

PAPERS AND MONOGRAPHS FROM THE NORWEGIAN INSTITUTE AT ATHENS  
SERIES 4<sup>o</sup>, VOLUME 1

THE MANY FACES  
OF BYZANTINE PHILOSOPHY

EDITED BY  
BÖRJE BYDÉN  
AND KATERINA IERODIAKONOU

THE MANY FACES OF BYZANTINE PHILOSOPHY

THE NORWEGIAN INSTITUTE AT ATHENS



VOL. 1



THE NORWEGIAN INSTITUTE AT ATHENS  
2012

ISBN: 978-82-999128-1-5  
ISSN: 1105-4204





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PAPERS AND MONOGRAPHS FROM THE NORWEGIAN INSTITUTE AT ATHENS  
GENERAL EDITOR: PANOS DIMAS

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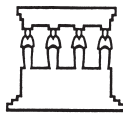
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ISBN: 978-82-999128-1-5

ISSN: 1105-4204

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## *Editors' Preface*

An international conference (London 2006), a scholarly workshop (Athens 2008), lots of email messages, meetings with the publishers, many hours of editorial work, all for the preparation of this volume. Nevertheless, this volume would not have come out without the generosity of the Norwegian Institute at Athens, and in particular without the support and patience of its director and colleague Prof. Panos Dimas. We thank him wholeheartedly. We would also like to thank Prof. Sten Ebbesen whose constant encouragement and advice in our Byzantine endeavours has proved in this case, as throughout the years, invaluable. Finally, Elizabeth Fowden's careful corrections of our idiosyncratic use of English improved our texts considerably. We dedicate this volume to Sten's favourite author, the Anonymus, for all the pleasures he has given us.



## Byzantine Philosophy Revisited (a decade after)

KATERINA IERODIAKONOU

It is exactly ten years ago that the volume *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources* was published (Ierodiakonou 2002). In the introduction to that volume my aim was to give a short guide to the basics of Byzantine philosophy, and at the same time a partial list of the unsettled questions concerning its dates, sources, and character. No definitive answers were given then; in fact it was argued that no definitive answers could be given, since more scholarly research needed to be done in this neglected area of the history of philosophy. A decade after, do we have answers to those questions? Is it time to reassess our somewhat dated, though still prevailing, standard views on the fundamental issues of Byzantine philosophy?

During the last decade there has been increasing interest in Byzantine philosophy, which has resulted in the appearance of critical editions of Byzantine philosophical texts, systematic studies of specific topics in Byzantine philosophy, as well as general surveys of the discipline as a whole. It is also indicative that the recent volumes and websites of the *Cambridge History of Late Antique Philosophy*, the *Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, the *Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, the *Oxford Handbook of Medieval Philosophy*, the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, the *Geschichte der Philosophie* (Bd. 5, C. H. Beck), the *Encyclopédie philosophique universelle*, the *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques* and others have included entries on Byzantine philosophy and on the more illustrious Byzantine thinkers. But does the implicit acknowledgment that among the periods of the history of philosophy a place should also be reserved for the study of Byzantine thought imply that we are now in a position to draw a more accurate map of this formerly ignored field?

It rather seems that, although some of the issues previously raised have been adequately scrutinized, many remain undecided or controversial. Moreover, it seems that new issues constantly open up and challenge our preconceived ideas about how we are to approach the philosophical writings of Byzantine times. In particular, the three main questions discussed in the introduction of the 2002 volume are still central and debated: ‘Is there philosophical thinking in Byzantium? Isn’t it all theology?’; ‘When does Byzantine philosophy actually begin?’; ‘Who counts as a philosopher in

Byzantium?'. To these, further intriguing topics have been added in the meantime. For instance, a lot of attention has recently been given in workshops and conferences to the cultural exchanges between the civilizations of the Middle Ages, and this has of course brought into focus the interplay of Western medieval and Byzantine philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

This introductory chapter, too, is not meant to supply conclusive answers to our questions concerning philosophical literature in Byzantium. At specific points I may sound less aporetic here than the last time around, but my aim is again to provoke further research rather than to settle the open issues once and for all. And I want to start by bringing up anew the crucial topic of the distinctive character of Byzantine philosophy. That is to say, I want to reconsider the expressed views on whether or not we can talk about an essence of Byzantine philosophy, an essence which clearly distinguishes it from Byzantine theology, as well as from ancient philosophy, and secures for it an autonomous status. Indeed, this topic has been at the centre of the latest controversy among the new generation of scholars working in this discipline. Furthermore, it best elucidates the general theme and title of the present volume. For Byzantine philosophical thinking, in my opinion, has many faces in the sense that it encompasses, just as ancient philosophy does, many different philosophical doctrines and many different ways of philosophical life. As to whether this polyprismatic character of Byzantine philosophy is as interesting or as thought-provoking as that of ancient philosophy, or for that matter of any other period in the history of philosophy, my contention is that it remains to be judged on the basis of sustained and systematic scholarly research.

### *Autonomy and Essence*

It is perfectly reasonable that the scholars who were the first to establish Byzantine philosophy as an academic discipline also raised the issue of the particular characteristics that distinguish this period in the history of philosophy from what proceeds and what comes after it. The chief characteristic that was singled out, effectively demarcating Byzantine from ancient philosophy, was none other than the religious affiliation of the authors

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<sup>1</sup> I could mention, for example, the following conferences and workshops: 'Greeks, Latins and Intellectual History 1204–1500' (University of Cyprus, May 2008; cf. Hinterberger & Schabel 2011); 'Renaissance Encounters: Greek East and Latin West' (Princeton University, November 2009), 'Knotenpunkt Byzanz' (37. Kölner Mediaevistentagung, September 2010; cf. Speer & Steinkrüger 2012) 'Convivencia in Byzantium? Cultural Exchanges in a Multi-Ethnic and Multi-Lingual Society' (Trinity College Dublin, October 2010).

whose texts were to form the philosophical canon of Byzantine times; and there is little doubt that, perhaps with the exception of George Gemistos Plethon, the Byzantine authors of philosophical texts all confessed themselves to be Christians. Therefore, Byzantine philosophy was conceived and presented as the Christian philosophy of the medieval East (Tatakis 1949). However, concerns were soon raised with respect to the extent to which this Christian character permeates Byzantine philosophical thought in such a dominant manner that philosophy becomes indistinguishable from theology in the period. So, right from the start of Byzantine philosophy as an academic discipline, there was an attempt to clarify its relationship to theology. The way this issue was formulated was by reference to the theoretical and practical autonomy of Byzantine philosophy (Benakis 1991).

The subordination of philosophy to theology, implied by the conception of philosophy as the servant or handmaiden of theology (*philosophia ancilla theologiae*), originating from the theological tradition of Alexandria (Origen, Clement), was influential in the medieval West, but never the prevailing view among the Byzantines. Theology in Byzantium did not have the systematic character that we encounter in the Western theological tradition and did not to any comparable extent use rational argumentation to support its claims. The theology of the Eastern Orthodox Church was very much based on revelation, and few arguments were accepted other than those drawn from the authority of Christian dogma (Podskalsky 1977). Hence, the theoretical boundary between philosophy and theology is easy to defend in the Byzantine context; philosophy did not serve theology's aims, and even if it had similar aims to theology it used a different and independent method to achieve them, namely rational argumentation. As to the practical autonomy of Byzantine philosophy, it was safely secured by the fact that, at least for the most part and to the best of our knowledge, Byzantine philosophical education took place at institutions which did not fall under the auspices of the Orthodox Church. Hence, Byzantine philosophy was proclaimed to be 'an authentic philosophical tradition', influenced by but still distinct from both ancient philosophy and contemporary theology (Benakis 1998: 162; Kapriev 2006: 6).

However, the very idea of autonomy was criticized as misleading and of no use; for it is indeed too difficult to find in Byzantium, or for that matter in the Middle Ages in general, authentic philosophical thought without the direct or indirect interference of faith and revelation. So, if we search for unrestricted autonomy, we may be asking too much from Byzantine philosophy, and from Byzantine civilization in general. Of course, as long as Byzantine scholars commented on ancient philosophical texts, the purpose

of their enterprise was clearly distinct from that of Byzantine theology. But philosophical discourse in Byzantium also aimed at finding demonstrative reasons for things that the Byzantines were already certain about on non-philosophical grounds, namely on the basis of their Christian beliefs. Moreover, philosophy was not supposed to inquire into the ultimate truth, and this *prima facie* restrained its freedom; for if human reason has its limits, philosophy has to work within these limits. So, it may have been the case that Byzantine philosophy developed its own aims and methods, but nevertheless its conclusions had to be in agreement with theology and was compelled to remain silent in front of what is beyond comprehension. It has been persuasively argued, therefore, that it is only a weak sense of autonomy that we can apply in the case of the philosophical discourse of Byzantine times (Zografidis, unpublished).

Having said that, I think there is also a stronger sense of autonomy that can be detected in the works of certain Byzantine thinkers, namely John Italos and George Gemistos Plethon. For philosophy in Byzantium seems to have regained with Italos its autonomy as a purely rational endeavour and one that even sought clear answers to questions concerning human destiny and the higher mysteries of Christianity. It is telling, I believe, that in doing philosophy Italos decided to talk about topics which nowadays, but also at the time, would be considered as belonging to theology as understood and taught by the Christian Fathers. In this Italos obviously followed the ancient conception of philosophy, according to which theology is part of philosophy, since it is supposed to culminate in the attempt to understand the first principles of everything. And it was, most probably, this supposed arrogance on the part of philosophers who reversed the order of priority between philosophy and theology that the Orthodox Church refused to accept, when it decided to condemn and anathematize Italos' doctrines (Ierodiakonou 2007). In the case of Plethon, on the other hand, irrespective of whether it is historically accurate to regard him as a pagan or not, it was the exaltation of reason, his 'cult of reason', that led him to his secular utopianism and justified his claim that philosophy could guide man to happiness. This is perhaps the strongest pro-rationalist claim ever expressed during Byzantine times, but it is interesting that it was made right at the end of the Byzantine period (Zografidis 2008; Siniosoglou 2011a).

Whether autonomous in an absolute or in a restricted sense, Byzantine thought still needs to prove what it offers the history of philosophy that is new. And the younger generation of scholars working in this area have tried to meet this challenge by reopening the discussion about the distinctive character of Byzantine philosophy, now phrased in terms of the 'true face'

(Cacouros 1998: 1364) or, more often, the ‘essence’ of Byzantine philosophy. That is to say, the issue that has recently been at the centre of scholarly debate is whether we can actually talk of a single essence of Byzantine philosophy or whether it is preferable to talk of many different Byzantine philosophies. After all, the Byzantines themselves had half a dozen definitions of philosophy which they inherited from the Neoplatonic tradition. Philosophy is defined throughout the Byzantine philosophical literature as: (i) knowledge of being as such; (ii) assimilation to God as far as humanly possible; (iii) knowledge of divine and human things; (iv) preparation for death; (v) art of the arts and science of the sciences; and (vi) love of wisdom. Furthermore, the term ‘philosophy’ seems to have acquired two very different senses in Byzantine usage (Dölger 1953; Hunger 1978, vol. 1: 4–10): it referred to the engagement with the philosophical questions of antiquity, an engagement which resulted in the production of commentaries, paraphrases and synopses, but also to Christian doctrines that were believed to offer the true answers to many of those questions, as well as to the practice of the Christian life, i.e. to ascetic monasticism. As Anthony Kaldellis argues in this volume, these different senses of the term ‘philosophy’ sometimes reinforced each other, as when ancient philosophy was used to support Christian faith, but at other times they came into conflict and then ancient philosophy was perceived as a threat to the integrity of Christian faith. In fact, Christian authors often opposed their own ‘true’ philosophy to the pagan or ‘external’ one, so that a philosopher in this sense was simply a monk.

Taking into consideration the different definitions and senses of Byzantine philosophy, Michele Trizio (2007) wrote an article in which he aptly expresses a widespread concern among contemporary scholars working in this field, claiming that the common tendency to attribute a modern conception of philosophy that hardly fits Byzantine intellectual history results in Byzantine philosophy becoming a category so narrow that it includes a very small number of thinkers and texts, while leaving uncategorized the vast majority of Byzantine intellectual endeavours. He thus argues that we should not take for granted that Byzantine philosophy can be defined in terms of an invariable, constant and unchangeable essence; for neither the set of Neoplatonic definitions as a whole, nor any one of them taken singly, can be univocally used for the definition of Byzantine philosophy. The more we study the texts of the Byzantine philosophical tradition broadly construed, the more we realize how discontinuous and multi-form this tradition is, and we detect a variety of meanings and functions attached to the term ‘philosophy’. Trizio’s suggestion is that we should not try to provide at all costs an image of Byzantine philosophy as a whole, but



we should attempt to figure out the different meanings and manifestations of the term ‘philosophy’ in Byzantium, i.e. the different Byzantine philosophies and social practices that cohabit and sometimes even clash in the same context.

Trizio’s position has already come in for criticism. In a recent article Niketas Siniosoglou (2011*b*) fiercely criticizes the anti-essentialist approach that refuses to define Byzantine philosophy; he considers it as a relativistic move that tends to hide the dependence of Byzantine thought on what he calls ‘the Christian hegemony of discourse’, i.e. the manipulation of Byzantine intellectuals on the part of the Church. Siniosoglou argues that, at the time of its establishment as an academic discipline, the history of Byzantine philosophy was intended to have as its core the thought of the Christian fathers; what the scholarly world has since anachronistically come to understand and present as philosophical thought in Byzantium cannot unconditionally qualify as the Byzantine engagement with philosophical discourse. This scholarly attitude, according to Siniosoglou, inadvertently suppresses the rise of the hegemonical role of the Church in the intellectual life of Byzantium, which instituted a hermeneutical monopoly in direct contravention to the qualifications of genuine philosophical discourse. Rather than being subservient to the Christian theological establishment, philosophical discourse in Byzantium reverted to calculated dissimulation that occasionally acquired an anti-authoritarian character; in other words, rather than Byzantine, philosophy in Byzantium was profoundly anti-Byzantine.

Siniosoglou’s proposal, too, has not been left unchallenged. Pantelis Golitsis (2011) has published a reply to Siniosoglou’s article in which he gives the following three arguments that seriously question the almighty presence of the Christian hegemony of discourse and the anti-Byzantine character of philosophy in Byzantium: (i) There is enough evidence to prove that the Eastern Orthodox Church did not defend, right from the start, a fully-fledged authoritative dogma, but developed it gradually over a long period of time. In fact, as late as the period of the Hesychasts, there were fervent debates over Christian dogma among members of the Christian establishment. (ii) There is no way of ignoring the fact that many Byzantine philosophers were actually part of the Christian establishment. For instance, Eustratios, who advocated the use of syllogisms in proving the two natures of Christ, was metropolitan of Nicaea. (iii) Even those Byzantine thinkers whom Siniosoglou portrays as dissidents opposed to the Church were often involved in articulating central theological doctrines, as is exemplified by Psellos’ theological writings. Thus, Golitsis backs up Trizio’s position that

it is not possible to give a definition of Byzantine philosophy. He suggests that, instead of reducing Byzantine philosophy to a single concept or tradition, we should pay attention both to the discontinuities as well as to the small continuities that can be found in Byzantine philosophical activity; in this way, we can examine it within its changing historical context and according to its twofold nature both as a Christian ascetic way of life and as part of the Hellenic *paideia*.

I agree with Golitsis that Siniosoglou's analysis is problematic when he ascribes to philosophy in Byzantium an anti-Byzantine character. There is no incontrovertible evidence that philosophers in Byzantium dissimulated adherence to paganism; on the contrary, most of them were well integrated and worked comfortably in the Christian milieu of the Byzantine state. Indeed, they were clearly influenced by this background and often engaged themselves in contemporary discussions of a theological rather than philosophical nature. At the same time, they were also influenced by the philosophical traditions of antiquity, inquiring into the same topics that ancient philosophers had been interested in and making use of the same syllogistic methods that had been advanced by the ancients. In fact, it is this inextricable continuity with ancient philosophy that, I think, chiefly justifies treating the Byzantine philosophical discourse as philosophical. For it is reasonable to claim that the Byzantines did philosophy as long as they were investigating the logical, ethical and physical questions that had puzzled ancient philosophers, some of which are still preoccupying contemporary philosophers.

Of course, it is important to recognize, too, that philosophical thinking in Byzantium was not merely a continuation of ancient philosophy, as Klaus Oehler (1969) stated. Reading Byzantine philosophy in this light would deprive us of the opportunity to detect the particularity of philosophical thought in Byzantium (Kapriev 2006: 5–6; Ivanovic 2010: 371–72). Moreover, it is important to recognize that what the Byzantines called 'philosophy' and what we nowadays call 'philosophy' are sometimes strikingly different. After all, part of the interest of Byzantine philosophy is precisely the various conceptions found in Byzantine texts of what philosophy itself should be, conceptions which may sometimes seem to conflict with each other but still constitute Byzantine philosophy as a whole (Bradshaw 2005). Does this mean, though, that we should regard as Byzantine philosophy whatever the Byzantines called 'philosophy'? Let me briefly explain what I have in mind.

The question as to whether we should follow our own perspective and consider as Byzantine philosophy what we nowadays understand as philosophy rather than what the Byzantines, or for that matter the Christian

Fathers, did become particularly intricate in the case of philosophy being conceived of as the ascetic way of life. Would a Byzantine monk, for instance, be regarded as a philosopher just on the grounds that he led an ascetic life? It is worth noting that this issue does not emerge only in connection with Byzantine times. Jonathan Barnes (2002a) discussed the evidence from inscriptions and texts which suggest that in late antiquity many men, and interestingly many women, too, were called ‘philosophers’, though their contribution to the philosophical discourse of their time is obscure.<sup>2</sup> Should we include them in our canon of ancient philosophers just because their contemporaries called them ‘philosophers’? Also, some of the people called ‘philosophers’ seem to have been involved in practices completely foreign to what we would now consider as philosophical. Should we think of such practices as philosophical, just because they were done by people who were at the time called ‘philosophers’?

Barnes discusses the example of Evagrius, the leader of a group of Christians in Beirut at the end of the fifth century, to whom our sources refer as a philosopher who led a paradigmatically ascetic life. But does this imply that it was by virtue of his asceticism that Evagrius was called ‘philosopher’? Though tied to philosophy, asceticism may have been simply a sign or concomitant of the feature by virtue of which Evagrius was called ‘philosopher’. For the relation between philosophy and asceticism, to use Barnes’ own analogy, is like the relation between health and exercise; just as ‘healthy’ does not mean ‘taking exercise’, so ‘philosopher’ does not mean ‘recluse’. Evagrius as well as all those people who were called ‘philosophers’ at the time were considered as such because they interested themselves in and studied the sort of things which had been discussed by Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus and Chrysippus; moreover, because sometimes they may have had their own views and developed theories about certain traditionally philosophical subjects, like for instance the immortality of the soul or causal determinism. It would not, therefore, be difficult to recognize them, Barnes argues, by the congruence between their intellectual interests and those of the Great Masters.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, as Pantelis Golitsis shows in his contribution in this volume, George Pachymeres’ praise of Nikephoros Blemmydes as a philosopher was not on the basis of his ascetic life as a monk. On the contrary, Pachymeres conceived of Blemmydes’ philosophical life as a philoso-

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<sup>2</sup> The classic study for the use of the relevant Greek terms is by A.-M. Malingrey (1961), whom Barnes criticizes in his article for her methods and inferences.

<sup>3</sup> I think that Siniosoglou (2011), who also refers to this article, misinterprets Barnes’ position, when he attributes to him the view that, due to the lack of a clear criterion, everyone in late antiquity could have been characterized as a ‘philosopher’.

phically trained intellectual life that induced suspension of judgment on human affairs, and thus liberation from mundane human concerns. For it is this sort of life, according to Pachymeres, which may constitute the foundation to real devoutness to God, a devoutness that has to be reflective and can hardly be combined with the anti-intellectualist faith of monastic life.

It seems, therefore, that the term 'philosophy' does not acquire in Byzantium an altogether different sense from that which we find in antiquity, though there are cases in which Byzantine thinkers may have been called 'philosophers' for reasons that cannot be considered as philosophical either from the perspective of ancient philosophers or from our own modern perspective. But this does not mean that Byzantine philosophy is philosophy in a different sense than ancient philosophy is, or for that matter than any other period of philosophy, when it comes to its objects of philosophical study and ways of pursuing them. At the same time, this does not mean that we should not be open to detecting aspects of the Byzantine philosophical discourse which are peculiar to this historical period, and to which we must be particularly sensitive if we want to pinpoint the distinctive characteristics of Byzantine philosophy. For as part of Byzantine civilization, which was undeniably influenced in most of its manifestations by Christianity, Byzantine philosophy developed certain concepts and relied on certain premises that were molded by the religious affiliation of Byzantine philosophers; and it is exactly such concepts and premises that may not be found in, or may be peripheral to, other periods of philosophy; moreover, it was such concepts and premises that were to promote a different conception of philosophical life in Byzantium. Needless to say, this applies in all periods of philosophy. Philosophy is a historical phenomenon, both in the sense that one does philosophy, or one is a philosopher, when one does what previous philosophers have done (i.e. one discusses the same issues and makes use of the same methods), but also in the sense that whatever a philosopher does may be crucially determined by the specific historical context in which she or he is immersed.

Philosophy cannot be said to have a well-defined single essence, and Byzantine philosophy cannot be said to share with other periods of philosophy such an unchangeable essence. We recognize someone as being a philosopher by comparing what he or she does with what past philosophers were doing; so, we recognize Byzantine philosophers as philosophers because they are typically concerned with questions inherited from the preceding philosophical tradition, namely ancient philosophy. As to those features which distinguish Byzantine philosophy from what past philosophers were engaged in, they should be closely studied but should not mis-

lead us into talking of Byzantine philosophies. For although it may be the case that many different doctrines and approaches were advanced by Byzantine philosophers, doctrines and approaches that were sometimes even in conflict with each other, we can still regard them as part of Byzantine philosophy as a whole. Besides, we do not talk of ancient or modern ‘philosophies’, though we are well acquainted with the variety of philosophical theories and attitudes presented by ancient and modern thinkers. Due to the fact, I think, that research in Byzantine philosophy has not been developed as much as in other fields, we tend to focus on certain standard texts and philosophical positions which we identify as the core of Byzantine philosophy, so that any divergences from these seem to create the need to talk of different philosophies. We should keep in mind, however, that although the Epicureans, for instance, were hardly interested in logic, they are still categorized as what we standardly think of as Hellenistic philosophy. Hence, I do not agree that Byzantine philosophy has a true face, nor that there are many Byzantine philosophies; it is preferable, in my view, simply to talk of the many faces of Byzantine philosophy.

But before I bring to a close the topic of the autonomy and essence of Byzantine philosophy, let me add something concerning the argumentative techniques of Byzantine philosophers, for this has been another area that has caused considerable concern to those scholars who refuse to subordinate Byzantine philosophy to the theological thinking of the time. To put it briefly, the issue is the following: if Byzantine philosophy depends on divine revelation in order to reach its conclusions, can it be considered as philosophy? It is true that serious criticisms were voiced against the use of rational argumentation in different periods of Byzantine history; logic was thought of as suitable for mediocre minds, but not as adequate for reaching the ultimate truth. There is also no doubt that Byzantine philosophers often used arguments that were not completely open-ended; rather, they were clearly designed to protect and support Christian dogma against heretical views. Finally, it cannot be denied that in their philosophical endeavours the Byzantines did not devote much space to testing or doubting the doctrines defended by the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Nevertheless, important though the notions of revealed truth and illumination may have been, the majority of Byzantine philosophers made ample use of Aristotelian syllogistic even in explaining Christian dogmas and in defending them against objections. Also, it is worth noting that most of the arguments the Byzantines used in their philosophical reasoning were usually based on premises that were argued for and not God-given (Ierodiakonou 2007). And even if in certain cases Byzantine thinkers were influenced by

their religious predilections in formulating their arguments, how much different in this respect is Byzantine philosophy from Western medieval, Jewish or Arabic philosophy? After all, in all periods of philosophy there is good and bad philosophy, and reaching conclusions that are not well-grounded is definitely one of the characteristics of bad philosophy. In his paper in this volume Börje Bydén discusses the issue of how it was possible for Byzantine philosophers to pursue cosmology as a demonstrative science and to insist at the same time on the infallible truth of the Christian revelation. John Philoponus, whom many Byzantines closely followed in this as in other cases, seems to have opted for a ‘Harmony View’, according to which there can be no contradiction between natural philosophy, as correctly practised, and the Christian revelation, as correctly interpreted. So, in order to establish that creationism is true, Philoponus undertook to show, in his treatises *Contra Proclum* and *Contra Aristotelem*, that the premises of ancient philosophers either do not support their conclusions or else are false. No doubt the main aspiration of his programme was to defend the Christian cause, but Philoponus tried to fulfil it by means of rational argumentation, and in particular by substituting the false premises with true ones and drawing the inferences correctly.

### *Tradition and Innovation*

Having argued that the interaction between Byzantine and ancient philosophy is at the heart of the problem concerning the philosophical status of the works of Byzantine thinkers, it is time to have a closer look at two aspects of this interaction. The first concerns the dates of these two periods in the history of philosophy, and the second the general character of the influence of ancient on Byzantine philosophy.

The problem of deciding what characterizes Byzantine philosophy and the recognition of its close connections with ancient philosophy are also reflected in the difficulty to determine when exactly ancient philosophy ends and Byzantine philosophy starts. In other words, we are still faced with the question raised at the introduction of the 2002 volume: ‘When does Byzantine philosophy actually begin?’ Of course, it is also difficult to ascertain the end of Byzantine philosophy, since its impact cannot be said to have vanished immediately with the fall of Constantinople in 1453, but the issue of the beginning of Byzantine philosophy seems to be even more problematic. For there are significant objections to positing as the starting point either a suitable political event or an important incident in the intellectual history of that period; that is to say, there are significant objections to

attributing to Byzantine philosophy an early start in the fourth century (the foundation of Constantinople), or in the sixth century (the closing of the Neoplatonist Academy by Justinian), or a later start in the eighth century (the appearance of John of Damascus' *Dialectica*), or even in the ninth century (the flourishing of Byzantine 'humanism').

Whatever one decides, however, there should be no doubt that the preferred date is nothing but conventional, just like most historical hallmarks. More importantly, there should be no doubt that it is extremely useful to study Byzantine philosophy in close association with the philosophical, theological and scientific thinking of the earlier centuries. For we are often reminded while studying the works of Byzantine scholars that Byzantine philosophy is a seamless continuation of ancient philosophy, and especially the philosophy of late antiquity. In this volume, for instance, Börje Bydén shows that, when it comes to the problem of the eternity of the world, most Byzantine cosmological writers borrowed both their rationalistic approach and the specific arguments in favour of creationism from John Philoponus. In fact, it is worth noting that it is particularly difficult to decide whether to classify Philoponus as belonging to late antiquity or Byzantium, and admittedly this does not become less problematic by taking into consideration what the Byzantines themselves thought. For when George Gennadios Scholarios listed the Greek commentaries on Aristotle's logic, he grouped Philoponus together with Leo Magentenos and Michael Psellos, rather than with the commentators of late antiquity, namely Alexander of Aphrodisias, Porphyry, Themistius and Simplicius, without indicating his criterion in a clear way (Ierodiakonou 2012).

But wherever we place the break between ancient and Byzantine philosophy, there is still a lot to be done in order to specify the extent to which Byzantine philosophers were influenced by their ancient precursors. The most controversial topic concerns the end to which, according to the Byzantines, the study of ancient philosophy was meant to contribute. Scholars mostly tend to see in Byzantium a more or less harmonious synthesis of ancient philosophy and the Christian background of Byzantine thinkers. For instance, Pantelis Golitsis claims in his paper that, in composing his *Philosophia*, Pachymeres aimed at challenging the misconception of ancient philosophy as being incompatible with the heart of Christian doctrine, by transforming Aristotle into a forerunner of the Christian truth. Anthony Kaldellis, on the other hand, focuses on the cultural dynamic of Christian authority and the opposition of certain Byzantine thinkers, whom he considers as dissidents, because they self-consciously, even if only covertly, came to certain philosophical positions that were incompatible with

Orthodoxy. Byzantine dissidents, according to Kaldellis, were not ‘pagans’ (at least not so long as that term requires cult or belief in the ancient gods), but their intellectual journeys were helped along by the study of ancient, non-Christian philosophy.

To settle this and similar differences of scholarly opinion, it would be helpful to gather more information about the actual knowledge Byzantine thinkers had of ancient philosophical theories, as well as about the actual use they made of them. That is to say, it would be helpful to gather more information about who the ancient philosophers were whose works the Byzantines read, to what degree they were acquainted with the ancient philosophical literature, and through which channels they came to be familiar with the ancient philosophical views. To start with, it would be of great use to future research to collect, in a systematic and critical manner, the Byzantine references to ancient philosophers, just like David Runia (1989) did in his investigation of how much the Greek Fathers knew and made use of Aristotle’s treatises. Besides, the collection of such evidence could also assist us in specifying preferences of Byzantine thinkers with regard to the various philosophical traditions of antiquity. For the Byzantines have often been thought of as generally adhering to Neoplatonism, but it becomes more and more clear that it is not that simple to categorize even individual authors as Platonists or as Aristotelians (Bydén, forthcoming). Indeed, Byzantine philosophers could be seen as advocates of the kind of eclecticism that is also found in late antique authors; that is to say, they do not seem to have been consistently loyal to one of the ancient philosophical schools, but rather preferred to combine doctrines developed by different ancient traditions.

What is true, moreover, is that Byzantine philosophers do not seem to have aimed at originality, another feature which they share with authors of late antiquity, and in particular with the Aristotelian commentators. However, even in their role as commentators, the Byzantines, just like the ancient commentators, managed to express their own views, which were sometimes heavily influenced by their Christian perspective. It is really surprising, as Michele Trizio points out in his paper in this volume, that Paul Moraux accused Eustratios of Nicaea of being a pedantic, repetitive and boring commentator at the same time as he condemned him for introducing in his commentaries his own views, as if such a practice was against the rules of how a commentator should work. Fortunately, Trizio adds, this negative evaluation of Eustratios’ philosophical comments is constantly losing ground among modern scholars. Besides, the fact that Eustratios’ commentaries were not poorly written seems to be corroborated by their



later fortune, in so far as they were not only read by many Byzantine authors, for instance Theodore Prodromos, George Pachymeres and Nikephoros Gregoras, but also translated into Latin and used extensively in the West. So, by George Gennadios Scholarios' time the commentator's task was both to unravel and explain the ancient text by offering interpretations of obscure passages, as well as to take the views of his predecessors seriously and comment upon them, often regarding the previous commentaries as a continuation of the Aristotelian work. For it seems that, in Gennadios' view, the role of the commentator was to transform Aristotle's thought for pedagogical purposes, but most importantly to expand on it. And it makes sense to suggest that such a development was closely connected to the fact that Gennadios consulted, as he himself was proud to admit, both the established ancient and Byzantine commentary tradition as well as the tradition inaugurated by the Latin scholars (Ierodiakonou 2012).

### *Authors and Texts*

The third of the main questions raised in the 2002 volume, 'Who counts as a philosopher in Byzantium?', opens up another area in which Byzantine philosophy can be said to exhibit many faces. For it is not only that in Byzantine thought we detect different philosophical doctrines and ways of philosophical life, and it is not simply that Byzantine philosophers were influenced by different philosophical traditions to different degrees; the figure of the Byzantine philosopher can also be said to be complex. For most Byzantine philosophers were not professional philosophers in the way their counterparts were in the medieval Western universities. Byzantine philosophers may have been teachers of philosophy, but they were also high officials, clerics, monks, even patriarchs.

Unfortunately, there has not been very much discussion about the distinctive characteristics of the Byzantine philosopher, i.e. whether there is something peculiar and special about philosophers in Byzantium that distinguishes them from philosophers of other periods and cultures. To investigate this subject adequately one would need to examine carefully the lives and deeds of philosophers at different junctures in Byzantine history. No doubt this is a vast and far-reaching inquiry that would be difficult to carry out in an exhaustive way, even if one decides to focus only on the most renowned and distinguished of Byzantine thinkers; but, I think, it would be worth pursuing. More difficult, though, is to determine whom one should include in the list of Byzantine thinkers who can rightfully be called 'philosophers'. For it seems important not to rely exclusively on our own mod-

ern preconceptions of what it takes to be a philosopher, but also to take into account how Byzantine thinkers were portrayed both by their contemporaries and by the immediately following generations. Moreover, it is equally important to examine how Byzantine thinkers themselves viewed and presented their role as philosophers. Hence, one needs to analyse systematically the autobiographical texts as well as all relevant biographical material concerning those who were considered in Byzantium as philosophers in order to reach a better understanding of the figure of the philosopher at that particular period in the history of philosophy. In this volume, for instance, Dominic O'Meara throws light on the two facets of Michael Psellos' personality as it emerges in his historical and his philosophical writings; namely, the political thinker and actor of the *Chronographia* on the one hand, and the teacher of the philosophical treatises and commentaries on the other. O'Meara shows that, by reading Psellos' history in relation to comparable ideas in his philosophical works, we can reach a better understanding of the political thought in the *Chronographia*, and of its relation to the political philosophy of antiquity.

Indeed, Psellos serves as a good example of a Byzantine thinker who not only succeeded in different careers, but also composed works belonging to different disciplines and genres: philosophical treatises and commentaries, theological, legal, geographical, historical and medical works, as well as poems, works on music and many letters and speeches. Thus, in order to give a comprehensive account of the intellectual contribution of Byzantine philosophers, it is crucial to take into consideration what they had to say about philosophy when writing in different disciplines employing different genres of writing. In Psellos' case, in particular, it is not only that his writings exhibit a sophisticated rhetorical style for which he became famous, we also find in them the theoretical justification of the close combination of philosophy with rhetoric as the ideal philosopher's discursive practice. For as Stratis Papaioannou argues in this volume, Psellos advocated, for the first time in the history of the philosophico-rhetorical debate, the indissoluble mixture of philosophy and rhetoric 'as if in a single mixing bowl'. After all, it is this mixture which he propagated consistently in his philosophical teaching and letters, and for which he praised intellectual figures of the past and the present.

Finally, Byzantine philosophers explored different areas of philosophy; they seem to have been interested not only in logic and metaphysics, but also in cosmology, natural philosophy, ethics, and political philosophy. George Arabatzis, for instance, presents to us, in this volume, Michael of Ephesus' comments on the biological works of Aristotle, for which there is

no ancient commentary. In this way, Michael's commentaries, just like other Byzantine commentaries and paraphrases, become an invaluable source for ancient views on this hitherto underexplored but intriguing area of natural philosophy. Also, Dimiter Angelov's paper introduces us to yet another area of philosophy that seems to have captured the attention of Byzantine thinkers, namely political philosophy. Angelov analyses the notion of the royal science, i.e. the knowledge possessed by a philosopher-king, as it is discussed by Nikephoros Blemmydes and Theodore II Laskaris. In the preface to his *Epitome logica*, Blemmydes claimed that kingship is similar to philosophy, since they both preside over their respective spheres; kingship is the highest political dignity, while philosophy is the art of arts and science of sciences. When kingship and philosophy converge, the ruling power reaches perfection and secures a good life for the ruled. Blemmydes' politically powerful student, Theodore II Laskaris, developed further this notion of royal science, explaining at length the importance of philosophy in the education of an imperial prince.

### *Reception and Historiographical Approaches*

Byzantine philosophers defended different doctrines and attitudes to philosophical life, showed different degrees of preference to different ancient philosophical schools, played different roles in the political and intellectual world of Byzantium, produced writings of different genres in different disciplines and in the different areas of philosophy. Interestingly enough, this multifaceted Byzantine philosophical output has been received in different ways at different periods by scholars working in different fields, such as philosophy, theology, classics, history, history of ideas. Michele Trizio (2007) assumed the task to chart the historiographical approaches to Byzantine philosophy, and to explain the recent increase of interest in its study, by associating it to the increase of interest in the study of the medieval Latin, Arabic and Jewish philosophical traditions. I think he must be right, although another factor should also be taken into consideration for the explanation of the phenomenon; namely, the increase of interest in the study of another until recently neglected area, namely the Aristotelian commentaries.

The conclusion of Trizio's survey of the historiography of Byzantine philosophy was that there is an urgent need to replace Basil Tatakis' handbook (1949) with a new, more comprehensive history of Byzantine thought. He disagreed about this with Linos Benakis, who expressed the opinion that we are not yet ready to compose such a history (2002: 285), but approved

Georgi Kapriev's statement that today we are not only ready but obliged to do so (2006: 10). Personally, I also agree that several of the interpretations suggested by Tatakis are obsolete; that since the publication of Tatakis' book, the number of scholars in the field of Byzantine philosophy has significantly increased, and so has the quantity and quality of editions and bibliographical contributions; that a handbook is particularly needed for introducing to non-experts as well as prospective scholars the basics of Byzantine philosophical thought. But there are still, I think, important gaps in our knowledge of Byzantine philosophy. Despite the work of the last ten years, there are simply too many Byzantine texts that remain unedited, and it is not even clear which of them should be regarded as philosophical. Consequently, I have repeatedly expressed the view that it may be too early to produce an introduction to Byzantine philosophy. Nevertheless, I also recognize that there are good enough reasons not to dismiss this idea.<sup>4</sup> After all, no work, and especially not an introduction, is expected to be the last word; it may rather give us a chance to realize what has been accomplished and what more needs to be done in this field. I still believe, though, that such general works should go hand in hand with specific studies that scrutinize the Byzantine philosophical texts themselves; and it is such scholarly endeavours as well as collaborative projects that I consider to be more promising in delivering significant results at this relatively early stage of research.

This volume constitutes the outcome of such scholarly endeavours and collaborative projects. It should be noted, however, that in its initial conception it had a different character from the present. It was meant to come out as the proceedings of a panel in the 21st International Conference of Byzantine Studies (London, August 2006) with the general title 'The autonomy of Byzantine philosophy'. The aim was to study the place philosophy occupied in Byzantine society and culture; in particular, the aim was to deal with the question of whether there is such a thing as philosophy in Byzantium clearly demarcated from theology and resistant to the pressures of religious orthodoxy and political authority. The speakers were Dimiter Angelov, Börje Bydén, George Zografidis and myself, and the areas of philosophy covered were logic, metaphysics, cosmology and political philosophy. At the end of the conference we decided to publish a volume on this central topic, which would include relevant contributions from more col-

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, I welcome the decision of Acumen Publishing to entrust George Zografidis with the writing of an introduction to Byzantine philosophy.

leagues and thus cover, in a comprehensive and systematic way, other areas of Byzantine philosophy. That project was never realized; instead, this volume now appears, containing some of the heavily revised presentations of the 2006 London conference together with other papers that were presented and discussed at a conference at the Norwegian Institute of Athens in December 2008.

Like the 2002 volume, this volume is not an introduction to Byzantine philosophy. It is a collection of articles on specific texts and themes of Byzantine philosophy and does not purport to deal with any of them in an exhaustive way. Moreover, it is not a collection of articles intended for the general public; rather, it is meant to whet the appetite of historians of philosophy, Byzantinists, classicists, historians of ideas and philosophers for a largely unexplored period in the history of philosophy. But since this volume shares some features with the 2002 volume, it makes sense to wonder whether it might be vulnerable to the same criticisms that reviewers have raised in the meantime. Is it the case, for instance, that it ‘offers very little for any non-specialist seduced by the title into thinking this to be a systematic and general treatment of the transmission and development of ancient Greek philosophy in the Byzantine Middle Ages’ (Searby 2002)? Or, does it fail ‘to some extent in its intention to introduce Byzantine philosophy to a wider audience’ (Sellars 2004, 344)? Such remarks would have been perfectly justifiable, I think, if it were not the case that in the introduction of the previous volume, as here, an attempt was made to outline clearly the limitations regarding the scope and purpose of these volumes. For our intention was not and is not to present either of these volumes as handbooks of Byzantine philosophy or general treatments of the influence of ancient thought on Byzantine philosophy; and as for their titles, though admittedly vague in their generality, it is far-fetched to regard them as misleading in this direction, or for that matter seductive.

A more challenging criticism of the 2002 volume referred to the fact that it rested on the assumption that Byzantine philosophy was understood as what could be connected to canonical ancient sources such as Plato and Aristotle (Bradshaw 2005); and the same can certainly be said about this volume, too. As I tried to explain at the beginning, I cannot but agree with the claim, which David Bradshaw elaborated in his book published in 2004, that Byzantine philosophy should be treated as much as a way of life as a form of understanding, and should therefore not be separated from its revealed source. Nevertheless, just as in the case of the 2002 volume, we also prefer in this volume—and I write here also on behalf of my co-editor—to focus on those Byzantine texts and authors that most closely relate, con-

sciously or otherwise, to the concerns of the ancient philosophical texts and authors; and the reason for this preference is, as we have previously stated, not that ‘we believe that an account in which the religious dimension is largely ignored is sufficient to grasp Byzantine intellectual history in its organic entirety, but because we think that a clearer conception of this part of Byzantine intellectual history is both desirable in itself and necessary for the understanding of the whole’ (Ierodiakonou & Bydén 2008).

This volume, therefore, intends to follow the tradition of the previous one in presenting some more ‘trial sections in a ground almost unknown to historians of philosophy’ (Zografidis 2003: 414); some more useful ‘preliminary explorations of a largely unmapped terrain’ (Bradshaw 2005: 236); some more scholarly studies which focus on details in anticipation that this may be ‘the likeliest way of reaching the still-distant goal of a broad, deep understanding of Byzantine philosophy’ (Livanos 2003: 260). For this volume principally aims at persuading its readership that Byzantine philosophy is worth investigating; and I am not of the opinion that there is only one way in which a period in the history of philosophy may be worth investigating. I perfectly understand, of course, that philosophers could insist that the degree of originality characterizing the ideas introduced in a period of philosophy should be an important criterion. In this respect, the previous volume received some damning criticisms; for instance, it was argued that for the most part Byzantine philosophers seem to have been not only unoriginal but ‘uninterestingly unoriginal’ (Hankinson 2003), or ‘not particularly engaging philosophically’ (Bradshaw 2005: 236).

Could the same criticism be raised against this volume, too? It remains to be seen. For the time being, I want to underline the fact that, even if it is once again proved that Byzantine philosophers did not present original philosophical theories, or developed those of their predecessors in philosophically exciting ways, this should not be regarded as a good enough reason for its sweeping condemnation. For as Jonathan Barnes wrote in the 2002 volume, originality or lack thereof should not determine whether one should study Byzantine philosophy or not: ‘Originality is the rarest of philosophical commodities. It is also an over-rated virtue: a thinker who strives to understand, to conserve, and to transmit the philosophy of the past is engaged in no humdrum or unmeritorious occupation’ (Barnes 2002*b*, 98). Indeed, it is important, I think, to realize the extent to which Byzantine thinkers help us in our attempt to understand better ancient philosophical texts; they provide us with information about ancient doctrines that have since been lost; they play a significant role in the history of Platonism and Aristotelianism in the West and, thus, they form part of the background for later philosophical de-

velopments. To appreciate Byzantine philosophy we simply need to make an effort to explore its multifaceted character.

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# Classifications of political philosophy and the concept of royal science in Byzantium

DIMITER G. ANGELOV

Recent years have seen a new rise of interest in the history of Byzantine political and social thought. Almost no attention has been paid, however, to the ways in which Byzantine authors classified and defined politics as a philosophical discipline on the basis of the ancient premise that the intellectual inquiry into politics belonged to the field of philosophy.<sup>1</sup> The Byzantine divisions of philosophy (*divisiones philosophiae*) and other classificatory texts are particularly revealing in this regard. They contain in a nutshell a description of the preoccupations of politics as a philosophical discipline, and comment on the connection of politics with other areas of philosophical knowledge. The taxonomic descriptions are a rich source material for studying continuity and change in the usage of political concepts with philosophical origin and content. My discussion will consist of three parts: first, an examination of the classification of political philosophy in the divisions of philosophy; second, an attempt at historicizing some notably divergent views on political philosophy voiced in a classificatory context; and third, an investigation of the usage and significance of the Platonic concept of royal science (βασιλική ἐπιστήμη), which was sometimes applied to the taxonomic description of philosophy and its divisions.

A note should be made at the outset about the methods, approaches and limitations of the following discussion. The discussion aims to highlight salient tendencies in the classification of political philosophy and is not comprehensive. The time span covered is mostly the period after the eleventh century, but occasionally material will be drawn from late antique as well as ancient philosophy. Historical factors are intentionally taken into consideration, because my guiding assumption is that no corpus of political ideas, regardless of its intellectual and discursive context, can evolve in isolation from surrounding forms of social organization. Therefore I will ask questions about the historical relevance of the examined notions of political philosophy—that is, the extent and ways in which the human good, the ob-

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<sup>1</sup> I take the present opportunity to continue the preliminary observations made in Angelov (2007: 9).

jective of political philosophy, is also recognizably the human good of contemporary Byzantium. No attempt will be made to broach the issue of whether or in what ways the term ‘political philosophy’ is an appropriate label for the field of Byzantine political and social thought. The resolution of this issue depends ultimately on modern conceptions and judgements. Rather, my narrow goal is to address the problem of definition on its own terms, through the conceptual vocabulary used by Byzantine authors. The source material used consists mostly of philosophical texts, but also includes texts belonging to other genres. This broader scope is in a way inevitable. In their most developed form, the *divisiones philosophiae* are found in predominantly scholastic works composed in the context of teaching activity and reflecting educational tradition. The concepts framed or used in the classroom had a circulation beyond its narrow confines. It has been aptly noted one should search for Byzantine philosophy not only on the pages of treatises and commentaries on ancient philosophical works, but also in a broader generic context, including orations and letters with philosophical content.<sup>2</sup> The investigation of Byzantine political thought needs also to consider genres normally disassociated with philosophy: primarily epideictic rhetoric, letters, and historiography, but also devotional and ecclesiastical literature, and even poetry. For the Byzantine philosophers were often authors with encyclopedic interests and a prolific literary output where they presented and discussed philosophical ideas.

### *Divisions of philosophy: the place of politics*

The natural starting point for examining the divisions of philosophy known in Byzantium is the influential Alexandrian tradition of the *Prolegomena philosophiae*: basic introductions to the discipline which normally precede the line-by-line commentaries on Porphyry’s *Isagoge*. The *Prolegomena* succinctly define and classify the philosophical disciplines in a way useful for the beginning student. Their authors—Ammonius, Olympiodorus, David, Elias and Pseudo-Elias (Stephanus)—were professors of philosophy with a Neoplatonic outlook who taught, at least for some periods of their lives, in Alexandria between the late fifth and the early seventh century.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ierodiakonou (2002: 6).

<sup>3</sup> On the Alexandrian school, see Lloyd (1967: 314–19); O’Meara (2003: 23–26); Watts (2006: 143–256). Pseudo-Elias has been plausibly identified as Stephanus of Alexandria by Wolska-Conus (1989: 69–82) (see also Roueché 1990: 123–27). A comparative summary of the prolegomena to philosophy by Ammonius, Elias, David and Pseudo-Elias (that is, Stephanus) can be found in Westerink (1990: 344–47).

Each *Prolegomenon* responds to or builds on earlier *Prolegomena*; the resulting educational literature testifies to contemporary as well as past debates in the philosophical schools. All surviving *Prolegomena* divide philosophy into theoretical and practical, subdividing further the branch of practical philosophy into ethics, economics and politics.<sup>4</sup> The *Prolegomena* derive this tripartite division of practical philosophy from Aristotle by referring to Aristotle's distinct treatises on each subject. As a further supporting argument, they highlight the different scales of engagement of each kind of practical philosophy with the human good: ethics deals with the good of an individual; economics, with the good of a single household; and politics, with that of an entire city.

This neat tripartite division of practical philosophy was not universally accepted in late antiquity. The sixth-century *Prolegomena* of David, Elias and Pseudo-Elias (Stephanus) mention opposition to and disagreements with the Aristotelian interpretation. The objection is said to have come from the Platonists. Pointing out, *inter alia*, that the quantitatively different applicability of ethics, economics and politics is an insufficient reason for them to be distinct sciences, the Platonists put forth an alternative division of practical philosophy into legislative and judicial. The reasons and logic behind this bipartite division need not concern us here. Suffice it to refer to Dominic O'Meara's pioneering study, which successfully challenges the stereotype of the apolitical nature of Neoplatonism and has shown that the twofold division of practical philosophy reflects the Neoplatonic ideal of the divinization of human society through the extension of the internal constitution of the soul into the domestic order of the household and the political sphere.<sup>5</sup> The debates on the divisions of practical philosophy reported in the sixth-century *Prolegomena* may be seen as an echo of discussions on political virtue and the political sphere characteristic of late Neoplatonism. The *Prolegomena* of Elias and, in a more explicit fashion, David hint at an authorial preference for the Platonic bipartite division of practical philosophy.<sup>6</sup> In addition, it is notable that some of the *Prolegomena*—especially those of Elias and Pseudo-Elias (Stephanus)—attempt to play down the differences between Aristotelians and Platonists by adducing different and

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<sup>4</sup> Busse (1891: 15–16); Busse (1902: 7–8); Busse (1900a: 31–34); Busse (1900b: 74–76); Westerink (1967: 43–46).

<sup>5</sup> O'Meara (2003: 56–58).

<sup>6</sup> For Elias, see Busse (1900a: 32–34); David (Busse 1900b: 75–76) mentions that the Platonists raised their objections with 'a good reason' (ibid. 76.1: καὶ τοῦτο εὐλόγως).

somewhat forceful arguments.<sup>7</sup> The sixth-century Alexandrian philosophers thus both seek to reconcile Aristotelians and Platonists, and reveal their own Platonic partiality.

In the long run, the twofold division of practical philosophy mentioned by the Alexandrian Neoplatonists did not take hold in Byzantium. Byzantine philosophers were remarkably unanimous in their preference for the Aristotelian tripartite division. Examples broadly dispersed through time serve to illustrate this trend. In his *Dialectica*, John of Damascus (d. 749) chooses to mention the three parts constituting practical philosophy: ethics sets rules about the conduct of an individual; economics deals with a household; and politics with ‘cities and lands’ (πόλεις καὶ χώραις).<sup>8</sup> An anonymous Byzantine ‘school conversation’ (or rather, an educational questionnaire) traditionally dated to the eleventh century implies the same division. Here practical philosophy is exemplified by a reference to Aristotle’s *Politics*, *Economics* and *Ethics*.<sup>9</sup> The Aristotelian commentator Eustratios of Nicaea (fl. c. 1112), whose ideas will be discussed more closely below, reports matter-of-factly the tripartite division of practical philosophy.<sup>10</sup> Late Byzantine scholars continue to classify practical philosophy into its three branches. In his thirteenth-century *Epitome logica*, an influential and widely disseminated textbook on logic, the Nicaean scholar Nikephoros Blemmydes (1197–c. 1269) concurs with earlier opinions: the chapter of the *Epitome* devoted to the division of philosophy states that moral and economic philosophers are the ones concerned with the good of individuals and households, while ‘a statesman (πολιτικός) is the individual leading and governing a city or cities in the best fashion’.<sup>11</sup> The notion of political philosophy as the preserve of the statesman is one worth keeping in mind.

<sup>7</sup> Busse (1900a: 34); Westerink (1967: 44–46). See also Westerink (1990: 347). Ammonius, an earlier representative of the Alexandrian philosophical school, subdivides further each of the three Aristotelian parts of practical philosophy into legislative and judicial without reporting any conflict between Platonists and Aristotelians. See Busse (1891: 15).

<sup>8</sup> John of Damascus, *Dialectica* 3 and 66; *Fragmenta philosophica* 8, in Kotter (1969–85: vol. I, 56; 137; 160).

<sup>9</sup> Treu (1893: 99). The so-called school conversation is in fact a list of general questions about grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, and law, which are all conveniently supplied with correct answers. Treu’s dating is uncertain, because it rests solely on the importance of law in the curriculum. Börje Bydén cautiously prefers to date the work within the period c. 1050–c. 1300 and points to a text deriving from it in the fourteenth- or fifteenth-century Cod. Vat. gr. 1144.

See Bydén (2003: 223; 2004: 147).

<sup>10</sup> Heylbut (1892: 1.25–3.31).

<sup>11</sup> Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Epitome logica*, in Migne (*PG* 142: col. 733B–C): ὁ δὲ γὰρ πόλιν ἢ πόλεις διεξάγων καὶ διακυβερνῶν ἀρίστως πολιτικός.

Blemmydes follows up the above comment by noting that practical philosophy is implemented through legislation and justice.<sup>12</sup> Thus, he considers legislative and judicial activity to be modes of operation of practical philosophy rather than its constituent parts—an influence of the *Prolegomena* found also, as we will see, in Blemmydes' preface to the *Epitome*.<sup>13</sup> After Blemmydes, the early Palaiologan scholar and statesman Theodore Metochites (1270–1332), in a section on the division of philosophy in the preface to his astronomical treatise, refers to the three parts of practical philosophy, again pointing out that politics deals with human communities and social practices in the cities (πόλεις).<sup>14</sup>

To be sure, the tripartite division of practical philosophy into politics, economics and ethics was not the only interpretation in the Greek Middle Ages. In one of his minor philosophical works Michael Psellos suggests a hierarchical division of philosophy into self-contained tiers or levels without mentioning practical philosophy.<sup>15</sup> The 'sciences dealing with political matters', set at the lowermost end of the taxonomic hierarchy of philosophy, consist of judicial and legislative science as well as rhetoric.<sup>16</sup> The legislative and judicial segments of 'the sciences dealing with political matters' hark back to the taxonomic views of the Neoplatonists, in whose philosophy Psellos was interested. The Psellian interpretation, especially the inclusion of rhetoric among the political sciences, is highly idiosyncratic in the context of the Byzantine *divisiones philosophiae*. As we have seen, the standard view in the *divisiones* was that political philosophy was an integral, self-contained and autonomous discipline, one of the three branches of practical philosophy.

Why did the tripartite definition of practical philosophy establish itself as the preferred one? One reason is that it provided a convenient template for the individual works in the Aristotelian corpus—the Byzantine 'school dialogue' illustrates the tripartite divisions of practical philosophy by referring

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<sup>12</sup> Migne (*PG* 142: col. 733C): κατορθοῦται δὲ τὸ πᾶν πρακτικὸν διὰ τε τοῦ νομοθετικοῦ καὶ δικαστικοῦ.

<sup>13</sup> Uthemann (1984: 120 and 135 n. 93) has argued that Blemmydes borrowed most of the content of this chapter of the *Epitome* from David's *Prolegomena* and some of it from that of Ammonius. Blemmydes clearly does not follow David, who (see above n. 6) hints at his preference for the bipartite division of practical philosophy into legislative and judicial. It is possible that Blemmydes was influenced by Ammonius who subdivides each division of practical philosophy (ethics, economics, and politics) into legislative and judicial, even though it is noteworthy that Blemmydes refers to modes of operation, not divisions.

<sup>14</sup> Bydén (2003: 445.70–446.81).

<sup>15</sup> The work is analysed by O'Meara in this volume.

<sup>16</sup> Duffy (1992: 1–4, esp. 3.55–4.96).

to Aristotle's treatises.<sup>17</sup> Another reason is that the alternative bipartite division appears to have been viable only as long as Neoplatonic philosophy flourished in late antiquity. It lost its breeding ground once the philosophical schools which cultivated Neoplatonism declined or were closed by the first half of the seventh century.

*Does political philosophy matter?  
Classicism versus contemporary  
relevance*

The brief definitions of political philosophy in the *divisiones philosophiae* follow an antique tradition and are in a way antiquarian. By stating that the goal of political philosophy is the well-being of an urban community (πόλις), these definitions are at odds with the imperial politics and identity of Byzantium. Besides, cities in Byzantium after the seventh century were no longer self-governing communities like the antique πόλεις and could hardly be considered a realistic subject matter for political theory. Clearly Byzantine authors were reporting definitions of political philosophy carried over from the past and played on the derivation of the word 'politics' from 'πόλις'. An offshoot of this classicizing view of political philosophy was its understanding as the body of political writing by ancient philosophers. We may be reminded here of the Byzantine 'school dialogue' pointing to Aristotle's treatises.

Yet this academic approach turned back to the past did not fully suppress the urge of the authors of the classifications to apply empirical observation to the description of political philosophy. A certain effort for accommodation with historical reality may be seen in the admission on the part of John of Damascus, Eustratios of Nicaea, Nikephoros Blemmydes and Theodore Metochites that political philosophy could deal either with the well-being of a 'city' or of 'cities' in the plural. The word 'πόλις' itself was not irrelevant to Byzantium as an empire. Byzantium inherited from imperial Rome, to some degree at least, the tradition of seeing itself as a city-turned-empire and a city ruling over other cities. The term *politeia* (πολιτεία) of the *Rhomaioi* was used on a non-official level as a designation for the Byzantine state.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the word 'πόλις' could refer to any model political community, and so veiled or explicit parallels could be drawn with the Byzantine polity. In particular, the regulatory activity of the statesman

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<sup>17</sup> See above n. 9.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Mango (1990: 54.8–9; 68.19; 78.15). See also Beck (1970).

(πολιτικός) could reflect contemporary political preoccupations. As we shall see, Eustratios of Nicaea's comments accompanying his classification of political philosophy draw a parallel between the emperor and the statesman (πολιτικός) who governs the πόλις. Furthermore, the gulf separating ancient political philosophy and contemporary imperial politics did not remain unnoticed, and proved capable of leading to innovative reassessment. In the early fourteenth century Theodore Metochites asked himself what the focus of political philosophy should be. Eustratios and Metochites approached the traditional classifications in an original and critical way influenced by the contemporary historical environment, and I would like to discuss each case in detail.

*Eustratios of Nicaea's preface to the Nicomachean Ethics:  
distributive justice*

The twelfth-century Byzantine philosopher Eustratios of Nicaea wrote at some length on the division of practical philosophy and its three constituent parts in the preface to his commented edition of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>19</sup> As is well known, Eustratios took a leading part in a project of republishing the *Nicomachean Ethics* along with explanatory commentaries carried out under the patronage of the learned princess and historian Anna Komnene. The commentaries on some books were the work of earlier philosophers, while twelfth-century authors composed the remaining ones—Eustratios of Nicaea glossed Books I and VI, while Michael of Ephesus, Books V, IX and X. From among the three parts of practical philosophy, Eustratios chose in the preface to deal most extensively with politics: a circumstance explicable perhaps by the interest in this subject on the part of Eustratios or his patron.<sup>20</sup> It is possible, too, that the preface anticipates the commented edition of both Aristotle's *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. Michael of Ephesus glossed the former work, although in a less extensive fashion than his commentaries on Books V, IX and X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>21</sup> One may be reminded that Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* was itself a work of political theory. Aristotle considered his inquiry in the *Nicomachean Ethics* to be political and conceived of the work as an

<sup>19</sup> On Eustratios and his commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, see Tatakis (1959: 216–18); Giocarinis (1964); Lloyd (1987); Mercken (1990: 410–19); Ierodiakonou (2005).

<sup>20</sup> Eustratios explains that the preface serves to clarify 'in what ways the three kinds of practical philosophy differ, second, what each one of them constitutes, and third, what is the benefit each one of them brings to people.' See Heylbut (1892: 1.23–25).

<sup>21</sup> On Michael of Ephesus' commentary on the *Politics*, see most recently O'Meara (2008).

introduction to the *Politics*.<sup>22</sup> Eustratios' commentaries on Books I and VI inevitably touch upon issues of political interest.

Eustratios' excursus on political philosophy in the preface focuses on the role of the statesman (πολιτικός) in the establishment and maintenance of justice. After reporting the familiar view of the city-centred subject matter of politics, Eustratios turns his attention to the statesman. The statesman, he says, ought to be virtuous in every respect and 'capable of transmitting goodness to all members of the polity, caring in every way for the citizens and the city, or cities, if he rules over many'.<sup>23</sup> What follows is of particular interest: Eustratios envisaged justice in the city or cities as the allocation of appropriate shares among the citizens, which the statesman was to carry out. The statesman, according to Eustratios, would know well that

... each ruler over more individuals of the same kind is obliged to take equal care of his subjects and of himself, not so that all would be receiving shares which are equal to his or simply equal with each other's, but in accordance with proportion. For this is how cities are consolidated, namely, when everyone receives what is due to him. Depriving him [that is, everyone] of what is due reveals the governors of the cities as being unjust, predisposes the subjects to be lax about the good, and puts cities in a worse situation. This is the sense of Euripides' words, 'many cities suffer whenever a good and brave man receives no greater honour than his inferiors' (Euripides, *Hecuba* 306–8).<sup>24</sup>

Eustratios' notion of the statesman making just distributions in accordance with the principle of just proportion has important antecedents in ancient philosophy. The late antique Neoplatonists, inspired by Plato's *Gorgias* (508a) and *Laws* (756e–57c), exploited the idea of justice as allotment based on the geometrical proportionality of ratios.<sup>25</sup> Probably a closer and more

<sup>22</sup> Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 1102a. The *Nicomachean Ethics* discusses political questions—for example, the supremacy of political science over other skills and sciences (1094a–b)—and devotes the entire Book V to the subject of justice. See Kraut (2002: 3–5; 98–177 [ch. 5: 'Justice in the *Nicomachean Ethics*']).

<sup>23</sup> Heylbut (1892: 2.30–3.3, esp. 3.1–3): [τὸν πολιτικὸν ἄνδρα ...] ἰκανὸν εἰσέτι καὶ τοῖς πολιτευομένοις μεταδιδόναι τῆς ἀγαθότητος, παντοίως κηδόμενον πολιτῶν τε ἅμα καὶ πόλεως ἢ καὶ πόλεων, εἰ πλειόνων τύχοι κρατῶν.

<sup>24</sup> Heylbut (1892: 3.3–12): ... εἰδότα καλῶς ὡς ἕκαστος ἄρχων πλειόνων ὁμοφυῶν ἐπίσης ἑαυτῷ φροντίζειν τῶν ὑπὸ χεῖρα ὀφειλέτης ἐστίν, οὐχ ἵνα τῶν ἴσων ἐκείνῳ ἢ ἀλλήλοις ἀπλῶς τυγχάνοιεν ἅπαντες ἀλλ' ἢ κατὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον. οὕτω γὰρ αἱ πόλεις συνίστανται, τοῦ αὐτῷ ἀνήκοντος ἑκάστου τυγχάνοντος. Αἱ γὰρ ἀποστερήσεις τῶν ἀνηκόντων ἀδίκους μὲν τῶν πόλεων <τούς> προεστῶτας ἐλέγχουσι, ῥαθύμους δὲ περὶ τὰ καλὰ <τούς> ὑποκειμένους διατιθέασι, τὰς δὲ πόλεις ἐχούσας κακῶς ἀπεργάζονται. τοιοῦτον γὰρ καὶ τὸ Εὐριπίδειον "ἐν τούτῳ γὰρ πάσχοι αἱ πολλαὶ πόλεις, ὅταν τις ἐσθλὸς καὶ πρόθυμος ὢν ἀνὴρ μηδὲν φέρηται τῶν κακίωνων πλέον". The quotation from *Hecuba* seems to have been proverbial and was excerpted in Stobaeus. See Wachsmuth & Hense (1884–1912: vol. IV, 6.1–3).

<sup>25</sup> O'Meara (2003: 102–3).



immediate source for Eustratios would have been the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the work on which he was just about to write a commentary. In Book V Aristotle divides justice into two kinds, distributive and corrective, and considers equality to be its most essential characteristic.<sup>26</sup> Equality in distributive justice was to be accomplished by means of allocating shares proportionate with the relative ‘worth’ (ἀξία) of the recipient: a proportionality that is geometrical in the sense of being based on the equality of quotients rather than arithmetical in the sense of being based on the equality of differences. Michael of Ephesos’ commentary on Book V of the *Nicomachean Ethics* gives an instructive example of distributive justice: if Achilles was twice as worthy as Ajax, it would be just that Achilles should receive twice the amount of coins given to Ajax. For example, if Ajax would receive four coins, it would be just for Achilles to get eight.<sup>27</sup>

There are both clear and veiled allusions to twelfth-century Byzantium. Eustratios refers to the members of the political community (that is, ‘the city or cities’) as ‘subjects’ (οἱ ὑπὸ χεῖρα) to the statesman; the expression is a conventional Byzantine term designating the emperor’s subjects.<sup>28</sup> The focus on just distribution parallels one of the prime functions of the imperial office, namely, the granting of court titles with their attendant salaries and the award of tax privileges, a practice which became increasingly common from the second half of the eleventh century onward.<sup>29</sup> Just distribution had a particular resonance in the twelfth century. Critics attacked Emperor Alexios I (1081–1118) for confiscating church wealth at the beginning of his reign and especially for siphoning off public tax resources for the benefit of the extended and powerful Komnenian clan.<sup>30</sup> In his classification of political philosophy Eustratios adds his voice to the choir by agreeing with the assumption of twelfth-century critics, namely, that the good ruler is the one who distributes resources justly among the subjects. Eustratios considers this kind of discussion to be a central subject matter for political philosophy.

Further on in his preface, Eustratios continues to refer to the activity of the statesman in a way reminiscent of the Byzantine monarchical system. Famous leaders of the classical and biblical past—Moses, Joshua and Solon—are presented as paragons of political philosophy. It is interesting to

<sup>26</sup> Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 1130b30–1132b20.

<sup>27</sup> Hayduck (1901: 19–23).

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, the twelfth-century historian John Zonaras, in Büttner-Wobst (1897: 562.11).

<sup>29</sup> Oikonomides (2002: 1039–48). See also Oikonomides (1996: 261–63).

<sup>30</sup> Magdalino (1983: 326–46).

find among them two legislators (Moses and Solon), a circumstance which seems to reflect the importance given to legislation as political philosophy in the Alexandrian *Prolegomena*.<sup>31</sup> Eustratios revisits the role of legislation in the body of his commentaries, where he notes that the task of political science or philosophy (ἡ πολιτική) is not only the establishment of laws in the city, but also the upkeep of walls, the maintenance of public hygiene and of the water supply, the provisioning of the city, the making of right decisions about war and foreign alliances, and the establishment of justice and proper religious worship.<sup>32</sup> From among these pressing concerns for any political community, water supply and the upkeep of the city walls were particularly relevant to the imperial capital Constantinople.

### *Metochites' dilemma on political philosophy*

In the late Byzantine period, Theodore Metochites attacked vigorously ancient works of political philosophy, which he nonetheless considered a high-ranking philosophical discipline. Metochites embarked on similar criticisms in two works: his early treatise *On Ethics or Education* and his subsequent collection of essays, *Sententious Remarks* (known commonly as the *Miscellanea*).<sup>33</sup> Metochites' life experience seems to have informed many of his views on political philosophy. A man of action as much as a philosopher, Metochites rose to the post of highest imperial minister and was the real power behind the throne of Emperor Andronikos II's government during the 1310s and 1320s until the emperor's downfall in 1328. In his treatise *On Ethics or Education* Metochites attacked Plato for exalting philosophy to the level of kingship (an allusion to the *Republic*) and for suggesting unrealistic political ideas.<sup>34</sup> Not only had Plato's political utopias never found their practical fulfilment in the past, Metochites notes, but they have no chance of ever doing so in the future. In a curious and important remark,

<sup>31</sup> Heylbut (1892: 4.5–7). Cf. *ibid.* 3.12–26, where Eustratios refers to the polity having four parts: legislative and judicial, taking care of one's soul; and gymnastic and medical, taking care of one's body.

<sup>32</sup> Heylbut (1892: 341.5–21). The context is a commentary on Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1142a2–6), where Aristotle illustrates the common understanding of prudence as an individual rather than a social virtue by citing Euripides. Eustratios digresses to show that an ethical virtue, such as prudence, differs qualitatively from economics and politics and then describes the preoccupation of each in detail.

<sup>33</sup> The treatise *On Ethics or Education* is usually considered to be one of the early works of Metochites, dated to 1297–98 (De Vries-Van der Velden 1987: 260) or around 1305 (Ševčenko 1962: 141 n. 2; Polemis 1995: 8–9). The *Sententious Remarks* has been dated to the period between 1321 and 1328. See Hult (2002: xiv).

<sup>34</sup> Polemis (1995: 169–77 [chs. 35–36]).

Metochites describes this situation as appearing to amount to ‘an abolition (κατάλυσις) of the greatest and best part of philosophy, political philosophy’.<sup>35</sup> The expression is interesting on two counts. Firstly, it places politics within philosophy and even assigns to it (enigmatically in this context) a supreme rank within philosophy—in complete contrast to Psellos in his minor philosophical work mentioned above, which relegates politics to the lowermost rank in the taxonomic hierarchy.<sup>36</sup>

Secondly and somewhat paradoxically, Metochites describes political philosophy as an abolished field of study. However, it is not that Metochites is sounding the death knell of the discipline, even though this may be the first impression. Metochites speaks not of the ruin of political philosophy in general, but of political philosophy *in antiquity* in particular. In the immediately following passage Metochites remarks that political philosophy or science (ἡ πολιτική) should deal with the possibilities and circumstances encountered in real life. He likens the versatile knowledge of politics to the skill of a sailor who knows how to keep his ship afloat in good and adverse weather (a standard simile of classical origin used often in Byzantine court literature). Politics, he continues, is not a discipline dealing with ideals and perfect situations, but one which has to address the natural imperfection of human life. To back this idea, Metochites mentions that no one in his times knows a perfect embodiment of either physical beauty or political virtues, the moral virtues of the soul according to Neoplatonism, which he says that he has often studied. The reason, he explains, is that virtue faces the material world which it could never fully control, a statement steeped in dualistic pessimism.<sup>37</sup> We may be reminded here of Metochites’ sympathies toward the philosophical school of scepticism and its agnostic tendencies.<sup>38</sup>

Metochites repeats and develops some of the above ideas in two of his essays in the *Sententious Remarks* (essays 80 and 81). Here he raises the question of why so few ancient philosophers concerned themselves with political philosophy and observes that those who did write on the subject shunned involvement in politics, preferring ethics to politics as an area of activity. Metochites explains this regrettable situation mainly through the preposterousness (κενολογία) of their political ideas. The ancient philoso-

<sup>35</sup> Polemis (1995: 172.13–16 [ch. 36]): ἡ διὰ τὴν τούτων ἀτυχίαν τῶν πραγμάτων καθάπαξ ἀποχώρησις, ἣν τις τοῦτ' ἀξιοῖ, κατάλυσις τις ἔοικε τῷ ὄντι εἶναι τοῦ μεγίστου τε καὶ καλλίστου μέρους φιλοσοφίας, τοῦ πολιτικοῦ.

<sup>36</sup> See above n. 16.

<sup>37</sup> Polemis (1995: 172.18–176.5 [ch. 36]). On the ‘political virtues’, see O’Meara (2003: 40–42).

<sup>38</sup> Bydén (2002).

phers should have acted, according to Metochites, like doctors practising their craft and helping their fellow citizens. Instead they preferred an apolitical conduct, which Metochites contrasts to how a statesman (πολιτικός) should act in reality, namely, by dealing with the current affairs to the best of his capacity.<sup>39</sup> Metochites' criticism of specific ancient political philosophers goes beyond Plato, who is mentioned both here and in his earlier treatise *On Ethics or Education*; now the criticism includes also Zeno, Chrysippus, Theophrastus, and mostly Aristotle whom Metochites chastises most severely.<sup>40</sup> Metochites contrasts the ineffectual thinkers of antiquity with ancient legislators who contributed to the greatness of their states: Zoroaster and Cyrus among the Persians, Hanno among the Carthaginians, and especially King Numa Pompilius among the Romans, whose legislation set the Roman monarchy on a firm course until Metochites' own times.<sup>41</sup> The emphasis on legislation, which harkens back to Neoplatonic views in the Alexandrian *Prolegomena*, is again worthy of note.

Metochites' conception that political philosophy should address real life and situations corresponds to his own interest in issues of political theory. More than twenty essays in the *Sententious Remarks* discuss political subjects of a varying degree of contemporary relevance, such as ancient constitutions, the three classic forms of government, and state finances. The last issue was a particularly pressing one: the reign of Andronikos II saw frequent fiscal crises and Metochites himself was the architect of the fiscal policies of the emperor during the later years of his reign. Therefore Metochites' view in his treatise *On Ethics or Education* of political philosophy as 'the greatest and best part of philosophy' addressing practical goals foreshadows the political essays based on his greater experience in government in his collection of *Sententious Remarks*.

### *The concept of royal science*

So far we have seen that the descriptions of politics in a series of Byzantine *divisiones philosophiae* composed in the course of many centuries were grounded in antique tradition, although they did occasionally go beyond what was expected from textbook definitions. I would like now to turn to a

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<sup>39</sup> *Sententious Remarks* 81, in Müller & Kiessling (1821: 532–37, esp. 533.24–27; 537.13–20).

<sup>40</sup> *Sententious Remarks* 80, in Müller & Kiessling (1821: 524–28).

<sup>41</sup> *Sententious Remarks* 107, in Müller & Kiessling (1821: 529–32). See also *Sententious Remarks* 107, in Müller & Kiessling (1821: 703–10), whose theme is the legislation of Numa Pompilius.

group of twelfth- and thirteenth-century taxonomic descriptions of philosophy composed outside the scholastic context of the *divisiones*. These descriptions link the Platonic concept of royal science (βασιλική ἐπιστήμη) to political philosophy. It becomes necessary here to examine at the Platonic pedigree of this interesting concept and the history of its use by the late antique Neoplatonists, the ‘immediate’ source for its reappearance in the eleventh century. The seminal Neoplatonic text to consider is the anonymous sixth-century dialogue *On Political Science*. The work has attracted much attention by scholars, although no attempt has been made to trace its influence on middle and late Byzantine political speculation.

The concept of royal science entered lastingly the ancient philosophical tradition through Plato’s dialogue the *Statesman*.<sup>42</sup> Here the skill of government is referred to interchangeably as ‘political’ (πολιτική) and ‘royal’ (βασιλική) knowledge or science.<sup>43</sup> The dialogue does not have the goal of addressing constitutional matters and leaves unexplained the distinction between ‘royal’ and ‘political’. In his critical response to Plato, Aristotle clarifies in the *Politics* (1252a8–17) that the king has a personal government; however, he is called a statesman (πολιτικός) when the citizens rule and are ruled in turn in accordance with political science. The *Statesman* describes royal or political science as an expert knowledge similar to weaving, navigation and medicine; it uses the related skills of generalship, rhetoric and justice, setting them in motion whenever the right occasion for action arises.<sup>44</sup> Aided by royal science, but not necessarily bound to the written law, the expert ruler is able to govern for the public benefit.

Ancient philosophical tradition after Plato maintained sometimes the synonymous usage of ‘royal’ and ‘political’. For example, the Roman Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus (d. c. AD 120) is said to have tried to convince, during his exile to Syria, a client king to the Romans of the benefits of philosophy, specifying that Socrates called ‘philosophy a political and royal science (πολιτική τε καὶ βασιλική ἐπιστήμη), because the one who receives it becomes a statesman straightaway’.<sup>45</sup> The context does not explain the intended meaning of ‘political and royal science’, although it is note-

<sup>42</sup> On this dialogue, see Lane (1997); Cooper (1999).

<sup>43</sup> On the identification of ‘royal’ and ‘political’, see Plato, *Statesman* 267c (‘kingship is another name for statesmanship’) and 276c. Cf. *ibid.* 266e; 274e; 289d; 291c; 305c–d; 309d. The concept of ‘royal science’ is explicitly used in 261c; 284b; 288e; 292e; 295b; for ‘political science’, see 303e.

<sup>44</sup> Plato, *Statesman* 303e–305e.

<sup>45</sup> The reference to the unity of philosophy and kingship goes back to Socrates’ words in the *Republic* (473d), although the vocabulary is also clearly that of the *Statesman*. See Lutz (1947: 66.24–26 [Discourse 8]).

worthy that the notion is tied to what was to become a commonplace in Byzantine court literature, namely, the Platonic idea of the philosopher-king. Another example of usage of this concept is the fourth-century Athenian rhetorician Sopater who worked in Neoplatonic circles. In the opening section of his *prolegomenon* to Aelius Aristides, Sopater states that ‘the science of the statesman is a royal care in governing.’<sup>46</sup> The statesman (πολιτικός) is said to give orders to others without himself acting, since he is the supreme legislator. The finality of all other skills (generalship, judicial rhetoric, the manual crafts, etc.) is subordinated to him, because the statesman contains and represents the good (καλόν) and happiness (εὐδαιμονία), while other arts and crafts act for the sake of happiness.<sup>47</sup>

The sixth-century dialogue *On Political Science* attempts to construct a philosophical *system* around the Platonic notion of royal science.<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, what survives today from the original six books of *On Political Science* is a fragment consisting of the end of Book 4 and a larger portion from the beginning of Book 5. The full scope of ideas discussed in the dialogue is thus unknown. Nevertheless, the surviving fragment is substantial enough to set the work into context. We know that the anonymous author, a contemporary of the emperor Justinian I (527–65), was schooled in Neoplatonic philosophy.<sup>49</sup> He was critically disposed to contemporary imperial politics. The programme of reforms outlined in Book 5 was markedly anti-authoritarian in its proposition of a mixed constitution and laws for the election and retirement of emperors.<sup>50</sup>

The table of contents of Book 5 notes that one of the discussed themes is the concept of βασιλική ἐπιστήμη and the link of royal science with, and its superiority over, other sciences and crafts.<sup>51</sup> In the initial section of the book, the main interlocutor, Menodorus, mentions that an earlier part of the dialogue, now lost, has demonstrated the differences between royal science and philosophy, and has shown that royal and political philosophy ‘are one

<sup>46</sup> Lenz (1959: 128.5–6): ἡ τοῦ πολιτικοῦ ἐπιστήμη βασιλική τυγχάνει κατὰ τὴν διοίκησιν πρόνοια. On Sopater and the Neoplatonic context, see O’Meara (2003: 209–11).

<sup>47</sup> The source is Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 1094a–b, where the end of political science is described as the finality of all crafts and sciences.

<sup>48</sup> All references below are to the Mazzucchi’s revised 2002 edition. The dialogue has recently been commented on and translated by Bell (2009: 49–79 [commentary], 123–88 [translation]), who renders βασιλική ἐπιστήμη into English as ‘imperial science’.

<sup>49</sup> See the detailed analysis by O’Meara (2002) and O’Meara (2003: 171–84). See also Praechter (1900).

<sup>50</sup> On the political ideas in the dialogue, see Fotiou (1981); Cameron (1985: 248–52, esp. 249 n. 47); O’Meara (2003: 180–82); Angelov (2004: 506–11).

<sup>51</sup> Mazzucchi (2002: 18.2–4; 18.10–11).

and the same thing insofar as being divine imitation'.<sup>52</sup> The lost part of the dialogue thus discussed Plato's identification of kingly and political knowledge. The extant section of Book 5 continues to use the concepts of 'royal' and 'political science' synonymously and interchangeably.<sup>53</sup> It has been argued that the identification between royal and political science would have been explicated through the principle of Neoplatonic metaphysics, by which the first member in an ordered series both pre-contains and produces subsequent members. The surviving section of Book 5 presents kingship as the source and fountain of 'political illumination', which it communicates to the uppermost tier of a hierarchically arranged chain of offices and hence to the lower tiers of offices.<sup>54</sup>

The dialogue also paints a picture of the genesis, mode of operation and metaphysical agency of political science. The emergence of political science is set in a Platonic myth of the Creation. Menodorus tells a story of how, soon after the Creation, humankind had found itself lying in the middle between the rational and the irrational, between a life of pure intellect and nature. This state of affairs led to internal turmoil in the soul (tossed to and fro without a sense of direction) and warfare in the political sphere. To mend the unhappy situation and ensure human survival, the Demiurge and divine foresight granted humankind the two gifts of dialectic and political science.<sup>55</sup> The above description is heavily indebted to the Platonic tradition: the historical reconstruction of the polity hearkens to the *Republic* (369a ff.); the myth of the Creation is based on the *Timaeus*; the transcendental origin of political knowledge finds parallels and explanations in the writings of late Neoplatonists.<sup>56</sup> Political science secures human salvation (σωτηρία) through the actions of the statesman (πολιτικός). Having received the knowledge of political science as a divine revelation at the time of the emergence of the political community, the πολιτικός is said to approach different sections of the polity differently. He teaches political science to those who are 'by nature receptive (φύσει δεκτικοί)', while others he saves through correct belief (ὀρθῇ δόξῃ) and the tradition of faith. Among others he introduces the custom of living a just life and the fear of the laws (that is, he is a lawgiver), and he teaches them to imitate his own

<sup>52</sup> Mazzucchi (2002: 21.9–11, esp. ll. 10–11: ὅτι ταῦτόν βασιλεία τε καὶ πολιτικὴ φιλοσοφία οἷα θεοῦ μίμησις οὔσα).

<sup>53</sup> Mazzucchi (2002: 64–66).

<sup>54</sup> O'Meara (2003: 176–77).

<sup>55</sup> Mazzucchi (2002: 55.6–57.10).

<sup>56</sup> O'Meara (2003: 79; 94–97; 176).

good life.<sup>57</sup> The πολιτικός is not identified with the βασιλεύς whose election and ideal qualities are described elsewhere in the surviving fragment of Book 5; nonetheless, the activity of the πολιτικός is monarchical in so far as it represents top-down ordering of the polity and inasmuch as political science is also royal science.

The salvation of humankind brought about by political science and the πολιτικός is both physical and metaphysical. After the πολιτικός sets the polity in order, the human race is able to regain its pristine state: ‘the heavenly metropolis’ (ἡ ἄνω μητρόπολις) from where it has been exiled.<sup>58</sup> How this happens precisely is not explained in the extant fragment of the dialogue. The broad outline of the scheme of salvation finds close parallels in Neoplatonic philosophy: namely, the importance of political virtues as the first stage in the divinization of the soul, the return of the soul to the One, and the idea of a heavenly city.<sup>59</sup> However, as scholars have warned, one should be cautious not to use these parallels to draw a hasty conclusion about the non-Christian religious beliefs of the author. The discussion of matters of metaphysics in the surviving part of the dialogue is brief and non-polemical. As a counter-argument against the author’s paganism, one can point to the circumstance that the phrase ‘the heavenly metropolis’ used by the dialogue is attested solely among Christian authors and that the notion of return to the heavens corresponds to the Christian notion of salvation after the Fall of Man.<sup>60</sup>

The sixth-century dialogue not only marks a peak in Neoplatonic political philosophy, but is worlds apart in its sophisticated argumentation from the advisory ‘mirror of princes’ literature, the main genre of political theorizing in the centuries immediately following Justinian I. The concept of royal science is absent from this court literature and appears to have been reintroduced during the upsurge of philosophical study in the eleventh century. The eleventh-century *Historia Syntomos*, cogently attributed to Michael Psellos, mentions in the context of an excursus on ancient Roman

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<sup>57</sup> Mazzucchi (2002: 59.1–15).

<sup>58</sup> Mazzucchi (2002: 60.1–8).

<sup>59</sup> O’Meara (2003: 176).

<sup>60</sup> A *TLG* search for the phrase ἡ ἄνω μητρόπολις shows that, apart from the sixth-century dialogue, it was used solely by Christian authors. See, for example, Gregory of Nazianus, *On the Holy Easter*, in Migne (*PG* 36: col. 656A). The question of whether the author of the sixth-century dialogue is a pagan or a Christian has no easy and obvious answer; it is evident that he lived in a mixed Christian and pagan milieu. On this question (left similarly open but with different arguments), see O’Meara (2003: 183). Bell (2009: 76–79) also considers this question difficult to answer.



history that a muse taught βασιλική ἐπιστήμη to King Numa Pompilius.<sup>61</sup> The idea of royal science being a divine gift to humankind is what we already saw in the sixth-century dialogue. Psellos' usage seems to have been intentional and premeditated. The source for this section of the *Historia Syntomos* is the *Roman Antiquities* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who reports a story according to which the ancient Roman king received divine instruction in 'royal wisdom' (βασιλική σοφία). It is noteworthy that Psellos modified the phrase 'royal wisdom' into 'royal science' (βασιλική ἐπιστήμη).<sup>62</sup> The substitution makes the passage from Dionysius of Halicarnassus fit the Neoplatonic idea of the divine origins of royal science and is explicable by Psellos' instrumental role in the eleventh-century revival of Neoplatonism.

After re-emerging in the eleventh century, the concept of royal science was linked with the classifications of practical philosophy. In the preface to his *Epitome logica* the thirteenth-century philosopher and monk Nikephoros Blemmydes remarks that 'to say it briefly, reigning scientifically (τὸ βασιλεύειν ἐπιστημονικῶς) is nothing else than the summit of practical philosophy'. The explanation stated in the immediately following sentence is that the emperor holds the reins of judicial and legislative power in his hands, and when acting with care and erudition he is seen 'as another God on earth'.<sup>63</sup> Thus, the exalted position of royal science (this is how I understand the expression 'reigning scientifically'), namely, at the apex of practical philosophy, is explained through the prerogatives of contemporary emperors as supreme legislators and supreme judges. The reference to legislation and justice is the same echo from the Neoplatonic bipartite division of practical philosophy which resonates, as we saw, also in Chapter 7 of the *Epitome logica* on the *divisiones philosophiae*.<sup>64</sup>

The connotations of royal science in the preface to the *Epitome logica* can become clearer through further examination of the context. In terms of

<sup>61</sup> Aerts (1990: 2.22–24). Duffy & Papaioannou (2003: 219–29) have adduced convincing philological arguments in favour of Psellos' authorship in spite of Aerts' earlier objections (1990: viii–xv). The use of the concept of βασιλική ἐπιστήμη itself lends support to Psellos' authorship of the *Historia Syntomos*.

<sup>62</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom.* 2.60.5. I would like to thank Stratis Papaioannou for this reference. It is interesting also that the *Historia Syntomos* reports the instruction of Numa as a fact, while Dionysius of Halicarnassus presents it as a story reported by some people.

<sup>63</sup> Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Epitome logica*, in Migne (*PG* 142: col. 689A–C, esp. 689B): καὶ ἵν' εἴπω συντόμως τὸ πᾶν, οὐκ ἄλλο τι ἐστὶ τὸ βασιλεύειν ἐπιστημονικῶς ἢ τῆς πρακτικῆς φιλοσοφίας αὐτὸ τὸ ἀκρότατον.

<sup>64</sup> See above nn. 11–13.

genre the preface is a mixture of philosophical musings and laudation of the emperor John III Batatzes (1221–54), who had commissioned Blemmydes to compose the textbook on logic and sponsored his teaching activities.<sup>65</sup> At the outset of the preface, Blemmydes lays out the similarity between kingship and philosophy, which boils down to the circumstance that both preside over their respective spheres. Kingship is the highest political dignity, while philosophy is the ‘art of arts and science of sciences’—one of the six definitions of philosophy reported in the late antique *Prolegomena* to philosophy.<sup>66</sup> When kingship and philosophy converge, the ruling power reaches perfection by imitating God and secures good life for the ruled. For ‘as some great philosopher reckoned in the best fashion’ (Plato is not mentioned by name), the subjects would prosper when the emperor is a philosopher.<sup>67</sup> It is this statement that is followed by the remark that ‘reigning scientifically is the summit of practical philosophy’. In other words, royal science is the knowledge possessed by a philosopher-king. But what kind of knowledge is royal science specifically?

Blemmydes’ stellar and politically powerful student and philosopher, the crown prince and for a brief time emperor of Nicaea Theodore II Laskaris (b. 1221/22, ruled 1254–58), develops further the notion of royal science. In his *Satire of the Tutor* Laskaris dwells at length on the importance of philosophy in his education, emphasizing its special role for an imperial prince.<sup>68</sup> The satire is a lengthy mockery of the tutor to whom Laskaris was unwillingly assigned as a teenager. Among the tutor’s many shortcomings is the alleged attempt to turn the crown prince away from the study of philosophy. Laskaris enumerates the six classic definitions of philosophy and describes how each referred to the benefits to be derived from philosophy. The definition of philosophy as ‘the art of arts and the science of sciences’ is linked with the profit of obtaining knowledge of ‘the first science, that is,

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<sup>65</sup> The preface is the *prooimion* both to an early first edition and the final edition of the *Epitome logica*. Carelos (2006: 401–2) re-edited recently the *prooimion*, describing it as an ‘integrated mirror of princes’. However one finds here no traces of *parainesis* or didacticism characteristic of court advice literature. On Blemmydes’ preface to his *Epitome* and its connection with his teaching activities on logic, see Lackner (1981: 353); Constantinides (1982: 12); Macrides (2007: 194). See also Munitiz (1988: 71 and n. 91).

<sup>66</sup> Blemmydes was to repeat the same reasoning in ch. 6 of his mirror of princes, the *Imperial Statue*. See Hunger & Ševčenko (1986: 44–46). On philosophy as the art of arts and science of sciences, see the *Prolegomena* by Elias (Busse 1900a: 20.18–23) and David (Busse 1900b: 26.26–28).

<sup>67</sup> Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Epitome logica*, in Migne (*PG* 142: col. 689A–B). The inspiration is Plato’s *Republic* X 689a–b.

<sup>68</sup> This is an idea which Laskaris was to revisit during his more mature years when ruling as a sole emperor. See Angelov (2007: 238).

royal science (βασιλική ἐπιστήμη)'. Laskaris presents royal science in the following manner:

[I needed to be a philosopher] inasmuch as philosophy is 'the art of arts and science of sciences', so that, subject to the providence of God and to conformity with nature that serves God's command, I, who am the crown upon humankind, would have the entire scientific knowledge of the first science, that is, royal science. For from there [from royal science] gaze the wise man and the private individual, the common craftsman and the soldier, the wrong-doer and the just man, the one who is judged and the judge, the bravest and the vanquished, the diligent and the indolent, the rich and the poor, households, villages, cities, and the world, and to put it shortly, all the people. Compile a work regarding what kind of man the person whose lot it is to govern should be! This is the reason why I very much needed to be a philosopher. For I think it is necessary for the rulers to know science and to do nothing without it.<sup>69</sup>

Like his teacher Blemmydes, Laskaris considered royal science a philosophical discipline. He expected to study the subject during his philosophical education and ridiculed an unfortunate teacher who dared think otherwise. In fact, Laskaris expected to gain the knowledge of royal science by reading a mirror of princes, for the expression 'what kind of man the person whose lot it is to govern should be' was used during the late Byzantine period in reference to works of court advice literature.<sup>70</sup> This circumstance may clarify Laskaris' otherwise enigmatic comment that all kinds of people, both virtuous and not, 'gaze from' royal science: they stare from the pages of a mirror of princes like Blemmydes' *Imperial Statue*, which illustrates virtues and vices through numerous historical and mythological figures. Like Blemmydes, Laskaris considered royal science a high-ranking subject: what Blemmydes had called 'the summit of practical philosophy' was for Laskaris 'the first science'. Laskaris comes close to Blemmydes' *Epitome logica* also by using the definition of philosophy as 'the art of arts and the

<sup>69</sup> Tartaglia (2000: 180.632–181.646): διὰ δὲ τοῦ 'τέχνη τεχνῶν καὶ ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστημῶν', ἵνα ἐπὶ θεοῦ προνοίᾳ καὶ φύσεως ἀκολουθίᾳ ὑπηρετούσης τῷ θεῷ προστάγματι, τῆς πρώτης ἐπιστήμης, τῶν γε κατὰ τὸν ἀνθρώπινον βίον ὦν κορωνίς, τῆς βασιλικῆς ἐπιστήμης φημί, παντοίαν ἔχω τὴν ἐπιστήμην—ἐκεῖθεν γὰρ ἐνορᾷ καὶ σοφὸς καὶ ἰδιώτης, καὶ βάνουσος καὶ στρατιώτης, καὶ ἀδικῶν καὶ δικαιοπραγῶν, καὶ κρινόμενος καὶ δικάζων, καὶ ἀριστεύων ὡς καὶ ἠττώμενος, καὶ σπουδαῖος καὶ ὀκνηρὸς, καὶ πένης καὶ πλούσιος, καὶ οἶκος καὶ κώμη, καὶ πόλεις καὶ κόσμος, καὶ συνελῶν εἴπω πᾶς ὁ λαός· ὅποιον γοῦν τὸν ἄρχειν λαχόντα δεῖ εἶναι σύναξον. διὰ τοῦτο οὖν ἔδει με ἄκρως φιλοσοφεῖν· ἀναγκαῖον γὰρ ἠγοῦμαι γινώσκειν τοὺς ἄρχοντας ἐπιστήμην καὶ ἄτερ ταύτης πράττειν μηδέν. The interpretation of this passage is not without difficulty. The preposition ἐπί in the phrase ἐπὶ θεοῦ προνοίᾳ is the editor's sensible emendation from ἐπεὶ found in the manuscripts. I have translated the word ἐκεῖθεν with its most common meaning of 'from there', 'thence'.

<sup>70</sup> The title of the fourteenth-century paraphrase of Blemmydes' mirror of princes *The Imperial Statue* is given in this way in some of the manuscripts. See Hunger & Ševčenko (1986: 45); Migne (*PG* 142: coll. 611–12).

science of sciences' in a similar context, although in this case he engages in a play of words appropriate for a satire and argues that the definition shows that royal science is a worthy philosophical subject.

A concept used by Laskaris in his descriptions of royal science reminds one of the dialogue *On Political Science*. His qualification of royal science as 'the first science' corresponds to the idea in the sixth-century dialogue about the early emergence of political science after the Creation and to Menodorus' words that political science is the 'first good' (πρῶτον ἀγαθόν), and the best and greatest skill.<sup>71</sup> Royal science was thus 'the first science' both temporally and in terms of value. The same idea is conveyed by the table of contents of Book 5 of the dialogue, which states that one of its subjects is the superiority of royal science over other arts and sciences. Unfortunately, this section of Book 5 has been lost.

Does the reappearance of the notion of royal science in Byzantium after the eleventh century indicate the influence of the sixth-century dialogue? Examining one last piece of evidence can help us to arrive at a plausible hypothesis. A twelfth-century imperial panegyric of the emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143–80) by Michael Italikos contains an interesting description of royal science, which, as far as I am aware, is unique in the middle Byzantine period.<sup>72</sup> A teacher of philosophy, rhetoric and medicine in Constantinople, Italikos included in the oration quotations from the *Republic* by which he strove to display his learning to the court audience.<sup>73</sup> The epideictic function of the imperial oration is neither unusual nor surprising, and it is important to realize that Italikos considered the rhetorical work to be a forum for the presentation of philosophical ideas. The oration lauds Manuel for having mastered at an early age, through the instruction given by his father, Emperor John II Komnenos, the art of war and royal science (βασιλική ἐπιστήμη).<sup>74</sup> Just as in the case of Laskaris, therefore, royal science is understood as a field of knowledge taught to princes. Further on in the oration, Italikos engages in a description of royal science as a master craft surpassing all political skills and sciences:

It was necessary that he [sc. the prince Manuel] learned royal science as a more masterly craft [than strategy], which subjugates all peoples to it and governs cities and all

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<sup>71</sup> Mazzucchi (2002: 63.4–8). See also *ibid.* 64.12–14 (citation from Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 4.2.11).

<sup>72</sup> On Italikos, see Treu (1895); Fuchs (1926: 38); Tatakis (1959: 218–19); Gautier (1972: 14–28); Kazhdan (1991). On Italikos as a teacher as well as on his oration in praise of Manuel, see Magdalino (1993: 333–35; 435–38).

<sup>73</sup> Gautier (1972: 282.1–2; 282.9–10).

<sup>74</sup> Gautier (1972: 282.23).

parts of the universe. For she [royal science] issues orders about actions to be carried out in the best possible manner, uses as her tools other powers, namely rhetoric and strategy, carries everything, so to speak, by attaching it to herself, and presides over all political [sciences and skills], just as the First Philosophy presides over all other sciences and skills and is called ‘the art of arts and the science of sciences’.<sup>75</sup>

It is interesting to find here a third example of a Byzantine author citing the definition ‘art of arts and science of sciences’ in order to place royal science within the divisions of knowledge. In this case, Italikos understands the ‘art of arts and science of sciences’ to be metaphysics, which Aristotle calls First Philosophy. The comparison here, therefore, is between metaphysics and royal science, the former presiding over the theoretical disciplines and the latter commanding as a master craft all other political sciences and crafts. Italikos’ description of royal science is richer in philosophical terminology than those of Blemmydes and Laskaris, and weaves together Platonic and Aristotelian notions. Thus, the Platonic concept of royal science is linked to the notion of an architectonic master craft, which Aristotle applies in the opening of the *Nicomachean Ethics* to political science.<sup>76</sup> Rhetoric and strategy appear as ancillary crafts to royal or political science both in Plato and Aristotle: the *Statesman* refers to rhetoric, strategy and justice as tools of royal science, while the *Nicomachean Ethics* speaks of rhetoric, strategy and economics as crafts subordinate to political science.<sup>77</sup>

The three descriptions of royal science by Michael Italikos, Nikephoros Blemmydes and Theodore II Laskaris share among themselves similarities with the sixth-century dialogue, which may be summarized as follows:

(1) The Byzantine authors view royal science as philosophical knowledge and a part of philosophy. Blemmydes comes closest to making a classificatory statement when naming royal science the apex of practical philosophy. All three authors assign royal science a supreme place in the hierarchy of knowledge: master craft, the apex of practical philosophy, the first science.

(2) All three authors explain the philosophical affinity of royal science through the definition of philosophy (or First Philosophy) as the art of arts

<sup>75</sup> Gautier (1972: 283.14–21): τὴν δέ γε βασιλικὴν ἐπιστήμην ὡς ἀρχιτεκτονικωτέραν ἐχρῆν ἐκμαθεῖν, πάντα ὑφ’ ἐαυτὴν ποιουμένην ἔθνη καὶ πόλεις καὶ μερίδας ὅλας τοῦ σύμπαντος διακυβερνῶσαν· αὕτη γὰρ περὶ τῶν πρακτικῶν ὡς ἄριστα διατάττεται καὶ χρᾶται ταῖς ἄλλαις δυνάμεσιν, ὡς ὄργανοις, ῥητορικῇ καὶ στρατηγικῇ, καὶ ὡσπερ εἰς ἐαυτὴν ἀναδησαμένη φέρει τὰ πάντα καὶ τῶν πολιτικῶν ἀπασῶν ὑπερκάθηται, καθάπερ ἡ πρώτη φιλοσοφία τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιστημῶν καὶ τεχνῶν, τέχνη λέγεται τεχνῶν καὶ ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστημῶν.

<sup>76</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 1094a26–28.

<sup>77</sup> Plato, *Statesman* 305c–d; Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 1094a27–b6.

and science of sciences. The superiority of royal science over other sciences and arts is one of the subjects of the sixth-century dialogue.

(3) Two of the three authors (Michael Italikos and Theodore Laskaris) assume that an imperial prince can learn royal science through instruction, whether by an emperor-father versed in it or by a philosopher capable of composing a discourse on kingship. The sixth-century dialogue mentions in a similar fashion that the statesman (πολιτικός) teaches political science to people receptive to it by nature.

The three areas of convergence with the sixth-century dialogue are significant enough to indicate intellectual continuity, but by themselves do not constitute sufficient evidence for concluding that there was *direct* dependence on the late antique work. No quotations from the dialogue *On Political Science* are identifiable, and the Byzantine reception of the work is known to have been unenthusiastic: one single mention of it in Photios' *Bibliotheca* and a single palimpsest manuscript in which the dialogue survives. Furthermore, the descriptions of royal science by the three Byzantine authors are brief and synoptic, omitting important points made in the sixth-century dialogue, such as the identification of political and royal science or the metaphysical role of political science. One is perhaps justified to envisage an intermediate source in the form of a simplified epitome or a philosophical chapter dealing with royal science, which would have been derived from the dialogue. An epitome like this could have been produced in the eleventh century, a time of revival of philosophical studies, when summaries of philosophical subjects were produced in the Psellian milieu.<sup>78</sup> This hypothesis finds support in the circumstance that the earliest middle Byzantine texts in which the notion of royal science reappears are the writings of Michael Psellos, including the *Historia Syntomos* and, as we will shortly see, also one of his orations. The suggested explanation of how the dialogue could have exerted indirect influence is only a plausible hypothesis. Further work and the edition of new philosophical texts may help to shed fresh light on the issue.

No matter what the path of transmission of the concept of royal science may have been, it is important to note that it gained wider currency in various non-philosophical contexts after the eleventh century. In Byzantine historiography and rhetoric βασιλική ἐπιστήμη referred to the body of knowledge which emperors acquired through instruction in order to be able to govern wisely and effectively. The *Historia syntomos* attributed to

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<sup>78</sup> One immediately thinks of the *philosophica* of Psellos or the philosophical work from the Psellian milieu preserved in Cod. Barocci 131 and edited by Pontikos (1992).

Psellos refers to the wise Roman king Numa being taught royal science by a muse. In a context closer to his own times, Psellos refers to the emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (1042–55) acquiring ‘royal science’ through the enlightened influence of a philosopher-advisor.<sup>79</sup> Anna Komnene’s *Alexiad* speaks of how the emperor Alexios I regarded his mother Anna Dalassene as a ‘leader in royal science’ and therefore confided in her so strongly as to entrust her with extraordinary powers.<sup>80</sup> In his *History* George Pachymeres notes that Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282–1328) mastered ‘royal science’ at an early age; therefore, the emperor initially rejected the recommendation of his advisors to disband the Byzantine fleet as a money-saving measure, although in the end this unwise decision was made.<sup>81</sup> The Platonic concept thus became applied to the characterization of educated emperors in Byzantine literature and historiography.

### Conclusion

This investigation has traced the Byzantine understanding of the place and nature of politics in the classification of philosophy. Of special interest has been the question of whether and how political philosophy as described in the classifications corresponded to contemporary politics. It is beyond doubt that the *divisiones philosophiae* conceived of political philosophy as an autonomous discipline. The Aristotelian tripartite division of practical philosophy, with politics as one of its legitimately constituted fields, was the common view during the Greek Middle Ages. The alternative Neoplatonic division of practical philosophy into two branches was generally not followed, although awareness of it is evidenced in the writings of Byzantine philosophers (Psellos especially, and to a lesser extent Blemmydes and Metochites).

The description of political philosophy in the *divisiones philosophiae* is usually brief, based on school tradition leading back to late antiquity, and articulated through ancient politico-philosophical terminology. The resultant academic and classicizing perspective is sometimes accompanied by a rarer view which takes imperial politics into consideration. The latter view also availed itself of ancient philosophical concepts, both Platonic and Aristotelian. Some of the classifications describe political philosophy as a field concerned with the activity of the statesman who brings good order and jus-

<sup>79</sup> Dennis (1994: 434–35) (*Or.* 17). The context is Psellos’ panegyric of his teacher John Mauropous, Metropolitan of Euchaita, who is said to have been an advisor to the emperor.

<sup>80</sup> 3.7.5.5–8, esp. 7–8: ὡς ἐξάρχῳ βασιλικῆς ἐπιστήμης ταύτη προσεῖχε τὸν νοῦν.

<sup>81</sup> Failler (1984–99: vol. III, 83.9–12).

tice to the πόλις or πόλεις. This view reflects a common top-down model of social theorizing and political ordering in Byzantium. The association of royal science with political philosophy served to connect political theory and social reality. Originally discussed in Plato's dialogue the *Statesman* (from where the very notion of the statesman derives) as the expert craft of governing, and elaborated later by the Neoplatonists, the concept referred in Byzantium to the historically specific knowledge of imperial rule. The notion of royal science worked as a bridge linking different periods and spheres: a bridge from antiquity to Byzantium, from philosophy to politics, and from political philosophy as a discipline to the advisory works on the ideal emperor and imperial governance.

Traditionally, historians of philosophy have observed the relatively low level of interest in political philosophy in Byzantium in comparison with logic, ethics and the subjects of theoretical philosophy. From the point of view of commentaries on ancient philosophy and scholastic texts, this observation is justified. Yet when account is taken of the taxonomic ordering of political philosophy, the view of royal science advocated by some Byzantine philosophers after the eleventh century opens the door of philosophy to the large, diverse and rich body of kingship literature. The word 'literature' is used intentionally, because the bulk of the works in question is rhetorical by genre and discourse (mirrors of princes, orations, works critical of emperors, etc.). To what extent and which works of this literature may be deemed philosophical in the context of the history of Byzantine philosophy are questions in need of further study. What is apparent is that the authors who used the notion of royal science include some of the most original Byzantine political thinkers, such as Michael Psellos, Theodore II Laskaris and George Pachymeres, who were philosophers with wide-ranging interests. It is likely that they would have considered kingship literature to belong to the field of political philosophy.

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# Michael of Ephesus and the philosophy of living things (*In De partibus animalium*, 22.25–23.9)

GEORGE ARABATZIS

## *Introduction*

As in other scientific disciplines, for biological knowledge the Byzantines depended largely on ancient Greek science, especially of the Hellenistic period. Under the appellation ‘biology’, we should understand those sciences which had to do with medicine, pharmacology, veterinary medicine, zoology, and botany.<sup>1</sup> As regards theories about living things (animals and plants), Byzantium carried on a tradition that synthesized elements from ancient Greek philosophy and the Christian religion (especially the philosophy of the Church Fathers). The crucial point here is the introduction by Christianity of the theory of the historical creation of the world, from its initial elements to the formation of humans, who were seen as the crown of the universe. In a rural civilization like Byzantium, proximity to the world of plants and animals produced popular literary works that played with the idea of human primacy over all other living beings, primarily animals, often through prosopopoeia.<sup>2</sup> Since Greco-Roman times, Aristotelian reflection on the conditions of knowledge of biological phenomena, in other words Aristotle’s biological epistemology, had fallen into oblivion;<sup>3</sup> what remained from his contribution to biology was the collection of natural data and curiosities that offered, together with other sources, material for late ancient compilations. We have to wait for the eleventh–twelfth centuries in order to see, in the person of Michael of Ephesus, a commentator on Aristotle’s philosophy of biology, and this paper will focus on him. Michael of Ephesus is an obscure writer; not much is known about his life, though there is no doubt that he is the author of a corpus of Aristotelian commentaries that took its final form in the eleventh–twelfth centuries.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For related bibliography, see Hunger (1978, section III/9); Vogel (1967: 264–305; 452–70); see also Théodoridès (1977).

<sup>2</sup> Among these animal fables were the *Physiologus*, the *Pulologus* etc. See Krumbacher (1897: section 2.3).

<sup>3</sup> Lennox (1994: 7–24).

<sup>4</sup> Michael of Ephesus is now thought to be a writer of the twelfth century, one of the circle of the Byzantine princess Anna Komnene’s scholiasts of Aristotle, if we accept the position

*Michael of Ephesus' praise of the study of animals and plants*

In *Parts of Animals* I, there is a passage that Jaeger considered as a kind of encomium written by Aristotle in order to praise the empirical scientific method, and a work quite in opposition to the stance of Aristotle's idealistic youth when he was greatly influenced by the dialectics of his master Plato. It is, Jaeger says, almost a confession about a new ideal of science, characteristic of his philosophical evolution.<sup>5</sup> Jaeger's overall position about Aristotle's progress in philosophy has been often criticized<sup>6</sup> but the encomiastic passage is still considered emblematic of Aristotle's progress in philosophy and/or his philosophical convictions.<sup>7</sup> The passage<sup>8</sup> was com-

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of Robert Browning (1962: 1–12). See also Frankopan (2009). For more information on Michael of Ephesus, see Arabatzis (2006: 17–36).

<sup>5</sup> See Jaeger (1934: 337). See Chroust (1963: 33), who refers to the passage as an 'autobiographical sketch'.

<sup>6</sup> See Chroust (1963); Düring (1961: 284); Ross (1975: 8; 13); Pellegrin (1990: 65).

<sup>7</sup> See Shields (2007: 15): 'This passage ... provides a window into Aristotle's emotively charged intellectual character'; and Pellegrin (1995: 25): it is 'un éloge de la biologie et des considerations méthodiques sur l'étude des parties des animaux'.

<sup>8</sup> The text is as follows: 'Of substances constituted by nature some are ungenerated, imperishable, and eternal, while others are subject to generation and decay. The former are excellent and divine, but less accessible to knowledge. The evidence that might throw light on them, and on the problems which we long to solve respecting them, is furnished but scantily by sensation; whereas respecting perishable plants and animals we have abundant information, living as we do in their midst, and ample data may be collected concerning all their various kinds, if we only are willing to take sufficient pains. Both departments, however, have their special charm. The scanty conceptions to which we can attain of celestial things give us, from their excellence, more pleasure than all our knowledge of the world in which we live; just as a half glimpse of persons that we love is more delightful than an accurate view of other things, whatever their number and dimensions. On the other hand, in certitude and in completeness our knowledge of terrestrial things has the advantage. Moreover, their greater nearness and affinity to us balances somewhat the loftier interest of the heavenly things that are the objects of the higher philosophy. Having already treated of the celestial world, as far as our conjectures could reach, we proceed to treat of animals, without omitting, to the best of our ability, any member of the kingdom, however ignoble. For if some have no graces to charm the sense, yet nature, which fashioned them, gives amazing pleasure in their study to all who can trace links of causation, and are inclined to philosophy. Indeed, it would be strange if mimic representations of them were attractive, because they disclose the mimetic skill of the painter or sculptor, and the original realities themselves were not more interesting, to all at any rate who have eyes to discern the causes. We therefore must not recoil with childish aversion from the examination of the humbler animals. Every realm of nature is marvellous: and as Heraclitus, when the strangers who came to visit him found him warming himself at the furnace in the kitchen and hesitated to go in, is reported to have bidden them not to be afraid to enter, as even in that kitchen divinities were present, so we should venture on the study of every kind of animal without distaste; for each and all will reveal to us something natural and something beautiful. Ab-

mented on by Michael of Ephesus and I will try to analyze what the Byzantine commentator saw in the Aristotelian exhortation to study living things. His commentary *in extenso* is as follows:

(a) ... there are things that need a brief survey, so that nothing should be left unexamined. Then, this is said about ‘the exchange as to the philosophy of divine matters’; as if the animals and the plants were saying to us: ‘men, although the heavenly bodies are noble and most divine, there are still things of sublimity [θαυμάσια] about us so that you should take us into account [make a rational inquiry about us] and do not despise us in every respect’. ‘Not having graces charming the senses’, he [sc. Aristotle] said to be the most disgusting and aversion-provoking animals such as the snail and many others. And ‘not to provoke childish aversion’ means that we should not avoid like children those animals that are not pleasant to the eye but approach them for the sublimity [θαυμάσιον] that there is in them.

(b) The story about Heraclitus is the following: Heraclitus of Ephesus was sitting inside the ἰπνός (and ἰπνός means the bread oven in a house where we bake the bread and thus we speak about ‘ipnites bread’); sitting then in the ἰπνός and feeling hot he asked the strangers who came to see him to enter; ‘even here, he said, there are gods’. Because, the phrase ‘all is full of gods’ is a Heraclitean doctrine. And because in the works of nature there is above all the final cause, and everything is or becomes because of the final cause; and as finality, he [sc. Aristotle] considered the realm of the good (because everything that is to become is becoming because of something that is taken as its good); and because it is like that, it is imperative that we investigate it.

(c) If someone thinks of the theory of organic parts of which the animals consist as being ignoble [ἄτιμον], for not producing pleasure to our senses, he must think the same concerning himself; for, what pleasure can the menses of women produce, or the foetal membranes that cover the baby when it comes out of its mother’s womb, or the flesh, nerves and similar stuff of which a man consists? Significant of that is the phrase ‘one cannot see without much repugnance that of which a human being consists’; we name repugnance the sorrow that is produced to the senses or, as we might say, the disgust.<sup>9</sup>

The passage has been divided into three sections:

(a) In this section we form a general idea about the specificity of the ‘sciences’ of living things as Michael sees it: the scholiast personifies the animals and plants so that they appear to ask for the attention of all humans—

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sence of haphazard and conduciveness of everything to an end are to be found in nature’s works in the highest degree, and the end for which those works are put together and produced is a form of the beautiful. If any person thinks the examination of the rest of the animal kingdom an unworthy task, he must hold in like disesteem the study of man. For no one can look at the elements of the human frame—blood, flesh, bones, vessels, and the like—without much repugnance.’ (*Parts of Animals* 1.5, 644b22–645a31. Trans. W. Ogle in Barnes [1984]. This is the English translation of Aristotle’s encomium of biology to which I will refer throughout the present article).

<sup>9</sup> *In De part. an.* 22.25–23.9. The translation of Michael’s texts is mine unless otherwise indicated.

not exclusively the scientists—besides the attention devoted to the noble things in heaven; Michael of Ephesus is not interested here either in the scientist or in the cultured man as he is in the initial passage of his commentary (*In De part. an.* 1.3–2.10), making thus a shift from epistemology to the ontological structure of the knowing subject. Michael insists also on the need to transcend, in paying attention to living things, the feelings of possible disgust that stem from a childish aversion from the less appealing aspects of nature.

(b) Michael refers to the well-known testimony of Aristotle about Heraclitus (to which Michael annexes the formula ‘all is full of gods’). Michael’s underscoring of the idea of the final cause is followed by a demand for further analysis (‘it is imperative that we investigate it’) which leads to the third section of the passage.

(c) In this last section we witness the full development of Michael’s thesis concerning the primacy of the good of each living thing as its final cause and the rejection of the sentiment of aversion in the study of animals; the feeling of repugnance in science is supposed to become more comprehensible with the use of the examples of human anatomy and birth that cause disgust.

The above three parts can be summed up in the following three propositions:

- (a1) Plants and animals ask for the attention of humans;
- (b1) ‘Philosophy’<sup>10</sup> states that every part of the world has its own share of sublimity;
- (c1) Our attention should be turned towards organic material (animals and plants) notwithstanding the aversion that this may provoke.

Two points mark a difference between Michael of Ephesus and Aristotle and deserve further analysis: (1) the personification of animals and plants, which is an innovation of Michael’s in relation to Aristotle’s text; and (2) the idea that no natural pleasure supports the scientific interest for living things.

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<sup>10</sup> On what ‘philosophy’ meant precisely for Michael we are unable to pronounce in a decisive and conclusive manner. Later, we shall discuss some of the evidence.

*The 'exchange' between divine philosophy and  
natural science*

For Aristotle the praise of natural science is understood within the limits of an 'exchange' (ἀντικαταλλάττεσθαι) with divine philosophy. This happens because, regarding living things, as he says, 'their greater nearness and affinity to us balances [exchanges] somewhat the loftier interest of the heavenly things that are the objects of the higher philosophy ...'. According to I. Düring, Michael's interpretation is quite divergent from Aristotle's position; the Stagirite, says Düring, supports a metaphysical worldview that relates the knowledge of living things to the knowledge of the celestial world.<sup>11</sup> To reinforce his position and make the meaning of the term 'exchange' more comprehensible, Düring presents two more uses of the notion in Aristotle. The first has to do with communication in love relations: 'But those who exchange not pleasure but utility in their love are both less truly friends and less constant' (*Eth. Nic.* VIII 4, 1157a12, trans. W. D. Ross, revised by J. O. Urmson). It is a formula that alludes, as Düring says, to the following passage from the Platonic *Phaedo*: 'This is not the right way to purchase virtue, by exchanging pleasures for pleasures, and pains for pains, and fear for fear, and greater for less, as if they were coins, but the only right coinage, for which all those things must be exchanged and by means of and with which all these things are to be bought and sold, is in fact wisdom' (*Phaedo* 69a, trans. H. N. Fowler). The second use by Aristotle of the 'exchange'-notion that Düring mentions is about necessity in the moral sphere: 'for "necessary" does not apply to everything but only to externals; for instance, whenever a man receives some damage by way of alternative [sc. exchange] to some other greater, when compelled by circumstances' (*Magna Moralia* I 15, 1188b19–20, trans. S. G. Stock).<sup>12</sup> Pleasure and necessity thus form the essential meaning of 'exchange'.

The core of Düring's criticism of Michael's reading of the Aristotelian encomium of natural science is that the Byzantine commentator does not understand the mechanism of the 'exchange' as Aristotle had conceived of it. The truth is that even between modern scholars there is a difference of opinion about the part this mechanism plays. For J.-M. Le Blond, the 'exchange'-notion suggests that Aristotle's general views about astrobiology

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<sup>11</sup> Düring (1943:120): 'The sense is thus that the study of the animal nature offers in exchange a certain knowledge of heavenly things—a conception worthy of the master-metaphysician Aristotle.'

<sup>12</sup> See Düring (1943: 120).



and theology are valid even in this first book of the *Parts of Animals* and have not been developed towards empiricism as Jaeger believed to be the case; thus, in Aristotle we witness the ancient cosmological view that was based on the dichotomy between the noble celestial world and the less valued terrestrial one. Consequently, if we follow the evolutionist position of Jaeger—as Le Blond does—this first book does not belong to the final scientific phase of Aristotle’s philosophical activity.<sup>13</sup> For Düring, on the other hand, the ‘exchange’-notion shows the permanent validity of a first philosophy or a philosophy of first principles in Aristotle’s work independent of his scientific research.

Does Michael’s reference to the ‘noble and most divine heavenly bodies’ mean that he also defends an astrobiological and theological (in the Aristotelian sense) worldview and, if so, is this a prelude to natural science or an ultimate conviction that transcends natural science? In speaking about nobility and divinity in the celestial sphere, Michael says in a passage from his commentary on the *Generation of Animals* that these are determined according to ‘immobility’;<sup>14</sup> whereas in a passage from his *In De motu animalium*, it is ‘priority’ that decides about the nobility and divinity.<sup>15</sup> Is he, then, in his view of scientific nobility as measured by immobility and priority, orientated towards speculative philosophy more than towards empirical research and to what extent is he giving in to Platonism in opposition

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<sup>13</sup> J.-M. Le Blond (1945: 182–83): ‘Dans ce chapitre, comme le souligne W. Jaeger, Aristote semble considérer les astres et les sphères célestes d’un point de vue beaucoup plus positif, qui d’ailleurs se manifestait dans le traité *du Ciel*, à côté des considérations biologiques et théologiques. Dans cette perspective, le mouvement des astres est envisagé d’un point de vue mécaniste et matérialiste .... Jaeger semble avoir raison de supposer que cette perspective mécaniste et matérialiste est postérieure aux vues sur l’astrobiologie et la théologie sidérale. Nous croyons cependant que cette dernière perspective n’a jamais été écartée totalement. – En tout cas, le traité sur les *Parties des Animaux* ne fait allusion qu’à celle-ci; on peut trouver là une raison de surcroît pour refuser à ce traité une date très tardive.’

<sup>14</sup> ‘The most noble sphere is the unmoved one, then the Cronian and so forth’ (*In De gen. an.* 86.26–27).

<sup>15</sup> ‘Saying that the first mover always moves, he [sc. Aristotle] adds, “for the eternally noble and the primarily and truly good, and not just occasionally good”, like our goods (for these are not always goods), “is too divine and precious to have anything prior to it”, i.e. that it is so divine that nothing is prior in worth to it; for such a thing is more precious [τιμωτέρον] than anything’ (*In De motu an.* 114.11–15, trans. Anthony Preus). Michael’s idea of a moving principle (see *In De motu an.* 110.14–16) is, according to Martha C. Nussbaum, a real contribution. See below, n. 41.

to Aristotelianism as Jaeger saw it, i.e. scientific empiricism? Düring does not believe that Michael, in interpreting the 'exchange'-notion, thinks as a metaphysician, a quality that he reserves solely for Aristotle. What, then, is the precise nature of Michael's interpretation?

Another way to deal with the problem would be the following: the opposition between celestial and terrestrial is transcended in Aristotle by the establishment of different autonomous sciences that allows the scientific study of the material world; I have argued elsewhere that Michael defends precisely that view of science.<sup>16</sup> Yet, his image of the natural world is different from Aristotle's and the example of animals and plants appealing to the attention of humans is an indication of this fact.

In sum, the two corresponding views that can be gathered from the passages of Aristotle and Michael of Ephesus are the following:

(1) For Aristotle, the difference in value between the celestial and the terrestrial world is bridged by the instauration of autonomous sciences and the pleasure that the scientist can draw from the study of the natural world after overcoming some possible aversion.

(2) For Michael of Ephesus, living things testify to their sublimity as objects of attention; there is no appeal to natural pleasure but only a warning against aversion as an epistemological obstacle and a reminder of the likeness between the organic parts of humans and other living things.

Thus, the surface structure of Michael's argument may be phrased as follows: (a2) animals and plants ask for the attention of humans; (b2) although the celestial world is noble, living things such as animals and plants possess their own sublimity; (c2) humans, who are part of the material world, should study animals and plants.

(c2) needs further clarification in order to understand Michael's position in relation to the modern readings of Aristotle. I will try to show next that Michael's interpretation of Aristotle's text constitutes an original approach.

### *Beliefs, perceptions and living things*

Let us now look more carefully at the appeal of the plants and animals to humans and ask whether we can distinguish here some kind of scepticism toward general human reasoning (scepticism played a role in the Christian tradition as a challenge to the overestimation of human reason). The relativistic stand concerning the perception of the value of the different animal

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<sup>16</sup> See Arabatzis (2009).

species is a characteristic of scepticism and constitutes one of the so-called sceptical modes. The idea of human excellence among the animal beings that is presented by the dogmatic argument goes as follows: if  $x$  appears  $F$  to animals of kind  $K$ , then  $x$  is  $F$  provided that  $K$  is the human kind. This position is subject to a sceptical suspension of judgment through the following reasoning:  $x$  appears  $F$  to animals of kind  $K$  and  $x$  appears  $F^*$  to animals of kind  $K^*$ —but we have no reason to prefer  $K$  to  $K^*$ . For the Sceptics, there is a primacy of perception in comparison to beliefs and thus: if  $x$  appears  $F$  to sense  $S$  and  $x$  appears  $F^*$  to sense  $S^*$ , there is no way to establish a hierarchy of senses or otherwise prefer  $S$  to  $S^*$ .<sup>17</sup>

The sceptical argument leads to a distinction underscored by Richard Sorabji between beliefs and perceptions in the animal world that has to do with the two general disciplines dealing with the epistemology of the science of animals and plants: the philosophy of mind and morals. Aristotle is willing, says Sorabji, to grant perception to animals but not the formation of beliefs that for him is an exclusive faculty of the human beings. Aristotle's refusal to attribute belief and reason to animals is emphatic in the *De anima* (III 3, 428a18–24).<sup>18</sup> As we have seen in the appeal of the animals and plants, these appear in Michael of Ephesus to hold beliefs—the belief in their own, even relative, value—a position quite contrary to Aristotle's views; yet, animals and plants are in need of human perception in order for their value to be formally recognized. A possible explanation of the reason for this difference between Aristotle and Michael of Ephesus would be that the animals' and plants' appeal is in the mode of 'as if', owing, perhaps, to medieval perceptions of the animals' and plants' position in the world as manifestations of godly nobility. So the whole question may be reducible to different cultural attitudes. It has been said that during the Middle Ages there was a general appeal to the testimony of creatures in order to edify the faithful and correct the morals; it was in fact a part of the technique of sermons.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, a text like *Physiologus*, written in Alexandria in the third century AD, condenses the symbolic signification of every animal in such a way that zoological knowledge helps the understanding of the meaning of the Bible. The natural characteristics of the animals thus constituted an allegory of the meaning of Creation.<sup>20</sup> In Christian discourse, 'complex

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<sup>17</sup> See Annas and Barnes (1985: 24–25; 39; 52; 68).

<sup>18</sup> See Sorabji (1993: 37).

<sup>19</sup> Steel (1999: 11–30).

<sup>20</sup> Steel (1999: 12–13).

thoughts about soul and body, reason and emotion, salvation and damnation were conveyed by means of animal symbols and metaphors'.<sup>21</sup> Yet, neither were animal fables unknown to Ancient Greek culture<sup>22</sup> nor did animals simply play a higher role in Christian discourse, where they were often called to represent the 'bestial other'.<sup>23</sup> This last aspect was not unfamiliar in Byzantine culture:<sup>24</sup> the dialectic of the humble and the noble regarding animals is thus present in the pagan as well as in the Christian world.

We supposed that the plea of the animals and plants is expressed in the mode of 'as if', but the 'as if' mode as a literary technique does not exhaust all the possibilities of the valuation of living things, and in any case we do not have in Michael a literary use, but a philosophical one.<sup>25</sup> The question of the value of animals (and plants) in Michael of Ephesus calls for further study of the relevant question in Aristotle. For the latter, such a use of the 'as if' mode may only be imaginary, and in that he does not stand alone. In both modern and ancient philosophy, there are ethical systems that have been founded on the belief that humans are superior to animals because of their possession of language that reflects the possession of rationality. Symbolic communication states the presence of desires and interests that are features proper to humans. The modern trend of ethical 'contractualism' supports the thesis that one has to be 'like' a human being or 'rational agent' in order to possess moral rights. In this way, 'contractualism' radicalizes the οἰκείωσις (likeness) theory that was the cornerstone of Stoic ideas about animals and, more precisely, of their undervaluation. The criterion of rationality is thus likeness to what a human being is.<sup>26</sup> The rejection of 'con-

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<sup>21</sup> Gilhus (2006: 263).

<sup>22</sup> For speaking animals in Ancient Greek culture and the Bible, compare *Iliad* 19.408–17 and Numbers 22:28–30.

<sup>23</sup> Gilhus (2006: 263).

<sup>24</sup> In fact, animals did not possess less of an ambiguous status in Byzantine culture. We witness this ambiguity in various epigrams, such as the following: 'And you also silence the bold passions, | when nature turning away from what is right | slips into beastly monstrosities' (Arsenius); and in another version: 'And he puts the animal passions to silence, | when nature deviating from what is seemly | falls into beastly monstrosities' (Anonymus); the common source of the above two is: 'And then our thoughts come to rest, which are like animals, | when nature deviating from what is seemly | falls into hybrid forms of bestiality' (George Pisides); see Lauxtermann (2003: 205).

<sup>25</sup> The 'as if' has been the subject of a particular philosophy, Hans Vaihinger's *Philosophie des Als Ob* (1911), see Vaihinger (2007). Vaihinger's idea is that every general term is a fiction, pragmatic as to its objective, and a sort of regulated error (not a hypothesis) destined to produce local truths. Michael of Ephesus' use of the 'as if' is also made, as we shall see, in the sense of an extension of categorial thought.

<sup>26</sup> See Sorabji (1993: 8).

tractualism' and of the Stoic position does not imply the recognition of the value of animals, as we can see in Kant, for whom the act of harming animals is unacceptable not *per se* as a moral contradiction, but because it may imply some harm to humans.<sup>27</sup> In Aristotle, the theory of the difference between humans and animals is stated in *Historia animalium* 588a20–24 and is summed up in the 'man alone of animals' formula, i.e. the denial of reason to all other animals except humans (see *Eth. Nic.* 1098a3–4; *Metaph.* I, 980b28; *Pol.* 1332b5–6; *Eth. Eud.* 1224a26–27). In *Parts of Animals* 641b8–9, Aristotle says that animals have locomotion, but only humans possess intellect. Besides this clear-cut distinction, a theory of gradation or continuity from animals to human beings (*scala naturae*) appears in Aristotle's *Historia animalium* 588b15ff. and in *Parts of Animals* 681a12–15, which does not abolish the difference between humans and animals concerning friendship (*Eth. Eud.* 1236b1–6), hope (*De part. an.* 669a20–22), and happiness (*Eth. Nic.* 1178b21–28). These views exercised a major influence upon post-Aristotelian animal philosophy when the Stoics tried to moralize Aristotle's natural science. There is only one passage in Aristotle where his views are qualified. In the seventh chapter of the *De motu animalium*, Aristotle came as close as possible to crediting animals with rationality, a position that has created doubts as to the genuineness of the passage, since it seems at odds with his position elsewhere.<sup>28</sup> On the basis of syllogistic thinking in humans, Aristotle noted that animals are impelled to movement and action by a similar desire, which comes about through sensation or imagination *and* thought (see 701a33–36). Michael, in commenting on the *De motu animalium*, states that '[i]t is the impulsive [ὀρμητική] and intentional [ὀρεκτική] power of the soul according to which animals move'.<sup>29</sup> So it is obvious that Michael refuses reason to animals and embraces completely the 'man alone of animals' formula. Yet, although he associates himself with the dominant position of Aristotle, his approach to the study of living things is quite different.

Michael turns upside down Aristotle's order of priority as to beliefs and perceptions so that animals and plants appear to have beliefs, but not suit-

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<sup>27</sup> Newmyer (2006: 15–16).

<sup>28</sup> Newmyer (2006: 23). Pellegrin (1995: 17) notes that for Aristotle 'l'animal, tout d'abord, est sujet'; yet, Aristotle refuses the (pre-Socratic) idea of a cosmic order put in place through narration because for him the world is constantly identical to itself and also, consequently, he would admit of no creationism. This latter is the cultural setting in which Michael of Ephesus operates and the fiction of 'as if' is what he proposes.

<sup>29</sup> In *De motu an.* 116.8–9, in Preus (1981: 53).

able perceptions. Since Michael considers the animal beliefs in the mode of ‘as if’, even in such a way as to attribute pure reasoning to human perception, his commentary is to be placed in a certain Peripatetic tradition that moves away from the Stagirite’s hierarchy of beliefs and perceptions. Thus, Theophrastus appears in Porphyry saying that animals use reasoning (but not with an argument in the ‘as if’ mode) (*De abst.* 3.25); and his successor, Strato, is of the opinion, as are some later Platonists like Damascius, that perception involves thinking, which (therefore) belongs to all animals (fr. 112 Wehrli from Plutarch, *De soll. an.* 961A). From the second century AD comes another ‘unorthodox’ statement by the Aristotelian Aristocles of Messene who argued that human perception involves belief (δόξα) (fr. 4.23–24 Chiesara).<sup>30</sup> Aristotle would have strongly opposed this position, i.e. the idea that perceiving involves cognizing (γνώριζειν).

Yet, Michael’s extension of the capacity for belief to plants makes his possible inclusion among the exponents of these later Peripatetic ideas problematic. By making plants as well as animals express opinions, does he mean to say that plants also hold beliefs? I think that a different meaning must be given to the idea that animals and plants express an apology of the importance of living things. Referring to an analysis that I have made of Michael’s commentary on *Parts of Animals* I, 1.3–2.10<sup>31</sup> as to the nature of his epistemology, I would say that the voice of the animals is none other than the appeal of intentionality; in other words, the animals and plants that are thought to hold beliefs represent nothing other than intentional objects and so the ‘as if’ mode refers to the idea of intentionality. In this case, the ‘existence commitment’ of the proposition is in no way necessary for the intentional act. The situation is different with regard to the ‘truth commitment’ of the intentional proposition. More precisely, the intentional character of the phrase ‘animals and plants say: animals and plants are worthy of scientific interest’, although not ‘existentially committed’—i.e. not real (animals and plants do not speak)—does not alter the ‘truth commitment’ of the basic proposition ‘animals and plants are worthy of scientific interest’. By using the ‘as if’ mode, Michael advances a double idea of common intentionality and propositional truth that I shall discuss later.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See Sorabji (1993: 45–47). The editor of Aristocles, M. L. Chiesara, resists Sorabji’s idea (ibid. 46) that Aristocles’ argument is ‘unorthodox’ regarding Aristotelianism (see Chiesara 2001: 133–34).

<sup>31</sup> See Arabatzis (2006: 318–22) and (2009: 179–84).

<sup>32</sup> In modern thought, there is a double approach as to the relations of intentionality with propositional truth. First, there is the heritage of the Austrian school, the ‘rigorous’ pheno-

*The Heraclitus example and the ‘incarnation predicament’*

The reference to Heraclitus constitutes the second step in Michael’s argument. Yet, right from the start, we have to face a difficulty: Michael annexes to the Aristotelian testimony about Heraclitus a second phrase of supposedly Heraclitean origin, the proposition ‘all is full of gods’. In reality, this phrase belongs to Thales as Aristotle himself states in a critical manner in his *De anima*.<sup>33</sup> Plato mentions the same phrase without attributing it to Thales,<sup>34</sup> so that one may suppose that Michael is drawing here on Plato rather than Aristotle. On the other hand, Michael is familiar with the *De anima*,<sup>35</sup> so the attribution of Thales’ saying to Heraclitus may be thought to be an error due either to the absence of the original text and its quotation from memory or to the use of a faulty compilation. To be more exact, Michael does not say that

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menology and analytic philosophy (J. P. Searle) and, second, a less rigorous phenomenological tendency that makes a loose use of the notion of ‘intentionality’. See Mulligan (2003).

<sup>33</sup> The Aristotelian passage referring to ‘all is full of gods’ is as follows: ‘Certain thinkers say that soul is intermingled in the whole universe, and it is perhaps for that reason that Thales came to the opinion that all things are full of gods. This presents some difficulties: why does the soul when it resides in air or fire not form an animal, while it does so when it resides in mixtures of the elements, and that although it is held to be of higher quality when contained in the former? (One might add the question, why the soul in air is maintained to be higher and more immortal than that in animals.) Both possible ways of replying to the former question lead to absurdity or paradox; for it is beyond paradox to say that fire or air is an animal, and it is absurd to refuse the name of animal to what has soul in it. The opinion that the elements have soul in them seems to have arisen from the doctrine that a whole must be homogeneous with its parts. If it is true that animals become animate by drawing into themselves a portion of what surrounds them, the partisans of this view are bound to say that the soul too is homogeneous with its parts. If the air sucked in is homogeneous, but soul heterogeneous, clearly while some part of soul exist in the inbreathed air, some other part will not. The soul must either be homogeneous, or such that there are some parts of the whole in which it is not to be found. From what has been said it is now clear that knowing as an attribute of soul cannot be explained by soul’s being composed of the elements, and that it is neither sound nor true to speak of soul as moved’ (*De anima* I 411a7–26, trans. J. A. Smith).

<sup>34</sup> Plato’s text is as follows: ‘Concerning all the stars and the moon, and concerning the years and months and all seasons, what other account shall we give than this very same,—namely, that, inasmuch as it has been shown that they are all caused by one or more souls, which are good also with all goodness, we shall declare these souls to be gods, whether it be that they order the whole heaven by residing in bodies, as living creatures, or whatever the mode and method? Is there any man that agrees with this view who will stand hearing it denied that “all things are full of gods”?’ (*Laws* X 899b, trans. R. G. Bury). See also *Epinomis* 991d.

<sup>35</sup> Michael is said to have commented on the *De anima* (see Arabatzis 2006: 1) and refers to it in his *In De part. an.*

the phrase is by Heraclitus but that it is a Heraclitean doctrine (δόγμα). Michael, possibly, draws here from Diogenes Laertius who says that ‘It seemed [ἐδόκει] to him [sc. Heraclitus] ... that all things are full of souls and demons’ (7.7–11 Marcovich = DK 22A 1.34–35).<sup>36</sup> This forces us to look closer at the reasons that may have made him compare the proposition that ‘even here, there are gods’ to ‘all is full of gods’. It is obvious from what is said before that Michael values the science of living things, for which the Heraclitean affirmation is evidence, in relation to soul, divinity and nature. Aristotle himself produces another version of the phrase ‘all is full of gods’ by writing ‘all is full of soul’.<sup>37</sup> In general, as to the distinction between a Platonic and an Aristotelian approach to the phrase, Michael stands closer to the positive position of Plato than to the critical one by Aristotle. Should we speak here of *panpsychism* or *pantheism*, as is usually maintained? G. S. Kirk in commenting on the phrase proposes the term ‘hylozoism’ on the condition that this applies to three different ideas: (a) the inference (conscious or not) that all things are in some way living things; (b) the conviction that the cosmos is permeated with life and that those of its parts which seem lifeless are in fact living; and (c) the tendency to face the world as a totality, whatever its constitution may be, i.e. as one living organism.<sup>38</sup> The philosophical qualification of Michael’s approach is the problem stemming from the fact that the phrase ‘all is full of gods’ is linked to the Heraclitean ‘even here there are gods’.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See Arabatzis (2010: 387).

<sup>37</sup> *De gen. an.* III 762a21.

<sup>38</sup> G. S. Kirk in Kirk, Raven & Schofield (1983: 109).

<sup>39</sup> As to the meaning of the Heraclitus story, it has been proposed that it is an ironic expression used by Heraclitus against Hesiod or Pythagoras (see Robertson 1938: 10). Another scholar, L. Robert, refutes the irony hypothesis in order to point at what is most evident: the presence of the Heraclitean fire in the furnace that explains the presence of the divine (Robert 1965–66: 61–73). A very particular interpretation is that of Martin Heidegger (1978: 234) who relates the passage with the phrase ‘ethos is the demon to human’ (ἦθος ἀνθρώπων δαίμων: DK 22B 119). According to him, the term ‘ethos’ does not refer to a moral stand but to the residence of humans that is, as long as they are humans, the proximity to god. More precisely, the affirmation that ‘even here, there are gods’ signifies a critique of everyday life. Heraclitus’ visitors expect to see a ‘philosopher philosophizing’, but what they come up with is the disappointing image of a poor man who lives beside an oven because he feels cold. Heraclitus senses their disappointment and in order to prevent them from going away (because visitors like them if displeased leave immediately) says to them that ‘even here, there are gods’; the ‘here’ means the oven, but also the ‘home’ of the philosopher. This phrase, says Heidegger, considers the residence of the philosopher (‘ethos’) from a new angle: even in the shadow of the habitual we sense the gods. See also Gregoric



The intentionality theory mentioned before helps the comprehension of Michael's approach: in the Heraclitus example we see an opposition formed by the idea of a social or common intentionality based on perception that is overcome by a propositional intentionality: the common intentionality is that of the visitors, the propositional one is that of the saying. The laymen's perception of Heraclitus sitting beside the bread oven is characterized by an evaluation on the basis of pleasure and pain (the outcome of the visit being the possible satisfaction or displeasure of the visitors). Michael feels the need to insist upon the fact that we are talking about an oven (ἰπνός) and thus reinforces the sense of opposition between the divine nobility contained and the humble container. The problem is to understand exactly what, for Michael, are the poles of the opposition in the Heraclitean paradigm. In a passage from his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the intellect and the science that are opposed to the animal condition (appetites and sensations) appear in Michael as stages in the ascent toward the divine and the transcendental in Neoplatonic, but also Christian terminology (cf. the expression 'immaculate light' = τὸ φῶς τὸ ἄχραντον):<sup>40</sup>

*... escaping from the appetites of every kind and the consecutive sensations that deceive the intellect and introducing fantasies as introducing forming and dividing principles and something like an unsolvable multiplicity, rejecting the opinions as multiple and in themselves and for the other things, and mixed to the senses and the imagination (because every opinion acts together with irrational sensation and imagination), returning to science and intellect, and after that to the life of intellect and the simple intuition, and in the process receiving the illumination from the divine and filling inside with the immaculate light. What is the good by which the divine rewards those who engage themselves in the intellect that is relative to it?*<sup>41</sup>

Assuming that Michael is a Christian Platonist (in the sense of adhering to the views expressed in the above terminology), the phrases 'even here, there are gods' and 'all is full of gods' may be taken as an illustration of an 'Incarnation Predicament' (henceforth IP). By this last term I refer to the apology of the material or empirical world surrounding us made by the Christians, who see it as the product of the Creation, thus fighting against Manichaean dualism, which understands the world as the outcome of the fall and the reign of evil. The passage we are studying here thus possibly

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(2001), which takes into (critical) account earlier interpretations, including Robertson's, Robert's and Heidegger's, and offers a cultural reading of the Heraclitus anecdote.

<sup>40</sup> See Symeon the New Theologian, *Hymn* 25, 149.

<sup>41</sup> *In Eth. Nic. X*, 603.16–30. Michael draws here on Proclus; the citations from the Proclan text were noted by Carlos Steel and are indicated in the text with italics. See Steel (2002: 55–56).

marks Michael's disposition to relate the world even in its least appealing aspects with the divine. Consequently, the phrase 'all is full of gods' cannot refer either to *panpsychism* or to *pantheism* because something like that would invalidate the IP and especially its implications of the existence of a separate, non-corporeal Divine principle that ennobles the whole, whether material or not.<sup>42</sup> From this point of view, Michael cannot subscribe to a speculative worldview where first philosophy plays the part of theology; this role is solely reserved for Christian theology and thus Michael seems to inherit Neoplatonic intellectualism, but not Neoplatonic metaphysics. This disposition allows him to value the exterior world, notwithstanding its dis-comforting sides, as part of Creation—in accordance with the IP—and to conceive simultaneously of what I will describe later as scientific intentionality towards the world. The idea that the Heraclitus example concerns the distinction between divine nobility and the humble material world is reinforced by the fact that the 'foetal membranes that cover the baby when it comes out of its mother's womb' and the other organic parts to which Michael refers are used by the Neoplatonists and notably Porphyry as a critique of the Christian belief that God was born from a woman's womb.<sup>43</sup>

Let us summarize the insight offered by the implications of the IP. The two poles of the dichotomy that the IP seems to transcend are the following: the

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<sup>42</sup> There is a rejection of divine corporeality in Michael due most probably to his Christian culture. Nussbaum thinks that Michael's expression 'if there were, among beings and having reality, some powers greater than the powers of heaven and earth, they would move tomorrow or some time' from his commentary on *De motu animalium* (110.14–16: trans. Preus) is a real contribution to the comprehension of Aristotle's expression 'if there are superior motions, these will be dissolved by one another' from *De motu animalium* 699b25–26 (trans. A. S. L. Farquharson), and she thinks that the Byzantine scholiast's hypothesis about a moving principle that, if it could exercise a force greater than the forces of earth and heaven, would do so and destroy the world, is correct. Nevertheless, Nussbaum believes that Michael's interpretation of Aristotle's moving principle as an interaction of forces and bodies is erroneous. For Aristotle, Nussbaum says, the moving principle with a force capable of moving and eventually destroying the world must be also a body—a sixth body different from the five physical ones. (The reason is that Aristotle continues by saying that the force of the aforesaid body cannot be infinite because there cannot be an infinite body: 'for they cannot be infinite because not even body can be infinite'; see 699b27–28). Thus, Michael's interpretation, Nussbaum says, is half right—as long as it points to one moving principle for Aristotle's passage—and half erroneous—for not attributing to this moving principle the quality of being a body (see Nussbaum 1978: 317–18; for a different view, see Preus 1981, 75). For a Christian or someone brought up in a Christian culture as Michael was, this interpretation stands midway between Aristotle and Christianity.

<sup>43</sup> See von Harnack (1916: fr. 77).

noble intellect and the humble material world. The problem would be to state how this transcendence works. It seems that we have here a form of syllogism where the IP is elevated to the status of the major term that correlates logically the animals' and plants' appeal to humans with the surpassing of human aversion toward the organic parts of bodies and the study of living things as a noble scientific activity.

Thus, the argument of Michael in this perspective may be formulated in the following way: (a3) The IP states that the world as God's creation is invariably noble; (b3) animals and plants are parts of the world; (c3) humans must study animals and plants as parts of God's invariably noble creation.

On this view, the basic argument of the call to the study of living things would be part of a more extensive position that schematically states: 'Look at the wonders that God created in the natural world.'

Nevertheless, this view is a problematic one and cannot be defended conclusively. First of all, the Christian perception of the material world is not governed in its totality by the good will inherent in the IP. This good will was made act through incarnation only once as proof of the Lord's immense love for humankind and it does not abolish the divinity's otherness from the material world. Another problem is that of the meaning of the aversion experienced in seeing certain organic parts of the natural world. Michael does not seem to deny the well-foundedness of this feeling that he uses as an argument in order to dissociate natural science from natural pleasure. This attitude may also mark a Christian's ambivalence regarding the valuation of the natural world.<sup>44</sup>

### *Pleasure, happiness and the living things*

Up to this point, we have distinguished two major tendencies in Michael's views concerning the study of animals and plants: (c1) there is an appeal to turn our attention towards organic material (animals and plants),<sup>45</sup> notwith-

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<sup>44</sup> See Goldman (1975). Goldman is criticizing Kojève's position that modern science has its origins in the doctrine of the Incarnation of God as an apology of the material world (see Kojève 1964).

<sup>45</sup> The nature of the plants may also be aversion-provoking in Aristotle: see *Eth. Nic.* X 6, 1176a34–45; also, there are forms of life that are indeterminately animals or plants, like the sessile sponges, the anthozoans and ascidians that are distinguished for their resemblance to plants (*De part. an.* 681a10–b9); the repugnance of the parts of the plants may not refer to vision, but to other senses like taste or smell; see *On Sense and the Sensibles* 5; see also Theophrastus, *History of Plants* 10.

standing the aversion that this may provoke; and (c2) humans, who are part of the material world, should study animals and plants.

According to Aristotle, the aversion that may be produced during the scientific work is overcome by the natural pleasure of knowledge; this is not the view of Michael, for whom the aversion provoked by some organic parts cannot be outweighed by any scientific pleasure. To explain Michael's thesis, a third proposition, based on the IP, was advanced, stating: (c3) humans must study animals and plants as part of God's invariably noble creation.

(c3) could satisfactorily fill the gap between (c1) and (c2) but was seen above to be a problematic view. In fact, the world is not invariably noble in the text of Michael of Ephesus. The celestial world is said to be noble (τίμια), but the world of living things other than humans is said to possess sublimity (τὸ θαυμάσιον). In the search for an understanding of the difference, we may look to Aristotle, who makes various uses of the term θαυμάσιος, first in relation to animals: 'The phenomena of the generation in regard to the mouse are the most astonishing (θαυμασιωτάτη)' (*Hist. an.* 580b10, trans. D'A. W. Thompson), and also in relation to a certain kind of wisdom: 'Whence even the lover of myth is in a sense a lover of wisdom, for myth is composed of wonders (θαυμάσια)' (*Metaph.* I, 982b18–19, trans. W. D. Ross). In the *De anima*, the θαυμάσιον is said to be constitutive of the value of knowledge and scientific research: 'Holding as we do that, while knowledge of any kind is a thing to be honoured and prized, one kind of it may, either by reason of its greater exactness or of a higher dignity and greater wonderfulness (θαυμασιωτέρων) in its objects, be more honourable and precious than another, on both accounts we should naturally be led to place in the front rank the study of the soul' (402a1–4, trans. J. A. Smith). And again, in the *De generatione animalium* 731a33–b2, we see the term related to the subject of human and animal knowledge: '[The animals] have sense perception, and this is a kind of knowledge; if we consider the value (τὸ τίμιον καὶ ἄτιμον) of this we find that it is of great importance compared with the class of lifeless objects, but of little compared with the use of intellect. For against the latter the mere participation in touch and taste seems to be practically nothing, but beside plants and stones it seems most excellent (θαυμάσιον)' (trans. A. Platt).

In Michael of Ephesus, there are two uses of the term, first in his commentary on Book V of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where a human virtue appears to surpass in sublimity a star like Venus: 'Justice appears to be excellent and more wonderful (θαυμασιωτέρα) than the star of Venus itself' (*In Eth. Nic.*

V, 8.3–4). In his commentary on the *Sophistici Elenchi* (2.20–22), Michael refers to the Platonic *Euthydemus* where ‘Socrates says, speaking to Crito, that sophistry is wonderful (θαυμάσια)’. In fact, we find three occurrences of the term in *Euthydemus*, when Plato speaks of ‘wonderful speeches’ (283a7), ‘wonderful wisdom’ (288b6), and finally the ‘wonderful Sophists’ (305b4), as Michael says. I translated θαυμάσιον here as ‘sublimity’ (and not as ‘wonderful’, ‘excellent’, or even ‘astonishing’ as others translators do) because I wish to suggest the double use made by Michael of the term as a real or phenomenal excellence as well as an ironic one; the word ‘sublimity’ can convey better the double, real and phenomenal feature.<sup>46</sup> The problem is how to relate the noble-humble division of a world that is everywhere equally worthy of knowledge to the distinction between pleasure and pain (aversion). For this, I will quote a crucial passage from Michael concerning the difference between humans and animals with regard to happiness:

He [sc. Aristotle] says, once the omissions and that which must be supplied from elsewhere are brought together, that in accordance with the assumptions of the Epicurean and later Stoic philosophers concerning happiness, one can attribute a share of happiness even to the non-rational animals, while according to myself and Plato and others who along with us would place happiness in the intellectual life, it is impossible for the non-rational animals to be happy in that way ....<sup>47</sup>

So it appears that happiness cannot be granted to animals and, by the same token, to plants. Here Michael is setting himself against Aristotle, the Epicureans (a logical opposition for a Byzantine Christian) and the later Stoa. What marks a difference in this case is the theory of happiness in the later Stoa that postulates common trends in Aristotle, the Epicureans and Stoicism. In contrast to the later Stoa, Michael opposes the theory that there is a general pleasure according to nature and, similarly, he distances himself from Aristotelian ethics where natural pleasure plays a constitutive

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<sup>46</sup> In Christian literature also, the term has a dominant positive meaning (see for example Gregory of Nyssa, *Hom. VIII in Cant.*, in Migne, *PG* 44: col. 948C), unless it refers to heresy (Hippolytus, *Haer.*, in Migne, *PG* 16: col. 3139B).

<sup>47</sup> *In Eth. Nic. X*, 598.19–24 (quoted in Praechter [1990: 40]): λέγει δὲ ὡς συλλεξαμένους τὰ παραλελειμμένα καὶ ὧν προσυπακούειν ἔξωθεν χρή, ὅτι κατὰ μὲν τὰς τῶν ἄλλων φιλοσόφων Ἐπικουρείων τε καὶ τῶν ὕστερον Στωικῶν περὶ εὐδαιμονίας ὑπολήψεις δύναται τις εὐδαιμονίαν μεταδιδόναι καὶ τοῖς ἀλόγοις ζώοις, κατ’ ἐμὲ δὲ καὶ Πλάτωνα καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ὅσοι τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν ἐν νοερᾷ ζωῇ ἰστώμεν, ἀδύνατον κατὰ ταύτην εὐδαιμονεῖν τὰ ἄλογα τῶν ζώων ....

role.<sup>48</sup> Instead, the early Stoics, to whom Michael seems to align himself, or at least whose contribution he seems to acknowledge, declared that living according to nature is living according to reason and that pleasure is only accessory to living things.<sup>49</sup> Compare this view with Aristotle's following passage from the encomium of natural science in the *Parts of Animals*: 'for if some have no graces to charm the sense, yet nature, which fashioned them, gives amazing pleasure in their study to all who can trace links of causation, and are inclined to philosophy' (645a8–11). It is a thesis to which Michael does not subscribe, since for him simple nature may never be a source of pleasure, but only the pure intellect can be such and, in any case, if bodily pleasures are embraced as goods, they will obscure the real (intellectual) pleasures.<sup>50</sup> The difficulty that consists in the fact that pleasure cannot be a criterion of happiness was already brought up by Cicero who reproduced some relevant Stoic ideas:

But when you try to prove the Wise Man happy on the ground that he enjoys the greatest mental pleasures, and that these are infinitely greater than bodily pleasures, you do not see the difficulty that meets you. For it follows that mental pains which he experiences will also be infinitely greater than the bodily ones. Hence he whom you maintain to be always happy would inevitably be sometimes miserable; nor in fact will you ever prove him to be invariably happy, as long as you make pleasure and pain the sole standard (trans. H. Rackham).<sup>51</sup>

The relation between natural and bodily pleasures is for Michael quite different from what this is for Aristotle and I will try to show next in which way the difference is established. Michael states that:

Every mind is searching for its proper good and has the intuition of it or dreams about it and submits to the animal and oppressive pleasures, which are not properly pleasures because of their evil lessons and the necessary and consequent ignorance of the real pleasures. Because the judging mind is overtaken by darkness about the real pleasures, which are not like that ... (*In Eth. Nic. X*, 538.12–16).

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Panaetius' notion of happiness 'in accordance to nature' (apud Stobaeum, 2.7 = Panaetius fr. 109 van Straaten). See Sorabji (1993: 139). As to whether pleasure exists according to nature there was already a controversy in antiquity; see Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* XI, 73. See Haynes (1962: 414).

<sup>49</sup> Zeno in Diogenes Laertius VII 85.

<sup>50</sup> For Michael's theory of happiness, see Ierodiakonou (2009: 185–201); Donato (2006: 180–84).

<sup>51</sup> Cicero, *De finibus* II 33.108: 'sed dum efficere vultis beatum sapientem cum maximas animo voluptates percipiat omnibusque partibus maiores quam corpore, quid occurrat non videtis. Animi enim dolores quoque percipiet omnibus partibus maiores quam corporis. Ita miser sit aliquando necesse est is quem vos beatum semper vultis esse; nec vero id dum omnia ad voluptatem doloremque referetis efficietis umquam.'

A distinction between animal pleasures and real pleasures contributes to the understanding of the exhortation to study living things. The absence of bodily pleasure in the perception of the parts of animals may be a sign of true intellectual activity. But this cannot really cover the totality of Michael's argument. The distinction between real pleasure and bodily pleasure will not explain much unless the broader theoretical frame of which it is extracted is further clarified.

Pleasure is not, in any case, really Michael's argument. What he says is that absence of pleasure or aversion is an obstacle to the appreciation of the value of natural science since it may cause suspicion as to its nobility and make it appear as ἄτιμον. It is not that Michael considers all the living things abhorrent, since the childish aversion concerns the most disgusting of them. To these latter are assimilated the parts of the human body in order to prove the human affiliation to the natural world. But what directs humans to natural science is the finality of reaching the realm of the good that should bring with it intellectual pleasure. But if this is a finality, it is not inherent in scientific activity, as it might have been for Aristotle who grounds this activity on an ontological desire for knowledge. In late antiquity, the philosophical theorization of pleasure owes much to Plato's *Philebus* where the ideas of pleasure as a mixed good as well as a return to the natural condition (but not the natural condition in itself) were of prime importance. Michael of Ephesus seems to combine the Plotinian and Proclan dualism that reserves all passions for the body with the later Neoplatonists' claim that passions can reach the soul and change it in substance (something that was unacceptable for Plotinus). Furthermore, Michael seems here to especially object to Damascius' theory of pleasure exposed in his commentary on *Philebus*.<sup>52</sup> Damascius is in fact presenting a theory of pleasure that combines Aristotelian, Epicurean and late Stoic elements.<sup>53</sup> On the basis of the attribution of cognition to perception that extends to all living things, he tries to make pleasure not only a characteristic of the movement towards the natural condition, but a characteristic of the natural condition itself. To this, Michael, who is particularly reluctant to accept the analogy between the two term pairs pleasure-cognition and perception-cognition, is strongly opposed. For Michael, the movement to the natural condition is indistinctively the cause of pleasure or pain, while the intellectual condition that is seen as the

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<sup>52</sup> Westerink (1959). It must be noted that in the manuscript tradition, the commentaries on the *Phaedo* and those on the *Philebus* are placed together. Michael refers to the *Philebus* in his commentaries (see *In Eth. Nic. X*, 536.15; 542.22; 542.29; 542.32).

<sup>53</sup> Riel (2000: 134–76).

cause of real pleasures must first achieve a state of neutrality towards the natural condition.

In Christian thought we see the idea of pleasure associated with a false science, as in the case of the art of divinization. Thus, in Gregory of Nyssa's *Contra fatum*, pleasure is in fact a major constituent of the divinatory arts because that is what makes such a false science plausible to humans who desire to know the future. Organic parts play a role in the practice of those arts, as for instance in the inspection of livers in order to predict the future and thus, says Gregory, pleasure gives to the evil deed the form of good, just as the taste of honey can cover what is distasteful.<sup>54</sup> It is not openly stated that true science may have to do with a direct overcoming of aversion, but since false science has to hide the unpleasant aspects of its practices and objectives under a pleasurable appearance (or in the prospect of bodily pleasure), such a direct overcoming may be implied by Gregory of Nyssa. The apology of the material world through the IP and the advancement of a disinterested regard (without the dominant search for pleasure) toward the surrounding world allow the formation of some sort of objectivity. Such a perception of the epistemological past would mean, regarding the Middle Ages in general and the Byzantine Middle Ages in particular, something more than the search for 'psychological anachronisms';<sup>55</sup> it would in fact be something like a research programme for the origins of scientific psychology.

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<sup>54</sup> See *Contra fatum* 59 McDonough: 'We can recognize the divine nature and its attributes by all those things which are opposite to it, for example, death instead of life, deceit instead of truth and every type of evil inimical to man. Anyone who embraces these becomes an abomination. Persons who often commit evil deeds offer a deadly cure since it is disguised with honey which cannot be tasted. Similarly, that corruptible nature within the soul seduces a person by assuming a good form and veils deception under the guise of a cure. People rush after this deadly poison thinking it to be good while it contains nothing beneficial. Thus whenever we encounter anyone with the pretense of knowing the future through deception which is controlled by demons, for example, through divinization, augury, omens, oracles about the dead and genealogies, each one is different and predicts the future in dissimilar ways. Therefore inspecting a liver or observing birds in flight to foresee the future do not promise their outcome by fate's compulsion. We claim that all these examples have one cause and assume one form (I mean demonic deception) since a prediction does not come true at a given time if indeed it does occur.'

<sup>55</sup> See Beaujouan (1997: 23–30).



*Intentionality and propositional content in  
Michael of Ephesus' philosophy of living things*

To summarize Michael's position we should say that for him aversion or absence of pleasure may hinder scientific activity and consequently condemn it as ἄτιμον. Thus, pleasure and pain are situated on a more basic level of the human being (since the feeling of disgust appears to be somehow identical to childish aversion). We should compare here the impossibility that bodily pleasure constitutes a criterion with the declared need, according to Michael of Ephesus, for a prospective natural scientist to face the organic parts of living bodies. Also, we must not forget that the appeal for the study of living things is addressed to every human and not only to the scientists. This reinforces the idea that the problem is treated here on the ontological, rather than the epistemological level. The question of material bodies, the perception of them with pain and pleasure, can be attached to the following passage from the commentary on Books IX–X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*:<sup>56</sup> here Michael makes use of the significant term σωματοειδής, that is, bodily, material, corporeal:

the visual perception of the forms is a perception of them without the matter, as Aristotle has shown in the second book of *De anima* ..., without the underlying matter. The hearing and the smell are more corporeal (σωματοειδεῖς) and they perceive the sensed objects more passively together with their matter (569.8–14).

*De anima* II is an important work with regard to intentionality and its relation to physicalism since it proclaims that every sense-perception is of a sensible form (424a17–21). Thus, pure form guarantees intentionality but, at the same time, intentionality requires a physiological change. The sense organs transform the real objects into intentional objects and yet the intentional objects are in the sphere of the intellect.<sup>57</sup> Although the animals in Michael may be considered as bodies without reason, in no case can they be thought as σωματοειδῆ; this last term refers explicitly to a hierarchy of human senses and to human perception, which have meaning only for rational beings like humans.

There is only one occurrence of σωματοειδής in the Aristotelian corpus, in *Problems* 24, 936b35, where we read: 'but substances which have body

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<sup>56</sup> For the close relation between Michael's scholia to the *De partibus animalium* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, see Arabatzis (2009: 170–71), where it is shown that both commentaries belong to the later phase of Michael's scholastic activity.

<sup>57</sup> Perler (2003: 20–21).

in them, like thick soups and silver, since, owing to their weight, they contain much corporeal matter (σωματοειδές) and offer resistance, because they are subjected to violent force as the heat tries to make its way out, form bubbles wherever the heat prevails' (trans. E. S. Forster). Σωματοειδής, as Michael uses it, stands rather closer to Plato's *Phaedo*: 'Because each pleasure or pain nails it as with a nail to the body and rivets it on and makes it corporeal (σωματοειδῆ), so that it fancies the things are true which the body says are true' (83d, trans. H. N. Fowler); in *Phaedo* again, at another point, Plato says: 'so that it thought nothing was true except the corporeal (σωματοειδές), which one can touch and see and drink and eat and employ in the pleasures of love, and if it is accustomed to hate and fear and avoid that which is shadowy and invisible to the eyes but is intelligible and tangible to philosophy' (81b, trans. H. N. Fowler). Michael Psellos also uses the term in relation to demons and to humans after the fall (see *Philosophica Minora* II 37.11–13 and *Theologica* I 30, 127–30). It is more likely that Michael did not borrow the term σωματοειδής from Plato, Psellos or from his regular source Proclus, who uses it quite frequently, as in *Inst. theol.* 197.5–7. The closest parallel to Michael's notion of the term is to be found in Damascius:

The 'body-like' [σωματοειδές] is different from the body: it is an affect of the soul, brought about in it by the body. Body-like is also the 'phantom' formed by such a kind of life-force and a more rarefied bodily substance, of which Plato says that it is 'weighed down' and that it is 'seen in the neighbourhood of graves'; hence it is said to 'accompany' the soul. It is 'produced by those souls' that are still tied to the visible; this is why they can be seen, through participation in the visible or through affinity with it.<sup>58</sup>

The logical opposition of σωματοειδής to the nobility of scientific activity reminds us of the discussion in Plato's *Parmenides* about the existence or not of the ideas of the humblest, ignoble things (ἀτιμότατον) (130c ff.). To the problem that arises there, Michael would answer in the most unequivocal way: the τιμώτερον (nobility) of the study of living things is based on the degree of the τιμώτερον of human intentional acts (meaning the acts of a higher intentionality).<sup>59</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Damascius, *In Philebum* §352 Westerink.

<sup>59</sup> The purity of the intellect goes together with the purity of the eye and the whole constitutes a metaphor for the superiority of contemplative happiness: 'sight is superior to touch in purity, and hearing and smell to taste; the pleasures, therefore, are similarly superior, and those of thought superior to these, and within each of the two kinds some are superior to others' (*Eth. Nic.* 1176a1–3, trans. W. D. Ross revised by J. O. Urmson). To this passage responds Michael's *In Eth. Nic. X*, 569.8–14, quoted earlier, as well as the metaphor of the 'eye' of prudence from *In Eth. Nic. X*, 609.6–10. For the latter, see Arabatzis (2009: 165).

While still on the subject of the term *σωματοειδής* and its uses, we should add to our consideration of the obvious Platonic heritage<sup>60</sup> further investigation of the Neoplatonic one. It is probable that the distinguishing character of the *σωματοειδής* in Michael comes from its opposition to the notion of *λογοειδής*. Simplicius (or Priscian) quotes Iamblichus approvingly for saying that humans have perception in a different sense from animals: human perception has a rational form (*λογοειδής*), whereas animal perception is body-centered. Animal perception can recognize (*γνώσις*) that the seen thing is a man, but it cannot say whether this recognition (*γνώσις* or *κρίσις*) is true or false. Such an appreciation would be self-reflection (*ἐπιστροφή*), which is impossible for the senses of living things such as animals and plants, which cannot get away from the body.<sup>61</sup> Thus, *σωματοειδής* and *λογοειδής* refer to states of mind or, for Michael, intentional states of mind.

There is in the epistemology of Michael of Ephesus, in his commentary on *Parts of Animals* I (1.3–2.10), a theory or proto-theory of intentionality.<sup>62</sup> Michael's intentionality theory is suggested there by the terms *σκοπεῖν* and *θεωρεῖν*; the first would be a pre-reflexive intentionality, the one that probably causes pleasure and pain; the second is the one that produces the

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<sup>60</sup> The allegiance to Plato is significant in relation to what can be considered as the 'Christian Platonism' of Michael of Ephesus. We can witness it in his commentary on Democritus' positions as transmitted by Aristotle in *Parts of Animals*, where, according to A. P. D. Mourelatos, there is a 'non-reductivist gloss' on Democritus B 165. According to Aristotle, Democritus approached natural science as though it were about the material cause and he neglected the final cause or the formal cause; and Michael specifies: 'It is evident to everyone what sort of thing man and each of the animals is in terms of shape and color; it is what they are in terms of matter that is non-evident. But if this is so, then our inquiry into it ought to be concerned with the non-evident, not with what is most evident' (*In De part. an.* 5.36-6.3, trans. Mourelatos 2003: 51). Mourelatos notes that, 'in all likelihood, Michael knows nothing more about Democritus' anthropology than what he gleans from the Aristotle's passage he is paraphrasing. Still, could Michael's gloss serve to inspire a viable reading of B 165? The message of the saying 'Man is what we all know' might have been this: ignore or set aside what is manifest; go beyond it; search rather for the underlying realities ..., which are hidden.' Michael's Platonism signifies the impulse to see beyond evidence (*ibid.* 52). According to my analysis here, Michael persistently insists on the superior nobility of humans over the animals, similar to God's nobility. This discussion points strongly to Michael's distinctive dualism.

<sup>61</sup> *In De an.* 173.1–7; 187.35–39; 210.15–211.13; 290.4–8. See Sorabji (1993: 49). This position allows the ascription of beliefs to animals. See Dennett (1976: 181–87); Sorabji (1993: 28). For the escape from the body, see Plotinus, *Enn.* 2.3, 9.20–23.

<sup>62</sup> See Arabatzis (2006: 318–22; 2009: 179–84).

objects of theoretical, scientific activity.<sup>63</sup> The appeal to humans to study living things addresses the pre-scientific intentionality which would be the ontological structure that we need in order to ground natural science. This first intentionality leads to the second one and to the intellectual activity of science. In fact the distinction between the two intentionalities cannot be definitive and the pre-scientific intentionality is rather a proto-scientific than a non-scientific one. The error would be to make intentionality pass for sensation; because of τὸ σωματοειδές, i.e. the corporeal reasoning, humans are capable of missing science. If we return to the paradigm of the animals and plants saying ‘we are noble objects of science’, we may say that the image of the speaking animals and plants is deceptive, but the deception is reversed because of the propositional content of the intentional act. In Michael’s view, intentional acts without propositional content are not as epistemologically satisfying as the ones endowed with propositional content. This is the case with the view of organic parts that causes distress to the general viewer, where the ill feeling is produced by non-propositional intentionality paired with an axiological presupposition based on the pleasure-pain distinction. Part of what we see in Michael of Ephesus is classical Greek intellectualism stemming from the superiority of *Logos*. Another part is a Christian attitude that promotes physical realism. Michael of Ephesus appears to be part of a long philosophical tradition concerning the difficult relations between intentionality and the natural world.

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<sup>63</sup> With regard to the sources for Michael’s theory of intentionality, besides what has already been said, Aristotle is not the prime candidate since the question of intentional acts in his writings is confined between physicalism and *phantasia* (see Caston 2001; Sorabji 2001*a*; Rapp 2001; Weidemann 2001; see also Arabatzis 2006: 318–22). As for the Neoplatonic sources, Sorabji claims that no intentional objects can be acknowledged in intellectual thought according to the Neoplatonists (Sorabji 2001*b*). D. J. O’Meara supports the thesis that intentional objects exist in discursive thought according to later Neoplatonism (O’Meara 2001). A number of the notions O’Meara examines (πρᾶγμα, ἀρχή, ἕξις, geometry) are to be found in Michael’s *In De part. an.* 1.3–2.10. The mechanism of intentionality is described by O’Meara in the following terms: ‘the correspondence between the ideal order of metaphysical discursive thought and the real order of transcendent objects allows us to see the suggestion that discursive concepts are images of transcendent objects in a new light: it is not the case that discursive thought looks at these objects as if they were images, but rather that in developing these concepts, discursive thought produces what are in a sense images of transcendent objects.’ The case is illustrated by a passage from Philoponus, *In De an.* III (Latin version) 88.37–49 (O’Meara 2001: 123).

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## A case for creationism: Christian cosmology in the 5th and 6th centuries<sup>\*</sup>

BÖRJE BYDÉN

As Christians, Muslims and Jews throughout the Middle Ages were struggling to come to terms with the ancient philosophical heritage, it seems always to have been the doctrine of the eternity of the world that posed the most formidable challenge. Most if not all Christian thinkers adhered to a literal interpretation of Genesis 1:1, according to which God, in the beginning, created heaven and earth. But they differed widely on the question as to whether or not it was possible to demonstrate the truth of this belief by philosophical argument. The conflict between what we may call ‘rationalistic’ and ‘fideistic’ attitudes to this problem came to a head in Western Europe in the thirteenth century, when Aristotle’s arguments in favour of eternity became a focus of attention.<sup>1</sup> The brightest luminary on the thirteenth-century horizon, Thomas Aquinas, denied the possibility. In the end it was his opinion that carried the day. According to Thomas, there will always be equal arguments for and against a beginning of the world; the fact that there was a beginning is something we learn only from revelation; it is, in Thomas’ parlance, an article of faith (*Summa theologiae* 1<sup>a</sup>, q. 46, a. 2). This opinion became predominant also in modern philosophy. When it was reformulated as the First Antinomy of Reason in Kant’s *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, and the assertion as well as the denial of a beginning were declared to violate the necessary conditions for any possible experience, the debate between creationists and eternalists was finally laid to rest.<sup>2</sup> And cosmology was handed over to the scientists.

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<sup>\*</sup> Parts of this paper have been presented to various audiences (London 2006; Athens 2008; Uppsala 2010; Budapest 2011; Stockholm 2011), to whom I extend my thanks for valuable response.

<sup>1</sup> I take a ‘rationalistic’ attitude in this context to involve not the strong view that *only* rational argument can satisfactorily solve the problem, but the weaker view that rational argument *can* satisfactorily solve the problem.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Creationism’ is used in this paper for the reasoned belief that the world has at some point begun to exist, both as to its present structure and as to its matter (it was created ‘post nihil’); conversely, ‘eternalism’ will be used without qualification for the reasoned belief that there has been no such beginning. Note that most late antique and medieval thinkers will distinguish the sort of eternity intended by this belief (infinite temporal duration, often called perpetuity or sempiternity) from ‘eternity proper’ (‘the possession of interminable life, all at once and completely’, to quote Boethius (*Cons.* 5 prosa 6). See further below, p. 97.



### *Philoponus' rationalistic outlook*

The opinion that there are equal arguments for and against a beginning of the world goes back to antiquity: it is reported by Philo of Alexandria (*Ebr.* 199) as well as by Galen (*Exp. med.* 19), and no doubt in other sources. But those who maintained that the belief in a beginning of the world *could* be satisfactorily defended by philosophical arguments were also able to rely on ancient predecessors. Usually they would rely, directly or indirectly, on John Philoponus, and more specifically on his three works on the eternity of the world, in which he made a concerted effort to argue philosophically in favour of creationism.<sup>3</sup>

Only one of these works, the earliest, survives practically in its entirety. It is known as *De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum* (or *Contra Proclum* for short). It consists of a detailed refutation from philosophical—as opposed to scriptural or patristic—premises of the Platonic Successor Proclus' eighteen arguments in favour of eternalism. It is dated by the author to AD 529, the very year that Justinian enforced the closure of the school of philosophy at Athens.<sup>4</sup> The second work (*Contra Aristotelem*) was a refutation of Aristotle's arguments in *De caelo* 1 and *Physics* 8. It is partly known through quotations and reports in Simplicius' commentaries on the relevant Aristotelian works.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> There is some uncertainty as to the number and contents of Philoponus' non-extant works on the eternity of the world. The Arabic bibliographies distinguish clearly between a refutation of Aristotle in six books and a shorter treatise 'showing that every body is finite and has finite power' (Davidson 1969: 359). Thus, the shorter treatise seems to have been closely related if not identical in content to the (probably independent, see Davidson 1969: 358–59) work reported by Simplicius at *In Phys.* 1326.37–1336.34. Similar content is also found in the second part of the first chapter of the Arabic summary of *De contingentia mundi*, which certainly must have been an independent work. Thus, it has been suggested that the work reported and discussed by Simplicius at *In Phys.* 1326.37–1336.34 is in fact identical to (the first chapter of) *De contingentia mundi* (Pines 1972: 341). On the other hand, towards the end of Simplicius' reports and discussions of the sixth book of *Contra Aristotelem*, 'which tries to eliminate the eternity of motion so that there can be no proof of the eternity of the world based on it' (1182.28–30; cf. 1118.4–7), beginning at 1129.29 and seemingly continuing until 1182.27 (frs VI/108–33 Wildberg), we find an extended passage (1178.5–1179.26) that closely parallels the first part of the first chapter as well as the third chapter of the Arabic summary. If this passage was indeed part of the sixth book of *Contra Aristotelem* (it is included as fr. VI/132 by Wildberg), it is clear from the way it is introduced by Simplicius (ibid. 1178.5–9) that it was set apart from the preceding refutation of Aristotle's arguments as a positive demonstration of the impossibility of a movement without beginning, in much the same way as *De contingentia mundi* is introduced as the demonstrative complement to *Contra Proclum* and *Contra Aristotelem* (Pines 1972: 321–22; see also n. 8 below).

<sup>4</sup> Literally to the year 245 after Diocletian's accession (*Aet.* 579.14–16).

<sup>5</sup> Fragments collected and translated in Wildberg (1987).

The third work (*De contingentia mundi*) is only extant in the form of an Arabic summary (which is probably a translation of a Greek summary).<sup>6</sup> In its preface (which seems to have been translated more or less in unabbreviated form), Philoponus explains that he has previously written works attempting to refute the sophistical arguments of Proclus, Aristotle and others in favour of eternalism, and that he now wishes to demonstrate his creationist thesis, since (as he says) the ‘perfect knowledge’ of things ‘which can (only) be known by syllogistic reasoning’ requires both the demonstration of the truth of the matter and the refutation of any sophistical arguments that have been employed to establish the contradictory of the truth.<sup>7</sup> This seems to indicate that the two refutations and the demonstration were all part of a unified programme aimed at establishing first that creationism *can be* true and subsequently that it *must be* true.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps we should pause here for a moment to ask ourselves how it can be possible at the same time to pursue cosmology as a demonstrative science and insist on the infallible truth of the Christian revelation—i.e. how to combine absolute rationalism and absolute faith. I can imagine at least two different ways of doing this. One is to subscribe to the notorious doctrine of the ‘double truth’: what is true in natural philosophy can be false in theology, and vice versa. This doctrine was condemned by the Bishop of Paris in 1277, but it is a moot point whether it really had any adherents.<sup>9</sup> If it had, Philoponus was certainly not among them. Another possibility, and I think the one that Philoponus opted for, would be to assume that there can be no contradiction between natural philosophy—as correctly practised—and the Christian revelation—as correctly interpreted. We may call this a Harmony View of the relationship between natural philosophy and Christianity. Now, since all the Greek philosophers actually did contradict any historically conceivable interpretation of the Christian revelation on at least *some* points, an important corollary of the Harmony View for anyone writing in late antiq-

<sup>6</sup> Pines (1972: 344 and n. 288).

<sup>7</sup> I rely on the English translation by Pines (1972) as well as the French translation by Troupeau (1984). The quoted phrases are from Pines’ translation (1972: 322).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Philoponus, *Aet.* 9.20–10.2. A similar description of his three works in favour of creationism is given by Philoponus in the preface to *De opificio mundi* (1.6–14, where lines 1.7–13 seem to refer to the two refutations and lines 1.13–14 to *De contingentia mundi*). He goes on to explain that he has been ‘mildly rebuked’ for only having focussed on philosophical arguments and not having paid due attention to the words of Moses (*ibid.* 1.14–2.5). *De opificio mundi* is thus conceived of as the exegetical complement to the philosophical trilogy, purporting to show (often through allegorical interpretation) that the revelation of the Pentateuch does not disagree with ‘the phenomena’, i.e. with scientifically observable facts (*ibid.* 2.19–25; 6.19–24).

<sup>9</sup> See Dales (1984).

uity or the Middle Ages will be that all the Greek philosophers made (philosophical) mistakes, which must be rectified. This is, I think, what *Contra Proclum* and *Contra Aristotelem* are all about. In order to carry out the first part of his programme and establish that creationism can be true, Philoponus needs to show that Proclus' and Aristotle's premises either do not support their conclusions or else are false. No doubt the main aspiration of the programme was to demonstrate the truth of creationism, by substituting the false premises with true ones and drawing the inferences correctly. But in so far as he was considered to have carried out this task successfully, Philoponus also managed, in the process, to vindicate natural philosophy and convince his readers of its fundamental solidarity with the Christian cause.

### *Philoponus' Byzantine legacy*

The significance of Philoponus' arguments for the Islamic and Jewish cosmological traditions is well attested and well known.<sup>10</sup> The arguments were partly transmitted via Islamic rationalist theology (*kalām*), and partly through Al-Kindī's works. From the Islamic and Jewish cosmologists they were picked up by Latin Christian philosophers and theologians.<sup>11</sup> What is probably less well known is that variants, or descendants, of some of these arguments are also well established in Middle and Late Byzantine textbooks and treatises on cosmology.

This is true especially of the argument known in the Arabic tradition as 'John the Grammarian's', for which our main source is the previously mentioned summary of *De contingentia mundi*, chap. 1. This argument is based on two propositions which Aristotle is supposed to have proved in the *De caelo* and the *Physics* respectively: (1) The world is a finite body, and (2) every finite body possesses finite power. From these propositions and the definition of 'finite power' as a power, the effect of which will eventually cease, it follows that the world is not eternal. The objection that the world may be sustained by infinite power deriving from an incorporeal source, namely the unmoved mover or God, is brushed aside by Philoponus as being irrelevant, since, as Aristotle would admit (*Cael.* 1.12, 281b20–22), a

<sup>10</sup> See especially Davidson (1969) and (1987).

<sup>11</sup> To mention but the two most well-known examples, the argument from the impossibility of an actualized infinity, adumbrated by Philoponus at *Aet.* 9.20–13.11 and set out in further detail in book 6 of *Contra Aristotelem* (if this is the text reported by Simplicius, *In Phys.* 1178.5–1179.26) as well as in chap. 3 of *De contingentia mundi*, was known both to Thomas Aquinas, who rejected it (*Summa contra Gentiles* lib. 2, c. 38) and to Bonaventure, who accepted it as sound (*Comm. in Sent.* lib. 2, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 2).

world which has a natural potentiality for being destroyed must in the course of an infinite period of time at some point actually be destroyed. Thus it must also have come into existence in the beginning, according to the axiom (stated by Plato at *Phaedrus* 245d3–4 and argued by Aristotle in *Cael.* 1.12) that everything capable of being destroyed has necessarily come into existence.<sup>12</sup>

‘John the Grammarian’s argument’ is also reported by Simplicius (*In Phys.* 1327.11–1329.12), but it is entirely possible that it was first introduced in Middle Byzantine cosmology by way of the Arabic tradition. A slightly garbled version of it appears, together with a number of other arguments familiar from Philoponus’ works, in the *Conspectus rerum naturalium* (3.30) by Symeon Seth of Antioch, who is well known as a translator from Arabic in the latter half of the eleventh century. Symeon argues, in open contradiction to both Plato and Aristotle, that since the world is a body, and every body possesses finite power, it must also have a beginning and an end. To dispel any doubt that the power of the world is finite he adds, somewhat unconvincingly, that while the fixed-star sphere completes a revolution in twenty-four hours, it would have done so in less time had it had greater power.

‘John the Grammarian’s argument’ also appears in the works of John Italos, an approximate contemporary of Symeon. Thus we are told in his *Quaestiones quodlibetales* (71.28–42) that not only did Plato expressly teach that the world has had a beginning, even Aristotle implied as much, since it follows from his own proofs of the incorporeality of the first mover in *Physics* 8 that the world, being a body and thus necessarily finite and possessed of finite power, is not eternal.

The same argument was restated in Late Byzantium by Nikephoros Blemmydes, who took it upon himself, in his widely circulated *Epitome physica* (PG 142, coll. 1224B–1228D), to refute a number of arguments in favour of eternalism. He attributed these to the Peripatetic school, but seems in fact to have collected them, together with their refutations, from Philoponus’ works, mainly *Contra Proclum*.<sup>13</sup> In support of the premise that the power of the world is finite Blemmydes referred to the impossibility of any part of a finite whole having infinite power, since this would entail that the whole has a power exceeding the infinite; but if the parts have finite

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<sup>12</sup> The extensive reliance on this axiom and its converse (for which see below, pp. 94–95) and its consequences for Christian cosmology and psychology in late antiquity (especially in the works of Aeneas of Gaza and John of Scythopolis) is explored in Krausmüller (2009).

<sup>13</sup> For details, see Bydén (2003: 182–84 and notes).

power the finite whole must have so too (coll. 1225B–E). Variants of ‘John the Grammarian’s argument’ may also be identifiable, in different stages of degeneration, and probably deriving proximately from Blemmydes, in Nikephoros Choumnos’ *On the Nature of the World* (c. 1315) and Nikephoros Gregoras’ *Florentius* (probably written in 1337).<sup>14</sup>

It is striking that most of these writers do not only owe their arguments in favour of creationism to Philoponus, but in addition share his rationalistic approach to the problem under discussion. Indeed, the essential harmony between natural philosophy and Christianity seems to be taken for granted by the majority of Byzantine cosmological writers. Symeon Seth, for instance, who explains in his preface that he wants to present more than a mere doxography, by giving demonstrative proofs of the true opinion on each subject (*Consp.* 1.1–9), for the most part argues in favour of the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic world view, except when it comes to eternalism and a few other doctrines difficult to reconcile with the Christian faith, which he takes pains to argue against.<sup>15</sup> Blemmydes’ *Epitome physica* is a work in much the same vein as Symeon’s *Conspectus*, only on a rather more encyclopaedic scale, exhibiting the same overall adherence to the natural philosophy of Aristotle and his commentators, revised in theologically sensitive areas with the help of philosophical arguments, drawn not only from Philoponus but also from the Stoic Cleomedes and others. Similarly, Choumnos begins his treatise by declaring his bold ambition to settle the debate on the nature of the world by proceeding demonstratively from securely established principles and definitions, such as are agreed upon by everyone, and continues by blending arguments in favour of Aristotle and Ptolemy with arguments against them, whenever this is required for the defence of the Christian doctrine.<sup>16</sup> Gregoras, on the other hand, was alto-

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<sup>14</sup> Choumnos in Sakkalion (1890: 76.12–20); Gregoras, *Florentius*, 1487–97. It is, however, entirely possible that Gregoras is reasoning independently on the basis of Aristotle’s *De caelo*, whereas Choumnos may be developing a point in Ps.-Justin, *Confutatio dogmatum quorundam Aristotelis* (130C), which is probably somewhat earlier than Philoponus’ works (see below, n. 30).

<sup>15</sup> In *Consp.* 29, he argues that the heavenly spheres and bodies can have no souls, since they are simpler and thus less ‘organic’ than the bodies of plants, which have only one soul faculty. In *Consp.* 37, he denies that the heavens are composed of a fifth body, on the grounds that the arguments of those (Plato, Proclus and Philoponus) who think it is composed of the finest part of the four elements, especially fire and air, are stronger. In *Consp.* 43, he suggests that the astronomical hypotheses of epicycles and eccentrics are unnecessary, since they were introduced in order to avoid having to ascribe retrograde motions to the planets, considered by the Greeks to be gods (and thus unworthy of such motions).

<sup>16</sup> For Choumnos’ prefatory declaration, see Sakkalion (1890: 75.14–23).

gether more sceptically—and fideistically—inclined.<sup>17</sup> In any case, it does not seem exceedingly far-fetched to hypothesize that the conviction that the view of Genesis 1:1 admits of proof by philosophical argument was spread to the Byzantine world from the same source that provided the standard philosophical arguments in favour of the selfsame view, namely Philoponus' works on the eternity of the world.

### *Creationism and Christianity*

It should be noted that the fact that Philoponus considered the problem as to whether or not the world has had a beginning to admit of resolution by rational argument does not in any way imply that he regarded the outcome of the argument as indifferent from the point of view of his Christian faith. It may seem superfluous to mention this, but it has in fact been claimed in recent years that 'Philoponus' rejection of Proclus' arguments is motivated by philosophy, not Christianity'.<sup>18</sup> For a number of reasons, I think this claim is wrong. It is certainly not supported by the circumstance that Philoponus fails to make use of any specifically Christian premises in his refutation of Proclus. A refutation is a dialectical exchange. It has to start out from premises that the opponent accepts, otherwise it cannot reach its goal. A philosophical demonstration, on the other hand, such as Philoponus seems to have attempted in *De contingentia mundi*, must start out from premises that are (as Aristotle says in the *Topics*) true and primary, and that anyone with any philosophical understanding will accept.

One reason—albeit by no means a decisive one—for thinking that the claim about Philoponus' motivation is wrong is that it is highly unlikely that any Greek Christian writing on cosmology in the sixth century would deny that the world—its structure as well as its matter—has had a beginning. It is sometimes asserted that creationism has never been a unanimous view among Christians. The reality, for once, seems less complicated. It is true that a clear and consistent orthodox position on the issue seems to have been arrived at only through the confrontation with various forms of Gnosticism espousing eternalism in the course of the second century.<sup>19</sup> But after that it was, as far as I can see, universally adopted. The four examples occasionally cited as evidence for late antique Greek Christian belief in the eternity of the

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<sup>17</sup> For Gregoras' epistemology, see Bydén (2012).

<sup>18</sup> '[T]here is no evidence that Philoponus brought his Christian beliefs to bear on philosophy. Indeed, the evidence is all the other way: he apparently did not bring his Christianity to the banquet of philosophy' (Lang & Macro 2001: 12).

<sup>19</sup> See the classic study by May (1978: 151–84).

world, namely a passage in Nemesius (late fourth century), one in Synesius (AD 409), one in Ps.-David or Elias (late sixth century), and one in Ps.-Philoponus or Stephanus (early seventh century), are all of dubious relevance.

To begin with Nemesius (*Nat. hom.* 2.31.8–16), who dismisses as irrational Eunomius' view that the world will be destroyed as soon as it has been completed, it is not to the idea that the world will be destroyed that he objects. It is to the idea that the world has not yet been completed, which bears no direct relation to the question of the eternity of the world, either a *parte ante* or a *parte post*.

Synesius (*Epist.* 105, 87–88) does indeed state his conviction that the world will never be destroyed. He does not, however, claim that this is a Christian view. On the contrary, he mentions it as an example of the discrepancy between his own, philosophically induced, opinions and those accepted by the Church, which makes him hesitant to take up the bishopric that has been offered to him. If anything, then, the passage is indicative of the fact that Christians and pagan philosophers in the early fifth century were strongly committed to contradictory positions.

Next, ?Elias (*In Cat.* 187.6–7) explains that the parts of a continuum have to be taken potentially and not actually, for otherwise, he says, 'the definition will be destructive', adding, parenthetically, that 'we will also make the heavens, being continuous and impassible (συνεχῆ ὄντα καὶ ἀπᾰθῆ), destructive and divisible'. It is difficult to understand what this is supposed to mean, and possibly the text is corrupt. In any case, this casual remark, made in the course of a lecture on elementary logic, is hardly sufficient to label the author as an eternalist, especially since the participle is not necessarily factive (it may have conditional force).<sup>20</sup>

Much the same can be said of Ps.-Philoponus (?Stephanus, *In De an.* 540.24–28), who simply reports some anonymous people contending that in the world as a whole no temporal priority obtains between actuality and potentiality, for *if* the world is eternal, as Aristotle believes, they must be simultaneous; the author aptly compares the problem to the conundrum about the hen and the egg.

So much for the evidence of Greek Christian belief in the eternity of the world from the third century onwards. It is not even clear whether any eternalists could be recruited from among the ancient Latin Christians.

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<sup>20</sup> Of course, it is not sufficient to label him as a non-eternalist either, so it cannot be used to establish the author's religious persuasion (his Christianity has been called into question by Wildberg 1990: 42–45).

Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* Book 5, Prose 6 has often been adduced as an example, but Richard Sorabji has pointed out, rightly to my mind, that '[t]he lack of a beginning or end is put forward as a *hypothesis* of Aristotle and Plato' without being clearly endorsed by Boethius (1983: 196 n. 28).<sup>21</sup>

Another reason—and a more important one—for doubting the claim that the motivation for *Contra Proclum* was unrelated to Philoponus' Christian faith is that it seems unlikely that any Greek *non-Christian* writing on cosmology at this time would deny that the world (even the present cosmic structure) is eternal.<sup>22</sup> All known pagan philosophers in the fifth and sixth centuries pledged their allegiance to Plato.<sup>23</sup> And Platonists had always agreed that the perceptible world was created (γενητός), not only in the sense of being composite and thus necessarily involved in a process of coming-to-be and passing-away, but also in the sense that it was created by a cause.<sup>24</sup> For without a cause, Plato said in the *Timaeus* (28a), nothing can be created. They differed, however, as to whether or not this implied that the perceptible world had had a beginning. And again, they all held that the process of coming-to-be and passing-away unfolds in time, but they disagreed as to whether or not this meant that *time* had had a beginning.

The authoritative text on these questions was Plato's *Timaeus*. At first blush, the *Timaeus* would appear to answer them in a fairly unambiguous way: at 28b it is plainly stated that the cosmos, inasmuch as it is corporeal and therefore perceptible, did not always exist, but has come into being, beginning from some starting-point (γένεονεν, ἀπ' ἀρχῆς τινος ἀρξάμενος). And at 38b it is explained that time came into being simultaneously with the

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<sup>21</sup> That is to say, the whole passage of Book 5, Prose 6, sects 10–14 is to be understood as an explication of *Plato's* view in support of Boethius' rejection (in sect. 9) of the attribution of the coeternity thesis to the Athenian philosopher.

<sup>22</sup> I.e. in the sense of not having ever begun to exist (cf. n. 2 above). It is not at all unlikely that they would deny that it is eternal in the atemporal sense in which God is. For the distinction between perpetuity and eternity proper, see below, p. 97. Asclepius (*In Met.* 185.32–186.3) says (apparently reporting—ἀπὸ φωνῆς—Ammonius) that some people claim (φασι 185.32 and 186.1, in the latter instance changed into φησίν by Hayduck) that Aristotle agrees with Plato (*Tim.* 41a–b) that the heavens are both in substance and in their activity destructible, but will be maintained forever since they emanate from the first principle. But later (*In Met.* 194.19–195.4) he explains that Aristotle and Plato considered that the heavenly bodies are indeed perpetual (αἰδία) and indestructible in substance, but not in their activity, and also not conceptually, since they are material and thus composite.

<sup>23</sup> I am not aware of any 5th–6th-century Greek writers on cosmology who were neither Christian nor pagan.

<sup>24</sup> See the synopsis of interpretative possibilities by Calvenus Taurus (fl. c. AD 140) apud Philoponum, *Aet.* 145.13–147.25.



heaven, in order that they may also be dissolved simultaneously, in so far as this will happen. But there is a complication: the account of the *Timaeus* is expressly said by the eponymous main speaker to lack in accuracy and consistency, since it is adapted to the capabilities of mortal men (29c–d). It is only a plausible story (an εἰκῶς μῦθος).

A non-literal interpretation to the effect that the *Timaeus* passages should not be taken to imply a beginning of the cosmos and of time was proposed already by Plato's second successor as head of the Academy, Xenocrates.<sup>25</sup> He was followed, not in the details of his interpretation but in his rejection of literalism, by the vast majority of Platonists for centuries to come.

Aristotle, as we have seen, took the account of the *Timaeus* at face value, and tried to refute it. In the early imperial period, Middle Platonists like Plutarch and Atticus also defended a literal interpretation;<sup>26</sup> but when the *Timaeus* became a set text in the Neoplatonic schools, around the turn of the third century, an exegetical orthodoxy insisting on eternal creation seems to have rapidly evolved. What Plato had meant, according to this orthodoxy, was simply that the perceptible world, being a composite thing, is the site of a perpetual process of coming-to-be and passing-away that is dependent for its continuation on a cause, which really *is*.<sup>27</sup> It has been suggested that the confrontation with Christianity was instrumental in the firm establishment of this interpretation.<sup>28</sup> Be that as it may: by the time the literal interpretation was subjected to Proclus' criticism in his commentary on the *Timaeus* and in his eighteen arguments in favour of eternalism, that is to say in the mid-fifth century, it had had no currency in Platonic circles for at least two hundred years.<sup>29</sup>

In these historical circumstances, then, when every Christian cosmologist and no non-Christian cosmologist could be expected to defend creationism, it seems perverse to insist that the fact that Philoponus did so had nothing to do with his Christianity. It is exceedingly likely that Philoponus would not

<sup>25</sup> What the doctrine of creation was meant to suggest, according to Xenocrates, was rather that the complex structures of the world are always constituted by a disarray of primary elements (Aristotle, *Cael.* 1.10, 279b32–280a2 with Simplicius, *In Cael.* 303.32–304.15).

<sup>26</sup> Atticus, fr. 6 Baudry; Plutarch, *De an. proc.* 1014a–c; cf. Proclus, *In Tim.* 1, 276.30–277.7; 1, 381.26–382.4.

<sup>27</sup> According to Proclus (*In Tim.* 1, 277.8–17), Crantor understood γενητός in this context to mean 'derived from an external source', whereas Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus took it to mean 'composite'. Proclus expresses his agreement with both parties, although his accounts of Plotinus' and Porphyry's views seem to be inaccurate (see Phillips 1997).

<sup>28</sup> See Niehoff (2007: 178–91).

<sup>29</sup> Note, however, that Atticus' exegesis of *Timaeus* 28b–d is quoted approvingly by Aeneas of Gaza in *Theoph.* 46.16–23.

have defended creationism had he not been a Christian. That is tantamount to saying that his refutation of Proclus was most probably motivated by his Christianity.

Indeed, as Michael Share has shown (2004: 4–6), there are passages in *Contra Proclum* that clearly imply that Philoponus saw himself in this work as the defender of the Christian truth. Moreover, as Share points out, some of these passages also show that Philoponus addressed himself at least partly to a Christian audience. This leads us straight to the question regarding the more specific purpose of *Contra Proclum* and the two other works. Why would Philoponus take the trouble to write detailed refutations of Proclus and Aristotle as well as a demonstration of the creationist thesis for the benefit of a Christian audience? After all, this audience would have precious little need for the ‘perfect knowledge’ described in the preface to *De contingentia mundi*, since it had already found the truth in the Bible. What, in short, may have compelled Philoponus to launch his rationalistic programme, and thus, accidentally, to shape the future of cosmology in the Middle Ages?

*Creationist works before Philoponus:  
Aeneas, Procopius and Zacharias*

Some light on this problem might be shed by a few flashbacks to those works that were written in defence of creationism in the preceding couple of generations. For Philoponus’ arguments themselves have ancestors in a small corpus of works from around the turn of the fifth century, which bear testimony to the Christian preoccupation with the question of the eternity of the world in the period between Proclus and Philoponus. Three of these works were written by three different authors associated with the flourishing city of Gaza. A fourth work that should probably be assigned to this period is a treatise known as Ps.-Justin, *Confutatio dogmatum quorundam Aristotelis*.<sup>30</sup>

Of the three Gazan authors the eldest was Aeneas of Gaza (c. 430–post 518), professor of rhetoric in his hometown and the author of a Plato-style philosophical dialogue called *Theophrastus* (after 484).<sup>31</sup> This work is

<sup>30</sup> On the *Confutatio*, see Boeri (2009). Note that while Ps.-Justin expressly rejects the rationalistic approach to creationism in his preface (col. 110C–E), Boeri makes a convincing case for regarding his programme as in effect rationalistic in spite of this (2009: 100–113; 131–35).

<sup>31</sup> On the *Theophrastus*, see Champion (2011); Krausmüller (2009: 54–58); Wacht (1969). An English translation for Duckworth’s Ancient Commentators on Aristotle series by Sebastian Gertz, John Dillon and Donald Russell has been announced (2012).

primarily concerned with questions pertaining to the individual human soul, its pre-existence (which is denied) and its immortality (which is affirmed). It also enters into details on matters of eschatology, but deals with the eternity a parte ante of both matter and the present cosmic structure in a more perfunctory way (43.22–48.17). The two characters of the frame dialogue are said to have been students of Hierocles at the Platonic school of Alexandria, and even if this does not prove anything about Aeneas' own education, it is clear that he was conversant with some of Hierocles' works.<sup>32</sup>

The second Gazan creationist is Procopius of Gaza (c. 465–529), who also became a professor of rhetoric in his hometown after studying in Alexandria. Procopius was not, as some scholars have believed, the author of a refutation of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, which has been shown to be a work of the twelfth century.<sup>33</sup> But he was the author of a commentary on Genesis (*PG* 87a, coll. 21–512), and the reason for mentioning him here is that he devoted a section of the introduction to this commentary (coll. 29A–33B) to deducing a number of allegedly absurd or impossible consequences from the view that the creation is coeternal (συνάιδιος) with the creator, which he ascribed to the Greek philosophers.

As we shall see, the view that the creation is coeternal with the creator is in fact not found in any ancient pagan philosophers. But it is ascribed to them not only by Procopius, but also by many other Christians, including Procopius' contemporary fellow Gazan Zacharias (465/6–post 536), who earned his epithet Scholasticus by writing an ecclesiastical history covering most of the latter half of the fifth century. Some scholars think he was in fact Procopius' brother.<sup>34</sup>

Like his older compatriot Aeneas, Zacharias composed a dialogue, the *Ammonius*.<sup>35</sup> In this dialogue the question of the eternity of the world is discussed at length. The action is partly set in the lecture room of Ammonius Hermiae, the former student of Proclus and future teacher of Philoponus, at the Platonic school of Alexandria. To all appearances it draws on personal experience, even though it borrows a couple of arguments from Aeneas, and others, as we shall see, from other literary sources. In his early student years

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Schibli (2002: 12 and n. 43).

<sup>33</sup> The author's name is Nicholas, Bishop of Methone. On his refutation of Proclus, see Angelou (1984).

<sup>34</sup> Summary of the debate in Minniti Colonna (1973: 18–20).

<sup>35</sup> The standard work on the *Ammonius* is still Minniti Colonna's edition with introduction, commentary and Italian translation (1973). An English translation for Duckworth's Ancient Commentators on Aristotle series by Sebastian Gertz, John Dillon and Donald Russell has been announced (2012).

Zacharias belonged to the *philoponoι* of Alexandria, a brotherhood of zealous laymen, whose ‘favorite task’, in the words of Frank Trombley (1993–94: 2:1), ‘was monitoring the activities of the pagan professors for sacrifice and other cult practices’. He later studied law at Beirut and practised it in Constantinople, until he was appointed bishop of Mytilene sometime before 536.

The thesis argued in the *Ammonius* is stated in the subheading:

The world is not coeternal with God but is in fact His creation, which, having begun from a temporal starting-point, is also destroyed whenever it occurs to the Creator to transform it, and the principle of the goodness of God is in no way vitiated by this thesis (*Amm.* 1–5).<sup>36</sup>

Before I go on to discuss the arguments presented pro and contra this thesis, let me say a few words about the overall structure of the work. The frame dialogue is set in Beirut. A former student of Ammonius has just arrived from Alexandria to study law. Another former student of Ammonius, who is a Christian (and is identified in the preamble, *Amm.* 11–12, as the author himself), recounts to him two conversations between himself and their common teacher on the question of the eternity of the world. The first is said to have taken place during a class on Aristotle’s *Physics* (Book 8, apparently) and the second a couple of days later during a class on the *Ethics* (Book 1, chapter 6, apparently). Sandwiched between these conversations is a report of a discussion in the Temple of the Muses between the Christian and Ammonius’ brightest student, the aspiring physician Gesius. Gesius too is a historical figure, in fact a friend and correspondent of Aeneas and Procopius, who indeed lived to become one of the most celebrated medical teachers of his day.<sup>37</sup> In the final part of the frame dialogue the Christian’s interlocutor raises the interesting question as to why the world was not created indestructible from the outset and the pagan and Christian positions are then summarized.

Zacharias was apparently as convinced as Philoponus about the demonstrability of Christian creationism. At one point his alter ego completely loses patience with the pagan philosophers who

assume that Christianity is only protected by the faith, and does not in addition take joy and pride in incontrovertible arguments and demonstrative necessities, on account of

<sup>36</sup> ὅτι οὐ συναΐδιος τῷ θεῷ ὁ κόσμος, ἀλλὰ δημιούργημα αὐτοῦ τυγχάνει, ὃ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς χρονικῆς ἀρξάμενον καὶ φθείρεται, ὅταν παραστῆ τῷ δημιουργήσαντι τοῦτο μεταποιῆσαι· καὶ οὐδὲν ἐκ τούτου ὁ τῆς ἀγαθότητος τοῦ θεοῦ βλάπτεται λόγος ...

<sup>37</sup> On Gesius, see Watts (2009).

being the only religion that expresses and clothes itself in true belief, pure ratiocination and demonstration based on the laws of reason and the actual facts (*Amm.* 148–53).<sup>38</sup>

In the main part of the dialogue there are basically two arguments against creationism advanced by ‘Ammonius’ and five by ‘Gesius’. One of ‘Gesius’ arguments is in effect identical to one of ‘Ammonius’. So in total we are offered six arguments against creationism. With a bit of good will I think it is possible to identify five of these as variants of arguments found also in Proclus’ defence of eternalism, as quoted by Philoponus.<sup>39</sup> ‘The Christian’ attempts to refute all of them; his refutations sometimes prompt defences from ‘Ammonius’ and ‘Gesius’, which are then in turn responded to. In addition, four positive arguments in favour of creationism are offered by ‘the Christian’.<sup>40</sup> Two of these, to which I shall come back, turn partly on the notion of coeternity mentioned above.

### *The historicity of the Ammonius*

Some scholars have suggested that Zacharias’ dialogue may serve as a complementary source for the philosophy of the historical Ammonius. One of the earliest and most assertive of these scholars was Pierre Courcelle, who believed that the discussions reported by Zacharias actually took place in the summer of 486 or 487.<sup>41</sup> In a somewhat more reflective vein, Philip Merlan

<sup>38</sup> ... οἰόμενοι τὸν Χριστιανισμόν μόνῳ τῷ πιστεύειν τειχίζεσθαι, καὶ μὴ πρὸς τούτῳ λόγοις ἀφύκτοις καὶ ἀποδεικτικαῖς ἀνάγκαις ἐπιγανύσκεσθαι τε καὶ ἀβρύνεσθαι, ὡς μόνην εἶναι ταύτην εὐσέβειαν τὴν πιστεῖ ἀγαθῇ καὶ λογισμοῖς ἀκιβδηλοῖς καὶ ἀποδείξει ταῖς διὰ τῶν λόγων καὶ ταῖς δι’ αὐτῶν τῶν πραγμάτων ἐπανθοῦσάν τε καὶ καλλυνομένην.

<sup>39</sup> With ‘Ammonius’ 1 (*Amm.* 106–13; 131–43) cf. Proclus 1 and 6 (see below); with ‘Ammonius’ 2 (*Amm.* 117–26; 1078–83) cf. Proclus 3 and 16; with ‘Gesius’ 1 (*Amm.* 368–460) cf. Proclus 3 (and Aeneas, *Theophrastus* 43.23–24); with ‘Gesius’ 2 (*Amm.* 553–61) cf. Proclus 5; with ‘Gesius’ 3 (*Amm.* 576–82) cf. Proclus 1 and 6; with ‘Gesius’ 4 (*Amm.* 730–34) cf. Proclus 1 and especially Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 12.15.1 and *Trin.* 5.16; with ‘Gesius’ 5 (*Amm.* 896–902) cf. Basil, *In Hex.* 1.3.9–11.

<sup>40</sup> (1) Argument from the nature of the world: the world consists of destructible parts (*Amm.* 203–7; 658–67; 931–36; see also the appeal at 1290–92 to the principle that what is composite must be dissolved, found in Plato, *Phaedo* 78c and Aristotle, *Metaph.* 14.2, not entered in Minniti Colonna’s apparatus fontium). Cf. Aeneas, *Theophr.* 48.12–17 and Basil, *In Hex.* 1.3.25–32; (2) Argument from the nature of god: axiological priority entails temporal priority (*Amm.* 516–20; 958–68); (3) Argument from the nature of god: productively causal priority entails temporal priority (since productive causation involves volition and the will to create must be temporally prior to the act of creation) (*Amm.* 754–58; 778–89; 1028–74); (4) Argument from the nature of god: unique attributes (*Amm.* 1005–23).

<sup>41</sup> Although he qualified his position: ‘Il ne faudrait pas croire que tout est historique dans ce récit; l’intention apologétique y est trop évidente ...’ (1935: 216). Arguably Siniossoglou (2005) goes even further than Courcelle, relying as he does on Zacharias as a direct source for Ammonius’ views (repeatedly cited as ‘Ammonius *ap.* Zacharias’) without

assumed that Zacharias' dialogue was 'essentially historic' and that 'Ammonius ... actually and in essence professed the doctrines ascribed to [him] by Zacharias' (1968: 194). On the strength of this assumption he went on to draw some fairly far-reaching inferences, as for instance that Ammonius had not recognized the first absolutely transcendent hypostasis of orthodox Neoplatonism (the One), but regarded the second hypostasis, which he identified with both the Aristotelian Intellect and the Platonic Demiurge, as the supreme deity, the productive as well as final cause of the perceptible world.<sup>42</sup> These inferences were in turn taken by Merlan to corroborate Karl Praechter's thesis that the Alexandrian school of Neoplatonism differed markedly from the Athenian school in emphasizing its Aristotelian elements and even accommodating itself to Christianity (1968: 199–201).

Many objections have been raised to Praechter's thesis in recent years. Concerning Ammonius it was pointed out by Koenrad Verrycken that the subject matter of Zacharias' dialogue is natural philosophy rather than theology, and that for this reason we should not expect to find any internal articulation of the divine creative principle in it. As Verrycken said, even Proclus nowhere in his eighteen arguments in favour of eternalism speaks of the first hypostasis, but this has not led anyone to conclude that he did not recognize it. Ammonius' adherence to the orthodox Neoplatonic account of three hypostases, the One, Intellect and Soul, is well attested in other sources. The moral is that Zacharias' dialogue should not be used as evidence for Ammonius' theology (1990: 210–12).

Verrycken did not, however, question the historicity of Zacharias' dialogue.<sup>42bis</sup> Now, if Merlan's and others' assumption that the dialogue is 'essentially historic' stands up to scrutiny, this means that we will still be entitled to draw inferences concerning Ammonius' natural philosophy from it, even if not concerning his theology. But if the assumption proves unfounded, any inferences concerning Ammonius' natural philosophy are of course equally unwarranted. And since such inferences have in fact been drawn, I think it would be useful to subject the assumption to scrutiny.

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any hint that this may be methodologically problematic.

<sup>42</sup> Ammonius' identification of the productive and the final cause of the world is evidenced in other sources (Simplicius, *In Cael.* 271.18–21; *In Phys.* 1363.8–12). See below, n. 44.

<sup>42bis</sup> This paper was already prepared for print when I was made aware of Verrycken (2001), in which the historicity of the *Ammonius* is indeed questioned. Some of the arguments and many of the conclusions in that paper have their counterparts in this one. My heartfelt thanks to Sebastian Gertz for the reference.

### *The arguments of the Ammonius*

Let us first try to see to what extent the testimony of other sources lends support to Merlan's assumption. It will be found, I think, that some of the statements attributed to 'Ammonius' and 'Gesius' in Zacharias' dialogue may well correspond more or less accurately to the views of their historical namesakes. 'Ammonius'' insistence that Plato and Aristotle are in agreement on everything, even on the theory of Forms, is a case in point.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, the repeated assertion that God is a productive cause may reflect the historical Ammonius' preoccupation with showing that Aristotle's unmoved mover, despite appearances, is a productive cause.<sup>44</sup> Much the same can be said of 'Ammonius'' first argument against creationism. It combines elements from Proclus' first and sixth arguments in favour of eternalism with some other material in a rather interesting way.

Let me first recapitulate Proclus' first argument. It is based on assumptions about the nature of the creator as well as that of his creation, the world. Both the creator and the world are good. If the creator is eternally so and in addition omnipotent, it follows that he has always been both willing and able to ensure that the world exist. If he had not, he would also have been subject to change. But he cannot have been subject to change, so the world must always have existed.<sup>45</sup>

In his sixth argument, Proclus assumes, on the authority of the *Timaeus* (41a–b), that only the creator can dissolve the world. On the other hand, only an evil power will dissolve something good. The world is good. And the creator is also good. Therefore the world will not be dissolved by anyone. What will not be dissolved is indestructible. Therefore the world is indestructible. But by the axiom stated by Plato at *Rep.* VIII 546a2 and argued

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<sup>43</sup> *Amm.* 946–52. Cf. Asclepius, *In Metaph.* 69.17–27.

<sup>44</sup> See especially *Amm.* 958–1056. Cf. Ammonius apud Simpl. *In Phys.* 1363.8–13; cf. *In Cael.* 271.18–21. However, in the discussion with 'Gesius' (*Amm.* 490–504), Zacharias makes it clear that he considers the pagan concepts of 'creation' and 'production' as being concerned with the imposition of form and order on preexisting matter rather than with the bringing forth of substances, contrary to the historical Ammonius' view as reported by Simplicius (*In Phys.* 1363.2–8). In the same vein, Zacharias depicts 'Ammonius' as being ignorant of the Neoplatonic distinction between proper, cooperative and instrumental causes at *Amm.* 209–30 (cf. Sorabji 1983: 305–6).

<sup>45</sup> Proclus' first argument and part of Philoponus' reply to it went missing from the archetype (Marc. gr. 236, 9th–10th cent.) before the oldest extant descendant (Par. gr. 2058, 15th/16th cent.) was copied, but an Arabic translation of precisely this part of the text survives. An English translation by Peter Adamson will be found in Share (2004); another, by John McGinnis, in Lang & Macro (2001).

by Aristotle in *De caelo* 1.12, what is indestructible must also be uncreated. Therefore the world is eternal, a parte post as well as a parte ante.<sup>46</sup>

Let us now compare this with ‘Ammonius’ first argument in Zacharias’ dialogue, which is as follows (*Amm.* 102–13; 127–43): Assuming that the world is good and the creator is good, how could the world come to an end? Would it be (a) contrary to the creator’s wish or (b) in accordance with it? If (a), then god is impotent. But if (b), then why would the creator wish to destroy something good? Three possibilities are considered. (i) Perhaps it is in order to create something better? Impossible ex hypothesi (the world is the best of created things). (ii) Perhaps it is in order to create something worse? Blasphemy! (iii) Perhaps, then, to create something equally good? That would be otiose. So if god is not impotent, evil, or simply frivolous, the world cannot come to an end. And if it cannot come to an end, then by the Platonic and Aristotelian axiom it cannot have come into being either.

Like Proclus’ sixth argument, then, ‘Ammonius’ first argument sets out first to establish the impossibility of an end to the world and then infers the impossibility of a beginning by the Platonic and Aristotelian axiom. Like Proclus’ first argument, it is based on the divine attributes of goodness and omnipotence (to which ‘Ammonius’ adds seriousness). Since it seeks to establish the impossibility of a beginning of the world only indirectly (via the Platonic and Aristotelian axiom) it can dispense with the attribute of changelessness added for good measure by Proclus. In his second argument (*Amm.* 115–26; 1078–83), ‘Ammonius’ in fact proceeds to argue directly from the changelessness of the creator to the impossibility of a beginning, noting in addition that if the creation of something good requires a change of mind on the part of the omnipotent creator, the creator must previously have been either ignorant of what is good or unwilling to promote it. ‘The Christian’s’ reply to this is the classic reply found in (e.g.) Augustine: willing a change is not the same thing as changing one’s will.<sup>47</sup> So the changelessness of the creator is not imperilled by creationism.

So far, ‘Ammonius’ first and second arguments seem, on the whole, historically plausible. The three possible explanations for the creator’s wish to destroy the world that he examines (i–iii above) may however be a cause for suspicion. This trilemma seems to have no parallel in any of Proclus’ arguments; on the other hand, it follows rather closely an argument reported

<sup>46</sup> Apud Philoponum, *Aet.* 119.13–120.14.

<sup>47</sup> ‘... aliud est mutare voluntatem; et aliud est velle aliquarum rerum mutationem’, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theol.* 1a, q. 19, a. 7 co. Cf. Augustine, *Conf.* 11.10; 11.30; 12.15; 12.28; *De civ. Dei* 11.4; 12.15; 12.18.



by ?Philo of Alexandria (*Aet.* 39–44).<sup>48</sup> As it turns out ‘the Christian’ actually attempts to disarm ‘Ammonius’ first argument by insisting that the creator can and will create something better (that is to say, by embracing the first horn of the trilemma).

The assertion that the best of created things cannot be bettered might look a bit too mindless to be fathered on a famous philosopher. But perhaps Zacharias is only a trifle unfair. Perhaps the historical Ammonius based his argument on the less vulnerable premise that the world is not only the best thing there actually is but the best there can possibly be. Or he might have pointed out, with ?Philo’s source (*Aet.* 43), and in the spirit of Proclus’ first argument, that the possibility now to create something better would imply a previous lack of either goodness or ability on the creator’s part. Be that as it may: there are other arguments in the dialogue which are unlikely to have been put forward by any Platonists in Zacharias’ time, and which appear to serve the primary purpose of providing cues for Christian catch-phrases. I will give a few more examples below.

### *Coeternity*

But for the time being, let us move on to have a look at some of the inferences that have been drawn specifically about Ammonius’ natural philosophy. One of these is, not unexpectedly, that Ammonius believed in the coeternity of the world and its creator. As we saw, this thesis, stated in the subheading of the dialogue, is the primary target of Zacharias’ attack. Indeed, it is either expressed by the character ‘Ammonius’ himself or ascribed to him by his Christian interlocutor more than a dozen times in the dialogue.<sup>49</sup>

It should be noted to begin with that there is no independent evidence of such a belief on the part of the historical Ammonius. And on the face of it, it does not seem very likely that the coeternity thesis would have recommended itself to any Neoplatonist. One reason is that it would probably appear to them to have exactly the sort of implications that it seemed to Zacharias to have: if the world and its creator share in the same eternity, they must also be equal in honour (ὁμότιμοι).<sup>50</sup> If not in any other respect,

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<sup>48</sup> On the question of the authenticity of this dialogue, see Runia (1981), who is in favour, and Skarsten (1987), who is against.

<sup>49</sup> It is stated by ‘Ammonius’ at *Amm.* 955; 1033–34; 1062–63; 1078–79; and by ‘Gesius’ at *Amm.* 525–26.

<sup>50</sup> *Amm.* 516–17; cf. *Amm.* 991; 1286–90; 1360–62.

then at least in terms of seniority. But God must be superior to the world in every respect (*Amm.* 953–94). Any Neoplatonist would readily admit that.<sup>51</sup>

The Neoplatonists, at least from Proclus onwards, made a clear-cut and explicit distinction between sempiternity (or perpetuity), ἀιδιότης κατὰ χρόνον, which is the infinite progression in time of the sensible world, and what we may call eternity proper, αἰώνιος ἀιδιότης, which is the timeless *now* characteristic of the intelligible world.<sup>52</sup> This distinction is ubiquitous in the medieval Latin tradition thanks to Boethius, who famously employed it in the last book of the *Consolation of Philosophy* to resolve the apparent contradiction between divine omniscience and human free will.

We know from Ammonius' commentary on *De interpretatione* 9 that his position on omniscience and free will was fairly close to that of Boethius.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, it is tempting to quote the last book of the *Consolation* on his behalf:<sup>54</sup>

When some people hear that Plato thought this world neither had a beginning in time nor will ever have an end, they mistakenly conclude that the created world is coeternal (*coaeternus*) with the Creator. However, to be led through the endless life Plato attributes to the world is one thing; to embrace simultaneously the whole presence of endless life is quite another, and it is this latter that is proper to the divine mind (*Cons.* 5, prosa 6, sects 9–10; trans. R. T. Miller).

But this is not how the literary character 'Ammonius' responds. On the contrary, he is reduced to silence and finally seems to acknowledge that he has been refuted by 'the Christian' (*Amm.* 995–1002; 1092; 1126–27).

Evidently, then, the ascription of the coeternity thesis to Ammonius is suspicious. On closer inspection, the term συναίδιος and its cognates (returning more than 900 results in TLG) turn out to be exclusively restricted to Christian authors.<sup>55</sup> It seems likely that they were coined for a theological

<sup>51</sup> Even in Zacharias' dialogue, 'Ammonius' as well as 'Gesius' deny that the world is equal in honour to God (*Amm.* 122–23; 524–26).

<sup>52</sup> For Proclus, see especially *Inst. Theol.* 55.16–21. The distinction is prefigured in several earlier philosophers, most notably Plotinus (*Enn.* 3.7.5; cf. also Porphyry, *In Tim.* fr. 46.10–15 Sodano). In more inchoate forms it is found even in Aristotle (*Cael.* 1.9, 279a18–b3) and Plato (*Tim.* 38c1–3), on whom it is fathered by Boethius (*Cons.* liber 5, prosa 6, sect. 14).

<sup>53</sup> *In Int.* 132.8–137.11, esp. 136.1–25 on the gods' unitary, definite and immutable knowledge of things past and future.

<sup>54</sup> For another defence of the eternalist position in similar terms, see Simplicius' reply to 'John the Grammarian's argument' at *In Phys.* 1327.29–1328.35. Cf. also Thomas Aquinas, *Aet. mund.*

<sup>55</sup> Calcidius' report of Numenius, printed by des Places as fragment 52, is usually taken to be more or less literal, but the inference about the coeternity of uncreated matter with God may well be Calcidius' own: 'atque ita, quia generationis sit fortuna posterior, inornatum

context (the Son being coeternal with the Father). At any rate this is how they are used by the vast majority of authors. The first times they are used with reference to the coeternity between the world and its creator seem to be in a passage in Gregory of Nyssa (*Contra Eun.* 1.1.359.7) and, more importantly, in chapter three of Basil of Caesarea's first homily on the *Hexaemeron*.

There is every reason to think that Basil's first homily is in fact the source of the term in Zacharias (as it undoubtedly is in Procopius of Gaza's *Genesis* commentary). First and foremost, there are a number of other arguments in the *Ammonius* that are identical or at least very similar to arguments in this homily; in a few instances they are expressly credited to Basil (*Amm.* 662; 906; 1290). For instance, one of the four positive arguments in favour of creationism put forward by 'the Christian' (repeatedly: *Amm.* 203–7; 658–67; 931–36) is the following: everything composed of destructible parts is destructible as a whole; the world is composed of destructible parts; hence it is destructible as a whole; by the Platonic and Aristotelian axiom that what is destructible has also been created, then, the world has been created.

For all 'the Christian's' claims of irrefutability (*Amm.* 663–67), the argument is not strikingly cogent. Its first premise was denied in antiquity by Theophrastus (apud ?Philonem, *Aet. mund.* 143) as well as Galen (apud Philoponum, *Aet.* 592.5–7; 599.17–601.20), and its second premise would undoubtedly have been denied by the historical Ammonius, as it was by Proclus, who indeed based an argument in favour of the indestructibility of the world as a whole on the indestructibility of the heavens (apud Philoponum, *Aet.* 477.14–479.10). It is also, from a Neoplatonic as well as a Christian point of view, of dubious parentage, since it was probably first used by Epicurus (it plays a role in Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 5, 236–323). Still, as the Christian points out, it rests on patristic authority, for it is showcased in Basil's first homily on the *Hexaemeron*, chapter three.<sup>56</sup>

The same is true of 'the Christian's' reply to 'Gesius'' final argument in Zacharias' dialogue. As 'Gesius' maintains, rather absurdly, that the spherical shape of the world itself precludes a beginning and an end, 'the Christian' sees his chance to quote Basil (*In Hex.* 1.3.9–11) to the effect that

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illud minime generatum aequaeuum deo, a quo est ordinatum, intelligi debeat.'

<sup>56</sup> *In Hex.* 1.3.30–32. Cf. Lactantius, *Div. inst.* 7.1, col. 736A. The argument is reported by ?Philo, *Aet. mund.* 124. According to McDiarmid (1940: 243) it is 'undoubtedly Stoic or Epicurean'. Sedley (1998) thinks it is Epicurean (*On Nature* 10 or 11), the refutation reported at *Aet. mund.* 143 being by Theophrastus. Sharples (1998: 131–42) agrees with Sedley.

even a circle has a beginning, at the points, namely, where the geometrician's compasses are placed (*Amm.* 896–907).<sup>57</sup>

In her edition of Zacharias' dialogue, Maria Minniti Colonna, who was well aware of the clear and express distinction between worldly sempiternity and divine eternity in Proclus, concluded that the thesis of the world's coeternity with its creator must probably have been original with the historical Ammonius (1973: 52). It should be said in all fairness that Minniti Colonna elsewhere wisely cautioned against taking all the arguments attributed by Zacharias to his teacher to reflect Ammonius' real views. But in this particular case she thought she had a good reason for relying on Zacharias. The reason was that the coeternity thesis also figures in Philoponus' *Contra Proclum*. And Philoponus, as we know, was also a student of Ammonius. Thus we would seem to have two independent witnesses in agreement.

Minniti Colonna's conclusion is, however, severely undermined by the uncertainty that surrounds the scope of the agreement as well as the degree of independence between Philoponus and Zacharias. To begin with, it should be noted that Philoponus never attributes the thesis to Ammonius. Indeed, Ammonius is never even mentioned in *Contra Proclum*. It is true that, when he first introduces the thesis, Philoponus does attribute it to some anonymous opponents (in the plural, like in the Boethius passage quoted earlier), and it may seem a natural inference that these are contemporary Neoplatonists, but the context suggests otherwise.

This context is related to those passages in the *Ammonius* in which Zacharias advances two positive arguments in favour of creationism turning on the notion of coeternity. So let us have a quick glance at these. The first argument comes in the conversation with 'Gesius' (*Amm.* 516–34). I have already alluded to it. If we grant that the world is coeternal with God, 'the Christian' says, then by the same token it will also be equal to Him in honour (ὁμότιμος). But equating the glory of the finite and perceptible world with that of the boundless and invisible nature would certainly be impious.<sup>58</sup> 'Gesius'' reply takes the form of a counterexample to the underlying assumption that all things contemporaneous (or coeternal) are also equal in honour: shadows are contemporaneous with the bodies that cast them, but

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<sup>57</sup> For this argument, see also Wolfson (1966: 352–54).

<sup>58</sup> This argument seems to develop a train of thought in Basil, *In Hex.* 2.2: if uncreated matter existed it would be equal in honour (ὁμότιμος) to God, the thought of which is abhorrent. The description of the finite world and the boundless nature closely follows Basil's wording in *In Hex.* 1.3.25–29 (the very same passage in which the coeternity thesis is mentioned).

are also caused by them and on that account inferior in honour.<sup>59</sup> ‘The Christian’ retorts that a body may indeed be a cause of the shadow, but not the only cause—since there also has to be light—and, more importantly, not a volitional cause.

The assumption that God is a (productive and thus) volitional cause comes into play in the second argument. This argument is repeated with some variations a number of times (see above, n. 40), but I think the following (abridged) example, from the second conversation with ‘Ammonius’ (*Amm.* 1028–55), is sufficiently representative.

Chr. Do you think it is possible for simultaneously existing things to be each others’ productive causes?

Amm. Not at all.

Chr. Would you say that coeternal things are simultaneous?

Amm. Of necessity.

Chr. And the world is coeternal with God?

Amm. Indeed.

Chr. And God, you say, is the productive cause of the world?

Amm. Of course he is.

Chr. Well, can’t you see that this is impossible on your views, provided the world is not some sort of a shadow, or else is the effect of its cause either in the sense of a complement of a substance (like the sun’s radiance) or in the sense of being consubstantial with it (like the Son with the Father). But this cause is *productive*, and furthermore *conscious and volitional* (ἐμφρῶν καὶ προαιρετική). So one premise has to be rejected: either God and the world are not coeternal, or God is not the productive cause of the world.

Both of Zacharias’ positive arguments are clearly developments of Basil’s exegesis of the word ἐποίησεν in Genesis 1:1, in chapter seven of his first homily on the *Hexaemeron*. Basil’s point is precisely that this word is used in order to make clear that the world is in the strict sense a *product*, that is to say, a separate artifact brought forth by an act of will on the part of the artificer, wherefore it is also necessary for it to be posterior in time to the productive cause, since any effect simultaneous with its cause must necessarily be an involuntary effect, like a shadow or a shaft of light (*In Hex.* 1.7.12–26). Basil’s analogies (ὡσπερ τῆς σκιᾶς τὸ σῶμα καὶ τῆς λαμπηδόνος τὸ ἀπαυγάζον) are quoted word by word at *Amm.* 757–58.

If we now turn to the passage in which the coeternity thesis is first introduced in Philoponus’ *Contra Proclum* (*Aet.* 14.18–17.14), we shall find that

<sup>59</sup> ‘Gesius’ indicates that he has borrowed his counterexample (φασί, l. 522). Minniti Colonna in her apparatus fontium draws attention to Plotinus, *Enn.* 4.3.9; *ibid.* 6.3.7; Sallustius, *De deis et mundo* 7.2. See below, p. 102. Cf. also Aeneas, *Theophrastus* 45.21–46.16, part of which (46.2–5) is quoted verbatim in ‘the Christian’s’ reply.

Philoponus, too, is arguing that the analogies with shadows and light adduced by the proponents of the thesis fail conspicuously to show that the thesis is true. The difference between him on the one hand and Basil and Zacharias on the other is that Philoponus is not using the premise that volitional causes must be temporally prior to their effects, but the more general one that all positive effects, in so far as they are not part of the substance of their causes, must be temporally posterior to their cause. As for the analogies, he quickly dismisses the shadow as a merely negative effect, but argues at length that there are two kinds of light: that which coexists with the sun is part of the substance of its cause, the sun; whereas the kind of light that flows from the sun into the air can evidently be destroyed before the sun is, and thus it is also (temporally) pre-existed by the sun.<sup>60</sup>

Apart from this, there are also certain features shared by the passages in Zacharias and Philoponus as against that in Basil. The immediate connection of the coeternity thesis with the two analogies is one such feature: in Basil (*In Hex.* 1.7.18–26.) the analogies are simply ascribed to ‘some of those who imagine that the world has co-existed with God from eternity’ (and if we are to take him strictly at his word these thinkers must have existed before Moses, since he is the one supposed to have chosen the word ἐποίησεν in order to correct their mistake). In addition, while Basil’s version of the analogy with the shaft of light speaks generally of its cause as ‘the source of radiation’ (τὸ ἀπαιγάζον, *In Hex.* 1.7.23), Zacharias identifies this source as the sun (*Amm.* 1042), whereas Philoponus speaks alternately of the sun and ‘the fire in our place’ (i.e. the terrestrial region), and completely avoids the Basileian terminology of ‘shaft of light’ (λαμπηδών) and ‘radiate’ (ἀπαιγάζω). More importantly, the distinction between the two kinds of simultaneous effects (negative ones and ones inherent in the cause) spelt out clearly by Philoponus is hinted at by Zacharias but completely absent in Basil.

Anyway: since the coeternity thesis is mentioned in another chapter of Basil’s first homily on the *Hexaemeron* and several of the arguments put forward by Zacharias’ characters are borrowed from this text, it seems plausible to think that the same text is also the source of the coeternity thesis in the *Ammonius*. Since Philoponus introduces the thesis without any mention of Ammonius, even though he connects it with the same analogies as does Zacharias, the assumption that his anonymous opponents are identical with

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<sup>60</sup> In a decidedly more Neoplatonic spirit, ?Elias, *In Cat.* 120.16–19, refers to the analogy of the sun and its light in illustration of God’s non-temporal and causal pre-existence to the world (allegedly reporting Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*).

Ammonius is unnecessary and gratuitous. And since the thesis was never defended by any Neoplatonists, and furthermore conflicts with fundamental Neoplatonic views shared also by Ammonius, there is, in conclusion, no reason apart from Zacharias' attribution for thinking that Ammonius subscribed to it, and several reasons for thinking that he did not.

The mysterious proponents of the coeternity thesis referred to by Philoponus, if they have ever existed, are very probably older than Basil. Matthias Baltes claimed (1976: 163–69) that all three passages discussed above (and three others making use of the same or similar analogies) derived 'with certainty' from a lost work by Porphyry, perhaps his commentary on the *Timaeus*.<sup>61</sup> I will not dispute the possibility that the examples of the shaft of light and the shadow were taken by Basil from a context in which Porphyry was trying to show that there is nothing to prevent a cause and its effect being simultaneous (like ?Elias in the passage cited above, n. 60, which is not discussed by Baltes), even if I doubt very much that Porphyry would have refused to admit that the world's coming-into-being issues from God (a refusal which Basil attributes to his source, *In Hex.* 1.7.19–20), or indeed that he would have conceived of the eternity of the world and that of God as being one and the same thing (a view which Basil, as we have seen, does not expressly attribute to his source, but Zacharias and Philoponus do).<sup>62</sup> I do think, however, that it is beyond reasonable doubt that Zacharias took these examples, as he took the argument from the destructibility of the parts (and the refutation of the argument from the spherical shape of the world, and very probably many other things), from Basil. After all, he quotes his *ipsissima verba*. Thus, in so far as Philoponus agrees with Zacharias against Basil, this cannot be used, as Baltes seems to have thought, as evidence for the content of a common source, but rather indicates Philoponus' dependence on Zacharias.

### *The aim of Zacharias' and Philoponus' anti-eternalist works*

Some degree of acquaintance with the work of Zacharias on the part of Philoponus is likely anyway. Edward Watts has suggested (2005) that the *Ammonius* was written especially for the needs of Christian philosophy stu-

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<sup>61</sup> The other passages discussed by Baltes are from Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 10.31, and Sallustius, *De deis et mundo* 7.2, in addition to Aeneas, *Theophr.* 45.21–46.16, mentioned above, n. 59. An interesting variation, not discussed by Baltes, is provided by Theophanes of Nicaea (d. c. 1381), who, while retaining some of Basil's (or rather Zacharias') language (ἀπαυγασμάτων), substitutes an analogy with reflections from lustrous bodies for that of shadows (*Apodeixis* 3; see Polemis 2000: 35\*).

<sup>62</sup> For the distinction in Porphyry, see *In Tim.* fr. 46.10–15 Sodano.

dents in Alexandria, who might have been so impressed by the personal authority of their Neoplatonic teachers that they were tempted to experiment with pagan worship. In order to forestall this, Zacharias is supposed to have tried to subvert the teachers' authority by portraying them in an unflattering way.

To my mind, this is in part, but only in part, a plausible suggestion. The plausible part is the idea that the dialogue was written for the needs of Christian philosophy students in Alexandria. My reservations have to do (1) with the fact that the stated purpose of the *Ammonius* is to counter eternalism, not pagan worship; and (2) with the possibility that Watts is underestimating the degree to which at least some of the arguments are seriously intended. For as we have seen, there are many details in Zacharias' portrayal of Ammonius' and Gesius' views that correspond perfectly well with what we can infer from other sources, despite the fact that there are others that cannot possibly be true to life. After all, most of the arguments attributed to Ammonius and Gesius have parallels in Proclus apud Philoponum. Besides, if, as seems reasonable to think, Zacharias was trying to reinforce the Christian philosophy students' belief in Christian creationism, it is difficult to see why he would have thought that denigrating their eternalist teachers should be a particularly effective strategy, when, arguably, it was more likely to be counterproductive. Eternalism was spread through arguments. Accordingly, it had to be countered with arguments. I cannot see any reason to doubt the sincerity of Zacharias' conviction (expressed in *Amm.* 148–53) that creationism could be philosophically defended. This is, after all, a conviction he shared with Philoponus and many mediaeval philosophical authors.

Still, if Zacharias' aim really was to provide an antidote to the pernicious doctrine of eternalism, spread among his Christian brethren by the Neoplatonic teachers, one probably has to conclude that he was not entirely successful. Not so much, perhaps, by reason of the occasional misrepresentations of his opponent's views, whether these were motivated by polemical purposes or simply the result of a lack of understanding,<sup>63</sup> as because his positive arguments in favour of creationism are less than philosophically satisfactory. One can only presume that there were Christian students of Ammonius who felt that something more compelling than this was needed,

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<sup>63</sup> I note with interest that Krausmüller suspects Aeneas of Gaza of exactly the failure to understand 'the distinction between "supra-temporal" and "temporal" ... one rather gets the sense that he sees eternity simply as a never-ending time-span' (2009: 56).



if the eternalists' challenge were to be met. On second thought, one can do better than presume. We know there was at least one such student.

If it is true that the *Ammonius* was composed for an audience of Christian philosophy students in Alexandria, Philoponus certainly belonged to the intended readership. According to Minniti Colonna (1973: 44–45) the *Ammonius* should be dated certainly after 491, probably after 512 and possibly even after 518. In 512 Philoponus was twenty-something, a brilliant student in Ammonius' seminar, entrusted with preparing his teacher's lecture-notes for publication.<sup>64</sup>

Obviously, Philoponus' three works on the eternity of the world are not immaculately free from malicious artifice. As we have seen, for instance, he too ascribes the coeternity thesis to his opponents, even once suggesting that the main thrust of Proclus' sixth argument is to convince us that Plato considered the existence of the heavens to be coeternal with the Creator.<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless they constitute an undeniable advance on the works of Aeneas, Procopius and Zacharias. They are basically serious full-scale philosophical treatises proceeding on the assumption that the Christian creationist doctrine can be satisfactorily defended by rational argument. The first work, *Contra Proclum*, quotes in full Proclus' arguments before setting out to refute them. After all, that is how Proclus' arguments have survived. Likewise, the sec-

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<sup>64</sup> If Watts (2005: 219) is right in assuming that the *Ammonius* was first composed in the 490s and revised in the 520s, the second edition would have appeared just in time for being taken into account in the *Contra Proclum*. However, the only argument he presents in favour of his assumption, namely that since the discussions with Ammonius pick up on ideas in Aeneas' *Theophrastus*, supposedly composed in the late 480s, whereas the discussions with Gesius do not, the Gesius episode was probably written later (2005: 229 n. 51), fails to convince, partly because it seems to rest on false premises. As far as the subject of the eternity of the world is concerned I have been able to find three ideas common to the *Theophrastus* and the *Ammonius*. One of them is the idea that there is no need to suppose that the creator was inactive before the creation of the perceptible world, since he was busy creating the intelligible world (*Theophr.* 44.19–45.4). In the *Ammonius*, this idea is expressed in the Gesius episode (*Amm.* 650–52). Another is Basil's idea that the destructibility of the parts entails the destructibility of the whole (*Theophr.* 48.12–15). In the *Ammonius*, this idea is expressed both in the Gesius episode and in the first conversation with Ammonius (*Amm.* 203–7; 658–67; 931–36). A third is Basil's idea that the shadow simile employed by the Platonists to illustrate the doctrine of eternal creation is irrelevant to the relationship between a voluntary creator and his creation. In the *Ammonius*, this idea is expressed both in the Gesius episode and in the second conversation with Ammonius; however, the point that an auxiliary cause besides the body is needed to produce a shadow, namely light, is common to the *Theophrastus* (46.2–5) and the Gesius episode (*Amm.* 536–45, where indeed the *Theophrastus* passage is quoted verbatim) but is not found in the conversation with Ammonius (*Amm.* 1028–55).

<sup>65</sup> *Aet.* 126.3–11. At *Aet.* 272.27–273.3 he ascribes to Proclus the view that the soul's self-movement entails the coeternity of the body and the soul.

ond work, *Contra Aristotelem*, followed the exposition in *Physics* 8.1 and *De caelo* 1.2–4 more or less point by point.

And on the whole, Philoponus' positive arguments in favour of creationism are more compelling than those of Zacharias. That is probably also the reason why they went on to have such a spectacular career, and Zacharias' did not. The only Byzantine author on cosmology I know of who does not seem to draw at all on Philoponus but instead on Zacharias is Gregory Palamas, who bases his own case for creationism, in the first two chapters of the *Capita philosophica* (1347/48), on two bits of evidence: the unimpressive argument, originally deriving from Basil, that the world, being composed of destructible parts, must be destructible as a whole; and the testimony of Moses and Christ, which is qualified by Palamas as 'certain and irrefutable proof' (C. 1–2).<sup>66</sup> It may not be fortuitous that the (rare) absence of Philoponean arguments here coincides with a (likewise rare) repudiation of any sort of rationalistic programme: according to Palamas (C. 21), facts about the World as a whole, including the fact that it has been created, belong in the same epistemological category as facts about God and Man, which are only knowable through the teaching of the spirit.

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<sup>66</sup> Palamas' dependence on Zacharias was shown by Demetrakopoulos (2000: 316).

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A Byzantine philosopher's devoutness toward God:  
George Pachymeres' poetic epilogue to his commentary  
on Aristotle's *Physics*\*

PANTELIS GOLITSIS

George Pachymeres was born in Nicaea in 1242 and died sometime after 1307, perhaps as late as 1315, in Constantinople, where he served as a high-ranking member of the clergy at St Sophia. Pachymeres has long been well known among Byzantinists for his important historical work, which covers the first forty-eight years of the Palaiologan dynasty (1259–1307).<sup>1</sup> As a historian he has been repeatedly praised for his objectivity and his mastery of ancient Greek language and literature,<sup>2</sup> which have made him appear in the history of culture as an illustrious example of the so-called 'Byzantine Humanism'.<sup>3</sup> His humanism is certainly not irrelevant to his status as one of the most prolific writers of philosophy in Byzantium. Apart from his *Philosophia*, a synopsis of the *corpus aristotelicum* in twelve books, which has been widely known in the West from the time of the Renaissance via its Latin translation,<sup>4</sup> Pachymeres also produced for teaching purposes, as I have argued elsewhere, a series of 'running commentaries' on Aristotle,<sup>5</sup>

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\* I would like to thank Katerina Ierodiakonou and Panos Dimas for inviting me to participate at the meeting held in the Norwegian Institute at Athens. While discussing my paper, Börje Bydén made many fruitful comments and suggestions; to him, as well as to Sten Ebbesen and Dominic O'Meara, I am particularly grateful for correcting my previous understanding of v. 17 of Pachymeres' poem. I would also like to thank George Bolierakis, George Karamanolis and Lutz Koch, who kindly discussed with me a much earlier draft of this paper. Finally, thanks are due to the anonymous readers, who helped me improve it significantly.

<sup>1</sup> Failler & Laurent (1984–2000).

<sup>2</sup> See Hunger (1978: 447–53); Fryde (2000: 315–19); Failler (2004).

<sup>3</sup> See, most characteristically, Arnakis (1966–67).

<sup>4</sup> P. Becchius (Basel, 1560). The first book of the *Philosophia*, which abridges the *Organon*, was published earlier in Greek (Paris, 1548). An edition of the whole work is being prepared by the Academy of Athens; three books have appeared until now: Book 10 (on the *Metaphysics*, cf. Pappa 2002), Book 11 (on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, cf. Oikonomakos 2005) and Book 6 (on the *De partibus animalium*, cf. Pappa 2008). A new, critical edition of the first book has been recently undertaken by the present author.

<sup>5</sup> By 'running commentary' (or exegesis) I mean what Byzantine authors themselves often designated as ἐξήγησις, that is, the kind of commentary which comments on a text in its entirety by dividing it into lemmas. It is therefore clearly distinguished from other types of commentaries such as paraphrases and synopses, which do not presuppose *reading* the text commented on.

which have not yet been published:<sup>6</sup> on the six treatises of the *Organon*, on the *Physics*, on the *Metaphysics* and on the *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>7</sup> He is also the author of the *continuatio* of Proclus' commentary on the *Parmenides*,<sup>8</sup> contained in his autograph codex *Parisinus gr.* 1810 along with other Platonic dialogues and commentaries on Plato.<sup>9</sup> It becomes clear that Pachymeres was deeply engaged in doing philosophy. Why?

This may seem a trivial question, but it is of particular importance in the case of Byzantine philosophy. Philosophy in Byzantium has often been seen quite schematically by modern historians as part of a Byzantine's standard erudition—roughly amounting to the idea of the Byzantine 'scholar' (be it a monk, an aristocrat, or a state or church official)—or as the self-justified continuation of a long-established venerable intellectual activity, which was naturally passed on to the Byzantines from Greek antiquity—and so one finds it legitimate to speak of the middle period of 'Greek', by this time Christianized, philosophy. However, not all periods of Byzantine history were equally intense with regard to philosophical activity, nor were they all characterized by the same understanding of the content and scope of philosophy.<sup>10</sup> It is the main purpose of the present contribution to offer an explanation for Pachymeres' intense philosophical activity at the beginning of the fourteenth century by means of a close reading of the poem which he appended to his commentary on the *Physics* and of some parallel texts. The case that I will try to make is that, through his philosophical activity, Pachymeres wished to defend a certain conception of how man should see his life and shape his devoutness, as opposed to a self-fashioning of monastic inspiration which dominated (the Church of) his time. I will further suggest that Pachymeres' intellectual stance did not emanate from a mere theo-

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<sup>6</sup> The only exception is the commentary on the *Physics*, which has recently been published under the name of Michael Psellos; cf. Benakis (2008). I have argued fully in favour of Pachymeres' authorship of this commentary in Golitsis (2007). Unfortunately, due to its erroneous *stemma codicum* and its misreadings (I shall refer to one case below), Benakis' edition cannot be used as a wholly reliable source for the text.

<sup>7</sup> On Pachymeres' philosophical works and teaching see Golitsis (2008: 54–60). The *Philosophia* was conceived as a means to a first acquaintance with the Aristotelian corpus, having a wider scope and being addressed (at least ideally) to a wider audience; it was followed (at least for Pachymeres' students) by the study of Aristotle's text through the various running commentaries and by the study of Plato.

<sup>8</sup> See Westerink & al. (1989).

<sup>9</sup> On Pachymeres' autographa, almost exclusively philosophical in their content, see Harlfinger (1996: 48) and Golitsis (2010b).

<sup>10</sup> See the excellent account by B. Bydén and K. Ierodiakonou, 'Byzantine Philosophy', in E. N. Zalta (ed.), *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/byzantine-philosophy/>).

retical concern about philosophy but also reflects facts related to his own life. Finally, I will try to show how Pachymeres' extended philosophical exegesis can be regarded as marking a new phase in the history of Byzantine philosophy.

*The study of the Physics: Aristotle  
'Christianized' and exemplified*

Pachymeres' commentary on the *Physics* ends with a poem written in hexameter (there is no epilogue in prose), which is directly inspired by the preceding study of Aristotle. It is preserved in ff. 154<sup>v</sup>–155<sup>r</sup> (ff. 1<sup>r</sup>–154<sup>r</sup> contain the commentary) of his autograph codex *Laurentianus plut.* 87,5 and goes as follows:<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The poem was first published by Bandini (1770: coll. 385–86), with a number of transcription errors, and later by Cougny (1890): *Epigrammata exhortatoria et supplicatoria*, no. 101, with many erroneous conjectures. Here is a new, revised transcription of the poem (I have regularised the punctuation), which I first published together with a French translation in Golitsis (2007: 652–53) (its revision and rendering into English owe much to the insights of Börje Bydén and Katerina Ierodiakonou):

Φύσιος ἦψαο ἀκαμάτοισι νόοιο μενοναῖς,  
 ἄτε τελεῆεν σχῶν κέαρ ἐν νοί· σῶμά τε φύσει  
 ὅσσα τε καπφύσιν, ὥσπερ ἐὴν φύσιν, οὔτοι ἀπέδρα,  
 ὡς σὰς ἀλυκτοπέδας οὐκ ἔκφυγεν, ὡς τ' ἐγένοντο  
 5 ὡς τε γεγῶτ' ἐνὶ καὶ ὡς φθιτῆς ἔμμορε μοίρης.  
 Ταῦτ' ἄρα θείαις μήτισι φύσιος ὄντα ἄποινα,  
 αἰὲν ἀθύρματ' ἔασσι παλιμπλάγκτοιο χρόνοιο,  
 σεῖο δ' ἐπιφροσύνης πυκινὰ σπουδάσματα κλυτά.  
 Μετρεῖ ταῦτα φύσις, μετρεῖ χρόνος, οὐδὲ σὲ λήθει  
 10 μέτρον ἔχοντα χέρεσσιν ἀειμνήστοιο σοφίης.  
 Ἄτάρ ἔγνωσ, ἔγνωσ καὶ ὄσ' οὐκ ἔδαέν (sic) γε βέβηλοι·  
 καὶ γε τὸ σῆς σφεδανῆς διζήσιος ἄθλον ἀπηῦρας,  
 εὔρες καὶ πόλον, οὔτι γ' ἔρημον ἐόντα προνοίης,  
 εὔρες νώνυμον ἀίδιον κράτος ἀμερὲς αἰὲν  
 15 ὡσαύτως ἔχον, ἠδ' ἀκίνητον ὑπ' οὐδενὸς ἄλκαρ,  
 ἐκτὸς ἐὸν πόνου, ὡς δὲ πάσης μεταβλήσιος ἔξω,  
 καὶ ἐ καθίζεις ἄνω, ὅπου τιμιώτατον αὐτῶ.  
 Στήθι, πέραν μὴ ζήτηε, ἄβατόν ἐστι τὸ πόρσω  
 καὶ γε σοφοῖς πᾶσι καὶ γ' ἀσόφοις· κενὸς ὅς γε μαστεύσοι,  
 20 ἠύτε σύ δε σοφὸς σοφίης μέτρα οἶσθα βροτείης  
 καὶ οἱ προσκύρσας ὄσ' ἐρύματ' ἀδηρίτω, ἔστης.  
 Στήσω γραφίδα καὶ τὸς ἄρ' ἐνθάδε ἠύτε κώπαν,  
 ἄλα διερχόμενος μειλίγματ' ἄγων πνοιῶν σῶν,  
 ὅττι κινῶν ἔστης, ἀμενηνὸς ἐγὼ γεγαῶς τις  
 25 πλεῖον ἔχων ἢ σύ, ὕμνον αὔειν πατρὶ ἀπάντων.  
 Ταῦτ' ἄρα σοὶ χριστώνυμος ἱερὸς αἰὲν ἀλιτρός,  
 ἀχρεῖόν τε γεώργιον ἀλλ' ἀγαθοῖο φυτουργοῦ,  
 καὶ πάχος οὖλος ὕλη τ' οὐκ ἐκ μέρους πλέα αἰσχους  
 ἡμμένος ὀφφικίων ἱερῶν ριπαῖσιν ἀχράντοις·

You grasped Nature through the untiring desires of your mind,  
 for you had in your heart such a perfect strength. The natural body  
 and all that is according to nature, how they naturally are, have not eluded you,  
 as they did not escape your bonds, <and you discovered> how they came to be,  
 5 how they can be and how they have obtained their share of mortal fate.  
 These are, then, a ransom in Nature's divine crafts,  
 toys, ever and again, of wandering Time,  
 objects of the solid study of your glorious wisdom.  
 Nature measures them, Time measures them, they do not escape even you,  
 10 who have in your hands the measure of everlasting wisdom.  
 But you knew, you also knew what pagans did not teach.  
 For you discovered the prize of your vigorous search,  
 you found a pole which is not devoid of providence,  
 you found an eternal power which is nameless, always partless  
 15 and the same, a safeguard unmoved by anything,  
 which is free of pain, as it is beyond any change.  
 And you placed it on high, where it is most honourable for it to be.  
 Stay still! Do not seek further, what lies ahead is inaccessible  
 to all the wise as well as the unwise. Vain is he who wishes to seek further,  
 20 since you, who are wise, who know the measures of human wisdom  
 and have reached what on account of so many fortifications is unconquerable, have  
 stopped.  
 Hence I too will put down my stylus here like an oar,  
 as I pass through the sea carrying your soothing breeze,  
 since you stopped moving <me>, although I, a fleeting creature of no importance,  
 25 have more than you, to utter a hymn to the Father of everything.  
 These verses are then for You by me, a sinful man who bears the holy name of  
 Christ,  
 a worthless plant, though grown by a planter who blesses,  
 <me>, <who am> all thickness, and matter full of shame not <just> in part,  
 who have attained the holy offices through immaculate gusts of wind.  
 30 And as long as I have held in the great Church the glorious rank of the chief  
 advocate,  
 I have never appeared as the prosecutor of my first icon,  
 and as long as I have been entrusted with the guard of justice in the palace,  
 33 I have never passed judgement on myself because of destructive enemies.

To begin with, some words about the form. The poem has what one might call 'Byzantine literary features'. Composed in dactylic hexameters, it eruditely imitates the exemplary poetry and language of Homer.<sup>12</sup> Loans from

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30      καί γε φέρων ἐν ἱρῶ μεγάλῳ πρωτέκδικον αὔχος,  
          ἔκδικος οὔποτε δειχθεὶς πρώτης εἰκόνος ἀμῆς,  
          καὶ φυλακὴν γε δικαίου πιστευθεὶς ἐν ἀνάκτων,  
          οὔποτ' ἑμαυτὸν ἀπ' ἐχθρῶν δικάσας ὀλετήρων.

<sup>12</sup> Having written scholia on the *Iliad* (see Turyn 1972: 23–25), Pachymeres was very well acquainted with Homer. His hexameters have in most cases canonical caesuras (16 penthemimeres, 8 tritotrochaic, 2 hephthemimeres, 2 trithemimeres; v. 1 is divided by a caesura after the fourth trochee; vv. 6, 27, 31 and 33 have no caesura at all) and are metrically almost impeccable (in vv. 19, 25 and 33 one must erroneously read πᾶσι, σύ, δικάσας in



Parmenides and Pindar can also be detected,<sup>13</sup> revealing through mimesis the author's classical culture. *Jeux de mots* (in a broad sense) characteristic of Byzantine poetry also appear: the wording ἄτε τελῆεν σχῶν κέαρ (v. 2) alludes to Aristotle's name; vv. 27, 28, 30 and 32 reveal quite skilfully the name of the author and the offices he held: ἀχρεῖόν τε γεώργιον ... | καὶ πάχος οὔλος ὕλη τ' οὐκ ἐκ μέρεος πλέα αἴσχους | ... καὶ γε φέρων ἐν ἰρῶ μεγάλῳ πρωτέκδικον αὔχος | ... καὶ φυλακὴν γε δικαίου πιστευθεὶς ἐν ἀνάκτων ...<sup>14</sup> In addition, the poem seems to achieve at its end its proper Byzantine identity, liberating itself from potential charges of slavish imitation of ancient models. For its 33 verses need not be a fortuitous number: the author, who calls himself χριστώ-νυμος (v. 26), wanted perhaps to let the sensitive reader count the years of Christ's life, thus subordinating the Homeric hexameter to a Christian end.<sup>15</sup> Be that as it may, a closer look at the content of the poem will indeed reveal to us a Christian reworking of ancient Greek heritage with regard to Aristotle's *Physics*.

The relation between the poem and the general object of the *Physics* is obvious from its first verse or, better, from its first word (φύσις). Pachymeres addresses himself to Aristotle, praising him for having amazingly 'trapped' (σᾶς ἀλυκτοπέδᾶς οὐκ ἔκφυγεν) and come to know the changing essence of nature and its ways of constituting the natural bodies, which are subject to the cosmic processes of coming-to-be and perishing (vv. 1–5). He subsequently refers to nature and time, which measure the finitude of all natural beings, as Aristotle himself has done thanks to his wise and scrupulous study (vv. 6–10). But this vigorous intellectual effort in the realm of natural objects and their 'mortal fate' would have been left without 'reward'

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order to retain the prosody). It seems to me, though, that Pachymeres was aware of these discrepancies, which in this case should be regarded as a sign of a personally engaged style of composition that cares more for the content and less for the form. At least the two poems which introduce his *Philosophia* and his *Quadrivium*, written, respectively, in twelve ionic hexameters and thirty Byzantine dodecasyllables, are metrically impeccable; they can be found, respectively, in Migne (*PG* 143: coll. 419–20), and in Tannery & Stéphanou (1940: 3). Besides Homer, a closer source of inspiration for Pachymeres' poems could, of course, have been Gregory of Nazianzus.

<sup>13</sup> V. 12: δίζησις, a Parmenidean word, certainly known to Pachymeres through Simplicius' commentary on the *Physics*. With vv. 18–19 cf. Pindar, *Ol.* 3.44–45: τὸ πρόσω δ' ἐστὶ σοφοῖς ἄβατον | κάσφοις.

<sup>14</sup> I.e. Γεώργιος Παχυμέρης πρωτέκδικος δικαιοφύλαξ. Pachymeres' patriarchal (*protek-dikos*) and imperial (*dikaiophylax*) offices are often mentioned in the titles of his works.

<sup>15</sup> Pachymeres mainly used 33 lines per page to write his *Philosophia* in his autograph codices *Berolinensis Ham.* 512 and *Parisinus gr.* 1930. Even a *usus scribendi* could be inspired by a religious cause.

(ἄθλον) had the ancient philosopher not found a safe pole which is beyond any change or movement, an eternal power which has no parts (vv. 11–17). This points directly to the last book of the *Physics* and the first unmoved mover, Aristotle’s God, seen here through Christian eyes.

The affinity between Aristotle’s first mover and the Christian God is in fact stressed by Pachymeres in the commentary itself. For instance, commenting on *Physics* VIII 6, 258b13ff.,<sup>16</sup> Pachymeres explains that

From this point on, <Aristotle> philosophizes about how it can be that something unmoved and exempt from all change, both absolutely and accidentally, which moves something else, really exists; that is the divine, which is primarily and by itself, unlike and unmixed with regard to all moving things. And this is ‘the blessed and only Sovereign’; it has in fact an absolute power over all things, because it surpasses all things in so far as it is not subject to any kind of movement.<sup>17</sup>

Pachymeres’ reference to the ‘blessed and only Sovereign’ (ὁ μακάριος καὶ μόνος δυνάστης) is to be traced back to Saint Paul’s First Epistle to Timothy,<sup>18</sup> as the readers for whom the commentary was intended would surely recognize. In highlighting the ‘Sovereign’s’ transcendence in terms of power (δύναται γὰρ κατὰ πάντων ὡς ὑπερφέρον πάντων), Pachymeres was very probably relying on Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite’s treatise *De divinis nominibus*,<sup>19</sup> on which he had previously

<sup>16</sup> “Ὅτι δ’ ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι τι τὸ ἀκίνητον μὲν αὐτὸ πάσης ἐκτὸς μεταβολῆς, καὶ ἀπλῶς καὶ κατὰ συμβεβηκός, κινητικὸν δ’ ἑτέρου, δῆλον ὧδε σκοποῦσιν ...

<sup>17</sup> *Laurentianus plut.* 87,5, f. 137<sup>v</sup>, ll. 1–4: Ἐντεῦθεν φιλοσοφεῖ πῶς ἔσται τι ἀκίνητον καὶ ἐκτὸς ἀπάσης μεταβολῆς καὶ ἀπλῶς καὶ κατὰ συμβεβηκός, κινητικὸν δὲ ἑτέρου, ὅπερ ἔστι τὸ θεῖον καὶ μόνως καὶ πρώτως καὶ ἀσυγκρίτως καὶ ἀμιγῶς ἐκ πάντων τῶν κινουμένων. καὶ τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ “ὁ μακάριος καὶ μόνος δυνάστης”. δύναται γὰρ κατὰ πάντων ὡς ὑπερφέρον πάντων κατὰ τὸ μὴ ὑποκεῖσθαι κινήσει ἡτινιοῦν.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. 1 Timothy 6:13–16: Παραγγέλλω [σοι] ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζωογονοῦντος τὰ πάντα καὶ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ μαρτυρήσαντος ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου τὴν καλὴν ὁμολογίαν, τηρῆσαί σε τὴν ἐντολὴν ἄσπιλον ἀνεπίλημπτον μέχρι τῆς ἐπιφανείας τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἣν καιροῖς ἰδίους δείξει ὁ μακάριος καὶ μόνος δυνάστης, ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων καὶ κύριος τῶν κυριευόντων, ὁ μόνος ἔχων ἀθανασίαν, φῶς οἰκῶν ἀπρόσιτον, ὃν εἶδεν οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ ἰδεῖν δύναται· ᾧ τιμὴ καὶ κράτος αἰώνιον· ἀμήν.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *De div. nom.* 203.23–204.4 Suchla: Ἡμεῖς δὲ τοῦ θεολόγου [sc. τοῦ θεοῦ Παύλου] κατὰ τὸ ἐφικτὸν στοχαζόμενοι τὸν ὑπερδύναμον θεὸν ὑμνοῦμεν ὡς παντοδύναμον, ὡς “μακάριον καὶ μόνον δυνάστην”, ὡς δεσπόζοντα ἐν τῇ δυναστείᾳ αὐτοῦ τοῦ αἰῶνος, ὡς κατ’ οὐδὲν τῶν ὄντων ἐκπεπτωκότα, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ὑπερέχοντα καὶ προέχοντα πάντα τὰ ὄντα κατὰ δύναμιν ὑπερούσιον καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς οὔσι τὸ δύνασθαι εἶναι καὶ τόδε εἶναι κατὰ περιουσίαν ὑπερβαλλούσης δυνάμεως ἀφθόνω χύσει δεδωρημένον. ‘We, aiming as far as we can at <what> the Theologian (sc. the divine Paul) <says>, celebrate the supra-potent God as omnipotent, as “blessed and only Sovereign”, as ruling in His might over eternity, as being not at all inferior to any being, or rather as transcending and anticipating all beings according to His supra-essential power, as of-

written a commentary.<sup>20</sup> With his commentary on the last book of the *Physics*, Pachymeres was now providing this absolute power of God—which for a Christian believer was of course an unquestionable truth, established through revelation—with a philosophical background or, so to speak, a ‘physical’ demonstration, logically structured through Aristotle’s argumentation about the necessary existence of a reality which is not subject to any kind of movement (κατὰ τὸ μὴ ὑποκεῖσθαι κινήσει ἡτινιοῦν).

We can ultimately see the same Christian-oriented handling of the *Physics* in the poetic epilogue of the commentary. Pachymeres suggests that Aristotle was in effect not a ‘pagan’ thinker, because his knowledge surpassed that of the pagans (v. 11: ἀτὰρ ἔγνωσ, ἔγνωσ καὶ ὅσ’ οὐκ ἔδαέν γε βέβηλοι).<sup>21</sup> By thoroughly studying nature and natural beings, Aristotle managed to secure a double advantage: he not only became aware of the finitude and, one may add, the vanity of human existence, which is dominated by change and time,<sup>22</sup> but, most importantly, he was also led to the discovery of an unmoved eternal power (κράτος) which is said to be provident, nameless and *free of pain* (vv. 13–16). Next to the Christian doctrines of providence and the apophatic onomatology of the divine, we can recognize in these verses Saint Paul’s ‘blessed Sovereign’, to whom ‘honour’ (τιμὴ) and ‘eternal power’ (κράτος αἰώνιον) are precisely due.<sup>23</sup> Aristotle, Pachymeres says, assigned to this eternal power the ‘most honourable place’ (v. 17: ὅπου τιμώτατον). For that he should not only be praised but should also be regarded as a forerunner of Christian truth. And the preceding study of his *Physics* was now to be seen as a path which finally led to God.

For a Christian thinker, however, God’s essence is unknowable. Still according to Paul, ‘<God> resides in inaccessible light’ and ‘no man has ever seen or is able to see Him’.<sup>24</sup> Pachymeres suggests that Aristotle be-

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fering to all beings with His rich outpouring their capacity to exist and to be that or this according to the superabundance of His supra-exceeding power.’

<sup>20</sup> Pachymeres’ commentary on the pseudo-Dionysian corpus has been edited by B. Cordier (Antwerp, 1634; reprinted in Migne, *PG* 3: *passim*). It is to be dated around 1285; see Aubineau (1971).

<sup>21</sup> This verse is reminiscent of (and in a way completes) a well-known poem by John Mauropous (11th century) on Plato’s and Plutarch’s closeness to Christianity; see Hörandner (1976: 257) and Karpozilos (1982: 103–4).

<sup>22</sup> A lesson which, nevertheless, could also be acquired through the study of other philosophers: see, for instance, the mention of Heraclitus and Cratylus in Pachymeres’ *History* below.

<sup>23</sup> 1 Timothy 6:16 (cited above, n. 18): ... ᾧ τιμὴ καὶ κράτος αἰώνιον.

<sup>24</sup> 1 Timothy 6:16: ... φῶς οἰκῶν ἀπρόσιτον, ὃν εἶδεν οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ ἰδεῖν δύναται.

came aware of that too, to the extent that he ended his *Physics* with the discovery of the eternal power and went no further.<sup>25</sup> What comes next in the poem (vv. 18–19: στῆθι, πέραν μὴ ζήτεε, ἄβατόν ἐστι τὸ πρόσω | καὶ γε σοφοῖς πᾶσι καὶ γ’ ἀσόφοις) is an exhortation which only technically is addressed to Aristotle himself; it concerns in effect all people—both the wise and the unwise, as Pachymeres says, recalling Pindar—who should let themselves be taught from Aristotle’s example, who is presented as the ‘wise’ *par excellence*, the one who knows ‘the measures of human wisdom’, and thus become conscious of the limits of human knowledge before the unlimited divine (vv. 19–21). Philosophical research has therefore to come to a halt, and so does exegesis. The exegete puts down his stylus like an oar in the sea of knowledge which Aristotle has until now dominated with his breeze (vv. 22–23), and the poem becomes the epilogue of a commentary which has followed, all the way through, the philosopher’s voyage towards the discovery of God. Nevertheless, Pachymeres had another ten verses to add.

*A parallel text from Pachymeres’ History:  
philosophy and devoutness*

In the fifth book of his *History*, Pachymeres reports Nikephoros Blemmydes’ (1197–1272) attitude to Patriarch Joseph I (1267–75)—who visited Blemmydes in his monastery intending to persuade him of his benevolence regarding the Arsenite schism (a grave ecclesiastical controversy having originally to do with Patriarch Arsenios’ deposition in 1261)—with the following words:

As a matter of fact, this man (sc. Blemmydes), *who was pursuing the life of a philosopher*, was completely detached from worldly things and remained indifferent to the events, having no feelings of compassion or repulsion for the one or the other man; but his mind was as if it were not contained in a body at all. He regarded both Arsenios and Joseph as being one and the same, for he was not paying attention to raw events so that he could come to judge that this one is the victim and that one the usurper—for he was surely thinking that such concerns belong to a grovelling intelligence which can see nothing beyond what is present—but *he knew on the one hand the stability and immutability of God and on the other hand man’s incapacity to stay at any one point in the same state*, be it for a brief instant. Heraclitus, he thought, put it well indeed: one cannot bathe twice in the same river, and Cratylus even better: not even once. Since things pass like in a current flowing perpetually, there was nothing new or in any way strange about the fact that Arsenios could be the victim of an injustice. One thing, and only one, was

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<sup>25</sup> It might be further added that Pachymeres was thus rendering Aristotle’s philosophy harmless to Christian dogma.

indeed necessary: devoutness. If devoutness is preserved, all the rest is necessarily banished by those who choose to live in an appropriate way.<sup>26</sup>

This passage echoes, at least to some extent, the content of the poem. For Blemmydes is credited here with the knowledge which Pachymeres ascribes in the poem to Aristotle, that is knowledge of God's immutability and of man's fragile course through the various events of life. This was for Pachymeres the kind of ethical knowledge to be acquired through the study of ancient philosophy—as the mention of Heraclitus and Cratylus in the passage suggests (a loan, of course, from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* IV 5, 1010a10–15)<sup>27</sup>—or, moreover, to be assimilated to philosophy itself. For Blemmydes is explicitly said to have pursued a philosopher's life (φιλόσοφον διαζῶν βίον), living almost as a mind outside its body. He could therefore be detached from the passions of a mere bodily existence, which would have led him to a vain reaction to the Arsenite schism. Yet this was not all: such an understanding of human life and fate should awaken someone to the 'one and only necessary thing': devoutness (τὸ εὐσεβές).

Now, Blemmydes was a monk, and one can plausibly think that his otherworldly-centred perception of human life was inspired not just (if at all) by ancient philosophical doctrines, but rather by monastic ideals.<sup>28</sup> This may well be true,<sup>29</sup> but it was definitely not how Pachymeres saw things. In the *prooimion* of his *Philosophia*, written shortly after his *History*<sup>30</sup> and

<sup>26</sup> *Relations historiques* 5.2 (2: 439.6–18 Failler): Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἐκεῖνος, φιλόσοφον διαζῶν βίον, ὅλος τῶν ὧδε ἐξήρητο καὶ ἀπαθῶς εἶχε πρὸς τὰ γινόμενα, οὔτε τινὶ προσπαθῶν οὔτε μὴν ἐμπαθῶν, ἀλλ' ἦν ὁ νοῦς ἐκείνῳ ὡς εἰ μὴ σώματι ὅλως κατείχετο, ἐν ἐλογίζετο καὶ Ἀρσένιον εἶναι καὶ Ἰωσήφ, οὐ γυμνοῖς αὐτοῖς προσέχων τοῖς γιγνομένοις, ὡς τὸν μὲν κρίνειν ἀδικηθέντα, τὸν δ' ἐπιβήτορα—ταῦτα γὰρ χαμερπούς τινος διανοίας καὶ μηδὲν ἐχούσης τῶν παρόντων πλέον εἰς θεωρίαν ἠγεῖτο—, ἀλλ' εἰδῶς Θεοῦ μὲν τὸ εὐσταθές καὶ ἀκίνητον, ἀνθρώπων δὲ τὸ μηδὲν ἐν μηδενὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ κἂν βραχὺ μένειν. Εὖ γὰρ καὶ Ἡρακλείτῳ εἰρησθαι τὸ μὴ ἐπὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ εἶναι δις βάπτειν, καὶ Κρατύλῳ μᾶλλον ὡς μηδὲ ἅπαξ· τῶν πραγμάτων δίκην αἰέτρου ρεύματος παρατρέχοντων, μὴ καινὸν εἶναι μηδ' ἄλλως ξένον, εἰ καὶ Ἀρσένιος ἀδικοῖτο· τὸ γὰρ ἀναγκαῖον ἐν εἶναι καὶ μόνον τὸ εὐσεβές· τούτου δὲ τηρουμένου, τᾶλλ' ἀπερρίφθαι ἀνάγκη τοῖς αἰρουμένοις ζῆν κατὰ τρόπον.

<sup>27</sup> Bydén (2002: 198 n. 54) thinks that Pachymeres quotes in this passage a statement of Blemmydes himself. In my opinion, the historian ascribes to Blemmydes words or thoughts that fit his own representation of Blemmydes as a 'philosopher'. At any rate, even if Blemmydes actually pronounced those words, Pachymeres sided with him.

<sup>28</sup> All the more, it might be further argued, because 'true' philosophy was often equated in Byzantium with Christian asceticism; see Dölger (1964) and Kaldellis in this volume.

<sup>29</sup> See his *Περὶ πίστεως* (*Sermo ad monachos suos*) in Migne (*PG* 142: coll. 585–606). A testimony of how Blemmydes was seen by his contemporaries in Ephesus, amounting to a description which fits the profile of an unapproachable monk, can be found in George of Cyprus' autobiography; cf. Lameere (1937: 181.12–22).

<sup>30</sup> On the chronology of these works see Golitsis (2009).

preceding his commentary on the *Physics*,<sup>31</sup> Pachymeres expresses his anti-monasticism indirectly, when speaking of the ‘benefits of wisdom’ that he wishes to recall in the mind of his readers with his work.<sup>32</sup> One of these recollected benefits, he insinuates, will be to love the senses, which are precisely hated by those who, due to their inhuman insensibility, despise philosophy.<sup>33</sup> As I have argued,<sup>34</sup> this is a rather clear-cut reference to the rigorist Patriarch Athanasios I (1303–09) and his zealous monks, who sought to impose ascetic ideals and monastic discipline on the clergy.<sup>35</sup> Against such a background, Pachymeres’ conception of φιλόσοφος βίος, as applied in his *History* to Blemmydes’ case, could not simply be that of a monastic or ascetic life, despite the fact that Blemmydes was a monk. It rather refers to a philosophically trained intellectual life, which would induce suspension of judgment on human affairs and thus liberation from mundane human concerns: a variation on a sceptic’s *ataraxia*, one could say, serving in this context as a foundation to real devoutness to God. Based on philosophy and coming from a ‘detached *nous*’, such devoutness had to be reflective and could hardly be combined with the anti-intellectualist faith of pure monastic life. At most, one could say that Pachymeres’ Blemmydes was an example of how monks should be.

Pachymeres says in the *prooimion* of the *Philosophia* that he has solely devoted himself to the contemplative activity of *nous*,<sup>36</sup> so that when he offers as a hymn to God the ten last verses of his poetic epilogue to the commentary on the *Physics*, we are likely to see the kind of ‘intellectual’ devoutness which he ascribed in the *History* to Blemmydes. This gesture, he

<sup>31</sup> In the commentary on the *Physics* Pachymeres refers twice to a previous teaching of the *De partibus animalium* and once to a previous teaching of the *De anima*; these have to be identified, I think, with Books 6 and 7 of the *Philosophia*; see Golitsis (2008: 57–59).

<sup>32</sup> “Ἐδοξε καὶ βίβλος ξυντέθειται αὐτῆ, ἣ δὴ Φιλοσοφία τὸ ὄνομα ..., ἐμοὶ μὲν μέλημα ἐραστὸν ..., τοῖς δ’ ἄλλοις τῶν καλῶν τῆς σοφίας ὑπόμνησις, ἵν’ οἷς ἀμελεῖται φιλοσοφία, τούτοις ἔχοι θαυμάζεσθαι. (Text established according to mss. *Laurentianus plut.* 86,22 and *Athous Iviron* 191, due to the loss of the corresponding folio in Pachymeres’ autographon *Parisinus gr.* 1930.)

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Parisinus gr.* 1930, f. 4<sup>v</sup>, ll. 26–28: ... ἐκείνοις [sc. τοῖς τῆς φιλοσοφίας καταφρονηταῖς] δ’ ἀπεναντίας τούτων ἐξ ἀναλγησίας ἢ πρόθεσις, ὡς μισῆσαι καὶ αὐτὴν μίαν τῶν ἀγαθῶν οὔσαν καὶ πρωτίστην, τὴν αἴσθησιν. The passage is based on Aristotle’s famous observation which opens the *Metaphysics* (I 1, 980a 21–22): Πάντες ἄνθρωποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει· σημεῖον δ’ ἡ τῶν αἰσθήσεων ἀγάπησις.

<sup>34</sup> Golitsis (2009).

<sup>35</sup> On Patriarch Athanasios’ rigid ecclesiastical policy and his controversies with the clergy (especially with that of St Sophia), see Maffry Talbot (1973) and, more recently, Patedakis (2006).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Parisinus gr.* 1930, f. 4<sup>r</sup>, ll. 32–33: ... μόνη δὲ τῆ θεωρία σχολάζων τοῦ νοῦ καὶ τοῖς μακαρίοις ἐντρυφῶν ἐκείνου κινήμασιν.

says, comes out as something in which the 'unimportant' Pachymeres surpasses the 'wise' Aristotle (vv. 24–25: ἀμενηνὸς ἐγὼ γεγαῶς τις | πλεῖον ἔχων ἢ σὺ, ὕμνον αὖειν πατρὶ ἀπάντων), since the philosopher stopped at the discovery of the prime mover or God. Uttered by an admirer of Aristotle,<sup>37</sup> these verses were of course not intended as a claim of superiority over Aristotle's philosophical skills, but as a declaration of the superiority of faith over philosophy.<sup>38</sup> Although this declaration limits the scope of philosophy, it is not meant to diminish its value: Aristotle expressed, of course, no devoutness to God; but it was he who led Pachymeres to do so.

Pachymeres describes himself before God as a 'worthless plant', a 'sinful man' who is 'full of matter and thickness' (vv. 26–28); he then refers to the high offices that he 'immaculately' attained within the ecclesiastical and palatine hierarchy: as chief advocate of the Church, he says, he has never prosecuted his first icon (vv. 29–31), that is, Christ; and as chief justice of the imperial court he has not been forced by destructive enemies to pass judgment on himself (vv. 32–33). Although the self-humiliation expressed in vv. 26–28 is typical of Christian anthropology, one could hardly miss the personal tone which resonates throughout Pachymeres' *sphragis*.

The last verses of the poem, especially those referring to Pachymeres' ecclesiastical office, constitute a straightforward confession of devoutness.

<sup>37</sup> Pachymeres' genuine admiration for Aristotle can also be detected in his running commentary on the *Sophistici elenchi*, where he responds to Aristotle's closing demand (184b6–8: λοιπὸν ἂν εἴη πάντων ὕμων [ἢ] τῶν ἠκροαμένων ἔργον τοῖς μὲν παραλειμμένοις τῆς μεθόδου συγγνώμην τοῖς δ' εὐρημένοις πολλὴν ἔχειν χάριν) with the following words (*Vindobonensis phil. gr.* 150, f. 198<sup>v</sup>; I have regularised the punctuation and the orthography): ἡμεῖς δὲ ἄλλ' οὐχ ὅπως συγγνώμην ἔχειν σοι τῶν ἐλλειμμένων ὀφείλομεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ συγγνώμην ζητοῦμεν ἐφ' οἷς οὐκ ἀξίως χάριν τῶν εὐρημένων ἀνελλιπῶς τὴν χάριν σοι ἔχομεν.

<sup>38</sup> That the content of religious faith surpasses philosophical demonstration is characteristically illustrated in the very last lines of the commentary, in which Pachymeres, probably committing himself to the view that the omnipresent God is both immaterial and material, overcomes Aristotle's negation of the first mover's infinitude in respect of magnitude with the following exhortation to his disciple (*Laurentianus plut.* 87,5, f. 154<sup>r</sup>, ll. 33–36): Οὗτος τοίνυν ἀναιρεῖ καὶ τὸ ἄπειρον εἶναι πρὸς τῷ πεπερασμένον εἶναι διὰ τὰς πρώτας αὐτοῦ ὑποθέσεις καὶ τὸν τοῦ ἀπείρου διορισμόν. σὺ δὲ καὶ ἀμερῆς εἴποις ἂν αὐτὸ καὶ ἀμέγεθες, ὡς μηδὲν ἔχον σῶμα, καὶ ἄπειρον αὐθις, ὡς ὑπ' οὐδενὸς περιεχόμενον· τί γὰρ τῶν κτισμάτων τὸν κτίσαντα περιέξει; 'He [sc. Aristotle] therefore also does away with the first mover being infinite [sc. in magnitude], in addition to its being finite, as a consequence of his first hypotheses and the definition of infinite. But *you* can tell both that it has no parts and no magnitude, because it has no body, and that it is infinite indeed, because it is not contained by anything. For what creation can contain the creator?' Instead of σὺ δὲ Benakis (2008: 430.18) erroneously prints Οὐδὲ. As far as I can tell, all manuscripts are at this point unanimous.

Such a confession might not have been unrelated to the contingencies of Pachymeres' own life. Pachymeres reports in his *History* that highly ranked church officials received no promotion under the patriarchate of Athanasios I.<sup>39</sup> It is therefore not unlikely that in the hostile climate which prevailed between the ascetic Patriarch and the clergy of St Sophia Pachymeres was personally blamed for negligence in his duties and for (or even because of) an unadmitted preoccupation with philosophy. In the *prooimion* of the *Philosophia*, Pachymeres says that the 'despisers' of philosophy, in other words Athanasios and his monks,<sup>40</sup>

did not want at all to distinguish between the one who is apt for something [namely, in Pachymeres' case, philosophy] and the one who is not, but they believed that what can be produced by whom has deserved Your glorious and immortal graces can be produced by anyone.

This might suggest that there was a personal attack on Pachymeres on the grounds of his preoccupation with philosophy, considered to be useless and not to conform to pure Christian ideals.<sup>41</sup> If so, however, Pachymeres seems not to have been affected by such claims and prejudices (being himself, we may surmise, in a state of Blemmydean *ataraxia*: 'there was nothing new or in any way strange about the fact that *he* could be the victim of an injustice'). In composing his *Philosophia*, Pachymeres wished precisely to reaffirm against the harsh monastic ideals of the Church of his time the value of the *love of wisdom* and the 'benefits' which are brought about through its study.<sup>42</sup> He consequently transformed Aristotle, through his commentary on the last book of the *Physics* and its poetic epilogue, to a forerunner of Christian truth, so as to challenge the misconception of philosophy as being incompatible with the heart of Christian doctrine. Finally, by

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Relations historiques* 13.37 (4: 721.15–16 Failler).

<sup>40</sup> *Parisinus gr.* 1930, f. 4<sup>v</sup>, ll. 28–31: ... καὶ ἀναμέσον ἐπιτηδείου πρὸς τι καὶ μὴ οὐδ' ὁλως ἠθέλησαν διαστείλασθαι, ἀλλὰ τοῦτο γίνεσθαι καὶ παρὰ τοῦ τυχόντος ἐνόμισαν, ὃ δὴ καὶ παρὰ τοῦ τῶν σῶν εὐκλεῶν καὶ ἀθανάτων χαρίτων ἠξιωμένου.

<sup>41</sup> One can get an idea of Athanasios' harsh ideals through his various *didaskaliai*, commonly sent to monks, clerks and the simple flock; see, for instance, Laurent (1971: no. 1762). There is also a letter (ibid. no. 1681; see Maffry Talbot 1975: no. 20 for the Greek text) in which the patriarch states that he returns a book which has been sent to him, because he and his associates have found it improper to keep with them such an 'object of luxury' (λογισάμενος ἀπρεπὲς τοιαύτην τρυφήν κατασχεῖν). As I argue in Golitsis (2010a), that book was sent back to Pachymeres and is to be identified with the *Philosophia*.

<sup>42</sup> Pachymeres' *Quadrivium* was very probably also a part of his reaction to the predominance of illiterate monasticism. In the poem which opens the work (see above, n. 12), he speaks of 'he in whom hatred against wisdom has been instilled' (v. 5: ᾧ μῖσος ἐντέτηκε κατὰ σοφίας, inspired by Sophocles, *Electra* 1311: μῖσός τε γὰρ ... ἐντέτηκέ μοι).



turning Aristotle's appraisal into a 'hymn to the Father of everything', he became himself an example of how philosophy was to lead someone to God and to inspire devoutness.<sup>43</sup>

*Pachymeres' exegeses and the autonomy of philosophical studies in early Palaiologan Byzantium*

That philosophy was not contrary to Christian beliefs was of course no strange conception throughout the Byzantine era. However, Pachymeres was the first, as far as I know, to base such a conception on the complete study of an ancient philosopher's text.

Contrary to what is quite often assumed in the historiography of Byzantine philosophy, teaching the *Physics* or other treatises of Aristotle from their beginning to their end by means of an exegesis was something of a novelty in Byzantium.<sup>44</sup> Only about half a century before Pachymeres' exegeses of Aristotle, Blemmydes himself, the eminent philosopher of the empire of Nicaea (1204–61), was describing the scope of the first book of his philosophical opus magnum Εἰσαγωγικὴ ἐπιτομή (the so-called *Epitome logica*) as follows:

Since the science of logic is not of insignificant usefulness to <the comprehension of> the Holy Scripture and of all the Words of Truth, we judged it necessary to leave for the

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<sup>43</sup> If Pachymeres was indeed accused by Athanasios of defective faith in Christ, it may be argued that the last verses of the poem were conceived by Pachymeres in a rather apologetical manner. Written, however, in a difficult literary style at the end of a philosophical commentary, it could hardly be expected to reach any people outside Pachymeres' own intellectual milieu.

<sup>44</sup> It has to be noted that in pre-Palaiologan Byzantium philosophy (often limited to logic) was primarily taught through various synopses and epitomes, which were intended mainly as a replacement of the ancient philosophical text(s); see also above, n. 4. An early and a late example of this are the Συνοπτικὸν σύνταγμα φιλοσοφίας (a widespread school handbook, where philosophy simply means logic) of the beginning of the eleventh century and Blemmydes' Εἰσαγωγικὴ ἐπιτομή (dealing with both logic and physics) of the middle of the thirteenth century. Notable exceptions, of course, are the various exegeses produced by Michael of Ephesus and Eustratios of Nicaea under the patronage of Anna Komnene in the first half of the twelfth century. It must be said, though, that this exegetical production constituted a rather isolated phenomenon, which barely reflects the overall teaching of philosophy at that time. Their contemporary, Theodore of Smyrna, who bore the title of 'consul of the philosophers' and was thus responsible for the teaching of philosophy in Constantinople, still produced an Ἐπιτομή τῶν ὄσα περὶ φύσεως καὶ τῶν φυσικῶν ἀρχῶν τοῖς παλαιοῖς διείληπται (contained in ms. *Vindobonensis theol. gr.* 134).

students of the Word of <God> Who Is<sup>45</sup> and for those initiated to the Truth some small comments that we have made on this science of logic.<sup>46</sup>

Logic is here subordinated by Blemmydes, explicitly and *a priori*, to Christian truth.<sup>47</sup> It has a value not in itself, but as a profane discipline helping us to understand the true meanings of the Holy Scripture.<sup>48</sup> The same author later made clear in his *Autobiography* that in the second book of the Εἰσαγωγικὴ ἐπιτομή (the so-called *Epitome physica*) he dealt with those subjects of natural philosophy ‘which are the more appropriate’ (τὰ καριώτερα) and ‘which are not far from what is useful’,<sup>49</sup> presumably not far from Christian doctrine. For Blemmydes, philosophy (including astronomy) had to be taught selectively and the epitome was the ideal form for his teaching.

Such a concise, theologically oriented fashion of teaching philosophy could not respond to the intellectual needs which arose in the Palaiologan era. This is aptly illustrated by George Akropolites (1217–82), a disciple of Blemmydes who later assumed the direction of the restored imperial school

<sup>45</sup> Blemmydes taught logic (and physics) in the monastery that he founded near Ephesus, dedicated to ‘God Who Is’ (Θεοῦ τοῦ ὄντος).

<sup>46</sup> *Epitome logica* 688C Wegelin: Ἐπειδήπερ ἡ λογικὴ ἐπιστήμη πρὸς τὴν ἱερὰν Γραφήν καὶ πάντα τοὺς τῆς ἀληθείας λόγους οὐκ ὀλίγον φέρει τὸ χρήσιμον, δεόν ἐκρίναμεν τοῖς τοῦ λόγου φοιτηταῖς τοῦ ὄντος καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας μύσταις μικροῦς τινας ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ λογικῇ λιπεῖν ἡμετέρους ὑπομνηματισμούς.

<sup>47</sup> The ‘words of truth’ (οἱ τῆς ἀληθείας λόγοι), which Blemmydes refers to, are not to be understood in a philosophical sense; they are in fact inspired from Saint Paul’s words in 2 Timothy 2:15.

<sup>48</sup> Such a conception of the value of philosophy, and especially logic, can be seen in Byzantium as early as in the writings of John of Damascus (died c. 749): the first part of his tripartite Πηγὴ γνώσεως (*Fons scientiae*), entitled Φιλόσοφα κεφάλαια, is merely a compendium of logic which serves as a clarifying introduction of terms used in the treatises Περὶ ἀρέσεων and Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβῆς τῆς ὀρθοδόξου πίστεως which come next. Logic played sometimes an important role within the theological controversies in Byzantium (see, for instance, Ierodiakonou 2002b on the role of logic in the Hesychast debate). Blemmydes himself wrote several short treatises on Christological and Trinitarian questions, and we may assume that, by teaching logic in his monastery, he wished to produce good theologians who would be able to defend the true meaning of the Scriptures.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *Autobiographia* 2: 75.1–8 Munitiz: Ἡμεῖς δὲ καὶ τὴν συλλογιστικὴν καὶ τὰ πρὸ ταύτης ἐν ἐπιτομῇ θέσθαι φθάνομεν, ἥπερ ἰσχύς σαφηνίσαντες. τὰ τε τῆς φυσικῆς καριώτερα καὶ τὰ τῆς μετεωρολογίας ἀναγκαϊότερα, καὶ τῶν διττῶν καὶ ἀντιστρόφων περιφορῶν καὶ τῆς τῶν αἰθερίων σωμάτων κινήσεως καὶ τῶν ταύταις ἐπομένων, ὅσα μὴ πόρρω τοῦ χρησίμου, τὸν ὅμοιον τρόπον περιοδεύομεν .... ‘We have been able to put syllogistic in an epitome, as well as what precedes it, clarifying these subjects as far as it was possible. And we went in a similar way through the most appropriate subjects of the physics and the most necessary ones of the meteorology, and through the double and inverse rotations and the movement of the ethereal bodies and what follows them, anything which is not far from what is useful ....’

of higher studies in the reconquered Constantinople. In one of his letters, he enthusiastically speaks of his personal study of 'the most divine Plato' and the Neoplatonic philosophers that enabled him to understand the precise meaning of a difficult passage of Gregory of Nazianzus, on which his teacher Blemmydes had been unable to help him.<sup>50</sup> What Akropolites had learned in his Nicaean youth was obviously not sufficient any more.

With the return of the empire to Constantinople, a renewed interest in ancient philosophy began somehow to develop. A need was felt to read texts which the previous generation had ignored (as the case of Akropolites studying Plato on his own illustrates) or to study extensively texts which had previously been known mainly through synopses and epitomes, as Pachymeres' various Aristotelian exegeses suggest. Now, studying Plato or Aristotle for their own sake (and through their own texts) is, of course, a proper philosophical activity. Furthermore, it had important consequences for the interaction between philosophy and theology in Byzantine thought. For undertaking an exegetical enterprise presupposes that the text studied is considered to have a value in itself and,<sup>51</sup> thus, paves the way for a close interaction with it. Therefore, even though philosophical positions more or less incompatible with Christian doctrine could easily be left unmentioned or superficially treated in an epitome, the framework of an exegesis necessitated that they be taken seriously into account. Aristotle's conception of the first unmoved mover, for instance, which lacks a detailed exposition in Blemmydes' *Epitome physica*, found in Pachymeres' exegesis its way to identification with Saint Paul's 'blessed and only Sovereign'. Overtly

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Georgii Acropolitae Opera* II: 71.1–13 Heisenberg-Wirth ('In Gregorii Nazianzeni sententias'): Περί τούτων καὶ γὰρ ἐν μείραξιν ἔτι τελῶν καὶ τῷ θεσπεσίῳ ἐκείνῳ ἀνδρὶ τῷ φιλοσοφωτάτῳ Βλεμμύδῃ, ἠνίκα παρ' αὐτῷ ἐφοίτων, ἐκοινολογήσαμην, ἀλλ' οὐδὲν τί μοι εἶχεν εἰρηκέναι σαφῶς, ἀλλ' ἄπερ καὶ ἄλλοι τὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐξηγούμενοι (λέγω δὲ τὸν μέγαν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις Μάξιμον καὶ τοὺς μετ' αὐτόν) εἰς πλάτος ἢ καὶ κατὰ σχολὴν διασαφοῦντες εἰρήκεσαν, ἐκεῖνά μοι καὶ αὐτὸς πρὸς τὴν ἀπορίαν ἐφθέγγετο. ἀλλ' ἐπέειπερ αὐτὸς τῶν τῆς φιλοσοφίας ἠψάμην ὀργίων τῷ τε θειοτάτῳ συνῆλθον Πλάτωνι καὶ τῷ μουσολήπτῳ Πρόκλῳ, ἔτι τε μὴν τοῖς ἐνθεαστικωτάτοις ἀνδράσιν Ἰαμβλίχῳ τε καὶ Πλωτίνῳ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς, οὓς οὐ καιρὸς καταλέγειν, ἐποδηγήθην πρὸς τὴν διάγνωσιν τοῦ ῥητοῦ. 'I spoke about these <two passages of Gregory of Nazianzus> to Blemmydes—this marvellous man who was most learned in philosophy—when I was still young and studied with him. But he had nothing clear to say to me; he repeated, all in all, what the other exegetes (I mean the great author Maximus [sc. the Confessor] and those who followed him) had said on the Father, explaining <his text> either in a general context or in the form of a commentary. But when I grasped by myself the mysteries of philosophy and joined the most divine Plato, the Muse-inspired Proclus and other most inspired men, such as Iamblichus, Plotinus and others whom it is not the right time to enumerate, I was guided to the comprehension of that passage.'

<sup>51</sup> See the illuminating remarks of Karamanolis (2006).

Christian as it is, this interpretation of Aristotle was the result of the study of Aristotle's text and not a prefatory announcement of an epitome, conceived as an actual part of an account of philosophical studies as a preliminary to Christian doctrine. Against this background, the rehabilitation of exegesis in the early Palaiologan era can be legitimately regarded as a sign of a (re)-gained autonomy for the field of philosophical studies in Byzantium.<sup>52</sup>

To come back to Pachymeres' poetic epilogue, it is unlikely that this sort of text could have been conceived as an epilogue to a synopsis or an epitome of the *Physics*. It is, indeed, very likely that Pachymeres found a source of inspiration for a hymn crowning his commentary on the *Physics* in Simplicius' (sixth century AD) exegesis of Aristotle's *De caelo*, which ends with the following prayer in prose:

This <commentary>, o Master of the Universe and Creator of the simple bodies in it,<sup>53</sup> I offer to You and to Your creations as a hymn, for I have desired to contemplate the greatness of Your works and to reveal it to those who are worthy (τοῖς ἀξίοις), so that we should not think of You anything cheap or human, but worship You according to Your transcendence with regard to everything which is produced by You.<sup>54</sup>

These lines express, of course, the heathen *Weltanschauung* of a Neoplatonist, who offers his hymn equally to the Creator and to the creations (ταῦτά σοι ... καὶ τοῖς ὑπό σου γενομένοις). Moreover, they are conceived as a counterpoint to the impiety of the godless and ignorant Christians (and in particular of John Philoponus, the counter-example of the ἀξιοί), who deny the divine eternity of the heavens and prefer to venerate in the cheapest way the human relics of Christ.<sup>55</sup> It appears, however, that they

<sup>52</sup> Such a regained autonomy would, of course, be not irrelevant to the intellectual controversies of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, during which further discussions on philosophy's content and scope were to take place.

<sup>53</sup> The simple bodies (fire, air, water, earth) of the cosmos, which are transcendently manifested in the heavens, constitute, according to Simplicius, the σκόπος of Aristotle's treatise, as it is traditionally determined in the prolegomena of the commentary.

<sup>54</sup> Simplicius, *In De caelo* 731.25–29 Heiberg: Ταῦτά σοι, ὦ δέσποτα τοῦ τε κόσμου παντός καὶ τῶν ἀπλῶν ἐν αὐτῷ σωμάτων δημιουργέ, καὶ τοῖς ὑπό σου γενομένοις εἰς ὕμνον προσφέρω τὸ μέγεθος τῶν σῶν ἔργων ἐποπτεῦσαί τε καὶ τοῖς ἀξίοις ἐκφῆναι προθυμηθεῖς, ἵνα μηδὲν εὐτελές ἢ ἀνθρώπινον περὶ σου λογιζόμενοι κατὰ τὴν ὑπεροχὴν σε προσκυνῶμεν, ἣν ἔχεις πρὸς πάντα τὰ ὑπό σου παραγόμενα. Simplicius also concluded with prayers his commentaries on Epictetus' *Encheiridion* and Aristotle's *Categories*. For a concise but excellent account of Simplicius' prayers, see Hadot (1978: 164–65).

<sup>55</sup> In the course of the commentary, Simplicius refers to the relics of Christ as 'rubbish more worthless than excrement' (κοπρίων ἐκβλητότερα). The whole passage is worth quoting, since it anticipates in many regards the content of the final prayer (*In De caelo* 370.29–371.4 Heiberg): "Ὅτι δὲ συμφυῆς ἐστὶ ταῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ψυχαῖς τὰ οὐράνια θεῖα νομίζουσιν, δηλοῦσι μάλιστα οἱ ὑπὸ προλήψεων ἀθέων πρὸς τὰ οὐράνια διαβεβλημένοι.

could still inspire a Christian intellectual like Pachymeres. For precisely the idea of a hymn as an epilogue of an Aristotelian exegesis as well as some of the introductory expressions are to be found in Simplicius.<sup>56</sup> And if we leave their rather secondary theological divergences aside—due to Simplicius' being a pagan philosopher and Pachymeres a Christian one—the two hymns are pretty much motivated by the same sentiment of religious faith.

No doubt Pachymeres was devoted to Christ, just as he stated in the poetic epilogue to the commentary on the *Physics*. What deserves our attention, however, is that Pachymeres felt free to find inspiration in a fervent pagan like Simplicius, who was moreover outspokenly sacrilegious with regard to Christ. This is a manifestation of a 'humanist' attitude—which has long been detected in Pachymeres' historical work—towards ancient philosophy: it acknowledged its value and was therefore able to learn from it and to renew its content.

### *Concluding remark*

The poetic epilogue which crowns Pachymeres' commentary on the *Physics* can be seen as an illustration of Pachymeres' belief that, contrary to implicit monastic claims of his time, true devoutness to God could be prepared and duly expressed through philosophy. We may justifiably assert that, albeit in a different context and with a different content, philosophy was thus finding anew in Byzantium its Platonic origins as a method of assimilation to God; as such, it was thought to be certainly worthy of serious and engaging study. Pachymeres' synopsis of the Aristotelian corpus (the *Philosophia*) and his

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καὶ γὰρ καὶ οὗτοι τὸν οὐρανὸν οἰκητήριον εἶναι τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ θρόνον αὐτοῦ λέγουσι καὶ μόνον ἰκανὸν εἶναι τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ δόξαν καὶ ὑπεροχὴν τοῖς ἀξίοις ἀποκαλύπτειν· ὧν τί ἂν εἴη σεμνότερον; καὶ ὅμως, ὥσπερ ἐπιλανθανόμενοι τούτων, τὰ κοπρίων ἐκβλητότερα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τιμώτερα νομίζουσι καὶ ὡς πρὸς ὕβριν τὴν ἑαυτῶν γενόμενον οὕτως ἀτιμάζειν φιλονεικοῦσιν. 'That it is innate in human souls to think of celestial realities as being divine is made clear by those who, influenced by their atheistic prejudices, slander the Heavens. As a matter of fact, even they say that the Heavens are the residence of the divine and its throne, and that the Heavens only are capable of revealing to those who are worthy of it the glory and the transcendence of God. Could one find more venerable conceptions? However, as if they forget all this, they consider that some rubbish more worthless than excrement is more venerable than the Heavens, and they quarrel between themselves about which one of them will outrage the Heavens better, as if the Heavens were born only to give rise to their insolence.' On these passages and more generally on the intellectual background of Simplicius' polemics against Christians, see the classic study of Hoffmann (1987).

<sup>56</sup> Simplicius: ταῦτά σοι, ὦ δέσποτα ... καὶ ... δημιουργέ ... εἰς ὕμνον προσφέρω. Cf. Pachymeres (vv. 25–26): πλεῖον ἔχων ἢ σύ, ὕμνον αὔειν πατρὶ ἀπάντων. Ταῦτ' ἄρα σοι ...

running commentaries on Aristotle (as well as on Plato) were precisely the literary fruition of such an approach to philosophy, which was now opened to many uses and assessments. Pachymeres interpreted philosophy, we can schematically say, within a Christian humanist context, combining profound knowledge of classical literature, anti-monastic ideals, and religious inspiration. But in later Byzantine intellectual history, someone like Plethon was to go so far as to dismiss Christianity in favour of a renewed religion inspired by ancient philosophy and pagan beliefs.

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# Byzantine philosophy inside and out: Orthodoxy and dissidence in counterpoint

ANTHONY KALDELLIS

While still in its infancy,<sup>1</sup> the study of Byzantine philosophy has finally emerged as a relatively discrete discipline. Among the many challenges that it has faced before reaching this point has been the suspicion that philosophy in Byzantium operated largely in subordination to Christian theology and should therefore be studied by specialists in the development of Orthodox doctrine. But a discrete modern discipline requires a (relatively) autonomous subject, which is why attention is being drawn to the self-standing commentaries that many Byzantine thinkers wrote on ancient philosophical works that in many respects owe little to their Christian historical context. Byzantine philosophers, moreover, continued the discussion of ancient problems and contributed original arguments to them, and they applied philosophical thinking to the resolution of topics in other fields. It is possible, then, to ‘analyse [their writings] systematically ... to show that their reasoning and argumentation was no less philosophical than the philosophical work of any other period in the history of philosophy’.<sup>2</sup> In a recent presentation of the state of the field, Katerina Ierodiakonou and Dominic O’Meara seem to counter the notion that Byzantine philosophy cannot be studied independently of theology.<sup>3</sup> Besides, neither discipline was institutionalized, which enabled philosophers to operate outside the institutional constraints that existed in the West; philosophy was part of general higher education, making it an attractive field of study; some of the Church Fathers had allowed that philosophy could be an important preparatory step for the study of theology; and, finally, theological debates could often turn on the interpretation of questions in ancient philosophy.

All this is true, but it is possible to go further by attending more closely to the way in which the Byzantines themselves conceived philosophy as a contested ideal, one version of which was perceived to be not only independent but hostile to Christian Orthodoxy. This paper will explore the implications of the fact that the ideal of philosophy was defined simultaneously

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<sup>1</sup> The word is used by Ierodiakonou & O’Meara (2008: 710).

<sup>2</sup> Ierodiakonou (2002: 2).

<sup>3</sup> Ierodiakonou & O’Meara (2008: 715–16).



in contradictory ways, one positive and one negative. This means that the work and careers of philosophers must be situated within a tense cultural dynamic that made the philosophical life permanently fraught with danger and ambiguity. Some Byzantine philosophers, those whose interests brought them closest to the thinking of the ancient Greeks, were therefore required to enter a delicate dance of appearances and constantly renegotiate the terms of philosophy and ‘Hellenism’ in their Orthodox society. Being a philosopher in Byzantium placed one in a position that had no parallel in other fields of activity, requiring that it be studied separately. Finally, this paper will suggest that greater ambitions can be ascribed to some of these philosophers, greater than merely commenting on ancient thought or contributing to theology, adding further reasons to the imperative to study philosophy as a discrete (albeit contested) field. That field, as Ierodiakonou, O’Meara, and others have defined it, is now on a solid footing, but the permanent culture clash that defined *paideia* in Byzantium may have generated more ambition and idiosyncrasy than is reflected in the list of philosophical activities with which we are currently operating. That *all* Byzantine thinkers were dutifully Orthodox is often assumed but has never been proven, and is implausible on the face of it. So, while some scholars have suggested that ‘philosophy in Byzantium is an autonomous discipline’,<sup>4</sup> so far, despite an abundance of promising sources, there has been a general reluctance to push that autonomy beyond the official doctrines of the Church. As a result, the intellectual scene has been cast as far more homogeneous than it was, more homogeneous in fact than it was perceived by the Byzantines themselves, for we have underestimated how semantically conflicted the social and cultural ground of philosophy was and how it was experienced by those thinkers who desired to practise it, at least certain modes of it.

The basic (typological) surveys of the meaning of φιλοσοφία in Byzantium by Franz Dölger and Herbert Hunger showed that it was an ambivalent term. It could, on the one hand, refer to the ‘scientific’ study of the technical questions of ancient philosophy (its ‘wissenschaftstechnischer Sinn’), and here it usually took the form of commentaries and introductions. On the other hand, the word also referred to Christian doctrine, which was believed to have given the true answer to many of those questions. By extending this sense, ‘philosophy’ could refer to the practice of the Christian life, i.e. ascetic monasticism, the Christian version, then, of ‘applied’ or ‘practical’ philosophy. One has to determine from the context which of

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<sup>4</sup> Ierodiakonou (2002: 3); for the position of L. Benakis, see the discussion by Trizio (2007: 277–87).

these two senses—technical or Christian—is meant in a given passage.<sup>5</sup> They could reinforce each other, as when ancient philosophy was used to expound or support Christian doctrine, or they could come into conflict, given that ancient philosophy disagreed on many points with Christianity. In fact, it was perceived by many as a threat to the integrity of the faith.

In this paper, I will focus on the one extreme of this spectrum, namely the notion (or suspicion) entertained by many Byzantines that (Greek) philosophy, even as it was practised in their society, was potentially or essentially hostile to Christian doctrine. In this I will be going against the grain of the scholarship, especially of Patristics and later Byzantine theology, which have tended to see in Byzantium a more or less harmonious synthesis of Christianity and ‘Hellenism’ (the latter conveniently defined as those aspects of ancient philosophy that were accepted by the Fathers).<sup>6</sup> It is not difficult to find statements in the scholarship to the effect that Byzantium was a monolithically Orthodox society, that it was impossible to think oneself outside of Orthodoxy from within its confines. This is often taken for granted even though it has, of course, never been proved, nor can one easily imagine what kind of historical argument could prove it. It is simply asserted, for example, that Psellos was, ‘like all his fellows, a good Christian. There was nothing else to be, except a Moslem or a Jew, and this would have been absurd.’<sup>7</sup> This is *a priori* reasoning, a conclusion drawn before the evidence has been studied. (*All his fellows too?*)

Byzantine Studies in general has tended to base many of its conclusions on preconceptions regarding the Mind of Byzantium, a mode of thinking about cultural Essences that was inherited from nineteenth-century historicism. Other fields have long since given up such notions. (When did classicists last base an argument on the Greek Spirit?) Moreover, the notion crumbles in the face of contrary evidence, which is now gradually emerging. If one looks closely at hagiography, for instance, one finds that Byzantine society was full of sceptics, ranging from village atheists to those who disbelieved in the power of individual saints or suspected the clergy of trickery and deceit.<sup>8</sup> People doubt because they can think, and no religion or ideol-

<sup>5</sup> Dölger (1953); Hunger (1978: vol. I, 4–10); see also Podskalsky (1977: 16–34). The standard survey of the word’s meanings in antiquity by is Malingrey (1961), most of which treats the Fathers. Siniosoglou (2008) has questioned the grounds on which early Christian thinkers appropriated the label of philosophy and argues that modern exegesis should not be bound by it: e.g. *ibid.* (31; 109; 115–16).

<sup>6</sup> See Kaldellis (2007a: 122–23).

<sup>7</sup> Browning (1975: 10), subsequently endorsed by a number of scholars.

<sup>8</sup> Dagron (1992: 59–69); and Kaldellis (forthcoming a). For the medieval West, see now Arnold (2005).

ogy has ever been able to totally drive this out of all of them, even in societies with far more invasive systems of control than Byzantium could ever muster. I will not, however, be discussing the evidence of hagiography here, which does not concern philosophers directly.

Looking at philosophers of the middle Byzantine period, there is reason to doubt the orthodoxy of Leo Choirosphaktes in the tenth century, Michael Psellos and Michael Attaleiates in the eleventh (the latter more an intellectual perhaps rather than a philosopher), the author of the satire *Timarion* and (provisionally) Theodore Prodromos in the twelfth. Of these men, the faith of all but Attaleiates was doubted or impugned by their contemporaries.<sup>9</sup> In addition to them, Psellos' student John Italos (in the eleventh century) and the latter's student Eustratios of Nicaea (in the early twelfth) were formally accused and indicted on the ground that their involvement with Greek philosophy compromised their doctrinal positions. Scholars have not looked too closely into the question of the actual guilt of all these men, at least not in a way that keeps all possibilities open at the start. It is usually believed that they must have been innocent but set up for political reasons (in part because genuine ideological deviance is considered to have been impossible),<sup>10</sup> though increasingly scholars who believe that intellectual developments are capable of generating historical events such as these are now beginning to downplay political explanations.<sup>11</sup> We might also look with more suspicion into the case of Leo the Philosopher in the ninth century, who was 'outed' after his death but not, as far as we know, formally charged.<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to note that all but one of these men whose faith was questioned identified themselves as philosophers of one kind or another, while the exception, Attaleiates, may have been more exposed to the teaching of Psellos than has hitherto been suspected.<sup>13</sup> Far from a monolithic society, then, our evidence presents us with a pattern of philosophical deviancy, at least *prima facie*. Even if we leave the question of these men's actual guilt open (which is more than many historians have so far been willing to do), we must at least conclude that a learned Byzantine of the

<sup>9</sup> Choirosphaktes: Magdalino (1997: 146–61; 2006: 71–79). Psellos: Kaldellis (1999 and 2007a: ch. 4). Prodromos and *Timarion*: Kaldellis (2007a: 270–83 and forthcoming b). Attaleiates: Kaldellis (2007b).

<sup>10</sup> In general, Browning (1975); Magdalino (1993: ch. 5). Italos: Clucas (1981). Eustratios: Joannou (1954).

<sup>11</sup> E.g. Ierodiakonou (2007); Siniosoglou (2010). The *locus classicus* for this type of discussion is the trial of Socrates; see Ahrens Dorf (1994) for a cogent defence of the autonomy of philosophical history in this case.

<sup>12</sup> Leo: Lemerle (1986: 198–204); also Magdalino (2006: 67–68).

<sup>13</sup> Krallis (2006).

eleventh or twelfth century who considered the predicament of ‘philosophy’ in his society would be more uneasy than the tidy typologies of Dölger and Hunger suggest. We have to reinscribe the term and the ideal of philosophy within a more contested and unsettled cultural space. Philosophy in Byzantium was more ambitious and more dangerous than has hitherto been realized—and I mean ‘dangerous’ in the sense that Socrates does in Book VI of Plato’s *Republic*, where he admits that philosophy may cause intelligent young men to lose faith in their culture’s norms and beliefs (see *Republic* 497d for an extreme formulation).

In the aftermath of Michele Trizio’s critical survey of the discipline, we must speak of philosophy in Byzantium as a diverse cultural practice and avoid postulating any kind of unitary ‘Byzantine philosophy’ with a single essence: ‘There are ... Byzantine philosophies, different manifestations and meanings of the term “philosophy” which cohabit, and sometimes even clash, in the same context.’ What we have, in the end, is ‘a group of texts which in different ways and according to different meanings of the term “philosophy” are influenced to various degrees by the ancient philosophical tradition.’<sup>14</sup> The thinkers I am dealing with here did, at least, have that much in common. Their practice of philosophy entailed a close engagement with the ancient sources, and their heterodoxy was attributed to precisely that engagement. There is no reason to postulate any additional unity or coherence to this group. They were not strict followers of particular ancient schools, but eclectics. They did not found new schools of their own, and each took his thought in a different and idiosyncratic direction. The ties among them, both personal and intellectual, are still unclear. The philosophical links between Leo the Philosopher and Leo Choirosphaktes are tenuous (it is interesting, however, that the latter wrote a poem lamenting the former’s death).<sup>15</sup> We still do not know how to get philosophically from Psellos to Italos and then to Eustratios, except that Proclus was a connecting thread. At the moment, each of these thinkers must be studied on his own terms, as we have no overarching narrative about Byzantine thought in which to place them. Instead of a narrative, then, my discussion focuses on the cultural dynamic of Orthodoxy and dissidence. By a dissident in this context I designate any thinker who self-consciously, even if only covertly, came to certain philosophical positions that were incompatible with Orthodoxy. Byzantine dissidents were not ‘pagans’ (at least not so long as that term requires cult or

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<sup>14</sup> Trizio (2007: 291).

<sup>15</sup> Lemerle (1986: 203–4).

belief in the ancient gods), but their intellectual journeys were helped along by the study of ancient, non-Christian philosophy.

What this set of philosophers had to face, I maintain, was that the ideal and practice of philosophy was fundamentally and irrevocably conflicted. It is not enough to note as Dölger and Hunger did that the word stood for different things, i.e. ancient pagan thought (which was deemed to be ‘outside’) versus Christian theology (which was ‘inside’), or for different kinds of activities, i.e. theory (whether pagan or Christian) versus ascetic practice (whether informed by theory or not). What we have to imagine in situating a philosopher in this society is how these senses conflicted actively with each other, generating an unsynthesized and so slippery system of values propelling intellectual and social life. The idea of philosophy was not just ‘complex’, it *simultaneously designated opposites* that were, however, inextricably linked. ‘Outside’ philosophy was not a thing of the past, dead and buried with the advent of the true faith; it was an always-present option, one that was deeply implicated in the very construction of the faith itself. The Fathers, for example, appropriated the cultural prestige and epistemological connotations of ‘philosophy’ for their brand of theological synthesis. But, on the other hand, the word has only a negative sense in the one passage of the New Testament where it appears, Colossians 2:8: ‘philosophy and vain deception’. Saint Paul’s experience with the philosophers in Athens was not a positive one,<sup>16</sup> while the Christian tradition generated many zealots who believed that ‘Jerusalem’ should have nothing to do with ‘Athens’.

‘Philosophy’, then, designated simultaneously both the most True and Good as well as the most False and Evil things known to the culture and, to make matters worse, the two could never be firmly separated for anyone engaged in intellectual activity. It is difficult to imagine a more conflicted state of being. One could not pursue philosophy without serious risk of falling ‘outside’, or of being perceived as having fallen there, as all the denunciations and trials reveal. In fact, the passageway between the two was always open: the serious study of theology almost always led to Greek philosophy. ‘Orthodoxy’ as a self-standing, unitary, and uncomplicated stance was problematic, if not impossible. Its own traditions always pointed learned Christians to alternative traditions that had seductions of their own and which supplied the grounds of dissent. The study of Plato and Aristotle would not make one into a ‘pagan’ but it could make one less certain of various Christian doctrines. Coping with this predicament called for sub-

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<sup>16</sup> See Kaldellis (2009: 53–59).

tlety, and perhaps also for evasion and dissimulation, at which the Byzantines were masters, their philosophers especially.

These philosophers invariably found themselves caught up in a game of accusation and defence; and it is worth looking closer at how it was played, for it reveals how key terms were constantly redefined and negotiated, affecting careers and reputations. Consider an example from the ninth century. Leo the Philosopher—mathematician, suspected occultist, classical scholar, scientific inventor, bishop of Thessaloniki, and finally professor of ‘outside’ philosophy in the capital—wrote an epigram ‘to himself’ whose title indicates that he was known by the name of ‘the Hellene’. The epigram thanks *Tyche* for granting Leo a pleasant and quiet life according to the teachings of Epicurus, a daring admission in the Byzantine context. From the way in which it is introduced, the name Hellene seems to have been ascribed to him by others, presumably for his extreme (excessive?) love of Greek thought. Though the word’s main meaning in Byzantium at that time was ‘pagan’, i.e. it designated total outsiders, it is not being used in such a hostile way here, certainly not by Leo in reference to himself. He was here showcasing the word’s potentially positive sense, as one who was learned in ancient wisdom. In this, as in many other ways, Leo was ahead of his time, for that alternative positive sense of ‘Hellene’ would not become more pervasive until the twelfth century. By drawing attention to it in his own less flamboyant times, it seems that he wanted to ameliorate it, given that it could become dangerous in enemy hands. He acknowledged it openly and playfully in order to take the venom out of it. Pagan ‘Hellenes’ were supposed to be secretive and nefarious. Leo was placing the term in a different light by making it open and linking it to a risqué but not necessarily heterodox sentiment, effectively neutralizing it.<sup>17</sup>

But doubts persisted. After his death, Leo was denounced by one of his students, Constantine the Sicilian, for sinking beneath the waves of ‘outside’ impiety and honouring the multitude of Greek gods over the Trinity. Christ has now punished him for his apostasy, Constantine says, for choosing Zeus as his god. In Hades he will find Proclus and Plato, Chrysippus and Hesiod. ‘All too late’, he concludes, ‘did I see the evil in your heart.’ It seems, however, that this poem caused a scandal and Constantine had to defend himself in an *Apologia*. The champion of Orthodoxy was interestingly placed on the defensive. He avers that some had praised him for exposing Leo, the ‘blasphemous apostate from the faith of the Christians’, while others accused

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<sup>17</sup> For the text, see Westerink (1986: 199–200); for discussions, Lemerle (1986: 198–204); Kaldellis (2007a: 182).

him of ingratitude and slander. Against the latter he affirms his faith in Christ and opposition to all Hellenes. It is in these poems by Leo and his student, then, and not in any treatises that they may have written on technical philosophical issues, that we observe the delicate dance of Byzantine Hellenism and Orthodoxy.<sup>18</sup> Much depended, we can see, on the struggle to define and redefine the term ‘Hellene’.

The question here is not so much whether Leo’s studies *actually* caused him to fall from the faith, which always remains a possibility (Constantine may have been telling the truth). The point is how slippery the ground of Hellenism and philosophy was. Constantine attempted to depict Leo as being ‘outside’, as perhaps others had before him. Leo’s response to these accusations, so far as we can tell from his epigram, was not so much to deny the charge by insisting that it was false and that he was really ‘inside’, but to attempt to bring inside more of what had lain outside, or at least to place it in a neutral intermediate space that would not give offence, through a rehabilitation and redefinition of the bad word itself, to extend the boundary and include within the sphere of the permissible more of Greek philosophy (even Epicurus), science and literature (even erotic literature).<sup>19</sup> The boundary itself was in question as well as the meaning of the words that were used to define it. There was room inside for Hellenes so long as they were properly defined. Was ‘Hellenism’ paganism or higher learning and literature? These were perhaps opposite sides of the same coin, but it is possible that no one of Leo’s contemporaries knew just how far outside he had travelled in his own thoughts. This inevitably fuelled suspicion. Be that as it may, we should note that, even though the times were not yet ready for the revival of erotic literature and the like, Leo had a prestigious career despite his Hellenism (whatever that was), while Constantine felt that he had to defend himself against accusations of ingratitude and slander. The defenders of Leo’s memory could cast Constantine’s accusation as a matter of bad taste or bad form (which does not mean, however, that they were not true). Being a philosopher required a certain set of survival skills—and some literary skill. We will consider additional exchanges of this type below.

It was not only accusations of heterodoxy that philosophers had to finesse. The ideal of philosophy had, in a different direction, been equated with monastic life, which held a position of commanding prestige in the

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<sup>18</sup> For Constantine’s poems, see Spadaro (1971: 198–205); previously in Migne (*PG* 107: coll. lxi–lxiv; 659–64), misattributed by both editors (Leo VI ‘the Wise’ used to be confused with Leo the Philosopher and Constantine the Sicilian with Constantine the Philosopher, the missionary to the Slavs, as well as with Constantine the Rhodian).

<sup>19</sup> Lauxtermann (1999).

culture. As one can see already in the stark confrontations depicted in the *Life of St Antony* (sections 72–80), a type-scene that would recur in later texts,<sup>20</sup> the vast differences between intellectuals and illiterate ascetics were well understood, yet the ideological revolution effected by early Christianity entailed the appropriation of prestigious sites of Greek culture and their transference to Christian counterparts, which were often their negations. Jesus was now King, martyrs were the new athletes, and desert solitaries were the new philosophers. Revolutions require precisely such stark reversals, paradoxes, and juxtapositions if they are to rewrite social values and establish new modes of power. They are also rarely ever complete. Byzantium was the heir of ancient Greece as it was of early Christianity and so it had to cope with an unsynthesized set of values. For example, the fifth-century ecclesiastical historian Sozomenus was attracted, at different moments, both to learned eloquence as well as to the monks' refusal of all learning.<sup>21</sup> 'Philosophy' also was never in Byzantium exclusively what any one of its spokesmen said it was. How did our more 'theoretical' philosophers distance themselves from the most obscurantist and anti-intellectual elements of the monastic world, to which they were never partial? An ideal candidate for this discussion is Michael Psellos.

The tension within the domain of Byzantine philosophy between (Greek) science and (Christian) asceticism, as well as Psellos' exclusive devotion to the former, are subtly presented in an encomium that he wrote for his mother. I have argued elsewhere that the purpose of this work was to shield him during one of the many moments when the sincerity of his faith had been called into question. He represents his mother as a saintly ascetic who dedicated herself to Christ, a philosopher whose works were calloused knees and an emaciated body. But Psellos weaves his own autobiography into the narrative, enveloping his intellectual career in her alleged sanctity. He presents her as the inspiration of his bookish studies while simultaneously distancing his brand of the philosophical life from hers, thus having it both ways. He addresses her directly toward the end of the oration, contrasting himself to her: 'I do not entirely philosophize according to that philosophy which is so dear to you, and I do not know what fate took hold of me from the very beginning and fixated me onto the study of books.'<sup>22</sup> Not only was his conception of philosophy firmly cognitive rather than ascetic, it was based overwhelmingly on 'outside' books. When he turns to list his intel-

<sup>20</sup> E.g. John Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories: Theophilos* 10 in Thurn (1973: 60).

<sup>21</sup> See Kaldellis (2007a: 141).

<sup>22</sup> Michael Psellos, *Encomium for his Mother* 27a, in Criscuolo (1989); discussion in Kaldellis (2006: 29–49).



lectual interests in this oration and in the *Chronographia*, the vast majority of his discussion is devoted to pagan literature, with small, formulaic appendices regarding his knowledge of ‘inside’ wisdom.<sup>23</sup>

Consider also Psellos’ description in the *Chronographia* of the monks who were favoured by the emperor Michael IV (1034–42):

I know that the man displayed absolute piety after he gained the throne. Not only did he regularly attend church but he was also devoted to philosophers and took very good care of their needs. By the word ‘philosophers’ I do not here mean those who investigate the natures of beings and seek the principles of the universe and who neglect the principles of their own salvation. I mean those who despise the world and live in the company of supernatural beings .... Michael entrusted himself to those men who were devoted to God and had grown old in the ascetic life.<sup>24</sup>

Many things are interesting about this passage. One is that Psellos was perfectly aware of the competing conceptions of philosophy that apparently operated in his society, and could define them precisely. Of course, all educated Byzantines were aware of them to some degree, as their society had never managed or even attempted to create a Christian *paideia* sanitized of all Hellenic contamination; it was ‘contaminated’ from its inception and remained so. Every affirmation of philosophy as the most Christian life, therefore, had to be defensive and had to be asserted always in defiance of lurking Hellenic alternatives. A passage cited often in modern discussions comes from the *Chronicle* of George the Monk (in the ninth century), who included in his account of the reign of Claudius I a digression on the origin of monasticism. His conclusion is that only Christians have philosophized truly, not any Greeks or Jews. The Greeks were the slaves of their passions and spent too much time speculating about pointless things. True philosophy is the way of life prescribed by right belief, which comes from Christ alone.<sup>25</sup> What is interesting, however, is that ‘Christian philosophy’ had to be justified in these terms in the ninth century, when (presumably) there were no more Greek pagans around, and not only then but in *every* century, again and again. The tension was *permanent* and ingrained; the alternatives were always potent.

We see this dynamic in Psellos, only from the opposite point of view. In the passage quoted above, Psellos may seem to be endorsing the monastic notion of philosophy, but if we look closely we see that he is not doing that at all. Psellos’ own conception of philosophy, in the many places where he

<sup>23</sup> Michael Psellos, *Encomium for his Mother* 27–30; *Chron.* VI 36–43.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Psellos, *Chron.* IV 34.1–8; IV 37.2–4.

<sup>25</sup> George the Monk, *Chronicle*, in de Boor (1978: vol. I, 345).

defines it (including the *Chronographia*), was exactly that which he here ascribes to those who ‘investigate the natures of beings and seek the principles of the universe’ (and we should not forget the final thing that he says about them, namely that they ‘neglect the principles of their salvation’). Psellos aggressively belonged to this cognitive and (as he put it in his mother’s encomium) bookish group of philosophers, he systematically sought his bearings in the ancient Greeks, and sarcastically mocked monks throughout the *Chronographia* and other works. He was consciously opposed to Christian monasticism, not merely in believing that monks failed to live up to their ideals but in holding those ideals to be unsuitable for human beings in the first place.<sup>26</sup> His references to monks as philosophers were either sarcastic or (cynically) made in letters to powerful monks or men of the Church whose favour he was currying.

Anti-monasticism is an understudied theme of Byzantine history, to put it mildly, though the evidence for it is substantial (if one counts its pagan enemies in Late Antiquity and many bishops and Christian intellectuals in the same period who opposed the movement on institutional and moral grounds; the Iconoclasts; later Orthodox emperors who tried to curb monastic abuse of fiscal privileges; sceptics in saints’ lives; and the philosophers discussed here). This history has not yet been written, in part because we have become all-too-accustomed to the idea of Byzantium as a big monastery.<sup>27</sup> In this regard (as in many others), Psellos was in the vanguard of a broad shift among Byzantine intellectuals away from monastic values, a shift that peaked in the twelfth century. His successors in this regard were not necessarily philosophers, but they did advocate a more bookish, cultivated Hellenism against the very types whom, say, John Chrysostom and George the Monk had called philosophers in earlier centuries. Eustathios, the Homeric scholar, even wrote a long treatise for the reform of monastic life when he was bishop of Thessaloniki, in which he suggested that monks should read more and not solely in religious literature either.<sup>28</sup> These attitudes were part of the background of the revival of Greek-inspired theoretical philosophy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which occurred as the Christian ideal of practical philosophy, i.e. asceticism, was losing its hold over intellectuals.

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<sup>26</sup> That these were Psellos’ views of philosophy and monasticism is not particularly controversial. See Kaldellis (1999: chs. 10–11; 2007a: ch. 4, citing previous studies).

<sup>27</sup> The notable exception to this trend was Beck (1982).

<sup>28</sup> Eustathios of Thessalonike, *Inquiry into the Monastic Life for the Correction of Its Abuses* 143; 146, in Tafel (1832: 249–50); and now Metzler (2006). For this shift in general, see Magdalino (1981: 51–66) and Kaldellis (2007a: 253–55; 315).

But ultimately the love-hate relationship between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ wisdom was far more critical an issue for Byzantine philosophers than were the changing fortunes of monastic ideals. This was because one could not study philosophy, or use it to elucidate theology, without going ‘outside’, even if only to a limited degree, but that opened one up to potential charges of actually *being* outside. Everyone had to at least *seem* to be inside, but this was especially hard for those like Leo and Psellos whose careers (and inclinations) kept them outside most of the time. We should not doubt that they actually preferred it on the outside, their pious protestations notwithstanding. So they walked the tightrope of appearing to be insiders who spent most of their time outside for professional reasons, while possibly being true outsiders on the inside (in a double sense, i.e. inside their minds and inside Byzantine society). Almost all of them were accused of being ‘really’ on the outside. And, to complicate matters, no one knew exactly where the threshold lay; it was negotiable, which enabled their strategies of defence when they were accused.

The most hysterical denunciations were private (even if publicized), such as by Constantine against Leo and by Arethas against Choïrosphaktes. Here the accused is a false philosopher who only pretends to be a Christian. In reality, he has been seduced by the ‘outside letters’ that he professes and tries to bring others to his apostasy. He is the equal of the emperor Julian (always the bogey-man of philosophy in Byzantium) and even of Satan himself, damned to Hell ‘in the company of your wise Plato’.<sup>29</sup> Official indictments, on the other hand, such as those against Italos (1082) and, later, his student Eustratios (1117), tended to be more precise, specifying the doctrinal errors into which each fell in his attempt to explicate the faith by relying on ‘outside’ philosophy. Among other charges, Eustratios was condemned for saying that Christ used Aristotelian syllogisms.<sup>30</sup> We may imagine the possible misunderstandings that occurred here between the philosopher and his accusers (for example, some may have thought that he was saying that Christ was an Aristotelian), but the root of the unease and so of the scandal probably lay deeper, at a level that was harder to put into words and involved the perceived threat of a renegotiation of the relationship between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. To subsume the words of Christ, even if approvingly, to classification according to the modes and standards of Greek logic blurred crucial distinctions and relations of value. In the Christian

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<sup>29</sup> For Constantine against Leo, see above. Arethas of Caesarea, *Choïrosphaktes or the Warlock-Hater*, in Westerink (1968: 200–212), and trans. in Karlin-Hayter (1965: 468–81); see Magdalino (1997: 151–52).

<sup>30</sup> Joannou (1953: 34).

scheme of things, Aristotelian logic had an instrumental role to play. The ultimate Insider must not be subjected to such profane qualifications, or else the very distinction might become meaningless. This presumptuous way of talking indicated to some that Eustratios had been ‘outside’ too long for his own good.

These proceedings had a grave consequence for Byzantine intellectual history. In their attempt to enforce a strict, uncomplicated, and therefore largely imaginary Orthodoxy, the authorities in this period were further poisoning the already tense relationship with Greek philosophy, which was a supplement to the faith that they could not entirely discard without also jettisoning a substantial part of the Christian tradition. Had Italos *openly* rejected Christianity in favour of Plato or Proclus, then the matter would have been simpler. But he did not, and so his judges had only suspicions to go on, as do we. They decided that he had acted covertly and *insinuated* rather than openly proclaimed his heresies; that he *pretended* to be orthodox in order to poison the minds of his students; and that his true sources were Proclus and Iamblichus.<sup>31</sup> This attitude of suspicion was made official and permanent in the articles appended to the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*, a liturgical proclamation that was expanded under Alexios I Komnenos to confront these sinister threats:

Anathema upon those who go through a course of Hellenic studies and are taught not simply for the sake of education but follow these empty notions and believe in them as the truth, upholding them as a firm foundation to such an extent that they lead others to them, *sometimes secretly, sometimes openly* (added italics).<sup>32</sup>

The charges may have been true in any particular case, for instance that of Italos, or they may not have, but the wisdom of the Church in so broadcasting them is debatable. It made the threshold between inner and outer wisdom an even more treacherous place to be, and yet the Church’s own needs required some people to be exactly there, even if only for the exposition of doctrine and the Fathers, the adaptation and application of the faith to new needs and circumstances, and the confrontation of enemies both old and new. This climate of officially recognized suspicion was a recipe for the

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<sup>31</sup> For the documents, see Gouillard (1985, esp. 147.191–92: ‘Italos hastened to hide his own impiety through a pretence of piety’); cf. *ibid.* (155.352–60) for feigned conversion; *ibid.* (147.202) for Proclus and Iamblichus; for a narrative, Clucas (1981). Niketas of Herakleia likewise did not believe Eustratios of Nicaea’s protestations of innocence: *Apologia and Accusation: Why He Does Not Accept the Bishop of Nicaea*, in Darrouzès (1966: 276–309, here 302–3).

<sup>32</sup> Gouillard (1967: 59); trans. Wilson (1983: 154).

detection of additional threats, even, sometimes, when they did not really exist.

It has been said that ‘the crisis was more one of confidence in the cultural superiority of Orthodoxy. Its guardians had seen their space invaded literally and metaphorically, and they were putting up more and higher barriers to keep insiders in and outsiders out.’<sup>33</sup> But how could anyone know for sure who was what? More importantly, how did the philosophers themselves cope with this climate of suspicion and accusation? I have argued elsewhere that a standard response to suspicion is dissimulation, or, in its extreme form, lying. It is unlikely that *all* the accusations were unfounded, and the example of George Gemistos Plethon at the very end of the Byzantine era shows that a philosopher could think and say exactly the sorts of things that were imputed to others before him. Just because Psellos and the others *said* they were orthodox when they were challenged does not prove that they really were.<sup>34</sup> And even if Italos was set up and convicted of specific heresies that were not his own does not mean that he was not guilty of other thought-crimes of which he was suspected (it is possible, after all, to frame a guilty man). Each case must be examined on its merits, using all the evidence available for it. However, we should not allow the outdated model of a universally pious Byzantium, where dissent was not even thinkable, to influence whether we accept a philosopher’s protestation of innocence. In many cases, we may never know the truth of the matter, but even this situation is more interesting, both historically and philosophically, than the old model. It is, after all, the exact situation in which the Byzantines lived, both the philosophers and their critics.

Coping is one thing, responding another. I have already discussed Leo’s attempt to ameliorate the label ‘Hellene’. Let us consider two rhetorical defences against similar charges, both of which seem to have been mostly private affairs. I have chosen Psellos’ response to John Xiphilinos, a friend who would become a patriarch, and Theodore Prodromos’ defence against a certain Barys, because they exhibit curious parallels and are not as well known as they should be.

Psellos’ angry letter responds to one by Xiphilinos that has not survived, in which Xiphilinos seems to have doubted Psellos’ commitment to the faith, at least to the monastic vows they had both promised to take when they fled the court of Constantine IX Monomachos shortly before that emperor died (1054). Xiphilinos also stated or implied that Psellos preferred to

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<sup>33</sup> Magdalino (1993: 386).

<sup>34</sup> The comments of John Stuart Mill (1985: 91) are apt.

study Plato—whom he called accusingly ‘*your Plato*’—than to practise Christian philosophy. The charge was substantially true. Xiphilinos no doubt knew from their acquaintance that Psellos had no personal interest in the monastic life and had recourse to it at that moment for political reasons. But the sincerity of Psellos’ Christianity had recently been called into question by others too, possibly the patriarch Michael Keroularios, who forced him to produce a confession of the faith. Moreover, Psellos was (or was about to be) engaged in a vicious feud with the monks on Mt Olympus in Bithynia, who mocked his inability to handle any deprivation and his addiction to Hellenic goddesses. The pious artifices and defensiveness of the *Encomium for His Mother* belongs to this period. The philosopher could not afford another challenge to his already shaky position, and this by a friend.<sup>35</sup>

For these reasons, I view Psellos’ anger as more bluster than indignation (‘that I have abandoned God and cling to Plato and the Academy, well, I don’t know how to endure this’, etc.). At first, he wants to cast the words ‘*your Plato*’ back at Xiphilinos. A Christian, Psellos seems to argue, should study Plato in order know where Plato is right and where wrong. Psellos implies that by performing this pious duty he himself was more Christian than Xiphilinos. But then he turns around and defends Plato by saying that Plato set the foundation for Christian dogma and was read by the Fathers too. He calls on the authority of Maximus the Confessor—‘I should call him *mine*, for he was a philosopher’—to show that his own philosophical studies have not placed him outside the Christian tradition. He later cites Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil of Caesarea as well, who had mixed Greek philosophy with Christian doctrine. It is Xiphilinos’ rejection of this tradition that makes him a ‘Plato-hater’ and ‘misologist’, i.e. a hater of logic and debate, which alludes to Socrates’ famous discussion in the *Phaedo* (89d ff.). One cannot have true virtue *and* false notions, he goes on to argue, so in effect Christians *have* to philosophize, by which he seems to mean study Greek philosophy. Psellos was certainly aware that at no time in Christian history had the study of Greek philosophy been required or even recommended officially, so his position here would come across as a rather impudent paradox, at least to the likes of Xiphilinos. Though he admits that it would still be possible for someone ‘not to accept the orthodox doctrine in a spirit of rational inquiry’, acknowledging then that philosophy does not necessarily lead to Christianity, he insists throughout that he himself does accept Christ.

What was unstable in this whole exchange was precisely the meaning of ‘philosophy’, which causes Psellos to vacillate between indignation at the

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<sup>35</sup> For the context, see Kaldellis (2006: 6). The letter is in Criscuolo (1990).

‘*your* Plato’ charge (no, he says at first, Plato is *yours*, not mine; he has power over you because you have not studied him) and his later affirmation that ‘Plato *is* mine’ (because I am a philosopher and good Christians must be philosophers). He ends by asking forgiveness for his tone and allowing Xiphilinos an opening to retract the accusation: ‘I was acting under the assumption that to be ranked with Plato meant that I was being separated from our divine men.’ What he wanted to hear from Xiphilinos was something like ‘I didn’t mean it that way’.

The life of Prodrornos is less well known (and less studied), so we cannot place his defence against a charge of heresy in a biographical context. In many satirical works, essays, and the letters that he exchanged with the self-proclaimed philosopher Michael Italikos, Prodrornos adopts a philosophical and specifically Platonic persona.<sup>36</sup> Future studies will hopefully elucidate this brilliant author as fully as he deserves, showing whether his multifarious corpus is informed by consistent philosophical concerns throughout. Here we will consider a poem (*Poem* 59) responding to the charge of an otherwise unknown Barys, which means ‘heavy’ or ‘oppressive’ but was evidently a real name, given that Prodrornos mocks it and it is attested in Byzantium. The *gerousia* that Prodrornos addresses in the first line (the ‘synod’ of line 125) is not necessarily to be taken literally but may refer to the poem’s readership; it is an imagined speech of defence before us. ‘Defence’ is perhaps not the right word as the poem delivers a vicious attack on Barys that echoes Psellos’ letter to Xiphilinos and may have even been based on it.

Prodrornos declares that he would have turned the other cheek (ll. 40–42) if the attack had been about worldly things, such as family, poverty or stupidity, but a slur on his faith required response. Barys had called him impious, and to remain silent would constitute a denial of God (l. 65). After citing some examples of righteous anger from the Old Testament (ll. 69–91) and declaring his faith in the Trinity, Prodrornos comes to the heart of the matter: he has been branded as a heretic because of his involvement with ‘outside wisdom’, specifically Plato and Socrates (ll. 105–6; 119–20). He immediately notes that one would then also have to brand as heretics Basil, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus (ll. 115–18). Prodrornos would he happy to be a heretic in their company. He later invokes the piety

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<sup>36</sup> For Prodrornos in general, see Hörandner (1974: 21–56); and 474–83 for *Poem* 59: ‘To Barys who, babbling, branded him with the name of a heretic’ (followed by a commentary), on which see Magdalino 1993: 390–91; Kazhdan (1984: 87–114: ‘Theodore Prodrornos: A Reappraisal’); and Kaldellis (2007a: 250–52; 270–76). His Platonism has not yet been studied from either a literary or a philosophical standpoint.

of the men in his family who raised him, specifically his grandfather and his uncle, who seems to have been a bishop in Rus' (ll. 184–90).<sup>37</sup> This invocation reminds us of Psellos' strategy in the *Encomium for His Mother*. The argument that follows in Prodromos' poem (ll. 191–203) likewise seems to be modelled on the letter to Xiphilinos. I did study outside texts, Prodromos admits, but I chose from them what was useful for the faith and discarded the rest. I studied logic so as not to fall into traps and bad reasoning. Plato, Aristotle and natural science are good for morals, politics and proper thinking, which is the same aggressive counter-argument made by Psellos against Xiphilinos. (The remainder of the poem is an attack on Barys himself.)

It is not strictly necessary that Prodromos was imitating Psellos here, as these were the kinds of arguments that someone in his position would naturally make in defence of his intellectual pursuits, but the correspondence is close and Psellos was well known among the twelfth-century humanists.<sup>38</sup> We observe the aggressive tone (more restrained in Psellos' case as the addressee was a friend), but in both cases this may have been as much strategy as genuine indignation (and it helps here that people can become indignant *that* a serious charge has been made against them, even if it is a true one). We note too the use of pious relatives as shields to deflect criticism, a saintly mother in Psellos' case, a bishop-uncle in that of Prodromos; the invocation of Fathers who had studied Greek thought, especially Basil, Gregory (either one), and Maximus; the standard claim that in reading 'outside literature' one had selected the good and rejected the bad; and the further argument that logical reasoning (which, apparently, one could learn only from the Greeks) was indispensable for good Christians.

Basil, the Gregories, and Maximus functioned as the protective talismans of Byzantine philosophy. According to Arethas, Choiosphaktes had compared himself to Gregory of Nazianzus and we know that Italos cited him too when he was being interrogated by the emperor's synod.<sup>39</sup> And not merely in Byzantium: in a unique episode from twelfth-century Kievan Rus', the metropolitan Klim Smoljatič was accused of vainly trying to make himself into a philosopher, and of citing Homer, Aristotle and Plato instead of Scripture. As in the cases of Psellos and Prodromos, all we have is Klim's response, which is conciliatory in tone and consists mostly of quotation of Scriptural passages. One of the points of this strategy, other than to prove that Klim does in fact know Scripture, is that the Bible must be inter-

<sup>37</sup> The identity of this uncle has occasioned debate. See Franklin (1984: 40–45).

<sup>38</sup> Kaldellis (2007a: 226–28).

<sup>39</sup> Arethas of Caesarea, *Choiosphaktes or the Warlock-Hater*, in Westerink (1968: 206; 210). Gouillard (1985: e.g. 145; 152–53).



preted because it cannot always be taken literally, and to interpret one must go beyond the letter of the text. ‘I inquire into the true meaning of what is said ...’ but, Klim adds, ‘I do not think that what I wrote was “philosophy”.’ The only non-Scriptural authority that he cites is, typically, Gregory of Nazianzus, who appears here ‘sailing to Athens as a young man, wishing to study the writings of the Athenians’.<sup>40</sup> The problem had been exported, and so too the standard response.

The Fathers’ ‘insider’ credentials were impeccable as they had defined the faith, yet they had also spent considerable time studying ‘outside’ wisdom. They were a bridge between the two thought-worlds, or rather proved that the two were not separate at all, that attempts to sever them must fail. The Fathers justified a form of Christian Hellenism or philosophy, but not necessarily the one practised by the likes of Psellos and Prodromos, so we must suspect a degree of cynicism behind their invocation. Psellos rejected precisely the ascetic ‘Christian philosophy’ pioneered by Basil and Gregory and he revived Platonism in ways that they would not approve. And while we do not know what prompted Barys’ accusation, Prodromos wrote satires that contained subtle blasphemies,<sup>41</sup> and pushed his thought in directions with no precedent in the Fathers (Lucian, for example, was his guiding star in much that he wrote). We may, then, wonder whether these Byzantine philosophers only *hid* behind Gregory (and his like) when they were challenged, but otherwise made their own way beyond them in terms of their literary and philosophical experimentations.<sup>42</sup> Psellos certainly knew that Gregory of Nazianzus would have disliked his project to rehabilitate the body and his argument that anti-Christian thinkers were essential for the understanding of Christian doctrine. There was a gap, in other words, between what the philosophers *professed* when challenged and what they *did* when left to their own devices. Contemporaries were sceptical, and we should be too.

In conclusion, it is possible that some Byzantine philosophers went beyond merely using philosophy to promote sanctioned theological objectives or writing technical but safe commentaries on the ancient thinkers. Many sources warn us that some were led by their study of ancient texts to doubt

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<sup>40</sup> Klim Smoljatič, *Epistle to Foma*; trans. Franklin (1991: 31–53; see the introduction, lviii–lxxii). I thank Olenka Pevny for this reference.

<sup>41</sup> See Roilos (2000: 113–20; 2005: 253–88); Kaldellis (2007a: 270–76).

<sup>42</sup> I have argued that Psellos’ professed admiration for Gregory of Nazianzus did not extend far into his basic attitudes; it was rhetorical, i.e. stylistic, or cynical, depending on the circumstance: Kaldellis (2006: 37–40; 2007a: 207–9; 217–18).

certain tenets of Orthodoxy and embrace views antithetical to them, for example astrological (in the case of Choïrosphaktes), regarding what attitudes one should have toward the body, or in rejecting monasticism. We, in turn, should be ready to recognize the feat of reasoning one's way out of a strongly established religion and adopt ancient or novel ways of thinking about physical, metaphysical, or ethical issues as a philosophical achievement in its own right.

Further exploration of the tense dialectic between Orthodoxy and dissent in Byzantium must not limit its horizons to the analytical tradition of modern academic philosophy, for much of ancient and Byzantine thought concerns broad cultural, ethical, and political topics that do not closely match modern curricular standards and methods of argumentation regarding logic, epistemology, and the philosophy of mind and language. We should be ready to relax the boundaries between general intellectual history and the history of philosophy, for we are not all in agreement over what constitutes philosophy and we do not yet possess, in the case of Byzantium at least, such an abundance of material that we can afford to be choosy. To give an example from the classical world, Herodotus has been discussed as a philosopher in a broader sense, for instance in his application of Greek science and practice of cultural relativism following (and perfecting) the teachings of the Sophists.<sup>43</sup> It is generally understood that ancient philosophy, in all its diverse genres and forms, differed notably in its interests and methods of demonstration from modern analytic philosophy. It would be more productive to assume, if only as a working hypothesis, that the same was true in Byzantium. We might risk losing much if we limit our focus to authors, or rather individual works that present themselves as technical elaborations or commentaries on the ancient technical traditions of philosophy, and so produce only doxography and philosophical *Quellenforschung*. Casting our nets widely will bring in a larger catch, not only because many (or most) Byzantines who wrote technical manuals also wrote in other genres as well, inviting intertextual readings, but also because we must factor in the Byzantine nexus of belief and power, the 'inside-outside' problem with which most ancient thinkers did not have to cope. In studying the Byzantines' inquiries into the highest questions and assessing their declarations of belief, we must consider the social and institutional power of an established religion and the sanctions that it could bring to bear against dissidents. In one sense, this too makes Byzantium more interesting than antiquity.

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<sup>43</sup> Lateiner (1989); Thomas (2000).

For instance, Herodotus had his Byzantine counterparts. The historian Michael Attaleiates was perhaps not a technical philosopher, but still he managed to produce a case for the equivalence of all religions, and his views on history and politics set him outside the bounds of Orthodoxy. To arrive at these conclusions he turned to ancient sources and models, including the history of the Roman Republic (as did many political philosophers in the modern period). His political thought looked to the past, and in his attempt to explain the current misfortunes of the Roman state and provide solutions for the future he rejected Orthodox ways of thinking, in some cases explicitly.<sup>44</sup> We may or may not want to consider his thought ‘philosophical’ (or Herodotus’ for that matter), but we would do well to consider his reflections as part of the background discussion that was going on at the time that all Byzantine thinkers were negotiating the boundaries between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’.

To cite another form of analysis that should be brought into close relation with doxography and philosophical *Quellenforschung* in the Byzantine context, it seems that even those who had a technical training in philosophy could express their philosophy (or aspects of it) in narrative mode, as Psellos did in the *Chronographia*. The *Timarion*, an anonymous satire of the late eleventh or twelfth century that was probably rightly suspected by Constantine Akropolites in the fourteenth century of being deliberately anti-Christian, appears to be a frivolous text on the surface but nevertheless has, I believe, a serious purpose. Its narrator emerges at the end of the work as one interested primarily in philosophy, and in the afterworld that he depicts, pagan gods and philosophers are dominant. They were right all along, it turns out, and this realization is accompanied by numerous subtle (and some not-so-subtle) slurs on Christianity. The narrator shows his hand toward the end when he takes up personally with the ancient philosophers, a group who will apparently not accept Christians in their midst. Interestingly, they reject Italos because he has not rejected his baptism, but they accept Psellos; that he, by mutual consent, ends up with the orators instead is an interesting commentary by the author on Psellos’ true proclivities, but the fact that he thinks that Psellos had renounced his baptism, thereby making him at least formally acceptable to the ancient philosophers if not lionized by them as he is by the orators, is obvious and telling. Oddly, this text has not yet been studied as a work of philosophy, or at least as a work which contains, in its

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<sup>44</sup> For the text, see Pérez Martín (2002); for a discussion, Kaldellis (2007b).

narrative of the afterworld, a commentary on the contemporary scene of Byzantine philosophy.<sup>45</sup>

To conclude, it is possible that Byzantine philosophy has not been fully appreciated because we have presupposed that Byzantine culture was far more static and monolithically pious than it really was. At the heart of the question of philosophy was in fact a fluid and dangerous boundary between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ that never became static. All Byzantine philosophers had to finesse it in various ways, making their works and proclamations inherently ambiguous. ‘Byzantium saw a much more varied display of meanings, status, and functions of philosophy than has been traditionally thought, even in regard to the relationship between philosophy and theology.’<sup>46</sup> We are only now beginning to seriously study genres such as Byzantine satire, while histories such as that by Attaleiates have received little critical attention. The question of the autonomy of Byzantine philosophy will require much philology and cultural hermeneutics. The prospects are exciting, but will be realized only when we apply to Byzantine texts and their social contexts the same sophistication that has traditionally been reserved for classical works (where now many assume, perhaps excessively, that almost every writer was a dissident of some sort). Philosophy in Byzantium was a contested space, a site of conflict about fundamental matters (inside vs. outside, pagan vs. Christian, revelation vs. reason, science vs. pietism, and so on.). The persistence of these tensions was inherent in the never fully synthesized intellectual tradition that the Byzantines had inherited. They were worked out again and again in the classroom, in theoretical treatises, in novels and satires, and in the subtle dances of Byzantine intellectual history.

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<sup>45</sup> For the text, see Romano (1974); trans. Baldwin (1984); for discussion, Kaldellis (2007a: 276–83; and esp. forthcoming *b*).

<sup>46</sup> Trizio (2007: 271).

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# Political philosophy in Michael Psellos: the *Chronographia* read in relation to his philosophical work

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The political thought explicitly or implicitly present in Michael Psellos' historical masterpiece, the *Chronographia*, has attracted the attention of modern readers and given rise to studies using diverse methods and reaching diverse results.<sup>1</sup> In general, however, this has been done without taking much account of the large body of texts produced by Psellos in relation to his teaching activities as a philosopher, with one notable exception: the autobiographical section in the *Chronographia* (VI 36ff.) where Psellos presents his philosophical education and interests, a passage evidently connected with Psellos' own philosophical work. The absence of research comparing the political thought of the *Chronographia* with what might be found in Psellos' philosophical works has the disadvantage of giving the impression of a double personality in Psellos: the political thinker and actor of the *Chronographia* and the teacher in the philosophical works. There is also the danger that we may deprive ourselves of means allowing us better to understand passages in the *Chronographia* involving fairly technical concepts and theoretical constructs which find fuller expression in the philosophical works, with the result that we may fail to grasp, or even misinterpret, Psellos' views in the *Chronographia*.

One reason for this situation is the long-standing absence of critical editions of Psellos' philosophical works, a problem which is now slowly being resolved. A further reason may be that historians might be tempted to think sometimes (may Clio forgive my rudeness!) that they can adequately discuss philosophers of the past without having a serious grasp of their philosophy. Perhaps the principal reason, however, is the feeling that the Psellos we find in the *Chronographia* is a real, interesting, even original thinker, whereas the Psellos of the philosophical works is an anthologist, an excerptor making patchworks out of ancient Greek philosophical texts, just the type which Byzantines were long supposed to exemplify and from which modern research wishes to save them. Yet the judgment dismissing Psellos'

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Gadolin (1970); Kaldellis (1999). The latter book stimulated my interest in this subject, which led me however to different conclusions.

philosophical work as patchwork can be shown to be inadequate.<sup>2</sup> One should also consider that Psellos had a deep knowledge of the Greek philosophical tradition, a knowledge more extensive than ours could ever be, a tradition in which he was steeped and in which he situated himself. It is precisely in relation to this tradition that we can reach a better understanding of Psellos' ideas and a more accurate view of his particularity.

In the following pages I would like to propose some elements of a study of the political thought of the *Chronographia* read in relation to comparable ideas in Psellos' philosophical works with the purpose of connecting these two facets of Psellos' mind, hoping thereby to reach a better understanding of Psellos' thought in the *Chronographia* and of its relation to the political philosophy of antiquity. In this article some examples of such comparative work can be proposed, not of course a complete examination.

## I

Perhaps a beginning might be made with a passage in the *Chronographia* (VI a 8) where Psellos provides a characterization both of the different conditions (καταστάσεις) of human souls and of their 'lots' (μερίδες) in relation to these conditions. We might say that what is involved is both the metaphysical and the ethical dimensions of human existence. Psellos distinguishes between two conditions of the soul, between soul taken *by itself*, living by itself separate from body, and soul as taken *with the body*, living with the body. The latter condition involves two possible 'lots': that of a soul which gives itself to the passions of the body, and that of a soul which avoids this, maintaining a moderate, intermediate position between the lower lot and the higher, that of soul living separately from the body. This higher lot of soul is described as 'divine', whereas the two lots of soul living with the body are identified as that of the 'political' man (πολιτικός ... ἄνθρωπος), with regard to the moderate position, and as that of the pleasure-loving life (ἀπολαυστικός; φιλήδονος), with regard to the soul given to the passions. The description of the two lower lots already involves ethical ideas to which we will soon return.

Psellos' distinction between three types of lives lived by souls may remind us of the three lives distinguished by Aristotle at the beginning of his *Nicomachean Ethics* (I 5, 1095b17–19): the life of pleasure, the political and the theoretical (or contemplative) life. However, Psellos' distinction is based

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<sup>2</sup> See O'Meara (1998); Ierodiakonou (2002b). Duffy (2002) shows what an exceptional figure Psellos was in the context of Byzantine philosophy.



on a metaphysical division between two conditions of soul, soul living separate from the body and soul living with the body, which does not seem particularly Aristotelian. The division between the two conditions of the soul in the passage of the *Chronographia* can be found elsewhere in Psellos' works, for example in his letters, where the condition of soul living with the body is described as 'human' and that of soul living separately as 'divine', and where Psellos situates himself in the middle,<sup>3</sup> that which he describes in the *Chronographia* as the lot of the 'political' man. In a short text *On the Soul*, Psellos presents the distinction between soul taken by itself and soul as taken in relation to the body in a way which recalls his Neoplatonic sources, in particular Plotinus' insistence on the need for soul to see itself by itself, separate from the body, where it discovers its divine nature, as compared to soul's view of itself as related to the body.<sup>4</sup> In the Neoplatonic philosophy of late antiquity, 'man' is defined as soul using the body as instrument and 'we' are identified with the soul, a doctrine also found by Psellos as attributed to Plato in Nemesius<sup>5</sup> and mentioned in Psellos' philosophical handbook, the *De omnifaria doctrina*, the more extensive versions of which he dedicated to the emperor Michael VII.<sup>6</sup>

According to this theory, then, we live, as souls separate from bodies, a divine condition, or, as souls living with the body, a human condition. These differing conditions involve differing ethical dispositions and actions, which, as the passage in the *Chronographia* makes clear, may be morally appropriate or not. In particular, the human condition may be directed to the life of the passions, a pleasure-loving life, or may be characterized by moderation, the life of the 'political' man. It is clear that it is this moderate life that Psellos endorses as regards the human condition, that of soul taken in relation to the body. The term 'political' and the expression 'political man', as used by Psellos here, should probably not be taken in a modern sense, but in a moral sense as indicating a virtuous disposition in human life characterized by moderation and contrasting with the vice of a life given to the passions. The appropriate moral sense can be found in the context of a conception of 'political' virtue which is mentioned in an earlier passage in the *Chronographia* (VI 44.6–8), where 'ethical' virtue, 'political' virtue and a virtue even higher than these, reaching to the paradigmatic, are contrasted with the 'natural' virtue (or its opposed vice) which we have from birth. The

<sup>3</sup> *Letters* 30 and 35 quoted by Jenkins (2006: 143–44).

<sup>4</sup> *Phil. min.* II 1, 1.1–2 and 17–23. See Plotinus, *Enn.* 4.7, 10.7ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Phil. min.* II 12, 23.21–24; *Epist. ad Cerul.* 32–33; see Plato, *Alcib.* 129e ff. and O'Meara (2003: 48).

<sup>6</sup> *De omn. doct.* 31.11–14; 33.2–3 and 8–14.

reader of Psellos' *De omnifaria doctrina* will recognize in this passage the presence of the theory of a hierarchy of the virtues (natural, ethical, political, paradigmatic, and so on) which Psellos explains at length in the handbook's chapters on the virtues (66–81), which he describes elsewhere in his philosophical works (*Phil. min.* II 32) and which, no doubt under Psellos' influence, reappears in John Italos, Eustratios of Nicaea and Michael of Ephesus.<sup>7</sup> Let us then turn to the *De omnifaria doctrina*, where we find more information about what the virtue of the 'political' man, 'political' virtue, is.

## II

We note first that the hierarchy of virtues follows the (metaphysical) division discussed above between soul in itself and soul in relation to body:

There are three orders of the virtues. For some of them order the human, that is soul with the body; some of them purify the soul from the body and turn it to itself, virtues which are called 'purificatory'; some of them occupy completely the purified soul with the contemplation of intelligible realities, those called 'theoretical' and 'intellective' (*De omn. doct.* 66.1–7).

The order of virtues not given a name here, those of the human, of soul related to the body, are named in a later section (69.6–7) as the four 'political' virtues of Plato which order human life (πολιτευόμενον ἄνθρωπον). Psellos is thinking of the four cardinal virtues defined by Plato at the end of *Republic* Book 4 and which concern good ordering of the functions both of the inner 'republic' of the soul and of the outer republic, Plato's good city-state. The term 'political' is used for these virtues by Plotinus in his treatise on the virtues (*Enn.* 1.2, 1.16) in a way which suggests that he is thinking of the inner 'republic', the ordering of soul in its life in relation to the body, whereas Porphyry, in his version of the Plotinian theory in the *Sentences*, refers to relations within a human community, an outer republic (32.6–8), a text copied by Psellos in *De omnifaria doctrina* section 70, where these 'political' virtues are introduced as ordering the 'phenomenal' man, i.e. man as soul living in the world of sensible appearances.<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere, in an interpretation of a passage in Synesius,<sup>9</sup> Psellos indicates that the 'political' virtues of the Greek sages are named by 'us' the 'practical' virtues and he then

<sup>7</sup> John Italos, *Quaest. quod.* 87ff.; for Eustratios, see O'Meara (2004: 113) and Papamanolakis (2007), for Michael of Ephesus, see O'Meara (2008: 48).

<sup>8</sup> For the expression 'phenomenal man', see Proclus, *In Alcib.* 25.3–6; *In Tim.* 1, 16.16; 117.1–2. For the expression 'political man' as used in connection with the concept of 'political' virtue in Neoplatonism, see O'Meara (2003: 44; 48; 57).

<sup>9</sup> *Phil. min.* II 32, 109.14–15.

provides a fairly extensive version of Porphyry's chapter on the virtues in the *Sentences*.

If section 66 of *De omnifaria doctrina* mentions three orders in the hierarchy of virtues, section 69 mentions four, whereas section 67 gives a yet more extensive list including six orders, virtues which are 'natural', 'ethical', 'political', 'purificatory', 'theoretical' and 'theurgic'. However, this more extensive list continues to span the fundamental distinction of section 66 between virtues of the soul as related to the body and virtues of the soul taken in itself: natural, ethical and political virtues concern soul in relation to the body, the three higher orders of virtues having to do with soul separate from the body. The more extensive list of section 67 also shows that Psellos is inspired not only by the accounts of the hierarchy of virtues in Plotinus (*Enn.* 1.2) and Porphyry (*Sent.* 32), but also by accounts in later Neoplatonists in which the hierarchy of virtues was developed further, in particular by Iamblichus, in a work *On the Virtues* (no longer extant) which Psellos seems to be using, as well as by Proclus.<sup>10</sup> These sources are also Psellos' inspiration for the idea that the hierarchy of virtues constitutes a scale of perfection, of ascending degrees of assimilation to God (sections 71–72). The highest degree of assimilation of soul as separate is reached in theurgic virtue, whereas the highest degree of assimilation of soul as related to body is reached in 'political' virtue:

For God says in the gospels 'If thou wilt separate the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth' [Jer. 15:19]: you see how He placed the most true [i.e. highest] assimilation in theurgy. But we would be well content if we were able to order ourselves through the political virtues.<sup>11</sup>

It will be of use to look a little more at the more modest (human) degree of assimilation represented by the level of 'political' virtue, as described in the sections on the virtues in *De omnifaria doctrina*, before coming back to the *Chronographia*.

In section 72, ascribing to Plato the idea that political virtues lead man to God as assimilating man to God to the extent possible, Psellos describes God in terms of a double activity: the knowledge of the principles of things prior to creation, and providence or care exercised in respect to lower things. For man, as imitating God (72.5–7), this means, (i) in the political

<sup>10</sup> *Phil. min.* II 32, 111.17–19. An overview of the Neoplatonic theory of the hierarchy of virtues can be found in O'Meara (2003: 40–49) (with further references).

<sup>11</sup> *De omn. doct.* 71.11–15; see *Phil. min.* II 32, 111.13–16. In the passage I quote Psellos gives the Neoplatonic hierarchy of virtues a biblical authority. An adequate answer to the question as to how Psellos may have sought to integrate the Neoplatonic virtues with Christian virtues would require an extensive investigation which cannot be attempted here.

virtues, turning to the things of this world and ordering 'those' who are inferior by means of the virtues that produce moderation of the passions (μετριοπάθεια) and, (ii) in the theoretical or contemplative life, ascending to the principles of all things.<sup>12</sup> The moderation of the passions finds more detailed expression in sections 75–80 where Psellos summarizes the doctrine of moral virtues as means between the extremes of excess and deficiency of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* Book II. He then connects this in section 81 to the psychology and virtues of Book IV of Plato's *Republic*. In other words, Psellos interprets Aristotle's doctrine of moral virtue as relating to the (Neo-)Platonic doctrine of political virtue. However, in speaking of these virtues, Psellos names them 'ethical' as concerning the acquiring by the irrational part of soul, from reason, of a quality of *ethos* (81.1–3). We need then to distinguish between the 'political' virtues, also called 'ethical' in certain contexts, and the level of virtue subordinate to the political virtues in the later Neoplatonic hierarchy of virtues, also called 'ethical' (as noted above), but which merely concerns moral habituation, for example in children and animals, without the contribution of reason (67.2–3).

In referring to the providential function of political virtues in ordering 'those' who are inferior, Psellos seems to have in mind the 'outer' republic, the sphere in which humans live in a political community. However, if we examine Psellos' Neoplatonic sources, we can observe that political order is the extension to others of the 'inner' republic, the ordering of the soul's life in relation to the body, an ordering that can extend first to the domestic sphere and then to the political. Thus the distinction between the sciences of ethics, economics (domestic life) and politics, in the Aristotelian division of the sciences adopted by the later Neoplatonists, is a distinction merely in quantity, the same 'political' virtues obtaining in the individual, in the household and in the state.<sup>13</sup> And the root of good order as extended to others is the order in the 'inner' republic of the soul.<sup>14</sup>

### III

We may come back now to the *Chronographia*. It has been noted that Psellos' history of Byzantine emperors is to a large extent an account of the *ethos* of these rulers and, to a lesser extent, of those who shared in their rule

<sup>12</sup> 72.7–12. On μετριοπάθεια (of Aristotelian origin) in the Neoplatonic hierarchy of virtues, see Hadot (1978: 150–61).

<sup>13</sup> See O'Meara (2003: 56).

<sup>14</sup> See O'Meara (2003: 45). For the inner and outer republic in Psellos, see below section *V*.

as advisors, ministers, relations, rivals, the account of their *ethos* serving to situate policies, actions and reactions to events.<sup>15</sup> It has also been pointed out that part of the background to Psellos' history is provided by the rhetorical theory and practice of royal panegyric, in which certain moral qualities (for example, φιλανθρωπία) are standardly attributed to the ruler to be praised.<sup>16</sup> However it is also clear that Psellos wishes in general to distinguish between his history and the writing of panegyrics, and his moral portraits of rulers mix praise and blame, presenting a series of variously contrasting combinations of virtues and vices. His approach evokes an influential precedent, that set by Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* with its edificatory tales of differing and contrasting moral characters and fates. Plutarch's work is probably also in the background to Damascius' *Philosophical History* (or *Life of Isidore*), where the Neoplatonist philosopher of the early sixth century presents an edificatory panorama of the contrasting moral characters and fates of a wide range of philosophers of late antiquity.<sup>17</sup> Damascius' work, portions of which are preserved in Photios' *Bibliotheca* and in the *Suda*, has the particularity of structuring the series of mini-biographies which it includes so as to illustrate in different ways the hierarchy of virtues of later Neoplatonism. Thus some individuals manifest certain natural virtues (or vices) and not others (for example, health, good memory); some display some ethical virtues (or vices) and not others; some reach the political virtues; and a few go even further, ascending the scale to the higher virtues, purificatory, contemplative and theurgic. Damascius' account concerns private persons, rather than rulers (although he does include some rulers), and it shows how different natural virtues or vices can develop into ethical virtues and vices and into political virtues affecting the lives of their possessors. I believe we can detect something comparable in Psellos' *Chronographia*: if the series of biographies concern those in power or associated with power, they often illustrate, not so much the rhetorical conventions concerning the virtues of the ideal ruler, as a conception of different types of virtue and vice, as these concern rulers, a conception which may be fitted into the theory of the hierarchy of virtues we have found mentioned in the *Chronographia* and explained in some detail in the *De omnifaria doctrina*.<sup>18</sup> The following examples might be given in support of this suggestion.

<sup>15</sup> See for example Gadolin (1970); Kaldellis (1999).

<sup>16</sup> Pietsch (2005). See Angelov (2007) for this theme in later Byzantine thought.

<sup>17</sup> See O'Meara (2006) on what follows.

<sup>18</sup> I do not wish to claim that Psellos here is directly inspired by Damascius' work.

At the inception of his reign the emperor Basil II was leading a dissolute, pleasure-seeking life, Psellos reports (I 4.5–13), in other words a life of immoderation, comparable to the lowest human life, a life subject to passions, which we have met already in Psellos' tripartition of the moral lots of the soul. However, Basil's character and way of life changed on his acceding to power: he became tough, rigorous, disciplined, an effective ruler (I 4 and 18). This means, I suggest, that Psellos considers Basil to have developed the equivalent of 'ethical' virtue, i.e. a virtue acquired for example by animals and children through training and not through reason which is part of the virtue next in the hierarchy, 'political' virtue. For it is the pressure of events (πράγματα) that changed Basil's character (I 4.7–8). That Basil's rigour was not true political virtue is suggested also by his autocratic approach to ruling, his refusal to take advice (a failing in Psellos' eyes, as we will see), his attending, not to the written laws, but to the unwritten laws of his own *naturally* well-endowed (εὐφροστώτη) soul (I 29.9–11). Basil may then have had great military success and accumulated riches, much to the material advantage of his empire, but he ruled, we may conclude, on the basis of his natural virtues and of ethical virtues imposed by the constraint of events, not on that of political virtue. Basil's brother and successor Constantine VIII was also immoderately given to the life of pleasure (ἀπόλαυσις), possessing natural strength of body, but too old to change in character as had his brother (II 1–2). Constantine was succeeded by his son-in-law, Romanos III, whom Psellos characterizes as falsely pretending to have knowledge which, had it been genuine, would have been beneficial to all (III 4.5–6). Another pseudo-virtue in Romanos was the piety inspiring excessive expenditures on Church building, an appearance of piety denounced by Psellos as also false, since it involved much injustice and the ruin of the body politic (III 15.8–11). With this exaggerated show of imperial piety Psellos contrasts the true piety of the intellect clothed in divinity, the soul stained in the purple of intellectual royalty, i.e. proportion in action and measure in thought.<sup>19</sup> Here also we cannot speak of genuine political virtue. Michael IV cuts a much better figure: his character was ordered, reason dominated his passions and he emerges as a good ruler. Yet here again, it was his natural qualities and the demands of rule, rather than an appropriate moral education, which gave him his virtues (IV 7.6–10; 8.6; 9; 11.8–10). At the end of his life Michael turned to another, higher life, that directed to God (IV 52–53).

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<sup>19</sup> III 15.18–20. See Kaldellis (1999: 72–74), for useful indications concerning Psellos' Neoplatonic sources on this subject.

Considered in the light of the theory of the hierarchy of virtues, we can say that these lives of the emperors describe a variety of natural qualities and defects of soul and body, natural virtues and vices.<sup>20</sup> From these can develop ethical vices or virtues, immoderation in the passions or disciplined dispositions. However if such ethical virtues develop, it is due, not to an appropriate education and to reason, but to the pressures brought by rule. False versions of virtues occur as does false knowledge. Genuine knowledge is generally lacking as is, I think we can infer, genuine political virtue. If emperors are nonetheless successful, it is due to their natural endowments and ethical virtues imposed by the harsh lessons of political reality. Psellos' differentiated appreciation of these emperors contrasts with the accounts which come at the end of the *Chronographia*, where Psellos follows more and more the standard rhetorical practice of imperial panegyric.<sup>21</sup>

#### IV

What then is the *ethos* of the truly good ruler, in Psellos' eyes? It seems to follow from the theory of the hierarchy of virtues that such a ruler should possess 'political' virtue, both within, in his soul, and without, as it applies to his function as ruler. Rule, Psellos assumes, is monarchic in form and has as its aim the good of the monarch's subjects, promoting lawfulness, justice, moderation.<sup>22</sup> The 'good' in question relates, we can assume, to the subjects as humans, i.e. as souls living in relation to the body, as distinct from higher goods attained by soul separate from the body through the higher stages of the hierarchy of virtues. Psellos compares the monarch to Plato's demiurge, i.e. the divine world-maker in Plato's *Timaeus* who brings order to disorder, imposing cosmic harmony, justice, equality.<sup>23</sup> However, the human monarch is not a god, Psellos insists. He complains in particular of rulers who claim to have the highest wisdom and highest virtues and who are only satisfied if they rule as gods rule (VI 74.15–20). Such rulers would rather die than have recourse to the support of collaborators providing them with God-sent help (20–25). We can discern here Psellos' critical attitude to the persistence in Byzantium of Roman imperial divinization.<sup>24</sup> His criticism

<sup>20</sup> For further references to these natural or innate virtues in the *Chronographia*, see Kaldellis (1999: 24–25).

<sup>21</sup> For the last part of the work (VII a–VII c) as added later, see Pietsch (2007: 111–12) (with references to earlier studies).

<sup>22</sup> *Chron.* IV 47.3–4; VII a 2 and 15.

<sup>23</sup> *Chron.* VII 62.6–9.

<sup>24</sup> But compare the change in the last part of the *Chronographia* (VII c 1.12–13: on Michael

involves a distinction between divine and human rule. Divine rule can be absolute, requiring no collaboration, being based on divine power, knowledge and virtue. However, human rulers are not so qualified: their mediocrity as regards knowledge and virtue is made all too evident in Psellos' portraits.<sup>25</sup> They must rule as humans; they require the assistance of advisors and experts in various fields; their rule, at best, will reach the level of 'political' virtue.

This is the point which Psellos makes in the passage of the *Chronographia* concerning the differing conditions and lots of the soul with which our study began. The context of this passage is the criticism of Leo Paraspodylos, the man the empress Theodora put in charge of government.<sup>26</sup> This man, in Psellos' view, was lacking in 'political' virtue, in political *ethos* (VI a 6.13–7.3). He was rough, unsociable, difficult to approach. His rigour, Psellos feels, is a virtue appropriate to eternity, but not to time; impassibility and inflexibility belong to another world, not to this world, to this life, a life related to the body, which is 'more political', adjusted to present circumstances, where soul relates to the passions (7.9–16). It is precisely at this point that Psellos introduces his distinction between the divine life (soul separate from body) and the human life of soul related to the body which may be 'political', as moderate, or dissolute, as given to the passions. Psellos criticizes the confusion which consists in applying moral dispositions appropriate to the divine life to the conduct of human affairs (8.18–24). In other words, in terms of the theory of the hierarchy of virtues, the virtues of soul separate from the body are appropriate for the divine life, not for human bodily existence, where the relevant desirable virtues are the 'political'. Rule exercised by humans over humans requires human virtue which includes flexibility and accommodation of the passions which are part of soul's life with the body.

One might doubt that Psellos' critique goes as far as assuming that Leo Paraspodylos actually attained divine virtues and lived a divine life. The impression given of Leo is far from flattering and Psellos' tone is ironic. What is at issue is Leo's autocratic, unsociable inflexibility. These characteristics may evoke divine virtues, but it does not follow from this that Leo actually possessed these virtues. It is more likely that they were, for Psellos,

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VII).

<sup>25</sup> Psellos' account of the deficiencies of rulers does not warrant Kaldellis' inference (1999: 51) that Psellos thought that these deficiencies were desirable.

<sup>26</sup> My interpretation of this passage differs from that offered by Kaldellis (1999: 155ff.), which I believe to be misled, in particular in that it does not take account of the Neoplatonic theory in the background of the passage.



pseudo-forms of such virtues. A little later (VI a 18), Psellos attacks monks, the ‘Naziraeans’, who behave as if they were demigods, who pretend to model their lives on the divine, but who do not in fact do this, while throwing into confusion the natural, corporeal order of human life. Such monks thus represent a double perversion: the confusion of the divine and human levels of existence (with their appropriate virtues); and the false pretence to divine virtues which they are far from possessing.

A good ruler ought to aim at ruling on the basis of ‘political’ virtue. Such a ruler also requires the collaboration of others, of advisors and experts in various fields. We might explain this requirement in Psellos by saying that one would need to be a god not to need such collaboration and that, in Psellos’ experience, the mediocrity of the rulers he describes, mediocrity in knowledge and virtue, demands recourse to others who might dispose of the requisite political knowledge and virtue and compensate for the deficiencies of the ruler.<sup>27</sup> Thus we sometimes meet in the *Chronographia*, in the entourage of the ruler, competent specialists, good generals, administrators, judges, men naturally talented and possessing expertise in rhetoric and law, having practical intelligence in relation to public affairs, representing the desirable political virtues, men such as Constantine Leichoudes (VI 178) and, we can safely assume, Psellos himself.

There is an exception to this, but a revelatory one. In the panegyric of Michael VII in the final part of the *Chronographia* (VII c 4), Psellos refers to the diversity of fields of specialization (kingship, philosophy, rhetoric, music, astronomy, geometry, logic, physics), each with its particular subject-areas and corresponding experts. So great a ruler was Michael VII, however, that he mastered all fields, he was, *mirabile dictu*, a specialist in everything! Perhaps Psellos’ *De omnifaria doctrina* deserves some credit for this surprising omni-competence. We may also suspect that Psellos, too, considered himself a specialist in many fields, if not in all, able to outshine many an expert. However, strictly speaking, the claim that the emperor was a specialist in everything makes no sense outside the imaginary world of imperial panegyric. Psellos himself reminds us implicitly, in his account of technical and scientific specialization, of the principle of specialization in Plato and Aristotle. In Plato’s *Republic*, humans, having diverse talents, function best in developing their specific expertises in collaboration, those best suited to rule ruling, those best suited for auxiliary or productive tasks

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<sup>27</sup> There may have been in the distant past perfect rulers such as Numa Pompilius, as he is described in Psellos’ (?) *Historia syntomos* 2 (cf. O’Meara 2003: 79 n. 21 for Julian the Emperor’s use of the figure of Numa as a Pythagorean philosopher-king).

assuming these functions. Ruling expertise is referred to in Plato's *Statesman* as the 'royal' science. Like the 'political' science of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (I 1), this science is 'architectonic', i.e. it commands and uses subordinate sciences such as rhetoric and military science (*Statesman* 303e–305d).

In view of the ruler's need to use specialists in the various fields concerned by his rule, we may wonder in consequence if there is a specific expertise in ruling, a royal or political science corresponding to political virtue. And what, we may also ask, is the role of the philosopher in relation to such a ruling science? In the reality of Psellos' history it seems clear that, in general, the rulers have neither the requisite political virtue nor the requisite political science. They must rely on advisors such as Psellos, a philosopher who advises Michael VI, for example, on how to govern as monarch (VII 39.8). However, for a fuller treatment of Psellos' understanding of the philosopher's position as regards political rule and of his views on political science, we need to leave the *Chronographia* and look elsewhere in his works. While not hoping to provide here, in the final part of this paper, anything like an exhaustive study of these questions, I would like to draw attention to two texts where Psellos addresses these matters in a way that may be relevant.

## V

The first text is a speech (*Or. min.* 8) given on the occasion of Psellos' declining of the rank of πρωτοασκηρητης, or Imperial Secretary. The editor of the text suggests a date of c. 1055 for the speech, which would then situate it in the difficult period when Psellos found himself obliged to withdraw from the imperial court and retire to a monastery (1054: *Chron.* VI 191–99). Indeed we can detect in the speech a bitterness felt at a time when things ran contrary to Psellos' ambition to combine philosophy and politics, leading him to retire to the higher life of philosophy, a life which only a sorceress, he claims (219), could make him leave. The text, in expressing Psellos' frustrated ambitions, is a statement of these ambitions and thus of how he himself saw his mission as a philosopher involved in politics. I will summarize in what follows the main ideas Psellos introduces in this regard.

Psellos begins his discourse with the sages of old who attributed little importance, he says, to political affairs (πράγματα), giving priority to the ordering of the 'inner nature' (5), i.e. the inner republic of the soul as com-

pared to the external political order. However, not all of these sages abandoned material existence for the transcendent realm of pure form, since some of them, as Psellos describes them, starting above, from this realm, ordered, by reason (λόγῳ), affairs here below: ‘For the philosopher is not to despair of political affairs, but is to go to them with reason,’ for these affairs relate to body and require soul as a form to remove from them their inherent tendency to dispersal (13–17). As examples of such philosophers Psellos names Pythagoras and Socrates, the one honouring Italian laws, the other Attic laws (18–19). The examples of Plato and Aristotle are developed in more detail: Plato, who composed in discourse the best republic and who attempted in Sicily to bring about a change from tyranny to lawful authority, in vain (20–28); Aristotle, who educated Alexander, correcting the *ethos* of his soul through philosophy (30), accompanying him on his military expeditions and even instructing him in the details of military science!<sup>28</sup>

This ancient order, where philosophy brought reason to individual lives, where all shared in intelligence and grace (69–73), is now reversed (73ff.), Psellos laments: what is base is exalted and philosophy is despised (99). Psellos then comes (121ff.) to his own case. He describes himself as having attempted, from his youth, to join the two ways, the higher and the lower, the way of philosophy and that of political affairs, not closeting himself as a philosopher in the isolation of a small house,<sup>29</sup> nor abandoning his books for judicial occupations, but keeping the philosophers’ books at hand as he involved himself in politics, being consequently admired both by philosophers and by politicians (121–34). This mixed life is described then by Psellos as a combining of philosophy with rhetoric (136ff.), Socrates and Pythagoras combined with Demosthenes (185–86), which gives Psellos the opportunity to describe his work with the various branches and authors (including Proclus) in philosophy and in rhetoric. The speech ends with the breakdown of his attempt to mix philosophy and politics. Having been weighed down by political affairs and filled with earthly afflictions, having contemplated the transcendent pure light of philosophy, he will not willingly descend from this to earthly matters (211–19).

My brief paraphrase of ideas presented in Psellos’ speech may suffice to indicate his perception of himself as philosopher and politician. He clearly privileges philosophy as a life transcending the body, a pure intelligible ex-

<sup>28</sup> The editor (Littlewood) aptly comments in his apparatus fontium: ‘perverse meminerat Psellos quae in libello Asclepiodoti vel ... Aeliani vel Arriani de re militari legerat.’

<sup>29</sup> The editor rightly notes here a phrase taken from Demosthenes *Or.* 18, 97. Psellos’ attitude might also evoke that of Themistius in relation to the closeted philosophers of the Iamblichean school (*Or.* 26, 122.3–6; 130.12).

istence in which the soul can share. But as a philosopher he also has distinguished predecessors in the attempt to bring reason, λόγος, to the ordering of bodily existence, in particular in politics. The philosopher should care for politics, even if it is not of primary importance to him. This involvement took the form in particular in Psellos of the mixed life, combining philosophy and rhetoric. However, Psellos now feels that this is no longer possible and that retirement from political affairs is necessary.

## VI

What λόγος should the philosopher bring to politics, to the political ordering of bodily existence? We may suppose that this λόγος will be a political wisdom or science correlative to political virtue. How then does Psellos conceive of such a political science? The second text I would like to introduce provides some indications concerning Psellos' conception of political science, which I will summarize here briefly.

The work (*Phil. min.* I 2) is untitled, but has to do with the superior value of philosophy, its unity and its division into various branches according to various criteria dividing these branches and determining their relative value. Thus sciences are distinguished and placed in a hierarchy of value in terms of their differing subject-matters, their accuracy, their different finalities (12ff.). Among the sciences making up philosophy Psellos mentions the 'art [τέχνη] of political affairs' (42–43). The primary division of philosophy is made in terms of the division of reality into the corporeal and the incorporeal (49–54), in each division of which are grouped a number of sciences. In the higher division, that dealing with the incorporeal, we find the more demonstrative sciences, those treating of intellect, of soul. And in the lower division, that relating to corporeal things, are found disciplines which are less scientific, working with likelihoods (εἰκοτολογούμενα), those dealing with nature (60, i.e. physics and its branches) and, inferior to these, those concerning themselves with 'political themes' (πολιτικὰς ὑποθέσεις), the legislative (νομοθετική), the judicial (δικαστική) and rhetoric (61–62).<sup>30</sup> While stressing the inferior scientific status and subject-matter of these latter disciplines, Psellos develops especially in what follows (67ff.) a comparison between the relative value of legislative and judicial knowledge as compared to rhetoric. If we recall that in Psellos' later Neoplatonic sources political philosophy is understood as constituted of legislative and judicial sci-

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<sup>30</sup> In the Athens colloquium it was noted that Psellos here appears to include rhetoric in philosophy.

ence, an idea going back to Plato's *Gorgias* (464b),<sup>31</sup> then we can see that the comparison Psellos makes between legislative and judicial knowledge, on the one hand, and rhetoric, on the other, is a comparison between political philosophy and rhetoric.

In some respects rhetoric claims superiority to the two other forms of knowledge, in Psellos' account, and in some respects it is found to be inferior to them. Rhetoric affirms its superiority, on the one hand, in terms of its ability to unify and give form to matters that are infinitely dispersed in legislative science (69–71), a dispersal compared to the dismemberment of Osiris (101–3). Rhetoric, its representative would argue, is a legislation to itself (αὐτονομοθεσία) and does not require the two others, whereas they are in need of it (76–84). On the other hand, rhetoric is inferior to legislative knowledge (including the judicial) in that rhetoric is concerned with words rather than with the truth and the beneficial, whereas the legislative provides laws and the judicial gives rational order (λόγον) to these, correcting the confusion of life and structuring the mores (ῥῆθη) of the populace (84–88).<sup>32</sup> However, being the lowest branches of philosophy, being concerned with lowly things, not being able to produce the assimilation to God achieved by philosophy,<sup>33</sup> the legislative and judicial are neglected by philosophers (88–96). Psellos deplores this neglect and ends his text with the suggestion that if someone with a scientific disposition had unified these forms of knowledge, making them harmonious, he would have produced, as Plato's demiurge did with the cosmos in the *Timaeus* (30b5–c1), a most beautiful creature on earth (97–101).<sup>34</sup>

From this we can conclude that, in Psellos' view, the current importance of rhetoric is relative to the scientifically ruinous state of legislative and judicial knowledge (i.e. political philosophy), in relation to which rhetoric is in principle, however, inferior. Legislative and judicial knowledge, although the lowest parts of philosophy, require the attention of the philosopher who will give them scientific order. If not actually divinizing man, as do more

<sup>31</sup> See O'Meara (2003: 56–57); O'Meara (2004: 115) (Eustratios of Nicaea). Later Neoplatonists, inspired by Plato's *Statesman*, also spoke of political philosophy as a 'royal science' (O'Meara 2003: 58; 94; 210), as does Psellos (see Angelov's contribution to the present volume). Psellos speaks of 'political philosophy' (πολιτική φιλοσοφία) in *Epist. ad Cerul.* 127–28. As was indicated to me at the Athens colloquium, a βασιλική ἐπιστήμη is mentioned as being what Numa Pompilius' Muse teaches him, according to Psellos (?), *Historia syntomos* 2 (the source seems to be Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom.* 2.60.5, who speaks of a βασιλική σοφία).

<sup>32</sup> For Neoplatonic sources for this, see O'Meara (2003: 56–58).

<sup>33</sup> See above section II.

<sup>34</sup> On the demiurgic image, see also above section IV.

especially the higher branches of philosophy, they can at least achieve an ethical ordering of the population in its earthly existence.

## VII

More research would certainly help to develop a fuller account than what is offered here. However, the above has perhaps gone some way in showing the following. The *Chronographia* refers to quite specific and elaborate philosophical theories for which we find a fuller explanation elsewhere, for example the theory of the hierarchy of virtues which is introduced and used in the *Chronographia* and described at length in *De omnifaria doctrina*. We thus have the possibility of better understanding the philosophical theories present in the *Chronographia* if we take account of Psellos' philosophical works and of the sources inspiring these works.<sup>35</sup> Psellos' position, both in the *Chronographia* and in the various other works we have considered, is fairly coherent and constant. A fundamental reference point throughout these texts is the distinction between incorporeal and corporeal existence, as this affects the human condition and the conduct of life. The incorporeal is preferred by the philosopher: it provides a higher life, concerns the soul alone, represents assimilation to the divine, the goal of philosophy, which, in philosophy, is found in the higher orders of the virtues and in the higher sciences. Psellos distinguishes this higher life from its counterfeits, in particular the sham divine life of certain monks. Corporeal existence represents a lower life, the life of soul in the body, a human life, which may be lived by bringing reason and order to bodily affairs (the 'political' life or 'political' virtue), or by allowing oneself to be dominated by the passions in a dissolute life. Without denying the higher, divine life, Psellos places considerable emphasis, in a way that is quite distinctive of him, on the mixed or intermediary life of political virtue, both as regards himself as well as regards his action in political affairs.<sup>36</sup> As a philosopher he finds models in antiquity

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<sup>35</sup> It is on these grounds that I do not think that Kaldellis (1999) proves his thesis that Psellos is anti-Neoplatonic. Kaldellis argues, for example, that Psellos' reference to the *Epinomis* (991e) in the *Chronographia* (VI 39) supports this thesis, given the main doctrine of the *Epinomis*. However, we should notice that the same passage of the *Epinomis* is referred to in a similar context by one of Psellos' favourite authors, Proclus (*In Eucl. I* 42.11–12; see also Iamblichus, *De comm. math. sc.* 21.18–29; 31.8–12) and I think few would be willing to argue from this that Proclus is anti-Neoplatonist. See also above n. 25.

<sup>36</sup> Psellos' emphasis on his middle position has been recently discussed by Jenkins (2006: 133; 143–44) and Delli (2007). Compare Criscuolo's emphasis on Psellos' 'humanism' (in his edition of Psellos, *Epist. ad Xiphil.* 31–43); this 'humanism', in Psellos' case, should be understood in the light of the concept of the 'human' and of human virtue indicated above section II; see O'Meara (2010).

for his ambition to bring reason, scientific order, to the ‘outer republic’, that of political power in Byzantium, by combining the ‘ways’ of philosophy and of rhetoric, in particular the lower branches of philosophy appropriate for this, the legislative and judicial, scientifically reformed and combined with rhetoric. Psellos’ development of this combination of ways is again quite distinctive and reminiscent in some respects of Themistius.<sup>37</sup> In the monarchical system in which Psellos lived, the monarch, far from possessing the perfect knowledge and virtue of divinity, often fell short—the *Chronographia* shows this in detail—of political virtue and knowledge and reached, at best, the lower level of ‘ethical’ virtue. Such monarchs consequently required, in compensation, advisors and administrators possessing the necessary political virtues and competences. Psellos saw for himself no mean role in this context, all the more so as he attributed to himself a wide range of such competences. What could at best be achieved would be the material well-being of the Empire and ethical order in its population. However the story Psellos has to tell in the *Chronographia* is often enough that of incompetent and/or dissolute rulers and their inadequate staff, who brought ruin to their subjects. Psellos himself might sometimes be forced to take refuge, to retire to the higher life of the philosopher, but one cannot but suspect that he hopes that this will be, if possible, temporary!<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Kaldellis (2007: 214).

<sup>38</sup> I am grateful for help given by Jacques Schamp and by the participants in the Athens colloquium.

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# Rhetoric and the philosopher in Byzantium\*

STRATIS PAPAIOANNOU

The scene is familiar. A Byzantine ‘sophist’ enters the stage. The ‘philosophers’ are polite and graciously greet him, yet reject his company. In their eyes, he is not one of them. By contrast, the ‘sophists’ or, as the text also names them, the ‘rhetoro-sophists’ receive him with enthusiasm and grant him an honourable place among themselves. The (early?) twelfth-century author of the *Timarion*, to whom we owe this description,<sup>1</sup> could not have imagined how his positioning of the Byzantine philosopher or, as he prefers to call him, ‘sophist’ would endure beyond the infernal stage of Hades, where *Timarion*’s oneiric experience takes place. Byzantine philosophers may still be valued today for their rhetoric and other technical skills (of, say, copying, collecting, or commenting upon philosophical texts), but rarely for their philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

The author of the *Timarion* did not, of course, have the future of Byzantine philosophers in mind. What his sarcastic pen was aiming at was to disqualify the philosophical aspirations of self-professed philosophers of his immediate present. He did so by referring to an age-old anxiety of pre-modern Greek writing dating back to, at least, the writings of Plato in fourth-century Athens. The anxiety pertained to the definition and regulation of the relation between discursive content and discursive form, between thought and language, or, as it came to be seen, between philosophy and rhetoric. The anxiety was provoked by the desire on the part of self-proclaimed ‘philosophers’—such as Plato—to mark a distinct, privileged space for their own discursive production within the highly competitive field of public discourse in Athenian social life.<sup>3</sup>

The negotiation between philosophy and rhetoric remained a constant point of reference for many generations of Greek writers. It was an opposition that would be used in order to separate different professions (βίοι) within the Roman-Greek Mediterranean world. Later, in Patristic writing, a

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\* I would like to thank Katerina Ierodiakonou and Börje Bydén as well as Panagiotis Agapitos, Dimiter Angelov, John Haldon and Dominic O’Meara for several helpful suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> *Timarion* (the relevant lines: 1123–35; see lines 1140–41 for the term ‘rhetoro-sophists’).

<sup>2</sup> For the historiography of Byzantine philosophy, see Trizio (2007). On *Timarion*, this Lucianic twelfth-century text, see Baldwin (1984); Tsolakes (1990); and, recently, Kaldellis (2007: 276–83).

<sup>3</sup> See McCoy (2007) with further bibliography.

similar polarity was employed to distinguish different world-views, namely orthodox Christian theology (imagined as true φιλοσοφία) from virtually every other discourse. Middle Byzantine intellectuals, the primary focus of this contribution, inherited this tradition and, as I wish to argue, came to revive and transform several of its inflections, especially after the tenth century.

*Timarion's* scene is a representative moment in the history of this revival and transformation and I would like to follow two of its leads. Firstly, the ill dreamer, whose prolonged nightmare includes the philosophical rejection and rhetorical embrace of the Byzantine philosopher, is concerned mainly with the position of the Byzantine intellectual within a set hierarchy. Timarion is not interested, that is, in the elaboration of the theoretical issue regarding the relation of content and form, thought and language. Rather, his concern regards status, authority, or what we might call social 'subject-position', the place of the Byzantine intellectual within Byzantine high society.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, the Byzantine philosopher whom Timarion satirizes is none other than Michael Psellos. This choice is not arbitrary. Among Byzantine intellectuals, Psellos was—perhaps more than anyone else—obsessed with presenting himself as a 'philosopher'; indeed, he was the first in the history of Byzantium (as far as we can tell) to obtain an imperial confirmation of his philosophical profession by receiving the title 'consul of philosophers' (ὑπατος τῶν φιλοσόφων) during the innovative reign of Constantine IX Monomachos.<sup>5</sup> More importantly, as has been already noted (though not adequately historicized), Psellos was equally obsessed with seeing himself as one who practiced an ideal mixture of philosophy and rhetoric.<sup>6</sup>

Focusing on Michael Psellos along with one of his early Byzantine models and, then, several successors in the twelfth century, this paper will investigate how Byzantine philosophers portrayed themselves as philosophers in relation to rhetoric. My concern is thus what may be loosely termed philosophical self-representation and it is only through this perspective that I

<sup>4</sup> For the term 'subject-position', see Whitmarsh (2001: 247; 295–301 and *passim*).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Kazhdan & Wharton Epstein (1985: 123–27). No specific title for the head of a 'school [παιδοτριβεῖον] of philosophers' is mentioned in the relevant source regarding an earlier similar appointment by Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos in tenth-century Constantinople; cf. Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker (1838: 446.1–22) (where also mention is made of three further 'schools' of rhetoric, geometry, and astronomy).

<sup>6</sup> Kustas (1973: 156–57); Anastasi (1974); Ljubarskij (2004: 197–224); Angold (1997: 76–91); Kaldellis (1999: 127–54); Jenkins (2006: 145–51) and, recently, Kolovou (2010) are the most notable discussions.

will touch upon Byzantine conceptions of the philosophical issue regarding how rhetoric as form and profession relates to philosophy. This focus is not because Byzantine thinkers did not discuss the couplet rhetoric-philosophy as a theoretical issue *per se*—quite the contrary, Byzantine theorists often addressed this matter within the sophisticated theories on language and discursive aesthetics they developed. Yet, just like for the Socrates of the Platonic dialogues, for Roman and late antique Greek writers like Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Gregory of Nazianzus, the Byzantine theorists' thinking was, before all else, framed by a desire to define the philosopher's or the rhetor's own image as a creator of authoritative speech.

### *Synesius of Cyrene on the philosopher's rhetoric*

As is the case with much else in Byzantium, so also Byzantine philosophers inherited their intellectual agendas from writers of the first glorious hundred years or so of Byzantine history. These early Byzantine writers were considered canonical reading material and their filtering of an entire earlier tradition—from Plato to the Second Sophistic and Neoplatonism—defined the premises of later Byzantine writing.<sup>7</sup> Of these authors, it is Synesius of Cyrene (c. 370–c. 413) that will serve as my example here. This choice is justified by a number of reasons. First, Synesius is one of the most self-referential among early Byzantine writers, styling himself consistently as a 'philosopher'. Secondly, unlike, say, Themistius, Libanius, Julian or Proclus, Synesius was viewed in Byzantium as a Christian writer, despite the clearly Hellenic outlook he shared with these writers; he was thus regarded as being part of the interior Byzantine tradition.<sup>8</sup> Thirdly, unlike other Christian writers who were equally self-referential, like e.g. Gregory of Nazianzus, Synesius summarized for Byzantine writers an emphatically Greco-Roman view of the definition of philosophy and rhetoric. His view, that is, was largely untouched by Christian preoccupations with theology and ascetic praxis. As an influential autobiographical writer, in appearance Christian but consciously Hellenic, Synesius can provide us an insight into the range of arguments that Byzantine writers had at their disposal as they set out to define their philosophical and rhetorical *personae*.

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<sup>7</sup> On this adherence to early Byzantium, see Papaioannou (2008), where there is also further bibliography.

<sup>8</sup> See the entries in Photios, *Bibliotheca* 26.5b–6a, and the *Suda*, sigma.1511. Both Photios and the *Suda*, while acknowledging Synesius' 'Hellenism', identify Synesius as a bishop and as a 'philosopher' and also praise his writing style.

Set in his own context, Synesius is a typical late antique intellectual. A Christian provincial aristocrat who became a bishop, Synesius traversed the socio-political distance separating his North African province from the new locus of power, Constantinople, as well as the intellectual space spanning from Greco-Roman structures of knowledge to the increasingly dominant Christian faith.<sup>9</sup> In his various writings, Synesius emerges as a man attempting to retain for himself what he already possesses: a significant social standing and the consequent social authority that this standing could afford.

In the late Roman Mediterranean world, such traditional aristocratic authority was not without challenges. It had to be re-affirmed, indeed proclaimed by the holder himself of social nobility, through acts and discourses of self-fashioning and in direct competition with a series of other emerging positions of authority (imperial, ecclesiastic, and, of course, ascetic). Facing this competition, the position that Synesius adopted through rhetorical self-representation was to root his social status in a traditional intellectual identity, that of the Hellene ‘philosopher’. Though with a long history behind it, this self-identification was not an entirely easy task. Beyond the competition, claiming for oneself the profession of Hellenic philosophy was complicated by the fact that the ‘Hellenic’ tradition itself offered Synesius somewhat fluid understandings—depending on context, genre, or audience—of what it meant to be a ‘philosopher’ as opposed to, say, a ‘sophist’ or a ‘rhetor’.<sup>10</sup> Synesius, therefore, needed to revisit the definition of terms, delimit the boundaries of identities, and, in a sense, reinvent anew a philosophical agenda.

With this framework in mind, let us look at how Synesius goes about his self-fashioning. In public settings, Synesius distances himself entirely from rhetoric. In its sharpest, Platonic terms, the polarity is set in Synesius’ introduction to his speech *On Kingship*, addressing the emperor Arcadius and his court.<sup>11</sup> Let me paraphrase this lengthy prooemium. ‘I’, Synesius begins,

have not come from a wealthy city, bringing arrogant and luxurious discourses, those vulgar [πάνδημα] ones that rhetoric and poetry (vulgar [πάνδημοι] arts themselves)

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<sup>9</sup> For Synesius’ career set in its socio-historical context, see Cameron and Long (1993); Schmitt (2001); and Rapp (2005: 156–66).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the pertinent remarks on the term ‘sophist’ in Whitmarsh (2005: 15–19).

<sup>11</sup> For the audience of this text, see Cameron and Long (1993: 134–42). The text is echoed in Psellos’ *Chronographia*; see Graffigna (2000).

produce.<sup>12</sup> My recital will not induce pleasure [ἡδονή] aiming at immature listeners. My discourse is not of fluid ethos and stylized diction for the display of fake beauty. Rather, it is philosophy that has come to visit you with discourses of deep and divine manner, discourses that are masculine [ἀρρενωποί] and solemn. Indeed, free speech, the speech of philosophy, is the only one worthy of the king's ear. Mere praise, by contrast, works like poison [φάρμακα] mixed with honey, incurring destruction. It is similar to cookery that incites fake desires and brings ruin, and entirely dissimilar to philosophical discourse, which like gymnastics and medicine pains bodies while saving them. If you are strong enough (even though you are not thus accustomed) to bear the discourse of philosophy, the discourse of truth, then I, Synesius, have been set before you to proclaim it.

There is nothing new in this claim against rhetoric placed strategically at the beginning of a rhetorical piece which among other things aims at establishing its speaker, Synesius, as the authoritative voice of 'philosophy'.<sup>13</sup> Philosophy and its practitioner are set in direct and, as it seems, non-negotiable distance to rhetoric.

In more private settings, such as the correspondence among friends of shared aspirations, however, Synesius can adopt a somewhat different stance. In the letter, for instance, that begins his letter-collection, Synesius argues that he 'fathers' discourses not simply of the 'solemn' philosophical kind, but also of the 'vulgar' (πάνδημος, literally 'belonging to the entire civic population') rhetoric.<sup>14</sup> Here, rhetoric, though still inferior to philosophy, is integrated in the philosopher's discursive production.

This seemingly ambiguous stance is not surprising. From Plato onward ambiguity is a permanent feature of the philosophico-rhetorical debate. Synesius himself is among those writers that devoted careful thought on the unconditional distinction and, simultaneously, desirable combination of philosophy and rhetoric. This thought is recorded in Synesius' *Dion*, a text that was a standard reading for the highly educated Byzantine élite.<sup>15</sup> The

<sup>12</sup> An allusion to the negative connotation of the word πάνδημος in Plato's *Symposium* (181a) where it is opposed to the word 'heavenly' (οὐράνιος), both applied to Aphrodite in order to distinguish two types of erotic desire.

<sup>13</sup> For another example see the beginning of Dio Chrysostom's *Olympic Oration* (*Or.* 12).

<sup>14</sup> *Epist.* 1, 1–5, to Nikandros. Synesius' phrase is alluded to in Psellos' *Letter* 5.12–14, ed. Gautier (1986); for its presence in other Byzantine writers see also below.

<sup>15</sup> Of the 58 surviving mss. of *Dion*, the earliest dates to the tenth century: *Par. Coisl.* 249, described in Devreesse (1945: 228–29). The contents of this manuscript are revealing of the kinds of texts with which Synesius was associated in Byzantium and the kind of readers that he attracted (one should note that several marginal scholia accompany the texts). The book begins with the rhetorico-philosophical works of Synesius (including his *Dion*, excluding his letters) followed by a Neoplatonic presentation of the ideal philosopher (Marinus' *Life of Proclus*), then Gorgias with brief extracts from Dionysius of Halicarnassus, then orations of Aeschines and Lysias, and, in conclusion, by Synesius again, his *On Kingship*. See further Brancacci (1985: 201–313) on the influence of, especially,

title of the text refers to Dio Chrysostom, the Greek philosopher-rhetor of the first century CE. The essay begins as a refutation of Philostratus' view of Dio Chrysostom, but then turns to a lengthy self-promoting elaboration of what Synesius considers to be the philosopher's relation to discourse in general, and rhetoric in particular.

Synesius' tone is often polemical, as if he engages in self-defence in the vein of Socrates' *Apology*—indeed, Socrates is a primary model for Synesius in this speech (especially in paragraphs 14–15). Several opponents are in Synesius' mind, as may be gleaned both from *Dion* itself (primarily 8.8–10 and 10.2) and from the letter which accompanied *Dion* when it was sent to Synesius' teacher, Hypatia, in Alexandria (*Epist.* 154). These opponents are contemporary ascetics, who claim to be 'philosophers' but negate discourse entirely, and fellow rhetoricians, who, either as performers or as teachers, submit themselves to their audience's temporary desires for sensual pleasure.

Furthermore, Synesius opposes the Roman Greek rhetorical view regarding the relation between philosophy and rhetoric, best exemplified by Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists*. Unlike Philostratus and other Roman Greek rhetors, such as Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Aelius Aristides—all of whom remained influential for Byzantine writers—Synesius does not wish to defend the philosophical aspirations of rhetoric, but, rather, the rhetorical practices of the philosopher. These earlier rhetors were concerned with the elevation of the status of rhetoric by making it appear as 'philosophical' as possible.<sup>16</sup> By comparison, Synesius (or, for that matter, Gregory of Nazianzus, and, as we shall see, later authors like Michael Psellos) had an almost opposite aim: to open up philosophy so as to allow rhetoric as a supplementary and, possibly, essential component of the philosopher's practice.

What interests me here, beyond the polemics, are the details of the ideal philosopher as projected by Synesius onto Dio, and as embodied in the *Dion* by Synesius himself. Let me distil some of the parameters of this ideal 'philosopher'. Synesius' overarching argument is that, while 'philosophy' allows the philosopher to relate to oneself and to the divine, *logos* (by which Synesius means discursive, linguistic form in general, including rhetoric) is an indispensable tool. With it, the philosopher relates to others, whether for

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Synesius' *Dion* in Byzantium; for discussion of the text itself, see Treu (1958) with Schmitt (2001: 37–38 and 67–143).

<sup>16</sup> On the attempt to imagine or defend a more 'philosophical rhetoric' see Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Ancient Rhetors* 1; Aelius Aristides, *To Plato, on Rhetoric* (e.g. 74.1–2: φιλοσοφία τις οὔσα ἢ ῥητορικὴ φαίνεται) and Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* (e.g. 1.480.1–11 and 481.12–26) and *Life of Apollonius* 5.40.

the sake of intervening morally in the affairs of the *polis* or for the sake of private pleasure amongst the select few (5.2 with 8.1–9.11). Discourse is thus accorded an important functionality in the public and private sphere and is presented as necessary for the philosopher's earthly, communal existence.

Furthermore, Synesius submits *logos* to an hierarchical distinction between what is termed civic and rhetorical discourse. The former is more appropriate for the philosopher.<sup>17</sup> The latter, by contrast, is the inferior kind, since rhetoric addresses the public settings of the festival and theatre (3.2–5) and aims primarily at sensual gratification (1.4 and 3.5). Be that as it may, unlike the distance instituted between rhetoric and philosophy in the introduction of the *On Kingship*, here in *Dion*, Synesius advocates for a philosopher who must engage with both types of discourse. This engagement is to happen either during the gradual process of philosophical education or, also later, in the philosopher's life (especially 4.1–3).

Two reasons seem to necessitate this integration of discourse in its totality. First, such openness to *logos* is what, in Synesius' view, marks an originally Hellenic philosopher. To be 'precisely Hellenic' and 'native' to the Hellenic heritage, as Synesius wishes to be, is to embrace Hellenic discourse in its entirety (and this includes the inferior rhetoric) and therefore be able to make a genealogical claim on a powerful cultural capital, the capital of Hellenism.<sup>18</sup>

Synesius cannot do without this capital if he is—and this is the second reason—to retain his public, aristocratic authority, separate from contemporary competing types of authority defined by Roman/Constantinopolitan imperial power and Christian scripture. Synesius insists that discourse is the tool with which the philosopher may impart morality to 'rulers' and 'private individuals' and thus acquire authority within society.<sup>19</sup> At that, discourse is persistently associated with *δύναμις* and its cognates.<sup>20</sup> Resorting to dis-

<sup>17</sup> This is a discourse, we read, that is 'ancient, according to nature, and appropriate to its subjects': τὸ ἀρχαῖον κατὰ φύσιν ἔχον καὶ τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις οἰκεῖον (*Dion* 3.3); see further 1.13, 3.8 and 4.1.

<sup>18</sup> See *Dion* 4.3; see further 6.2, 8, 9.1 ('native' philosopher), 9.3 ('Hellenic conduct'), 9.6 and 11.2 (on the Hellenic genealogy to which Synesius belongs) with *Epist.* 41, 240–43. For such use of Hellenism see e.g. Elm (2003) with Whitmarsh (2004: 139–58).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Dion* 1.14; 2.2; 3.1; see further 9.6–10.1 on the practice of virtue as a preparatory philosophical phase.

<sup>20</sup> See e.g. *Dion* 3 and 14, on Dio's and Socrates' discursive power respectively, or 5, on the discursive inability of Synesius' opponents, the ones who disregard rhetoric and poetry. See also how it is in discourse that Synesius locates his god-given gift of 'being able for the greatest things and willing the best' (*δύνασθαι τε τὰ μέγιστα καὶ τὰ κάλλιστα βούλεσθαι*); see *Against Andronikos, To the Bishops* (*Epist.* 41, 106–7).

course may be a necessity, imposed upon the philosopher by his earthly and communal existence. It is also, however, a natural outcome of the philosopher's power of display (5.4): 'As God gave substance to the bodies of forms as visible images of his invisible powers [δυνάμεις], thus also a beautiful soul being fecund with what is best', Synesius argues of the philosopher, 'has its power [δύναμις] transmissible to the outside.'<sup>21</sup>

Synesius, therefore, argues for the philosopher's adoption of rhetoric. This adoption or, indeed, appropriation should not to be confused with some kind of rhetorical philosophy, an indissoluble mixture of the two disciplines. Rather, Synesius envisions a double life for the philosopher. As is made clear throughout the *Dion*, rhetoric and philosophy remain distinct and unmixed enterprises. Tellingly, for instance, Synesius imagines discourse as a performance that surrounds without ever touching the philosopher's true self; it may communicate the philosopher's inner truth to the select few but also conceals it from the uninitiated (5.7 with 18.1–5).

This distinction of the two disciplines—evident in Synesius and elsewhere in contemporary and earlier Greek writing—should be kept in mind because it serves to retain the hierarchical superiority of philosophy and promote it (and not rhetoric) as the primary profession and identity marker. For, though he appropriates rhetoric, Synesius strives to identify exclusively with philosophy. In it, he finds an essential, divinely originating autonomy: 'Why should I be', he claims (12.9–10), 'a slave to anything fixed, when it is possible to fully possess autonomy [αὐτονομία], and lead my discourses where I decide to lead them, not being judged by the negligence of listeners but by having myself as a measure? This is the fate that God gave to me, namely to be without a master [ἄδέσποτος] and free [ἄφετος].' A memorable remark, yet not uncommon among early Byzantine writers.<sup>22</sup> The philosopher's autonomy is, for part of this intellectual tradition, an absolute category, indeed an ontological category, the fixed and natural boundary that separates the real philosopher from others that might compete for his superior authority.<sup>23</sup> It is only from this secure horizon that intellectuals/aristocrats like Synesius can open philosophy to rhetoric.

<sup>21</sup> See further *Epist.* 41, 116–18 and 184–85.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Dion* 14.5 with Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 36.12, another strong proclamation of the 'philosopher' as an 'autonomous' creature. Cf. also Proclus, *In Remp.* 1.65.8–13.

<sup>23</sup> On philosophy and the philosopher's freedom associated with a specific (aristocratic) *physis*, in other words a specific ontology, see Synesius, *Dion* 6.1, *Epist.* 41, 94–96 and *On Providence* 1.2. The notion is, of course, Platonic (cf. *Phaedr.* 252e2–5) and Neoplatonic (recurrent in Proclus' commentary on the *Republic*).



*Michael Psellos, the rhetor-philosopher*

This careful appropriation of rhetoric for the philosopher's self-representation will not be repeated in Byzantine writing for some time. Even if the two professions continued to exist and thrive until at least the sixth century in urban centres of the Eastern Mediterranean, neither philosophers nor rhetors seem to have felt the necessity to justify their profession. Teachers of rhetoric like Libanius in Antioch, Gregory's contemporary, or Procopius and Choricus, rhetoricians at the sixth-century school of Gaza, appear self-confident and secure in their practice, showing no need to ground it in the profession of philosophy.<sup>24</sup> Similar was the attitude of philosophers. Though they dealt extensively with discursive form and the value of rhetoric—as, for instance, in the Neoplatonic schools of Athens and Alexandria in order both to explicate Plato's texts and clarify Plato's position regarding the epistemological place of discourse—they could do so safely. I mean that these philosophers approached rhetoric primarily from a theoretical perspective, rather than as a more urgent matter of social positioning.<sup>25</sup>

As we move to later centuries, the concern over the exact relation between philosophy and rhetoric was further diminished, since the fate of the two professions was markedly different. With the transformation and, in large parts of former Byzantine territory, the gradual disappearance of the Greek-speaking urban élite, a process that lasted from the seventh into the early ninth century, the importance of rhetoric receded along with many other aspects of Greco-roman urban culture.<sup>26</sup> It is safe to assume that rhetoric did not disappear completely, but, as far as our sources tell us, those who had access to books, writing and public speaking did not place a significant value upon the profession of rhetoric as such.<sup>27</sup> Hagiography, church homi-

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<sup>24</sup> Professing philosophy is not a seminal concern for Libanius (cf. his lengthy autobiographical oration [*Or.* 1]). Similarly, being a 'rhetor' is a recurrent claim in the writings of Procopius and, especially, Choricus; see the latter's *Funeral Oration in Honour of Procopius* 1.11–12 (*Op.* 8) where a personified Rhetoric is introduced lamenting for the loss of her best practitioner, Procopius.

<sup>25</sup> See e.g. the Neoplatonic readings of rhetoric and, in general, discursive form in Hermias' scholia on Plato's *Phaedrus*, Olympiodorus' commentary on the *Gorgias*, and, of course, Proclus' commentaries on the *Cratylus* and the *Republic*.

<sup>26</sup> For an overview of the fate of the Byzantine urban world in this period, see Haldon (1997) with Wickham (2005).

<sup>27</sup> Procopius of Caesarea (writing in the 550s) seems to be the last early Byzantine writer before the tenth century to be designated by the name 'the rhetor'; cf. the manuscript titles of Procopius' works as well as references to Procopius in Agathias, *Histories* 7.22 and

letics, ecclesiastical poetry and biblical exegesis take the place of rhetoric which (along with classicizing poetry) was relegated to past types of discourse, preoccupied with ‘lying’.<sup>28</sup>

‘Philosophy’, by contrast, remained more or less intact as a claim to authority—despite the feeling of despair that can be felt in some late antique philosophical historiography.<sup>29</sup> Whether in John of Damascus’ Neoplatonic definition of philosophy or the revival of the reading of Plato, Aristotelian logic and Neoplatonic thought in the course of the ninth century, whether in the redefinition of *philosophia* as the ascetic way of life in patristic and hagiographical writings or in the association of philosophy with divination and occult practices, the title ‘philosopher’ retained its social currency.<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, gradually, during the tenth century primarily, one witnesses a revival both of rhetoric as a value-giving discursive practice and of the distinction of rhetoric vs. philosophy in definitions of the ideal intellectual.<sup>31</sup> Practising and being exposed to rhetorical discourse is now again regarded as a welcome preparatory stage and additional qualification in the philosopher’s curriculum vitae—this is particularly the case when tenth-century Byzantine writers refer to the curricula of such early Byzantine ‘philosophers’ as Synesius and Gregory of Nazianzus.<sup>32</sup>

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9.13–14. For a review of learning in the period between the sixth and the ninth century, see Moffatt (1977).

<sup>28</sup> Typical is the phrase by Basil of Caesarea anthologized in the 8th-century compilation *Sacra Parallela* (in Migne, *PG* 96: col. 341.19–23): Ῥητορικὴ καὶ ποιητικὴ, καὶ ἡ τῶν σοφισμάτων εὗρεσις, πολλοὺς ἀπεσχόλησεν, ὧν ἡ ὕλη τὸ ψεῦδος ἐστίν. Οὐτε γὰρ ποιητικὴ συστήναι δύναται ἄνευ τοῦ μύθου, οὔτε Ῥητορικὴ ἄνευ τῆς ἐν τῷ λέγειν τέχνης, οὔτε σοφιστικὴ ἄνευ τῶν παραλογισμῶν. This conception of rhetoric is a Byzantine commonplace, especially in monastic literature; cf. e.g. Theodore the Studite, *Epitaphios on Plato, his Spiritual Father*, proem (*PG* 99: col. 804a) and Symeon the New Theologian, *Ethical Orations* 9.59.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Damascius, *The Philosophical History* 150, ed. Athanassiadi (1999).

<sup>30</sup> The Neoplatonic and ascetic definitions are conveniently reviewed in Duffy (2002: 139–43) with further bibliography. On the profession of *philosophia* appropriated by ascetics see e.g. Darrouzès (1961, index s.v. ‘philosophia’). On the ninth-century revival, see Lemerle (1971). On logic, see Bydén (2003: 217, n. 6). On *philosophia* and the occult, see Magdalino & Mavroudi (2006: esp. p. 13). See further Bydén (2003: 1–39), for a recent account on philosophy and philosophers in Byzantium.

<sup>31</sup> Niketas David from Paphlagonia (late 9th–early 10th c.), Arethas’ pupil, who, in the manuscript titles of his works, is designated as ‘rhetor’ and ‘philosopher’ alternatively, is a good example of this trend. See also John Geometres, *Letter Describing a Garden* 9.

<sup>32</sup> See e.g. *Suda*, sigma.1511 on Synesius and, especially, gamma.450 on Gregory of Nazianzus, who καὶ ἐξ φιλοσοφίαν ἐξήσκητο καὶ ῥήτωρ ἦν ἀμφιδέξιος (notably, the same exact wording is given in the biography of Apollinaris of Laodicea, who is presented as an acquaintance of Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil of Caesarea: alpha.3397).

This revival of rhetoric as profession should be placed within the context of the intellectuals' position in the shifting social structures of Constantinopolitan politics, from the ninth through to the twelfth century.<sup>33</sup> To some extent, certain features of Synesius' late antique situation remain intact in middle Byzantine Constantinopolitan society. This is a society in which social authority continues to be determined by acts and discourses of self-fashioning. Constantinopolitan—courtly or urban—aristocracy, clerics and monks, intellectuals, teachers and bureaucrats all continue to compete within a fluid social arena that is defined more by shifting networks of kinship and friendship, than by any stable social stratification.<sup>34</sup> Of course, certain people and groups fare better than others in achieving, maintaining and re-enforcing their authority particularly through association with by now well-established social formations. The court, the monasteries, and the church—to name the three most important such formations—and the individuals that become part of them remain the primary producers of social meaning and, consequently, holders of authority.

As far as we can tell, during most of the ninth and part of the tenth century, Byzantine intellectuals indeed emerge through the ranks of hegemonic social formations and those social groups that belong to the upper echelons of Byzantine society. Theodore the Studite, patriarch Photios, Constantine VII, but also Leo the Philosopher, Arethas, Niketas Magistros, Theodore Daphnopates, and John Geometres are members of an intellectual élite chiefly by already being members of a social élite.<sup>35</sup> This is a social status that they share with the early Byzantine intellectuals whom they value and imitate. Like Synesius and Gregory of Nazianzus, most of these Byzantine writers add intellectual authority (occasionally infused with Hellenic cultural capital) to a pre-existing social power. They already possess this power through their aristocratic lineage and association with the powerful social formations mentioned above.

By contrast, authors like the so-called Anonymous Professor (ed. Markopoulos 2000), a tenth-century Constantinopolitan teacher, John Sikeliotes, a commentator of Hermogenes in the early eleventh century, Michael Psellos and John Italos, teachers of philosophy in the eleventh century, and Michael Italikos and Theodore Prodromos, rhetoricians of the

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<sup>33</sup> The picture provided here cannot but be a cursory one; for some preliminary discussion of the social position of Byzantine authors, see Beck (1978: 123–25) with Kazhdan & Wharton Epstein (1985: 130–33).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Haldon (2006; 2009).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Lauxtermann (2003: 34–45) for a discussion of similar issues from the perspective of patronage.

twelfth, represent a new intellectual type in Constantinopolitan culture. These writers—most characteristically among them Psellos—acquire access to political authority primarily by creating an intellectual authority for themselves.<sup>36</sup> This intellectual authority is produced through semi-private teaching—and, thus, through the most precarious and least defined of Byzantine institutions, the school—as well as through public speaking.<sup>37</sup> Intellectual authority is thus made through the profession of philosophy and rhetoric, in a social environment in which teachers and rhetorical performers are more easily expendable—in comparison to, say, aristocrats, bishops, or abbots. Intellectuals like Psellos are not insiders of the Byzantine economy of power; rather, they operate peripherally. In effect, they produce philosophical and rhetorical meaning, yet neither for an audience that is given nor with a fixed place in the Byzantine cultural market.

In precisely this setting—the increasing visibility of philosophers/teachers and rhetors/performers in Constantinopolitan society—, Psellos revives a Synesian framework in order to configure the relation between the two professions. As was the case with Synesius, Psellos identifies himself first as a philosopher, sometimes adopting a strict opposition between philosophy and rhetoric and distancing himself safely from the latter and its practitioners.<sup>38</sup> Following Synesius, Psellos speaks equally of the necessity of discourse and invents various ways in which rhetoric may be acceptable for the philosopher.<sup>39</sup> He writes, for instance, of the ‘civic’, ‘ancient’ and ‘purified’ rhetoric that he, unlike his contemporaries, pursues and imparts, and he also defends both the classical and the late antique roots of this elevated rhetoric.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> In this, Psellos and other such Byzantine intellectuals were much like Cicero, ‘a political outsider without the authenticating pedigree of ancestors who had held high elected office’, or like Stephen Greenblatt’s Renaissance writers, who could not root ‘personal identity in the identity of clan or caste’; see Dugan (2005: 1) with Greenblatt (1980: 9).

<sup>37</sup> On middle Byzantine (especially 11th-century) education, see Lemerle (1977), with Agapitos (1998) and Markopoulos (2006); on rhetoric, see Mullett (2003). On the rise of the importance of *paideia* during the course of the tenth century, see, further, Gaul (2010: 76–77).

<sup>38</sup> See e.g. *Phil. min.* I 36.10–14 or *Letter* 110, ed. Sathas (1876: 354.23–29).

<sup>39</sup> See e.g. *Letter* 11, ed. Sathas (1876: 242.21–25).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Letter* 224, ed. Kurtz & Drexler (1941), with Synesius, *Dion* 3.3; and *Chron.* VI 23 with Synesius, *Letter* 1. See also Psellos, *Letter* 174, ed. Sathas (1876: 442.23–25): ἐργάζομαι δὲ οὐ τὴν πᾶνδημον ῥητορικὴν, οὐδὲ τὴν θεατρικὴν καὶ ἀκόλαστον ... ἀλλὰ τὴν οἰκουρὸν τε καὶ σώφρονα with n. 14 above. On Synesius’ *Dion* and its presence in Psellos’ presentation of the rhetorical style of Gregory of Nazianzus, see Levy (1912: 41); for further Synesian allusions in Psellos, see Papaioannou (2000).

Nevertheless, beyond Synesius or any other premodern Greek writer, Psellos' most frequent stance on the matter is to advocate the indissoluble mixture of philosophy and rhetoric, the creation of a 'commingled science' (σύμμικτος ἐπιστήμη), as he calls it.<sup>41</sup> It is this mixture which Psellos propagates in his lectures and letters, which he ascribes to his most cherished models, such as Plato and Gregory of Nazianzus, and about which he praises intellectual figures of the past and the present (most important among them is the tenth-century writer Symeon Metaphrastes, nearly an 'alter ego' for Psellos, for whom he wrote an extensive encomium).<sup>42</sup> Most interestingly, when writing in the first person singular, Psellos' adopted persona is consistently that of a learned man who perfectly joins philosophy with rhetoric: 'in my soul', he writes, 'as if in a single mixing bowl,<sup>43</sup> I mix philosophy and rhetoric together'.<sup>44</sup> For the first time in the history of the philosophico-rhetorical debate, the combination of philosophy with rhetoric is imagined as the ideal philosopher's unified and single discursive practice.<sup>45</sup>

In order to highlight some of the details as well as the importance of this self-representational gesture, it is worth looking closer at one of the many instances in which Psellos describes this 'commingling'. The text is the lengthy autobiographical digression that Psellos inserts into his *Chronographia* while describing the reign of his most important patron, the emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (Book VI, chs. 36–46). Written sometime in the early 1060s, this narrative describes Psellos' gradual entrance to Monomachos' court in 1043 (when Psellos was twenty-five years old).

Psellos begins by presenting the two fundamental areas of his studies: 'rhetorical discourse in order to be able to mould [πλάσασθαι] language'

<sup>41</sup> *Letter 223*, ed. Kurtz and Drexler (1941: 265.5–6).

<sup>42</sup> Of the numerous examples, see *Letters* 174 and 188, ed. Sathas (1876); *Theol.* I 98 (on Plato); *Poem* 7.177–78; *Theol.* I 102.4–6; *Theol.* II 6.139–40 (the last three references on Gregory of Nazianzus); and *Or. hag.* 7 *passim*, esp. ll. 62–70 (on Symeon Metaphrastes). Cf. *Theol.* I 79.73–78 (a critique of the style of Maximus the Confessor, the 'philosopher') and *Theol.* I 47.80–89 (a critique of John Sikeliotēs; in Psellos' view, Sikeliotēs, though a 'sophist' in reality, titled himself a 'philosopher' and attacked such able 'sophists' as Synesius, Libanius or Procopius).

<sup>43</sup> An allusion to Plato, *Timaeus* 41d4–6?

<sup>44</sup> *Or. min.* 8.191–92: ὡςπερ ἐφ' ἐνὶ κρατῆρι τῆ ἐμῆ ψυχῆ φιλοσοφίαν καὶ ῥητορικὴν ὁμοῦ συγκεράννυμι. See also Kustas (1973: 196–97).

<sup>45</sup> In this respect, I disagree with the view put forth in Jenkins (2006: 145) that 'it would be difficult to argue that he [*i.e.* Psellos] was any more insistent than Dionysius of Halicarnassus had been in the 1st century' with respect to the mixture of rhetoric with philosophy. For Dionysius of Halicarnassus, see the discussion above.

and ‘philosophy in order to purify the mind’ (ch. 36). His contact with rhetoric, Psellos declares, was such that he could possess its ‘powers’ (δύνασθαι is the verb used) of argumentation, but not so much that he might ‘follow’ rhetoric ‘in every aspect’. Psellos graduated to philosophy, starting with ‘natural’ discourses and reaching ‘first philosophy’ (namely theology)<sup>46</sup> by way of the ‘middle knowledge’ (namely mathematics, as may be inferred from ch. 38). So far so good; like a good ‘traditional’ intellectual, Psellos appropriates rhetorical discourse as an introductory step toward higher pursuits. Indeed, the paragraphs that follow in the narrative (chs. 37 through 40) tell only of Psellos’ philosophical achievements: his resuscitation of wisdom, his intellectual journey from the commentary tradition to the original sources, Aristotle and Plato, and then back to Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus and the ‘great harbour’ of Proclus. Finally, we read of Psellos’ ultimate exploration of all—even extra-discursive—knowledge, using as his intellectual base his own ‘single science of everything’.

After such a curriculum of gradual intellectual ascent, one might not expect to encounter rhetoric again. Yet Psellos returns to rhetoric in chapter 41. Unlike his earlier remark where he seemed unwilling to identify with the study of rhetoric, here he states directly that his discourse always combines both rhetoric and philosophy, a combination that, as he claims, makes him unique. Rhetoric in this chapter is not presented as simply preparatory of philosophy; rather, it is regarded as a fundamental constituent of the philosopher’s discursive practice. Indeed, after Psellos has recounted his engagement with theology and patristic writings and repeated his unmatched contribution in the Constantinopolitan revival of classical and early Byzantine knowledge (chs. 42–43), he seems to nearly forget his ‘philosophical’ identity. For he concludes his autobiographical digression with three paragraphs (chs. 44–46) devoted almost entirely to a disturbingly self-confident praise of his own unique rhetorical nature, to what he alludes as his ‘natural virtue’, and its enchanting effect upon Constantine Monomachos.

Thus, while Psellos begins his philosophical self-representation by preventing himself from being completely immersed in rhetoric, the narrative returns to the mixture of philosophy with rhetoric, and then reaches its culmination in equating Psellos’ ‘nature’ with his pleasure-generating eloquence.<sup>47</sup> The pattern is not uncommon in his texts and, I would argue, is

<sup>46</sup> A common Neoplatonic term, ultimately from Aristotle (*Metaph.* VI 1025b3–1026a32); see, e.g., John Philoponus, *On Aristotle On the Soul* 58.7–21 with Psellos, *Phil. min.* II 13, 37.32–38.13.

<sup>47</sup> For a different reading of this section of the *Chronographia*, see Kaldellis (1999: 127–41). Though Kaldellis is right to argue that one of the main themes of the *Chronographia* is

telling of Psellos' approach. Psellos first rehearses the constraints of the Byzantine tradition, where rhetoric is a clearly distinct and hierarchically inferior category. Then proceeding beyond the tradition, he joins philosophy with rhetoric in a nearly indissoluble mixture. In due course, Psellos will occasionally identify with what, until then, had been regarded as inferior, namely rhetorical appearance and its affectations.<sup>48</sup>

Let us look at two more examples, two texts that stem from Psellos' educational practice. The first is an attempt at a definition of philosophy (*Phil. min.* I 2), while the second is a university lecture that addressed the insistent desire of Psellos' students that their philosopher-teacher should lecture on the value of myth (*Or. min.* 25). In the former text, Psellos imagines philosophy both as an autonomous entity (philosophy, we are told, 'is both in everything and outside everything') and as a universal activity: philosophy 'spins around together with the heaven' and mixes all knowledge (20–28). This philosophical totality of knowledge includes rhetoric, which is explicitly placed, as one might expect, toward the bottom of the epistemic ladder.<sup>49</sup> Yet, in defining rhetoric, Psellos imagines this inferior discipline in terms that are strikingly reminiscent of philosophy's qualities. Rhetoric too is a universalizing practice that mixes everything (69–71)—Psellos even posits a possible comparison of rhetoric too with 'the heaven that has its perfection in the infinity of its motion' (76–78). And, like philosophy, rhetoric too is autonomous—indeed Psellos names rhetoric, and rhetoric alone, an *αὐτονομοθεσία*, a discipline regulated solely by its own principles (80–84).

In the second text, Psellos assumes a similar stance. His lecture on myth is structured around an intricate rhetorical strategy that divides the lecture (a total of 188 lines in the Teubner edition) in two. During the first half of the lecture (lines 1–95), Psellos feigns a strong resistance to his students' desire to talk about myth. He, a philosopher, has by now 'traversed matter and has ascended almost to the Forms' and thus reacts to those who wish of him to imitate a 'sophist' like Dio Chrysostom in offering an encomium of myth. At nearly the exact middle of the text (line 96 onward), however, Psellos

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'the rise of Psellos himself and the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy in his thought and career' (ibid. 138), I find somewhat unconvincing the notion that rhetoric was integrated by Psellos only to the extent that it provided a disguise for his 'true' project (namely philosophy and its Platonist and likely anti-religious thrust).

<sup>48</sup> For more examples and further discussion, see Papaioannou (forthcoming).

<sup>49</sup> For this hierarchical structure, see O'Meara, 'Political Philosophy in Michael Psellos' (in this volume).

changes his course and begins to discuss myth, offering an impressive defence for its value.

This defence consists of pressing further both the philosophical and rhetorical value of myth advocated by earlier philosophical and rhetorical theory. In earlier writing, myth is useful either as a cover for philosophical truth (as Neoplatonic exegesis of Homer argued—for instance in Proclus' commentary on the *Republic*) or as preparatory for the acquisition of the skill of persuasion (as was claimed in Byzantine discussions of the *progymnasma* of *mythos*—for example in John Doxapatres' eleventh-century commentary on Aphthonius). For Psellos, however, this valuation of myth is not enough. Rather, in this lecture, myth is imagined as—significantly for us here—an 'arrogant *rhetor* ... who fashions and refashions his intended meaning in whichever way he wills' and is proclaimed to be 'music, superior to philosophy' (173; a strategic misreading of Socrates' final moments in Plato's *Phaedo*).<sup>50</sup> Though in the beginning of the text Psellos, the 'philosopher', distances himself from the inferior discourse of myth, by the end of the lecture he has elevated myth, the 'rhetor', to an unprecedented height.

These two texts with their parallel imagining of the two disciplines (philosophy and rhetoric) and the temporary favour granted to inferior discourse (the *αὐτονομοθεσία* of rhetoric in the first and myth imagined as a personified rhetor in the second) should not be read as Psellos' elaboration of a philosophical question. Psellos does not put forth here any detailed elaboration of the relation between philosophy and rhetoric or between myth and philosophical discourse. Psellos, I believe, has a different concern. Both texts are about self-representation, about promoting Psellos with his rhetorical philosophy as the ideal intellectual figure.

Notably, the first essay ends with Psellos' wish that someone 'who has arrived at the habit of knowledge [*ἐπιστήμη*]' might exist, a person who, in a contemporary world of people who only practice separate disciplines, would 'bring together into one thing' and 'unite and mix together' the vari-

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<sup>50</sup> According to Plato's *Phaedo* (60d–61b), Socrates had a recurrent dream to 'create music and work at it', which he revisited during his final moments. Initially, Socrates interpreted the dream as a mere cheer for him to continue exactly what he was doing: philosophy, 'the greatest kind of music' (a phrase which was, notably, evoked in Neoplatonic definitions of philosophy with which Psellos would have been familiar; cf. e.g. Proclus, *In Remp.* 1, 57.8–23 and 60.24–25 and David, *Proleg.* 25.19–24 with John Tzetzes, *Chil.* 10.597). Then, however, Socrates decided that the dream was urging him to practice 'music' in the regular sense; hence, he turned to the making of poetry (though still without 'creating myths!'). By contrast, as Psellos cites the story, it is myth that is implied as 'the greatest kind of music'. For the episode in the *Phaedo*, see Roochnik (2001); for Psellos' reading, see also Kolovou (2009).



ous types of knowledge (including rhetoric) in order to produce one single and ‘most beautiful living creature upon earth’. Who else is that ‘someone’ if not Psellos himself who repeatedly proclaims his proficiency in every type of knowledge and, especially, his mixture of rhetoric with philosophy?

Similarly, Psellos concludes his lecture on myth by urging his students to welcome myth into their very inner core, their soul: ‘Should we not receive him’, Psellos asks, ‘with utter reverence? Dine him with the best that we have? Let him rest in our soul as if in a house, providing him our mind [νοῦς] as his bed, entirely covered with beautiful sights? If we let him inhabit us in this manner, he too will honour us back and give us the starting points of fictions [πλάσματα] and the art and power of persuasion.’ Who else, we might ask, is this skilled visitor than Psellos himself, the rhetor, to whom, for instance, Monomachos, as we read in the *Chronographia* at the end of the section discussed above, allowed entrance to his very ‘heart’?<sup>51</sup>

### *The philosopher’s politics*

With its explicit mixture of philosophy and rhetoric and its temporary valuation of the inferior discipline, Psellos’ self-representational stance is unlike anything else in his distant and immediate past. While other Byzantine writers, such as Synesius, occasionally join the two professions and flirt with the aesthetic value of rhetoric, they neither put the mixture of philosophy with rhetoric so ostensibly on display nor does their flirting with rhetorical identity ever result in sacrificing—however temporarily—the traditional belief in the primacy of philosophy. By contrast, Psellos maximizes what is a latent notion in Greek autobiographical tradition: rather than preparatory, supplementary, or just superfluous, rhetoric is central to the philosopher’s social persona.

At that, Psellos is innovative when placed in the history of Greek philosophers’ self-referential writing. Simultaneously, as I would like to argue, he brings to the fore—though, as we shall see, with a twist—certain conceptual trends that are evident in middle Byzantine rhetorical theory. Just like Byzantine self-representation, the field of Byzantine rhetorical theory (for instance, the commentaries in Hermogenes’ corpus and Aphthonius’ *progymnasmata*) remains largely unexplored, especially in

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<sup>51</sup> *Chron.* VI 46: Τοῖς μὲν οὖν ἄλλοις καιρὸν εἶχε καὶ μέτρον ἢ πρὸς αὐτὸν εἴσοδος, ἐμοὶ δὲ καὶ αἰ τῆς καρδίας αὐτῷ πύλαι ἀνεπετάννυντο, καὶ κατὰ βραχὺ προϊόντι ξύμπαντα ἐπεδείκνυτο.

regard to the question that interests us here, the relation between rhetoric and philosophy.<sup>52</sup>

Among Byzantine rhetorical theorists, the work of John Sikeliotes in the early eleventh century mentioned above, stands out for its attempt to redefine rhetoric in accordance to theological or, better (as Sikeliotes himself saw it), philosophical premises.<sup>53</sup> In the introduction to his commentary on Hermogenes' *On Forms*, Sikeliotes suggests that the πάνδημος rhetoric (an evocation of a Synesian concept) is necessary for all those who desire to learn the 'science of politics' (πολιτική ἐπιστήμη), 'even if', Sikeliotes continues, 'Plato—unworthily of Plato himself—condemned [κατεπαυεῖν]<sup>54</sup> the fire of rhetoric which is beneficial to the public and belongs to everyone [πάνδημος]'.<sup>55</sup>

Accordingly, Sikeliotes imagines the ideal rhetor as what he calls a 'civic [πολιτικός] philosopher'.<sup>56</sup> This philosopher is, as he explains in the commentary itself, 'a rhetor who is not simply a rhetor, but someone who orders and adorns moral character, leading humankind toward what is more rational and, indeed, truly human by turning ... all irrationality to its opposite' (376.3–14). The primary examples of such political philosophers are, as one might expect, the 'teachers of the Church' who 'fashion and order not only cities, but also moral character' (469.27–470.1). The fathers, we read, 'joined civic discourse' with whatever is 'absolutely necessary' for man to 'commune' with God and thus 'raised our nature to the nature of eternity'. This new kind of rhetoric, Sikeliotes further states, 'is the true civic discourse [πολιτικός λόγος], the one that grants lawfulness to the powers of our souls, those intelligible cities [πόλεις], ... introducing peace ... and transferring us to that original polity from which we were snatched away' (466.17–470.7).

<sup>52</sup> Kustas' admirable work (1973) is the first attempt to map Byzantine rhetorical theory, though many of his arguments would now require revision.

<sup>53</sup> Sikeliotes' work is to be placed during the reign of Basil II (after 1000?) though the details of his biography are unknown, except what one might glean from an autobiographical note he inserted in his commentary to Hermogenes (see *Commentary on On the Forms*, ed. Walz 1834: 446.24–448.15), where Sikeliotes refers to speeches that he composed (no examples of which survive), one of them delivered in the Constantinopolitan suburb of Pikridion at the order (?) of Basil II. On Sikeliotes see Kustas (1973: 21 and *passim*), with Mazzucchi (1990) and Conley (2003).

<sup>54</sup> The word is wrongly translated as 'loben, preisen' in LBG, citing this very passage.

<sup>55</sup> *Prolegomena*, ed. Rabe (1931: 393–95).

<sup>56</sup> See *Commentary on On the Forms*, ed. Walz (1834: 466.1–470.7 with 217.7–8; 376.3–4). Sikeliotes' terms here may partly originate in Hermias, *Scholia on Plato's Phaedrus* 221.13–24. On the emphasis on the 'civic' definition of rhetoric in Byzantium, see further Schouler (1995).

What seems to be at stake here is the anxiety to retain the value of rhetoric in a social context, such as that of medieval Constantinople, where the models of public speech are no longer pagan rhetors, but Christian ‘philosophers’ like Gregory of Nazianzus (or indeed like Sikeliotēs himself who is titled ‘philosopher’ in the manuscripts that transmit his commentary). For Sikeliotēs, the way to address this anxiety is to regard rhetoric as a necessary part of the philosopher’s political responsibility, which is translated in his view as the responsibility to impart morality. Rhetoric can thereby be reclaimed as a proper philosophical activity, which addresses the needs for correct *politeia*, whether communal polity or, more importantly, personal way of life (the main Byzantine understanding of the term *politeia*).

The association of rhetoric with ‘politics’ and its consequent inclusion in the philosopher’s identity are notions that Psellos was all too happy to adopt. He too, after all, imagined Christian writers as both ideal rhetors as well as ideal philosophers; and he too insisted on the reintegration of political praxis in the philosopher’s discourse.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, one might say that, to some extent, Psellos’ self-representation embodies the philosophico-rhetorical qualities ascribed to rhetors of the past by contemporary rhetorical manuals, such as Sikeliotēs’ *Commentary*.

Yet, just as when compared with Synesius’ autobiography so also when juxtaposed with contemporary rhetorical theory, Psellos’ version of the philosopher-rhetor is markedly different in one seminal respect. While both Synesius and Sikeliotēs emphasize the philosopher’s moral responsibility, disguised as *civic* responsibility, so as to justify the practice of rhetoric and involvement in political matters, this is a responsibility that does not figure prominently in Psellos’ self-representation. This does not mean that Psellos is some kind of an amoralist, either in theory or in practice—indeed, in the context of teaching or the writing of history, for instance, Psellos has much to say about virtues, and, following the Neoplatonic structuring and terminology of virtues, ‘political’ (πολιτικά) virtues at that.<sup>58</sup> In self-representational writing, however, Psellos refrains from regarding his rhetoric and consequent politics as imparting or contributing to good morals. Instead, Psellos places at the foreground a view that is either morally indifferent or, at the very least, ambiguous. In the stead of morality, Psellos projects theat-

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<sup>57</sup> See *Poem* 7.177–78 or *Theol.* I 102.4–6 (on Gregory of Nazianzus). On Psellos and politics, see the next footnote.

<sup>58</sup> This is nicely elaborated in Dominic O’Meara’s essay in this volume.

rics and erotics, those, as we have seen, inferior aspects of public, ‘vulgar’ rhetoric, by portraying the political sphere as a theatrical arena, where the philosopher’s superior rhetorical performance incites irresistible desire.

The speeches by which Psellos, at different stages of his career, defended the philosophical value of his involvement in Constantinopolitan public affairs and the acquisition of imperial titles and honours, might suffice to show his approach. In these texts, the philosopher’s moral role—Christian or otherwise—is nearly never evoked in support of Psellos’ politics. Rather, the most prominent idea is that he follows the example of such (as Psellos regards them) politically active philosophers as Plato and Aristotle and, indeed, that he supersedes them by mixing their philosophy with Demosthenic rhetoric. The metaphor that gradually dominates Psellos’ argumentation is that of politics as a competitive stage (theatre, stadium or battlefield) in which he, again ‘by his nature’, excels.

Here are the speeches in sequence: In *To Those Who Think that the Philosopher Desires to Be Involved in Political Affairs, and because of This Disparage Him* (*Or. min.* 6), Psellos claims that he is a philosopher who still remains in the human *theatron*, as a knowledgeable, observing spectator. In *To the Slanderer Who Dropped [sc. against Psellos] a Defaming Leaflet* (*Or. min.* 7), Psellos juxtaposes his discursive ‘performative’ ability (μιμούμενος) to an accuser who has entered the political ‘stage’. Against his opponent’s second-rate imitation of Aristophanic ‘drama’, Psellos sets his own model, Plato, ‘who performs [ὑποδύεται] Socrates’. In *When He Resigned from the Title of Protoasekretis* (*Or. min.* 8), Psellos likens himself to ‘dancers’ and glorifies his ability to mix philosophy and rhetoric and thus assume a variety of forms (184–210). In *To Those Who Begrudge Him the Honorary Title of Hypertimos* (*Or. min.* 9), Psellos ridicules the inability of his opponents to compete with him. At the end of the ‘contest’ and as the *theatron* is still present, Psellos is appointed by the judge as the leader. Finally, in *To Those Who Begrudge Him* (*Or. min.* 10), Psellos proclaims that ‘he becomes an actor of another’s form’ leaving his opponents at a loss, for all they can do is remain spectators of his performance: ‘If you choose to run again and again in competition with me, and then you lose,’ Psellos concludes, ‘you will become—rather than competitors—spectators, sitting somewhere high on the *theatron*, watching my race.’<sup>59</sup>

When involved in politics, Psellos the philosopher-rhetor is thus not an agent of morality but simply an inimitable performer, an ingenious actor.

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<sup>59</sup> *Or. min.* 10.103–7: συντρέχειν πολλάκις αἰρούμενοι καὶ ἠττώμενοι ἄνω που τοῦ θεάτρου καθήμενοι θεαταὶ τοῦ ἐμοῦ δρόμου ἢ ἀνταγωνισταὶ μοι γενήσεσθε.

Indeed, civic morality is further set aside as Psellos recurrently refers to the incitement of private desires provoked by his performance. The intricate narrative of the *Chronographia* with which I began is instructive in this respect. After having narrated the curriculum of his intellectual formation, Psellos claims that his rhetorical achievement causes an intense and eroticized reaction on the part of the emperor: ‘Just like those possessed by the divine are inspired in a manner that cannot be communicated to others, he too could find no cause for his pleasure and would almost kiss me. This is the extent to which he was immediately entranced by my eloquence.’<sup>60</sup> It seems that ἔρωσ, the desire that a good performer arouses, and thus the patronage and support he raises, rather than political ἦθος, is the intended rhetorical effect of the philosopher’s involvement in politics, in the philosopher’s aspiration to climb up the social ladder.<sup>61</sup>

### *Rhetoric and philosophy after Psellos*

Despite Psellos’ self-projected confidence, the actual social fate of the Byzantine intellectual did not change radically, either for himself or for the generations of philosophers and rhetors that succeeded him in late eleventh- and twelfth-century Constantinople.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, Psellos’ valuation of rhetoric marks a significant transition for the conception of rhetoric as this is evident in several twelfth-century writers, especially those associated with Anna Komnene in the second quarter of the twelfth century and those that followed Eustathios of Thessalonike toward the end of that same century.<sup>63</sup>

For these writers, Psellos’ insistence on the mixture of philosophy with rhetoric becomes a topos.<sup>64</sup> The renewed interest in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* also

<sup>60</sup> *Chron.* VI 46: ὁ δὲ, ὡσπερ οἱ θεοφορούμενοι ἀδήλως τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐνθουσιῶσιν, οὕτω δὴ κάκεινῳ αἰτίαν οὐκ εἶχεν ἢ ἡδονῇ, καὶ μικροῦ με δεῖν κατεφίλησεν, οὕτω μου τῆς γλώττης εὐθὺς ἀπηώρητο.

<sup>61</sup> See further e.g. *Chron.* VI 161 or *Letters* 6 and 69 (ed. Sathas 1876).

<sup>62</sup> See Magdalino (1993: 316–412).

<sup>63</sup> For Psellos’ influence on twelfth-century writers, see Papaioannou (forthcoming) with further bibliography.

<sup>64</sup> See Anna Komnene, *Alexias* 15.7.9.24–26; Michael Italikos, *Orat.* 15 (150.11) and *Letter* 5 with Criscuolo (1971: 60–62; 69); Nikephoros Basilakes, *Or.* B1.19 (18.14–18) and B4.5 (78.10–17); Eumathios Makrembolites, *The Story of Hysmine and Hysminias* 7.14; Theodore Prodromos, *Monody for the Holiest Metropolitan of Trebizond kyr Stephanos Skylitzes* 36 and 54–55 in Petit (1903); Niketas Eugeneianos, *Funeral Oration on Theodore Prodromos*, 456.6–11 in Petit (1902); John Tzetzes, *Letter* 77; Gregory Antiochos, *Funeral Oration on Nicholas Kataphloron* 58.23–59.5, ed. Sideras (1990); and Michael Choniates, *Discourse to the Patriarch Michael* 80.2–28 with Kolovou (1999: 266–70). See also Wilson (1983: 171), on the scribe Ioannikios and his self-representation.

belongs to this post-Psellian world where intellectuals search for further philosophical justification of their pursuit of discursive performance.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, for the first time in Byzantine history, it seems as if, equally to and, sometimes, regardless of philosophy, rhetoric by itself is considered capable of promising some kind of social authority.

Two telling examples will suffice. The first is from Michael Italikos (c. 1090?–before 1157), an author well versed in both rhetoric and philosophy. Italikos begins one of his letters to an unknown addressee (*Letter 13*) by claiming that ‘after comparing science against science, I find philosophy quite lacking in comparison to rhetoric’; and, following a lengthy comparison of the two ἐπιστήματι (with an emphasis on rhetoric’s ‘political/civic’ function), Italikos concludes: ‘compared with philosophy, rhetoric appears to me more heavenly’.<sup>66</sup> Some fifty years later, in another rhetor, Euthymios Tornikes (late 12th–early 13th c.), we encounter one of the most extravagant encomia of rhetoric in middle Byzantine writing. In his *Encomium to Alexios III Komnenos* [1195–1203] ... *Urging the Emperor to Make Him a Rhetor*, Tornikes, citing Synesius, writes: ‘In this way, this, the most beautiful and most public [πάνδημος] rhetoric benefits us in every respect ... by immortalizing good emperors and by preserving up to the present day its familiar and dear name, the sophists.’<sup>67</sup>

It would be a mistake to read Italikos’ and Tornikes’ words as empty wordiness, excessive remarks necessitated simply by occasion and genre,

<sup>65</sup> See John Italos, *Rhetorical Method*, ed. Kečakmadze (1966: 35–42) (on which cf. Conley 2004 who downplays, too strongly in my view, the revival of Aristotle’s views on rhetoric in Italos), and the two commentaries, one anonymous (12th cent.?) and the other by Stephanos Skylitzes (12th cent., first half), both edited in Rabe (1896); for Skylitzes see also Hörandner (2007). Comparable are also the intricate views on (as well as practice of) rhetoric and philosophy by Theodore Metochites as excellently analysed in Bydén (2002).

<sup>66</sup> Ἐπιστήμην πρὸς ἐπιστήμην ἀντεξετάζων, εὐρίσκω φιλοσοφίαν παρὰ πολὺ λειπομένην ῥητορικῆς ... συγκρινομένη ῥητορικὴ θεσπεσιωτέρα φιλοσοφίας μοι καταφαίνεται. For Italikos, cf. Papaioannou (2007).

<sup>67</sup> Darrouzès (1968, sect. 2, 140.30–31): Οὕτως ἡ καλλίστη καὶ πάνδημος αὕτη ῥητορικὴ πανταχόθεν ἡμῖν ἐπιχορηγεῖ τὰ καλά, τοὺς ... ἀγαθοὺς αὐτοκράτορας ἀπαθανατίζουσα καὶ τὸ οἰκεῖον ταύτη καὶ φίλον ὄνομα μέχρι δὴ καὶ ἐς δεῦρο, τοὺς σοφιστὰς, περισώζουσα. Cf. Synesius, *Epist.* 1 (cited also above): Παῖδας ἐγὼ λόγους ἐγεννησάμην, τοὺς μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς σεμνοτάτης φιλοσοφίας καὶ τῆς συννάου ταύτη ποιητικῆς, τοὺς δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς πανδήμου ῥητορικῆς. See also section 1 in Tornikes’ speech (139.1–2): Ὡ καλὸν τοῦτο πάλαι κρατήσαν ἔθος, ἀγωνίσματα καὶ λόγους τῆς πρέσβας καὶ πανδήμου ταύτης ῥητορικῆς μέσοις ἀνακτόροις ἐνσοφιστεύεσθαι ... ἄνδρα τρόφιμον τοῖς τῆς ῥητορικῆς ὅλοις τετελεσμένον ὀργίοις καὶ <τοῖς> τῆς συννάου δὲ σοφίας, ποιητικῆς τε καὶ γραμματικῆς. The phrase appears also earlier, in the circle of Anna Komnene, in George Tornikes’ (between 1110 and 1120, died 1156/7) *Proimion for When He Became Teacher of the Psalter*, ed. Darrouzès (1970: 78.3–6).

letter-writing and speech of praise respectively. Rather, the remarkable value accorded to rhetoric suggests a social context where rhetoricians feel confident to invest in this value for their social advancement. Rhetoric is regarded as a valid profession and practice in which writers pride themselves and with which they praise their teachers, friends and associates.<sup>68</sup> To value rhetoric in this way was not a self-evident matter nor simply an ‘ideologically safe’ choice,<sup>69</sup> but rather a remarkable novelty.

The same point may be made also from a different perspective. The reader of twelfth-century writing will find also here affirmations of the value of philosophy over and above rhetoric. Nevertheless, even some of these more traditional views are expressed either within discussions focused on rhetoric or in genres conditioned by rhetoric. For instance, in Stephanos Skylitzes’ commentary on Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* we encounter the idea that rhetoric is subordinate to philosophy (ed. Rabe 1896: 268.27–28). This opinion, however, is expressed in a context where a philosophical justification of rhetoric is at work. Take also *Timarion*, with its ridiculing of the philosophical aspirations of rhetors like Psellos. One should not forget that the text itself is a fictional dialogue, in the tradition of playful Lucianic rhetoric, the kind of rhetoric which only now, after a silence of several centuries, is possible again in Byzantium in the context of the highly rhetorical twelfth-century culture.<sup>70</sup>

Comparable is the situation in another text, with which I would like to conclude. Manuel Karantenos, a minor late twelfth-century intellectual, ad-

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<sup>68</sup> E.g., Italikos’ *Letter* 24 is addressed to a ‘rhetor’ while Italikos himself claims to be an accomplished ‘rhetor’ and ‘sophist’; *Letter* 14: 144.10–11. In his *Monody*, mentioned above (ed. Petit 1903), for his teacher and friend Stephanos Skylitzes (metropolitan of Trebizond at the moment of his death and likely the author of one of the two surviving Byzantine commentaries on Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*), Theodore Prodromos recurrently commends Skylitzes for his rhetorical eloquence while spending no word on the likely *philosophia* of his metropolitan friend. Similarly, in his *Funeral Oration* on Theodore Prodromos, also mentioned above, Niketas Eugeneianos dwells on the rhetorical (rather than philosophical) virtues of his friend, whom he, nevertheless, addresses as ‘philosopher’; Petit (1902: 463.3–4). Cf. also Constantine Manasses, *Discourse to Michael Hagiotheodorites* 400–401, ed. Horna (1906). In the same vein, Eustathios of Thessalonike spends much time on (his) rhetoric while no single word on *philosophia* as a tool for self-promotion in his *Letters*, ed. Kolovou (2006).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Magdalino (1993: 335) on rhetoric as an ‘ideologically safe’ choice.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. the apophthegmatic definition of *philosophia* by John Tzetzes where philosophy is opposed to highly rhetorical discourse, yet within a poem explicating words and phrases from Tzetzes’ letters—both letter-writing and verse being exactly rhetorical enterprises; see *Chil.* 10.590 with Bydén (2003: 5). For the revival of fiction in this period see Mullett (2007) and Agapitos (2012).

dressed, in a brief essay, a student's question on 'the difference between mystical and superior philosophy and that lowly and vulgar [πάνδημος] rhetoric'.<sup>71</sup> Karantenos asks his student to use his imagination, his καταληπτική φαντασία, and envision both disciplines personified before his eyes. An elaborate description follows, reminiscent of Lucian's *Dream*.<sup>72</sup> the 'immovable and divine' female philosophy with her 'masculine gaze' is contrasted sharply with the 'effeminate' young male that is rhetoric. The conclusion is obvious: the student must embrace philosophy and avoid rhetoric lest he lose 'the nobility of his soul'. This fear is an old one and Karantenos is in good company, as we saw above, to rekindle it.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, that Karantenos employs a fanciful, imaginative, Lucianic rhetoric in order to make his 'philosophical' point gives testimony to the value rhetoric had, since Psellos, acquired in the rhetorico-philosophical debate.

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<sup>71</sup> Another reference to Synesius' Platonic phrase, this time, however, restored to its negative Platonic connotations. The text is edited in Criscuolo (1975–76); for Karantenos see Browning (1962: 198–200) and Roilos (2005: 31; 154–55).

<sup>72</sup> On which see Gera Levine (1995).

<sup>73</sup> For one further personification of philosophy as the 'best mistress' Penelope, reserved only for the 'truly philosopher' Odysseus, see Eustathios of Thessalonike, *Comm. in Homer's Odyssey* 1.27.10–20.



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

MICHELE TRIZIO

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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup>

## *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.<sup>4</sup> Surprisingly, this view has

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<sup>1</sup> See Giocarinis (1964) and Steel (2002).

<sup>2</sup> See Trizio (2009a).

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

<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.'<sup>6</sup>

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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 ἀτελές, τὸ δὲ ἀτελές οὐκ ἀγαθόν, ἢ ἡδονὴ ἄρα οὐκ ἀγαθόν. Πόθεν ὅτι ἀτελές ἢ ἡδονή; πᾶσα ἡδονὴ κίνησις, ἢ δὲ κίνησις ἀτελής, ἢ ἡδονὴ ἄρα ἀτελής. πόθεν ὅτι τὸ ἀτελές οὐκ ἀγαθόν; τὸ ἀτελές ἢ τῷ ἐνδεῖν ἢ τῷ ἐκπεπτωκέναι τῆς ἑαυτοῦ τελειότητος ἀτελές ἐστίν, ἐκότερον δὲ τούτων οὐκ ἀγαθόν, τὸ ἀτελές 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).

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

<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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,<sup>8</sup> and by his claim to have written his commentary on Book II of the *Posterior Analytics* on the request of certain friends.<sup>9</sup> Despite the emphasis on rhetoric<sup>10</sup>

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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.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> *In Eth. Nic. VI* 294.28.

<sup>9</sup> *In An. po. II* 123.27–28.

<sup>10</sup> 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,<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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 αὐτῶ κατὰ τὸ νῦν τε οὔσης 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-

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

<sup>11</sup> *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.

<sup>12</sup> 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,<sup>13</sup> Eustratios clarifies that the expression ‘present, future and past’ was meant ‘to speak Homerically a little’ (ἵνα καὶ καθομηρίσω μικρόν).<sup>14</sup> The extremely rare expression ‘to describe something Homerically’ (καθομηρίζειν) is first found in the funeral oration for Basil the Great by Gregory the Theologian,<sup>15</sup> whom Michael Psellos regarded as the best model of Christian rhetoric,<sup>16</sup> while Joseph Rhakendytes explicitly refers to Gregory as the source for καθομηρίζειν in his *Synopsis artis rhetoricae*.<sup>17</sup> 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,<sup>18</sup> the Byzantines credited Homer with the invention of rhetoric, and this belief was reasserted throughout both primary and higher education.<sup>19</sup> 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*.<sup>20</sup> 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

<sup>13</sup> 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).

<sup>14</sup> The reference is to *Il.* 1.70.

<sup>15</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 43, 17.5. The Homeric expression quoted by Gregory is ἔφετε κλονέων (*Il.* 11.496).

<sup>16</sup> Michael Psellos, *Orationes panegyricae* 17.275ff.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph Rhakendytes, *Synopsis artis rhetoricae* 7, 593.15–17.

<sup>18</sup> Περὶ ἰδεῶν λόγου 389.21–27.

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

<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup>

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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup> 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,<sup>25</sup> suggest-

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

<sup>22</sup> Michael Psellos, *Orationes panegyricae* 17.276–83.

<sup>23</sup> Isocrates, *Ad Demonicum* 34.

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

<sup>25</sup> 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,<sup>26</sup> and writes, elsewhere, that Proclus is 'the chief of the most theological of the Greeks'.<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup>

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.<sup>29</sup> 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.).

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

<sup>26</sup> *Chron.* VI 38.1–5.

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

<sup>28</sup> 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).

<sup>29</sup> 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*.<sup>30</sup> What is less known is that, according to Golitsis,<sup>31</sup> three manuscripts, *Marcianus gr.* 212 (1<sup>r</sup>–44<sup>r</sup>),<sup>32</sup> *Vaticanus gr.* 1429 (1<sup>r</sup>–79<sup>v</sup>)<sup>33</sup> and *Escorialensis* T.I.18 (1<sup>r</sup>–74<sup>v</sup>),<sup>34</sup> 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,<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup>

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,<sup>37</sup> I shall show this paraphrase's reliance upon Eustratios' own commentary.<sup>38</sup> 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

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<sup>30</sup> This paraphrase was edited by Oikonomakos (2005).

<sup>31</sup> See Golitsis (2008: 66)

<sup>32</sup> On this manuscript see Mioni (1981: 326).

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

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

<sup>35</sup> See Golitsis (2008: 66–67).

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

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

<sup>38</sup> 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),<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup>

## 2 Nikephoros Gregoras' *Solutiones quaestionum I*

The third, and most important, case-study carried out here is represented by Nikephoros Gregoras' *Solutiones quaestionum*.<sup>41</sup> 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*

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

<sup>40</sup> *In Eth. Nic. VI* 268.10–21: τοῖς γὰρ γινώσκουσι, φησὶν, ἢ γνῶσις τοῖς γινωσκομένοις ἐξομοιοῦται, ὡς εἶναι τῶν μὲν ἀναγκαίων ἀναγκαίαν καὶ τὴν γνῶσιν, ἐνδεχομένην δὲ τῶν ἐνδεχομένων. πῶς γὰρ ἂν εἴη ἀναγκαία τῶν ἐνδεχομένων ἢ γνῶσις, 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 γνῶσις ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ὡς ἀπλῶς ἐνδεχόμενον γινώσκουσα καὶ τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον ὡς ἀναγκαῖον. τὴν γὰρ ἀληθεύουσαν γνῶσιν, 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 ὀντότητος· 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 γνῶσιν ὁμοίαν εἶναι τῶν γινωσκομένων καὶ ἀναγκαίαν μὲν τὴν τοῦ ἀναγκαίου, ἐνδεχομένην δὲ τὴν τοῦ ἐνδεχομένου, πᾶσα ἀνάγκη· καὶ γὰρ ἐνδεχομένη γνῶσις ἐστίν, ἥτις οὐκ ἀεὶ ἀληθεύει· ψεύδεται δὲ ἡ γνῶσις, 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 γνῶσις ἐνδεχομένη ἐστὶ. διὰ τὰ αὐτὰ δὴ καὶ τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἀναγκαία ἢ γνῶσις· πᾶσα γὰρ γνῶσις καθ' ὁμοιότητά τινα καὶ οἰκειότητα γίνεται· καὶ γὰρ ἐφαρμογή τις ἐστὶ καὶ ἐπαφή τοῦ γινωσκομένου καὶ τοῦ γινώσκοντος.

<sup>41</sup> 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 commonplace<sup>42</sup> as large sections of his *Semeioseis gnomikai* are devoted to the instability of human affairs, which is explicitly linked to ancient scepticism.<sup>43</sup>

A discussion, however, of the sceptical tendencies in late Byzantine thought will not be addressed here<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup> 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).

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

<sup>43</sup> *Semeioseis gnomikai* 29; 61.

<sup>44</sup> For an excellent account of this problem, see Bydén (2002).

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

<sup>46</sup> 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 Gheron ('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 ἕαν ἰχθύες ἐκ τῆς ὑγρᾶς καὶ κατὰ φύσιν διαίτης ἐστὴν τῶν χερσαίων μετενεχθέντες ἡμαρτημένην αἰεὶ καὶ τοῦ ὀρθοῦ καθάπαξ ἀποπεφυκίαν 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 φθορᾷ, 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.<sup>47</sup>

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

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

operation of each thing and its position in the hierarchy of beings,<sup>48</sup> since everything, in general, participates in the First Cause according to its place and rank in the hierarchy of beings.<sup>49</sup> Proclus seems to be Eustratios' main source for this idea,<sup>50</sup> 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.<sup>51</sup>

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.<sup>52</sup> Despite occurring in many sources such as Philo,<sup>53</sup> 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).<sup>54</sup> 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-

<sup>48</sup> *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.

<sup>49</sup> *In Eth. Nic. I* 49.2–3.

<sup>50</sup> 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).

<sup>51</sup> *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.

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

<sup>53</sup> 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 *Nichomachean 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'.

<sup>54</sup> *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.<sup>55</sup> While in general Proclus' vocabulary dominates the commentary,<sup>56</sup> some Christian elements sporadically enter the discussion.<sup>57</sup> 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,<sup>58</sup> 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.<sup>59</sup> 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–

<sup>55</sup> 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 συναγήοχε, 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 συναγήοχε) with John Philoponus, *In An. po.* 439.19–20 (ἀλλ' ἀπὸ αἰσθήσεως, ὡς δέδεικται, ἐνδίδονται ἡμῖν ἀφορμαὶ ἐξ ὧν τὸ καθόλου συνάγεται καὶ ἐπιγινώσκουμεν).

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

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 99–103.

<sup>58</sup> *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.

<sup>59</sup> *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).<sup>60</sup>

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,<sup>61</sup> while the related discursive and dianoetic activity of the soul serves as the starting point of the recollection process.<sup>62</sup> 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’.<sup>63</sup> 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.<sup>64</sup> 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

<sup>60</sup> 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.

<sup>61</sup> 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).

<sup>62</sup> On this point see Trizio (2009b: 99–108).

<sup>63</sup> *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: ἄν 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.

<sup>64</sup> *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,<sup>65</sup> ‘dancing in a circle around the Intellect and grasping them one by one’, as Eustratios literally quotes from Proclus’ commentary on the *Parmenides*.<sup>66</sup>

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.<sup>67</sup> 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,<sup>68</sup> or the need to awaken ‘the One in us’.<sup>69</sup> Or consider

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<sup>65</sup> *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 νοεῖα 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).

<sup>66</sup> *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).

<sup>67</sup> 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).

<sup>68</sup> 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).

<sup>69</sup> 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.<sup>70</sup> 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.<sup>71</sup>

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.<sup>72</sup> 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

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<sup>70</sup> 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).

<sup>71</sup> *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.

<sup>72</sup> 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 speech<sup>73</sup> 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.<sup>74</sup> 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.<sup>75</sup>

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.<sup>76</sup> While his teacher Theodore Metochites’ re-

<sup>73</sup> On this argument cf. supra n. 45.

<sup>74</sup> 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.

<sup>75</sup> *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.

<sup>76</sup> 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,<sup>77</sup> 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).<sup>78</sup> 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.<sup>79</sup>

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.<sup>80</sup> Basil of Caesarea<sup>81</sup> and Gregory of Nyssa,<sup>82</sup> 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.<sup>83</sup> 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-

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

<sup>78</sup> The expression 'moonless night' (ἐν σκοτομήνη) 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.

<sup>79</sup> Περὶ κατασκευῆς καὶ γενέσεως ἀστρολάβου 1.19–20.

<sup>80</sup> *Antilogia* 484.143–45.

<sup>81</sup> Basil the Great, *Homil. in Psalmos* 48.21ff.

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

<sup>83</sup> See Gregory of Nyssa, *De Beat.* 1, 85.1–86.2.

sive to non-discursive thought that results from this.<sup>84</sup> All the traditional philosophical arguments in favour of men's superiority over animals, such as, for instance, the Stoic<sup>85</sup> and then Christian<sup>86</sup> 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,<sup>87</sup> 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.<sup>88</sup> 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*.<sup>89</sup> 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

<sup>84</sup> 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*.

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

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

<sup>87</sup> 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.

<sup>88</sup> 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).

<sup>89</sup> These lists, contained in the *Marcianus gr.* 203 (f. 293<sup>v</sup>), *Vaticanus gr.* 421, and *Hierosolymitanus Sti Sep.* 106 (f. 7<sup>v</sup>), 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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