

**Georgios Gemistos Plethon**  
**The Byzantine and the Latin Renaissance**

Edited by  
Jozef Matula  
Paul Richard Blum



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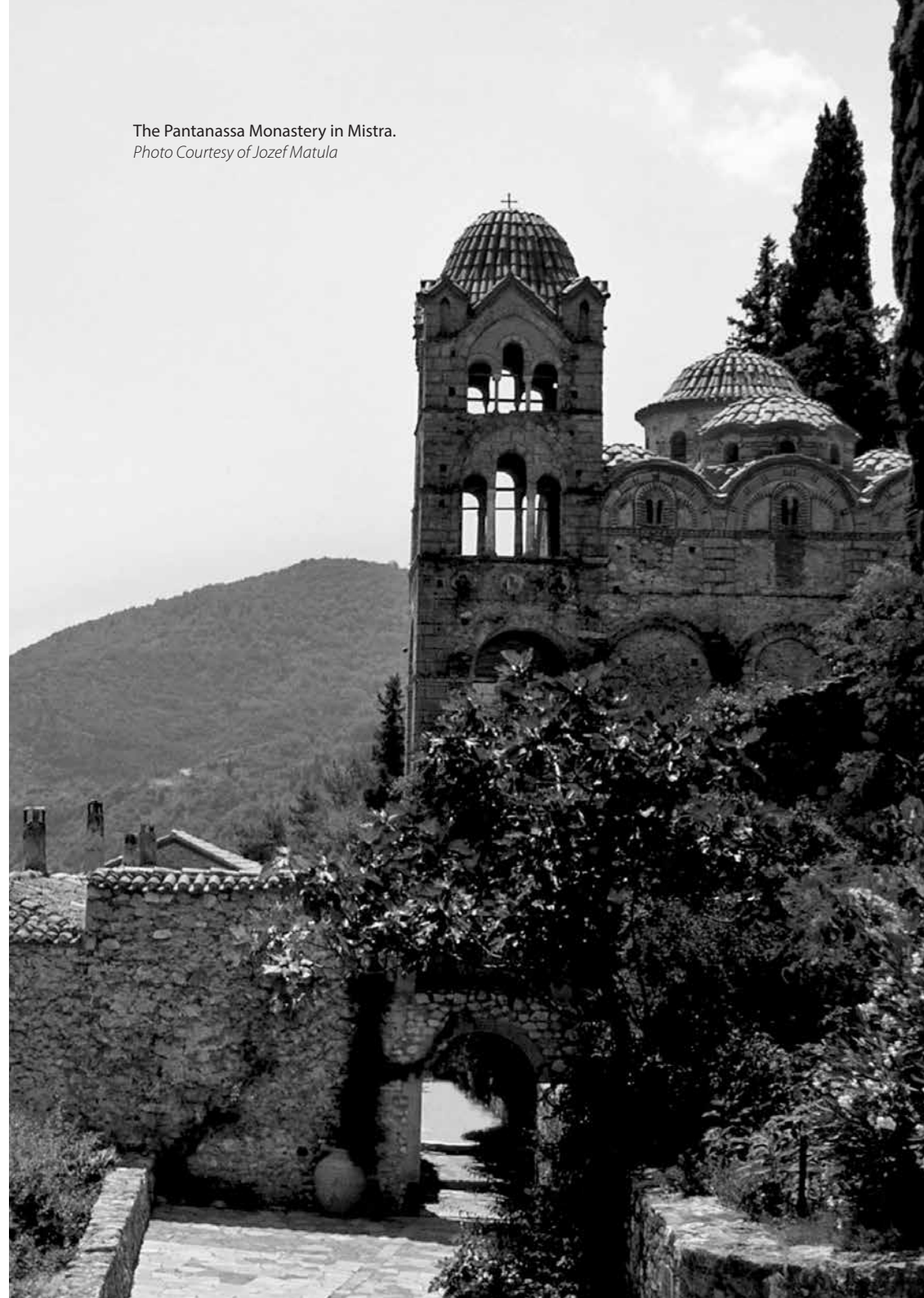
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The Pantanassa Monastery in Mistra.  
Photo Courtesy of Jozef Matula



## Content

<b>Preface</b>	9
----------------	---

### An honorary paper

Wilhelm Blum    München, Germany	
<b>Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta (1417–1468): Stadtherr von Rimini, Neuheide und Verehrer Plethons</b>	11–38

### Plethon's philosophy in the Byzantine context

László Bene    Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary	
<b>Constructing Pagan Platonism: Plethon's Theory of Fate and the Ancient Philosophical Tradition</b>	41–71
George Arabatzis    University of Athens, Greece	
<b>Plethon's Philosophy of the Concept</b>	73–111
Sergei Mariev    Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany	
<b>Plethon and Scholarios on Deliberation in Art and Nature</b>	113–142
John A. Demetracopoulos    University of Patras, Greece	
<b>Hermonymos Christonymos Charitonymos' <i>Capita decem pro divinitate Christi</i>: A Posthumous Reaction to Plethon's Anti-Christianism</b>	143–259

### Plethon and the Latin Renaissance

Mikhail Khorkov    Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russian Federation	
<b>How to Make a New Philosophy From an Old Platonism: Plethon and Cusanus on <i>Phaedrus</i></b>	261–272
Vojtěch Hladký    Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic	
<b>From Byzantium to Italy: "Ancient Wisdom" in Plethon and Cusanus</b>	273–292
Jozef Matula    Palacký University, Olomouc, Czech Republic & Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul, South Korea	
<b>The Fate of Plethon's Criticism of Averroes</b>	293–322
Davide Amendola    Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Italy	
<b>Plethon's <i>Opuscula de historia Graeca</i> and Bruni's <i>Commentarium rerum Graecarum</i>: Rewriting Greek History Between the Byzantine and the Latin Renaissance.</b>	323–351
Walter Seitter    Wien, Austria	
<b>Plethon in Duplicate, in Triplicate ... The Question of Portraits</b>	353–373



## Post-Byzantine Plethon

Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker	CNRS, Paris, France	
<b>Are Psellos's and Plethon's <i>Chaldaean Oracles</i> Genuine?</b>		375–389
Paul Richard Blum	Palacký University, Olomouc, Czech Republic & Loyola University Maryland, USA	
<b>Plethon the First Philhellene: Re-enacting the Antiquity</b>		391–413
Niketas Siniosoglou	Athens, Greece	
<b>Plethon and the Philosophy of Nationalism</b>		415–431
Jacek Raszewski	Faculty of "Artes Liberales", University of Warsaw, Poland	
<b>George Gemistos Plethon and the Crisis of Modern Greek Identity</b>		433–456
<b>Index</b>		457–462

## Preface

Georgios Gemistos Plethon (1352–1452) was a representative of 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup>-century Byzantine thought, which manifested itself in three basic forms: Greek Christian Orthodoxy, interchange with the western European strains of thought (e.g., translation of scholastic works into Greek, but also evident in the Council of Ferrara-Florence), and a revival ("renaissance") of Greek culture, which has been variously named proto-nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, paganism from the Christian standpoint, and Hellenism for its parallels with 19<sup>th</sup>-century Greek nostalgia.

This volume contains contributions from the international conference that explored those facts: "Georgios Gemistos Plethon: The Byzantine and the Latin Renaissance," which took place at the Center for Renaissance Texts at the Palacký University, Olomouc (Czech Republic), from the 10<sup>th</sup> through the 12<sup>th</sup> of May, 2013. The Center is supported by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Czech Republic. The organizers and participants express their gratitude for this generous support.

The editors decided to publish the first article, *Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta (1417–1468): Stadtherr von Rimini, Neuheide und Verehrer Plethons*, by Dr. Wilhelm Blum, despite the fact that Dr. Blum could not participate in the conference. The editors are delighted to include his article in the volume, as he is a leading scholar within the area of Plethon's thought. His study on Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta is a valuable paper and the editors decided to publish it in its original length and style, without any changes.

The editors are grateful to the following persons who each proofread some of the contributions: Vincent Castaldi, Kaitlyn Henry, and Steven Silvestro of Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore, David Livingstone of Palacký University, Olomouc, Andrew Bruske of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul and John A. Demetracopoulos of University of Patras, Greece.

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# An honorary paper

## Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta (1417–1468): Stadtherr von Rimini, Neuheide und Verehrer Plethons

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**Abstract:** What were the motives of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta (1417–1468) for revering the Late Byzantine Philosopher Gemistos Plethon (1355–1452)? Why did Malatesta (being rather uneducated) invite the Greek to his court in 1439, and why did he steal Plethon's corpse in 1465? The only surviving monument of Plethon is the tomb Malatesta erected (and embellished with a Latin inscription) at the main church of Rimini in 1465. First, Cleope Malatesta, the wife of the "Despotes" of the Peloponnese, had known Plethon at Mistra; second, her brother had reported on the philosophical fame of Plethon; finally, Cyriac of Ancona had reported to Malatesta on his conversations with Plethon. In order to understand Sigismondo, this paper provides a summary of his life and character and of his "Muses' Court" at Rimini.

**Keywords:** Gemistos Plethon; Late Byzantine Philosophy; Mistra, Peloponnese, Rimini; Malatesta family; Sigismondo Pandolfo; Cleope; Laura; Pope Pius II.

### I. Das Leben des Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta

Drei Söhne sind es, die Pandolfo Malatesta (1370–1427) in Brescia, im Norden Italiens, gezeugt hat: Sie sind nicht alle drei von derselben Mutter geboren worden, sind aber allesamt „natürliche“, also uneheliche Söhne, nämlich Galeotto Roberto Malatesta, der am 3. Februar 1411 geboren wurde, Sigismondo Pandolfo und Domenico, der bekannt wurde unter dem Namen Malatesta Novello.

1. Galeotto, der Älteste, wurde aufgezogen in Rimini, und zwar von Carlo, dem Bruder seines Vaters, und dessen Ehefrau Elisabetta da Gonzaga. Im Jahre 1427, also mit gerade erst 16 Jahren, verheiratete ihn sein Onkel mit Margherita, einer der vielen Töchter des Markgrafen Niccolò III. von Ferrara – er wird uns noch mehrmals begegnen –, doch der Ehe lag gewiss nicht Liebe zugrunde, sie war ausschließlich aus dynastischen Gründen in die Wege geleitet worden. Das hatte die peinliche Konsequenz, dass Galeotto, wie man sich erzählte<sup>1</sup>, seine Frau niemals berührt hat, sondern in engelhafter Reinheit dahinlebte. Er war Mitglied des Dritten Ordens des heiligen Franziskus und huldigte mehr und mehr einem monastisch-kontemplativen Leben. Er verstarb nach noch nicht 21 Lebensjahren am 10. Oktober 1432. Recht bald nach seinem Tod hatte sich sein heiligmäßiger Lebenswandel herumgesprochen, dafür sorgte auch eine Legende über den „frommen gottseligen Galeotto Roberto Malatesta“, die ein Franziskaner aus Rimini verfasst hatte; dafür sorgte ebenfalls das Wissen darum, dass seine Frau Margherita sich nach seinem frühen Tod als Nonne in ein Kloster ihrer Heimatstadt zurückzog.

2. Galt also Galeotto Roberto allseits als Heiliger, so kann man das von seinen zwei (Halb-)Brüdern gewiss nicht behaupten. Domenico Malatesta Novello wurde ebenfalls in Brescia geboren, und zwar von der Mutter des Sigismondo, nicht der des Galeotto Roberto, am 6. April 1418.

Die Illegitimität der drei Brüder wurde durch Dekret von Papst Martin V. schnellstens aufgehoben, ein Vorgang, der im 15. Jahrhundert offensichtlich ungemein häufig war<sup>2</sup>, und so konnte der Vater Pandolfo davon ausgehen, dass seine Söhne ihn rechtmäßig beerben würden. Im Jahre 1443 erleben wir den für die damalige Zeit gar nicht so seltenen Fall, dass sich Novello auf der militärischen Gegenseite zu seinem Bruder Sigismondo befand. Doch abgesehen von kriegesischen Auseinandersetzungen wird Novello als Mäzen in die Geschichte eingehen: In den Jahren 1452–1454 gründet er in Cesena, etwa

<sup>1</sup> Jones 175.

<sup>2</sup> Am Beispiel der Lucrezia, einer der vielen Töchter des Sigismondo, soll dieser Vorgang der Legitimation vorgestellt werden (nach Baroni in Falcioni [Hrsg.], Band 2, 684). Papst Nikolaus V. erklärte am 13. Dezember 1453, *Dominam Lucretiam filiam Nobilis Viri Sigismundi Pandulphi de Malatesta tamquam filiam legitimam habendam esse et posse Patri in Bonis succedere, sive ex testamento sive ab intestato*. – Für das gesamte Thema ist zu verweisen auf die glänzende und umfassende Darstellung von Ludwig Schmugge von 1995 – der allerdings nur die Verhältnisse im deutschen Sprachraum behandelt, nicht die von Italien.

30 km entfernt von Rimini, unter der tatkräftigen Mithilfe seines Verwandten Antonio Malatesta eine Bibliothek und legt damit den Grundstein für die später so berühmte Biblioteca Malatestiana von Cesena. In dieser seiner Stadt ist er dann auch verstorben, am 20. November 1465.

3. Bei den drei Brüdern Malatesta fühlt man sich unwillkürlich erinnert an die drei „Brüder Karamasow“ von Dostojewskij: Es gibt auch hier den Heiligen, den Denker und Intellektuellen sowie den durch Leidenschaft aller Art Geprägten. Gewiss, dieser Vergleich trifft nicht in allen Bereichen zu, aber dass Sigismondo der Vertreter des Leidenschaftlichen ist, das lässt sich nicht leugnen. Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta ist in Brescia am 19. Juni 1417 geboren, sein gesamtes Leben ist mehr oder minder das eines Condottiero, also eines Anführers einer Truppe von Söldnern. Er war Stadtherr von Rimini und hatte die Ehre, von Kaiser Sigismund, der am 3. Mai 1433 von Papst Eugen IV. zum Kaiser gekrönt worden war, in eben diesem Jahr in seiner Heimatstadt zum Ritter geschlagen zu werden. Seine militärischen Unternehmungen brauchen wir hier nicht aufzuführen, denn er verdingte sich grundsätzlich nur bei jenen Herren, die ihn zahlten, und zwar besser zahlten als andere (das Wort „soldato“ heißt ja nichts anderes als „der in Sold = Geld Genommene“). So finden wir ihn einmal im Kampfe für, ein anderes Mal gegen die Truppen des Papstes, meist steht er mit den Montefeltre von Urbino im Krieg, nahezu immer kämpft er gegen die Spanier, die das Königreich Neapel als seine Soldaten verpflichtet hatte. Immerhin gelang es ihm, nach seinem Sieg über diese Spanier bei Piombino<sup>3</sup> im Jahre 1447 allseits als herausragender Söldnerführer Anerkennung zu finden. Doch der Niedergang war programmiert: Zum Einen zahlten seine Soldgeber immer unregelmäßiger, mit der einzigen Ausnahme der Republik Venedig, zum Zweiten aber erwuchs ihm in dem am 19. August 1458 zum Papst Pius II. gewählten Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405–1464) ein unversöhnlicher Gegner, der es schaffte, ihn vor aller Welt zu diskreditieren, lächerlich zu machen und als unverbesserlichen Bösewicht darzustellen. Papst Pius II. hatte zu Weihnachten 1460 Sigismondo und Novello, also die beiden Brüder Malatesta, exkommuniziert, deren Untertanen von ihrem Treueid entbunden<sup>4</sup> und diese Exkommunikation im April 1461 aufs Neue ausgesprochen. Im Oktober 1461 fand in Rom ein Schauprozess statt, immerhin unter Vorsitz

<sup>3</sup> Piombino liegt etwa 15 km südlich von jenem Populonia, das wir aus Vergils *Aeneis* 10, 172 kennen und in dem sich heute noch etruskische Gräber befinden.

<sup>4</sup> Zu diesen Vorgängen siehe besonders Jones 228–231 und Bertozzi 183.

des berühmten Kardinals Nikolaus von Kues (1401–1464), dessen verdienter Ruhm als Philosoph außer Frage steht, dessen Tätigkeit als Politiker jedoch spätestens seit seiner Stellung als Bischof im tirolischen Brixen durchaus problematisch ist – sein Grab ist heute noch in seiner Titelkirche San Pietro in Vincoli in Rom –; das Ergebnis dieses Schauprozesses ist dies, dass Nikolaus am 27. April 1462 das Urteil öffentlich verkünden ließ, demzufolge Sigismondo absolut geächtet sei. Dazu kam es noch zu mehreren „Verbrennungen in effigie“ in Rom, wobei man der jeweiligen Puppe ein Spruchband in den Mund legte mit den Worten: *Sigismundus hic ego sum Malatesta, filius Pandulphi, rex proditorum, Deo atque hominibus infestus, sacri censura senatus igni damnatus*. Weit schmerzhafter für Sigismondo aber war der Verlust seines päpstlichen Vikariats sowie der Abzug seiner Söldner, allein die Herrschaft über die Stadt Rimini war ihm verblieben. Da er aber in empfindlichen Finanznöten war, musste er sich abermals verdingen, nach Lage der Dinge kamen als Geldgeber nur mehr Mailand oder Venedig in Betracht. So übernahm Sigismondo eine Aufgabe, die kein anderer Condottiero Italiens sich zutraute. Von 1464 bis 1466 befindet sich Sigismondo in Diensten der Republik Venedig, mit dem Ehrfurcht gebietenden Titel eines Capitano Generale kämpft er auf der Peloponnes (die damals auch Morea genannt wird) gegen die Türken. Von irgendwelchen besonderen militärischen Erfolgen des Sigismondo hören wir nichts, mitunter hält er sich auch während dieses Auftrags in seiner Heimatstadt auf, aber als Trophäe aus der Peloponnes bringt er den Leichnam des Plethon nach Italien und lässt ihn an der Außenmauer des Tempio Malatestiano in seiner Heimatstadt Rimini bestatten. Nach seiner endgültigen Rückkehr im April 1466 gelingt es ihm wieder einmal, als Söldnerführer eines Heeres des Papstes, dieses Mal Pauls II., eines Neffen von Eugen IV., in Mittelitalien zu kämpfen. Doch am 9. Oktober 1468 ereilt ihn der Tod in seiner Residenzstadt, seine Witwe Isotta versteht es bestens, ihre und Riminis Interessen in der Welt zu vertreten.

## II. Einblicke in Sigismondo's Charakter

1. Der alte Grundsatz „cherchez la femme“ ergibt bei Sigismondo beachtlich viele Facetten ein und derselben Grundstruktur seines Wesens. Von der bemerkenswerten Anzahl seiner außerehelichen Kinder brauchen wir hier

nicht zu handeln<sup>5</sup>, aber seine vier Ehefrauen wollen wir ein wenig genauer betrachten. Die erste Ehe mit einer Tochter Carmagnola soll nicht einmal vollzogen worden sein, aber am 7. Februar 1434 fand die feierliche Hochzeit des Sigismondo mit Ginevra d' Este aus Ferrara statt<sup>6</sup>.

Diese Ginevra war im Frühjahr 1419 als Tochter der Laura Malatesta geboren worden, und diese ihre Mutter wird unter dem Namen Parisina in die Geschichte und Literaturgeschichte eingehen.<sup>7</sup> Deren Schicksal ist berühmt-berüchtigt, man kennt sie als die „Phädra von Ferrara“. Sie war 1404 in Cesena in die Familie Malatesta geboren worden und wurde ab 1416 in Rimini von Carlo Malatesta und dessen Frau Elisabetta da Gonzaga aufgezogen (nicht anders als Galeotto Roberto). Doch schon im Jahre 1418 wurde sie verheiratet, und zwar an den verwitweten Stadtherrn von Ferrara, an Niccolò III.: Die Vierzehnjährige wird die Ehefrau des Vierunddreißigjährigen, dessen Favoritin allerdings Stella dei Tolomei ist, die ihm drei Söhne geboren hat, Hugo, Leonello und Borso. Laura Parisina erhält ihren Platz im Kreise der vielen außerehelichen Kinder des Niccolò – von ihm sagte man in keineswegs nur böser Absicht: *Di qua o di là del Po sono tutti figli di Niccolò!* – und hier verblieb sie auch nach der Geburt ihrer Zwillinge Ginevra und Lucia am 25. März 1419. Aber das (Ehe-)Glück war ihr nicht hold: Der Lieblingssohn des Niccolò, Hugo, und Parisina, beide gerade erst 20 Jahre alt, hatten sich ineinander verliebt, und Niccolò wurde Augen- und Ohrenzeuge einer ihrer verbotenen Liebesnächte. Daraufhin ließ er sich durch nichts und niemanden erweichen, nach einem wahrlich kurzen Prozess wurden seine Frau Parisina Malatesta und sein Lieblingssohn Hugo enthauptet.

Just deren Tochter Ginevra, also eine Malatesta, heiratete Sigismondo. Sie gebär ihm einen Sohn, der aber kurz nach der Geburt verstarb, und sie selber ist schon am 3. September 1440, also mit 21 Jahren, verstorben. Der nunmehr zum zweiten Mal offiziell verwitwete Sigismondo heiratete am 25. Oktober 1441 in Cremona eine uneheliche Tochter des Francesco Sforza, die Polissena Sforza.<sup>8</sup> Die Hochzeitsfeierlichkeiten finden am 22. September 1441 statt, die

<sup>5</sup> Man lese dazu den Beitrag von Delvecchio, wo auf Seite 699 allein von sieben (!) unehelichen Töchtern des Sigismondo die Rede ist.

<sup>6</sup> Iotti: „Ginevra“ in: Falcioni (Hrsg.), Band 1, 554.

<sup>7</sup> Iotti: „Parisina“ in: Falcioni (Hrsg.), Band 1, 433–469.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Orlandi: „Polissena Sforza“, in: Falcioni (Hrsg.), Band 1, 569–579.



Braut zählt gerade einmal 13 Jahre, der Bräutigam ist 24 Jahre alt. Doch auch sie ist, nach den Geburten zweier Kinder (deren eines sofort verstarb) im jugendlichen Alter von 21 Jahren am 1. Juni 1449 verstorben.

Jetzt tritt Isotta degli Atti, geboren 1432/1433, auf den Plan, eine Frau, die es vermocht hat, Sigismondo so an sich zu fesseln, dass er nach mehr als sechs Jahren des Zusammenlebens sich doch noch zu einer offiziellen Ehe mit ihr entschloss. Schon im zarten Alter von 13 Jahren hatte sie Sigismondos Aufmerksamkeit erregt: Am 22. Mai 1447 gebar sie einen Sohn, der allerdings noch vor dem sechsten Lebensmonat verstarb, und als dessen Vater konnte man damals schon unschwer Sigismondo ausmachen. Isotta verblieb weiterhin im engsten Umkreis des Sigismondo, sie wurde binnen kurzem das, was man in Frankreich die „Maitresse du lit“ nannte: Beweis dafür ist nicht zuletzt die Tatsache, dass ihr Bruder Antonio degli Atti im Februar 1448 in einer feierlichen Zeremonie zum Ritter – cavaliere – des Malatesta-Hofes ernannt wird. Aber ein noch größerer Beweis ist dies, dass nunmehr begonnen wird mit dem Umbau der Franziskanerkirche von Rimini im Sinne und zu Ehren der Isotta, mag diese Kirche auch offiziell „Tempio Malatestiano“ heißen. Im Jahr 1453 macht Sigismondo seiner Isotta ein teures Geschenk und lässt diesen Vorgang auch notariell beglaubigen; und im Jahr 1456 dürfte die Hochzeit stattgefunden haben, denn 1455 finden wir ihren Namen noch als „Isotta de Actis“, am 16. Mai 1457 aber als „Isotta de Malatestis“ geschrieben. Über die folgenden Jahre wissen wir nichts Genaues zu berichten, doch eines ist sicher: Während der Abwesenheit des Sigismondo von Rimini, also während seines Aufenthaltes auf der Peloponnes, gewinnt Isotta an Figur und politischem Einfluss. Gemeinsam mit ihrem Sohn Sallustio übt sie die Herrschaft in Rimini aus, unterzieht sich also wirklich realen Aufgaben der Politik: Zum Dank dafür, aber auch als Ausdruck seiner ehrlichen Liebe zu ihr setzt Sigismondo sie und Sallustio als die Alleinerben seines privaten Vermögens ein. Nach dem Tod ihres Ehemannes 1468 kümmert sich Isotta aufs Beste einerseits um ihre Belange als verheiratete Malatesta, andererseits aber auch um die Interessen ihrer Anverwandten aus dem Hause degli Atti. Ihr Todestag ist der 9. Juli 1474, und ihr Grab findet sie, wie sie und Sigismondo es immer gewünscht hatten, in dem Inneren des Tempio Malatestiano zu Rimini.

2. Ein wirklich objektives Charakterbild des Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta können wir heute sicher nicht mehr entwerfen, aber einige wenige bezeichnende Züge vermögen wir doch anzugeben. Da ist zunächst zu erwähnen sein Interesse – nicht seine Kenntnis – an humanistischer Bildung: Mag auch sein

Versuch, italienische Sonette zu verfassen<sup>9</sup>, mehr oder minder misslungen sein, so umgab er sich doch in seinem Rimini mit einer beachtlichen Anzahl von Vertretern verschiedenster Disziplinen, ganz besonders aber von Dichtern, Lehrern und Literaten. Er selber verstand zwar kein Griechisch, holte aber doch den Basinio an seinen Hof, den zur damaligen Zeit besten Kenner Homers. Zum Zweiten aber müssen wir bei aller Häme, die über ihn ausgegossen wurde, doch klar feststellen, dass ihm eine positive Begeigerungsfähigkeit sowie eine Beständigkeit eigen waren, wie es zur Genüge sein langes gutes Verhältnis zu und mit Isotta beweist. Selbst sein absoluter Todfeind, Papst Pius II., bestätigt ihm eine zupackende Art, eine große militärische Erfahrung und beachtliche körperliche und geistige Gewandtheit. Von seinen negativen Eigenschaften aber fallen besonders zwei ins Gewicht, sein (Neu)Heidentum und seine grenzenlose Ruhmsucht. Es ist sicher so, dass Sigismondo im Laufe seines Lebens sich immer weniger als Katholik fühlte, dass er sich immer mehr von der Kirche entfremdete und dass er grundsätzlich sein Heil einzig im Rahmen der irdischen Welt finden wollte, also ohne die geringste Hoffnung auf ein wie auch immer geartetes Jenseits. Beweise für diese seine Haltung gibt es zuhauf. Wir erinnern daran, dass er die Kirche des heiligen Franziskus mehr und mehr in einen heidnischen Tempel umbauen ließ, ebenso, dass das Epos „Hesperis“ seines Hofdichters Basinio da Parma ausschließlich aus dem heidnisch-antiken Götterglauben lebt, was natürlich von Sigismondo selbst so gewollt und angeregt war. Als zweiten Beweis aber ziehen wir neben den Worten des Papstes Pius II., die im nächsten Kapitel ausführlich behandelt werden, zwei Äußerungen des Georg von Trapezunt heran. Dieser Georg war 1395 auf Kreta geboren worden – sein Beiname „der Trapezuntier“ rührt von seinen Großeltern her –, aber schon um 1415 nach Italien gekommen, nach seiner Konversion zum Katholizismus 1426 betätigte er sich zunächst als Lehrer, um dann 1441 als Sekretär in den Dienst der päpstlichen Kurie zu wechseln, 1472 oder 1473 ist er verstorben. Dieser hatte den neuheidnischen Philosophen Plethon schon beschimpft als<sup>10</sup> *Gemistus quidam (!), omnium hominum impiissimus*, und er warnt neuerdings den Sigismondo aufs Eindringlichste davor, Plethons Leichnam in Rimini beizusetzen; er gibt ihm stattdessen den – durchaus ernst gemeinten! – Rat, die Leiche Plethons ins Meer zu werfen<sup>11</sup>. Doch das

<sup>9</sup> Beispiele bei Piromalli 80–84.

<sup>10</sup> Garin 102.

<sup>11</sup> Garin 109 Anm. 18. Georg schreibt unter anderem: *Dico me praedixisse Sigismundo, nisi Apollinem qui habitat in corpore Gemisti ex urbe sua eiceret, male eventurum...*

viel mehr Abstoßende an Sigismondos Charakter ist seine Gier nach Ruhm, eine innere Haltung, der er alles unterordnete und die ihm grundsätzlich Antrieb zu jedem Tun und Unterlassen war. „Der Ruhm ist für Sigismondo die Zierde seiner Herrschaft sowie ein ästhetisch-politisches Medium“, urteilt Antonio Piromalli<sup>12</sup> über ihn, zu seinem Ruhm sollen die Sänger singen, die Baumeister bauen und die Dichter dichten<sup>13</sup>. Er war zeitlebens getrieben von einer wahrlich unersättlichen Gier danach, „seinen eigenen Namen und seine persönlichen Taten zu verewigen“, von einer unstillbaren Sucht, „Unternehmungen durchzuführen, die ihm desto größer erscheinen mussten, je schärfer der Kontrast zur Realität war“<sup>14</sup>. Man ist versucht, das Motto des Ignatius, des Gründers des Jesuitenordens – *Omnia ad maiorem Dei gloriam* – im Hinblick auf Sigismondo durch Änderung nur eines Wortes radikal abzuändern: *Omnia ad maiorem sui gloriam*. In der Gestalt des Sigismondo verbinden sich Heidentum und Ruhmsucht so sehr, dass sie alle guten Eigenschaften seines Herzens mehr und mehr unterdrücken: Dieses Gesamturteil über ihn abzugeben scheint wirklich berechtigt.

### III. Das Bild des Sigismondo bei Papst Pius II.

„Bekannt und berüchtigt wegen seiner Untaten“ nennt ihn der große Humanist Enea Silvio Piccolomini in seinem Werk „De Europa“<sup>15</sup>. Doch seinem vollen Hass und seinem ungeheuren Abscheu gegenüber Sigismondo lässt Enea Silvio erst freien Lauf, nachdem er zum Papst Pius II. gewählt worden war, und zwar in seiner Autobiographie (der bis heute einzigen eines Papstes überhaupt). Die wichtigsten Punkte der Beurteilung des Sigismondo durch Pius II. sind die folgenden<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Piromalli 39.

<sup>13</sup> Schon von Ferrara aus besingt beispielsweise Tito Strozzi den Sigismondo als (*Borsias* V 245; Ludwig 137) *Sismundusque ferox et Martis ad aspera natus*.

<sup>14</sup> Piromalli 31. Exkurs: Seine wahrlich übersteigerte Ruhmsucht dürfte Sigismondo nicht zuletzt von seinem leiblichen Vater ererbt haben. Dieser hatte sich als Herakles gesehen: Das beweist eine Silbermünze mit dem Bild des Hercules als Schutzpatron von Brescia (siehe Francesca Morandini 40–46, das Bild der Münze auf Seite 46).

<sup>15</sup> Aeneae Pii, *De Europa* 62, in *Aenaei Opera* S. 465: *sceleribus insignis*.

<sup>16</sup> Pius II., *Comm.* II 32.

1. „Er besaß von der gesamten Geschichte Kenntnis<sup>17</sup> und er verfügte über eine nicht geringe Kenntnis der Philosophie“.

2. „Er war von außergewöhnlicher Körperkraft, aber auch von herausragenden Geistesgaben, ihm war eine bemerkenswerte Gabe der Rede eigen, und in militärischen Dingen wusste er sehr gut Bescheid.“

3. Die Tatsache der unehelichen Geburt des Sigismondo wird zwar von dem Papst erwähnt, doch er misst ihr keine große Bedeutung bei. So fasst er die guten Seiten des Sigismondo in dem folgenden Satz zusammen: „Was auch immer er tat oder unternahm, er schien gerade dafür geboren zu sein“.

Doch nun folgt das große „Aber“: „Aber sein böser Charakter überwog alles und jedes“. Nach dieser generellen Feststellung führt Pius II. seine großen Untaten auf, die wir in Kürze auflisten.

4. Seine Habgier ist so groß, dass man ihn nur mehr als einen Räuber bezeichnen kann. Seine sexuelle Gier ist dermaßen unersättlich, dass „er sogar seinen eigenen Töchtern und Schwiegertöchtern Gewalt antat“<sup>18</sup>, dass er sich selbst in homosexuellen Beziehungen als Partner anbot, dass „er nicht nur christliche, sondern sogar jüdische Mädchen vergewaltigte“, und einmal, im Heiligen Jahr 1450, habe er eine deutsche Adlige unweit von Verona nach einer Vergewaltigung in ihrem Blut liegen lassen.

5. In politischer Hinsicht ist er „treulos und meineidig“ gegenüber allen jenen, die ihn in ihre Dienste genommen haben: Jeden verrät er an Jeden – so zum Beispiel König Alfons I. von Neapel (König von 1442 bis 1458) an Cosimo dei Medici von Florenz –, und so musste er schließlich seinen eigenen Bürgern von Rimini ausrichten lassen, sie würden niemals, solange er lebe, Frieden erleben. Ja, es ist schon so, sagt der Papst, dass „niemand unter Sigismondos Herrschaft in Ruhe und Sicherheit leben konnte“.

6. Ganz besonders verwerflich ist nach Meinung von Pius das Verhältnis des Sigismondo zur Religion, also nicht nur zur katholischen Kirche, sondern zu

<sup>17</sup> Dazu bemerkt Burckhardt 167 Anm. 2: „Historiae ist hier der Inbegriff des ganzen Altertums“.

<sup>18</sup> Giovanni Pontano (1426–1503), Minister des Königs Ferrante von Neapel, scheut sich nicht, „von Sigismondos Schwängerung der eigenen Tochter“ zu berichten (Burckhardt 338 Anm. 3).

dem Phänomen des Glaubens überhaupt. „Für Priester empfand er einzig Hass, alle Religion verachtete und schmähte er“. Das sind Charaktereigenschaften, die der Papst für unerfreulich und für falsch hält, aber der tiefste Vorwurf, der den Kern aller Theologie genau so betrifft wie das Herz des Glaubens, folgt noch „Er glaubte ganz und gar nicht an das Leben nach dem Tod und vertrat die Ansicht, die Seele gehe gemeinsam mit dem Leib zu Grunde“. Papst Pius II. beschreibt seinen Todfeind als einen typischen Vertreter der rein innerweltlichen Lehre, dem eine jede metaphysische Ausrichtung abgeht; eine solche Haltung finden wir gar nicht selten bei Humanisten Italiens zu dieser Zeit<sup>19</sup>.

7. Obwohl Sigismondo also bar jeglichen Glaubens ist, „hat er dennoch in Rimini eine wunderschöne Kirche zu Ehren des heiligen Franziskus errichten lassen“, doch der Bau dieser Kirche, besser: deren Erneuerung durch Sigismondo, geschah mitnichten zur Ehre Gottes. Nein: „Er hat diese Kirche dermaßen mit heidnischen Kunstwerken vollgestopft, dass man zur Ansicht kommen musste, es sei dies nicht mehr eine Kirche für Christen, sondern eher ein Tempel für diejenigen, die die Götter der Heiden anbeten“. Zu diesen „heidnischen Kunstwerken“ werden gerade auch die verschiedenen Grabmäler an der Außenwand des Tempio Malatestiano gerechnet (von der Tumba Plethons aber konnte der Papst noch nichts wissen).

8. Nun aber kommt, als würde dies alles noch nicht ausreichen, der in den Augen des Papstes allerschlimmste Vorwurf, nämlich die Anklage der Gotteslästerung. Kirchen sollen Gotteshäuser sein, in denen das gläubige Volk betet<sup>20</sup>, aber nicht protzige Paläste wie die Palazzi der hohen Herren. Und doch: „Sigismondo hat in dieser Franziskanerkirche seiner Konkubine ein Grabmal errichten lassen, das mit grandioser Kunst versehen und in seinem Marmor wunderschön war“, und nun kommt der zentrale Punkt, „und er hat nach der Art der Heiden eine Inschrift anbringen lassen, die folgendermaßen lautet: Der göttlichen Isotta geweiht“. Sigismondo stellt sich also seine Isotta schon

als divinisiert vor<sup>21</sup>, als zur Göttin erklärt wie seinerzeit Caesar oder Augustus und viele andere Kaiser. Die Anklage des Papstes aber richtet sich nicht so sehr gegen die Isotta als vielmehr gegen den Neuheiden Sigismondo Malatesta, den Leugner der wahren Gottheit, den Blasphemisten.

9. In einer abschließenden Passage fällt der Papst sein Gesamturteil. Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta ist außerstande, Ruhe zu geben und Frieden zu wahren, er folgt ausschließlich seinen Lüsten und Begierden. So war er „von allen Menschen, die jemals gelebt haben oder noch leben werden, der Schlimmste: Er ist eine Schande für Italien und eine Schmach für unsere Zeit“<sup>22</sup>. In einem seiner vielen Briefe nennt ihn derselbe Papst „Italiens Abschaum“<sup>23</sup>. Solche Urteile bedürfen wahrlich keiner erklärenden Interpretation mehr.

10. Dieses außerordentliche Verdammungsurteil müssen wir aber sehr behutsam und mit Vorsicht lesen, ist doch der persönliche Hass des Schreibers in jeder Zeile zu sehen. Papst Pius II. hat sich in seiner Beurteilung des (und der) Malatesta mitnichten an die Forderung des Tacitus<sup>24</sup> gehalten, *sine ira et studio* zu schreiben, seine Urteile sind ganz gewiss nicht objektiv, sondern höchst subjektiv und geprägt von Abscheu. Dies können wir am Besten dadurch beweisen, dass wir einige wenige Beispiele weiterer Beurteilungen von Persönlichkeiten seiner Zeit zum Vergleich heranziehen. Da wäre einmal zu erwähnen des Papstes sichtliche Zuneigung zu Francesco I. Sforza (1401–1466) und zu dessen Sohn Galeazzo (1444–1468), dem Herrn von Pavia und dem künftigen (fünften) Herzog von Mailand. Gerade den Letztgenannten, der noch nicht einmal das 16. Lebensjahr vollendet hat, preist Pius II. in den höchsten Tönen<sup>25</sup>: Der wird beschrieben als ein Mensch von edelstem Charakter, als ein echter Prinz, dem jedes kindliche oder gar kindische Gebaren fehle; der erinnert den Papst weit eher an einen lebenserfahrenen weisen alten Mann,

<sup>19</sup> Vgl. besonders Burckhardt 367–416. Pietro Pomponazzi wird dann im Jahre 1516 aufs Neue lehren, die Seele des Menschen sei sterblich.

<sup>20</sup> So schon im Neuen Testament, siehe zum Beispiel *Ev. Mt.* 21, 13; *Mk.* 11, 17; *Lk.* 19, 46.

<sup>21</sup> Dieser Passus zeigt, dass das Grabmal schon zu Lebzeiten beider, der Isotta und des Sigismondo, begonnen wurde: So war dies damals die Regel, man denke zum Beispiel an das Grabmal des Papstes Julius II., für das dieser schon zu Lebzeiten Michelangelo verpflichtet hatte.

<sup>22</sup> Pius II., *Comm.* II 32, 5 (S. 328): ... *Italiae dedecus et nostri infamia saeculi*.

<sup>23</sup> Jones 225 Anm. 2: *Fex Italiae* (so schrieb man damals die „faex“).

<sup>24</sup> Tacitus, *Annales* I 1, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Pius II., *Comm.* II 26, 3.

und diesem sei trotz seiner Jugend schon die Gabe der freien Rede eigen. Zum Zweiten wollen wir zum Vergleich das Bild anführen, mit dem der Papst in kurzen Strichen den Niccolò III. skizziert, den Herzog von Ferrara<sup>26</sup>. Bei diesem ist ebenfalls die Rede von seiner hohen Begabung wie auch seiner unersättlichen Gier, aber nun hebt der Papst auf die oben erwähnte Enthauptung von dessen Ehefrau und dessen Lieblingssohn Hugo im Jahre 1425 ab. So kommt es zu dem Urteil des Pius über jenen Niccolò d' Este, den er vor einiger Zeit noch „den am meisten von allen in unserer Zeit vom Schicksal Begünstigten“ genannt hatte<sup>27</sup>: „Das Volk möchte ihn wohl glücklich nennen, hätte er nicht seine Frau und seinen Sohn, von deren verbotenem Verhältnis er erfahren hatte, auf der Stelle enthaupten lassen“. Dieser historisch nachweisbaren Tatsache fügt er nun eine ganz andere Beurteilung bei, als wir dies aus seinen Äußerungen über Sigismondo Malatesta gewohnt sind, eine nahezu objektive nämlich<sup>28</sup>: „Das ist die gerechte, Gottes würdige, Rache: Derjenige, der die Ehen anderer ungemein häufig geschändet hat, musste es nun selbst erleiden, dass sein eigener Sohn sein Ehebett entweiht hat“. Die vermeintliche Vergewaltigung der Deutschen (einer Herzogin aus Bayern) vor Verona, dies das dritte Beispiel, vom Mai 1450 ist ganz und gar nicht erwiesen<sup>29</sup>, Malatesta hält diese Tatsache für frei erfunden und für eine Verleumdung der Venezianer, habe er doch „diese Deutsche niemals zu Gesicht bekommen“. Und schließlich noch ein viertes Beispiel für die klare Voreingenommenheit bzw. den Hass des Enea Silvio gegenüber der Familie der Malatesta, dieses Mal aus einem Brief<sup>30</sup>: Die unappetitlich-voyeuristische Darstellung der sexuellen Süchte des Pandolfo, des Vaters der drei Brüder Malatesta, liefert nichts als Gemeinplätze, wie sie zu diesem Genre gehören, und regt weit mehr zu

<sup>26</sup> Pius II., *Comm.* II 39, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Aeneae Sylvi, *De Europa* 52 (*Aeneae Opera*, S. 450).

<sup>28</sup> Pius II., *Comm.* II 39, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Jones 202–203.

<sup>30</sup> Wir zitieren ohne den geringsten Kommentar und ohne Übersetzung die Sätze des Papstes nach Jones 165 Anm. 5: Pandolfo (1370–1427) *cum senuisset nec pro voluntate libidini posset operam dare, se coram nudas adduci iubebat feminas et adolescentes, qui eis admiscerentur, ut ex aliorum coitu suum provocaret. Inter scorta, quibus frequenter abutebatur, unum fuit forma egregium, quod prae ceteris amavit. Huic cum satisfacere non posset vetulus, Marchesinum ... Bergomensem aetate florida, moribus scurrum, qui suam vicem adimpleret, introduxit, concubinumque concubinae adiecit, et saepe medium dormire permisit. Hinc nobilissima soboles nata, Sigismundus ac Pandulphus (sic!) et Dominicus Malatesta...*

Rückschlüssen auf den Verfasser selbst als auf Pandolfo an. Angesichts dieser vier Beispiele stellen wir fest: Das Bild, das Papst Pius II. von Sigismondo entwirft, ist ganz gewiss negativ überzeichnet und geprägt von Hass und Widerwillen; dabei müssen wir natürlich eingestehen, dass Sigismondo zweifellos beachtliche Angriffsflächen geboten hat<sup>31</sup>.

#### IV. Der Musenhof im Rimini des Sigismondo Malatesta

Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta hat sich umgeben mit einer Vielzahl von Mitarbeitern auf den verschiedensten Gebieten: Baumeister und Architekten, Musiker und Dichter, Politiker und Militärs, aber auch Schriftsteller der verschiedensten Gattungen. Sein Ziel war es, einen Musenhof zu unterhalten, wie dies zu seiner Zeit in anderen Signorie Italiens üblich war, zum Beispiel in Ferrara unter den Este, in Mantua unter den Gonzaga oder bei den Medici in Florenz. Weil es aber in Rimini gar nicht selten am Geld fehlte und weil durchaus nicht ein Jeder unter Sigismondo arbeiten und leben wollte, konnte dieser keineswegs die Besten seines Jahrhunderts auf Dauer um sich versammeln<sup>32</sup>. So gäbe es ein Vielzahl von Namen zu nennen, doch es sollen im Folgenden nur die wenigen, aber in ihrer Weise repräsentativen, Intellektuellen am Hofe Riminis zur Zeit des Sigismondo genannt werden.

1. Tobia del Borgo (oder: Borghi) war in Verona geboren und immerhin von Guarino als einer seiner Meisterschüler gelobt und empfohlen worden. Nach seinem juristischen Doktorat hatte er am Hofe des Niccolò III. in Ferrara als Redner und Dichter begonnen und kam dann um 1445 nach Rimini, wo er sich sehr schnell des Vertrauen des Sigismondo zu erwerben wusste. Er wurde zu einer Art Haus- und Hofgeschichtsschreiber ernannt, schrieb fleißig Gedichte, natürlich in Latein, und betätigte sich auch da und dort als Redner, mitunter sogar als Gesandter seiner Stadt. Dafür wurde er von Sigismondo auf mannigfache Art belohnt, so erhielt er zum Beispiel ein Wohnhaus als Eigentum zum Geschenk.

<sup>31</sup> Ohne diese Angriffsflächen aber wäre das Drama „Malatesta“ von Henry de Montherlant von 1947 nicht vorstellbar. Besonders wichtig sind die Szenen 4 und 5 des Zweiten Aktes und die Szene 8 im Vierten Akt, wo die Ruhmsucht des Sigismondo aus seinem eigenen Mund folgendermaßen klingt: Quand on bouleverserait la forme de mon rivage, la mer dans les siècles des siècles y répéterait encore: Malatesta... oder auch: La mer sur mes grèves répète éternellement: Malatesta... Diese Sätze spricht er bei Montherlant zu seiner Frau Isotta!

<sup>32</sup> Von der wirklichen Armut des Dichters Tracola handelt überzeugend Piromalli 49–50.



2. Roberto (degli) Orsi ist ebenfalls als Dichter in Rimini, doch im Grunde ist er nichts anderes als ein Speichellecker, der zugeben muss<sup>33</sup>: „Einem so großen Herzog zu gefallen, das ist wahrlich kein geringer Ruhm“.

3. Tommaso Seneca da Camerino hatte sich quer durch Italien bei den verschiedensten Geldgebern verdingt und war schließlich als Lateinlehrer in Rimini aufgenommen worden. Er hielt seinen Unterricht und schrieb Gedichte zu Ehren Sigismondos, mehr ist von ihm nicht zu vermelden.

4. Porcellio Pandoni hatte sich ebenfalls schon an vielen Orten Italiens aufgehalten, seine Tätigkeit in Rimini erweckt denselben Eindruck wie die des Tommaso Seneca. Von ihm sei ein Distichon angeführt<sup>34</sup>, einmal zur Charakterisierung des Dichters, dann aber auch als weiterer Beleg für die ungeheure Ruhmsucht des Landesherren Malatesta, dessen Anliegen es ja zeitlebens gewesen war, seinen eigenen Namen der Unsterblichkeit anheimzugeben:

*Wenn schon der alten Könige Ruhm ist groß und gewaltig, / ewig ist dann deren Ruhm, wenn ihn der Dichter verschafft.*

5. Roberto Valturio (1405–1475) ist der Onkel des Carlo Valturio, der von 1442 bis 1450 in Rimini als Kanzler und Sekretär dem Sigismondo gedient hatte. Dieser Roberto Valturio ist bekannt geworden durch sein 12 Bücher umfassendes Hauptwerk „De re militari“, welches von Aldo Francesco Massera<sup>35</sup> charakterisiert wurde als ein „typischer Ausdruck der gelehrten Renaissance“. Doch auch dieses umfangreiche Werk verdient recht eigentlich seinen hochtrabenden Titel nicht, denn in Wirklichkeit ist es<sup>36</sup> „eine sehr sorgfältige und inhaltsreiche Enzyklopädie von Nachrichten über die Kriegskunst der Alten, mehr nicht“. Valturio war Philologe, nicht Militär und auch nicht Militärhistoriker, und doch: Ein Notar nennt diesen Valturio im Jahre 1463 *omnium scientiarum doctor et monarcha*<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> Piromalli 57.

<sup>34</sup> Zitat nach Rossi in Falcioni (Hrsg.), Band 2, 617: *Si veterum est ingens et fama et gloria regum, / aeterna est regum gloria vatis ope.*

<sup>35</sup> Massera, in: Piromalli 231.

<sup>36</sup> Massera, in: Piromalli 233.

<sup>37</sup> Massera, in: Piromalli 247.

6. Der Bedeutendste unter den Dichtern am Hofe in Rimini ist zweifellos Basinio Basini von Parma (1425–1457). Dieser hatte sein feines Latein zunächst in der Casa Giocosa des Vittorino da Feltre in Mantua erlernt und hatte dort unter dem Griechen Theodoros Gazes (ca. 1400–ca. 1475/1476) seine Liebe zu Sprache und Literatur der Griechen entwickelt, insbesondere zu den Epen Homers: Er gilt als der beste Kenner Homers im Italien des 15. Jahrhunderts<sup>38</sup>. Nach dem Tode des Vittorino folgte er seinem Lehrer Gazes nach Ferrara, der es dort, wiewohl Grieche, im Jahre 1447 zum Rektor der Universität brachte, und zur gleichen Zeit war er natürlich auch Student bei dem allseits, auch von Papst Pius II.<sup>39</sup>, gerühmten Guarino von Verona gewesen. In den rund vier Jahren seines Aufenthaltes in Ferrara hat er schon fleißig Gedichte geschrieben, unter anderem verfasste er auch die *Meleagris* in drei Büchern, die er dem damaligen Herzog von Ferrara, dem Leonello d' Este, widmete. Seit 1449 lebt er in Rimini und darf sich in der Gunst des dortigen Stadtherren Sigismondo Pandolfo sonnen. Dieser verschafft ihm im Jahre 1451 nicht nur ein Haus, sondern auch eine Frau, die Witwe eines Rechtsgelehrten, und ab 1453 ist er offiziell „Bürger“, also nicht mehr nur Einwohner, dieser Stadt. Am 24. Mai 1457 ist er in Rimini verstorben, es waren ihm also nur 32 Lebensjahre vergönnt. Von kleineren Gedichten und Briefen abgesehen, können wir fünf größere Werke aus seiner Feder aufführen: Die schon genannte *Meleagris*, die er als Epos in drei Büchern in Ferrara niedergeschrieben hatte; die *Diasymposis*, ein Götterbankett; die *Astronomica* von 1455, die er in der Nachfolge des Aratos von Soloi schrieb; der *Liber Isottaetus*, aus dem wesentliche Teile nachweislich von ihm verfasst worden sind; und schließlich sein Hauptwerk, das Epos *Hesperis* in 13 Büchern.

Die *Astronomica* des Basinio haben eine erstaunliche Nachwirkung, sie sind nämlich neben Anregungen aus der Antike das unmittelbare Vorbild für die künstlerische Ausgestaltung der „Kapelle der Planeten“ in dem Tempio Malatestiano<sup>40</sup>. Der *Liber Isottaetus* ist, wie der Name schon sagt, eine dichterische

<sup>38</sup> So Finsler 30.

<sup>39</sup> Pius II., *Comm.* II 41, 1: *Guarinus Veronensis, grandaeus et venerabilis senex, magister fere omnium, qui nostra aetate in humanitatis studio floruerunt...*

<sup>40</sup> Siehe den Beitrag von Bacchelli. Dort auch zwischen den Seiten 190 und 191 24 wunderschöne Reproduktionen aus den *Astronomica* im Codex Parmensis 1008, geschrieben in Rimini 1458, sowie Abbildungen der 12 Tierkreiszeichen aus der Kapelle der Planeten und noch einige Götter des antiken Götterhimmels aus dieser Kapelle.



Huldigung an Isotta degli Atti sowie an deren Ehemann. Einige wenige der in diesem Buch gesammelten Gedichte haben andere Verfasser, die meisten Carmina aber stammen ganz sicher von Basinio selbst. Einige wenige Verse aus dem Carmen 6 des 3. Buches können den Grundcharakter aller dieser Gedichte aufzeigen; dabei ist allerdings zuvor zu bemerken, dass das Carmen 6 sich insgesamt als eine Todesanzeige der Isotta an ihren Ehemann darstellt<sup>41</sup>:

- 19 *Et rear esse deos, cum sic miseranda puella*  
*mortua sim, maritum labar et ante diem.*  
*At mihi sperabam tranquilla tempora vitae*  
 22 *longa, ducis quondam numine tuta mei.*  
 33 *Ah, quotiens lacrymas fundet Pandulphius heros*  
 34 *dicar et o tantae causa ego tristitiae.*  
 39 *Te, Pandulphe, canent populi regesque superbi,*  
 40 *flebis at Isottae funera maesta tuae.*  
 99 *Barbara gens omnis, nos Itala terra probabit,*  
 100 *quod fuerim tanto digna puella viro.*

In diesem Stil läuft das ganze Gedicht mit seinen 104 Versen ab, in genau demselben Stil sind alle Dichtungen des *Liber Isottaus* abgefasst. Das Epos *Hesperis* oder „Hesperidos Libri XIII“ ist ohne Frage das Hauptwerk des Basinio, es ist geprägt von einer beachtlichen Kunst der Einfühlung in und des Schöpfens aus Homer. Der Inhalt lässt sich in Kürze zusammenfassen: *Hesperis*, das heißt „das Lied von dem Westen“, ist nichts anderes als die Schilderung des Kampfes Italiens und der Italiener gegen die Barbaren, unter denen keineswegs nur die Heere des Königs Alfons I. von Neapel zu verstehen sind. Sieger und damit Retter Italiens ist in diesem Epos natürlich kein anderer als der Condottiero aus Rimini, der Cavaliere Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta. Den Vorbildern Homer und (weit weniger) Vergil folgend, entwirft Basinio auch einen Besuch des Sigismondo auf den Inseln der Seligen, wofür er allerdings drei ganze Bücher braucht. Erstaunen mag, dass an einer Stelle ein Hinweis

<sup>41</sup> Ausgabe: *Poeti Latini* 240–246, die Verse werden nicht übersetzt.

auf die christliche Anschauung vom Jenseits gegeben ist; das ist deswegen erstaunlich, weil „in der Hesperis das Heidentum unumschränkt herrscht“<sup>42</sup>, ein Faktum, das für die gesamte Umgebung des Malatesta wie auch für ihn selbst ungebrochen zutrifft.

7. Zwei besondere Ereignisse aus dem kulturellen Umfeld des Sigismondo sollen noch erwähnt werden.

- a) Am 8. Mai 1458 kam es zu einem Auszug von bemerkenswert vielen Intellektuellen aus Rimini<sup>43</sup> unter der Führung des Paolo Ramusio. Ihr Entschluss zum Verlassen der Stadt ist damit zu begründen, dass ihr behagliches Leben fürderhin nicht mehr garantiert war, und zwar einerseits wegen des bekannten chronischen Geldmangels des Stadtstaates, andererseits aber auch wegen des Jähzorns des Stadtherren.
- b) Die zweite Begebenheit aber ist weit bedeutsamer, bei dieser handelt es sich nämlich um eine offizielle Diskussion über den Sinn des Griechischen<sup>44</sup>: Am 27. Oktober 1455 saßen sich im Palast und in Anwesenheit des Sigismondo Malatesta Basinio, Porcello und Tommaso Seneca gegenüber; die beiden Letztgenannten verfochten die These, für das Verstehen lateinischer Texte sei das Griechische völlig überflüssig und unnötig, Basinio hingegen verfocht vehement die Unverzichtbarkeit des Studiums von Sprache und Kultur der alten Griechen, und zwar just zu dem Ziel eines besseren Verständnisses der römischen Schriftsteller und Dichter. Es ist erfreulich, dass bei dieser Kontroverse Basinio Recht bekam und Recht behielt; eine Diskussion dieses Inhalts wäre anderswo, etwa in Ferrara, Rom oder Florenz, gewiss niemals entfacht und durchgeführt worden, da ein Jeder von der Notwendigkeit des Griechischen wusste, auch und gerade so kurz nach der Einnahme der Hauptstadt der byzantinischen Griechen durch die Türken.

8. Das letzte Wort über die Kultur am Hofe des Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta zu Rimini übergeben wir einem zeitgenössischen Humanisten aus dem Ausland. Die Relativität aller der Lobgesänge auf Sigismondo oder Isotta hat wohl niemand besser gesehen und beschrieben als der Zeitgenosse aus Ungarn

<sup>42</sup> Finsler 32.

<sup>43</sup> Piromalli 59.

<sup>44</sup> Garin 95; Piromalli 52; Berger 20; auch schon Burckhardt 167 Anm. 1.

Janus Pannonius (1434–1472), der die gesamte Lobhudelei der verschiedenen Hofdichter als das entlarvt, was sie in Wahrheit ist: eine reine Konjunkturlyrik, deren Vertreter demjenigen nach dem Munde reden, der sie zahlt, ja der sie gerade zu diesem Behufe zahlt<sup>45</sup>. Die beiden Gedichte auf Malatesta lauten in deutscher Übersetzung<sup>46</sup>:

*Wenn du, künftige Zeit, von Triumphen der Herrn Malatesta,  
wenn du von Sigismunds glänzenden Taten dann liest,*

*wirst du nur eitle Lügen von unbedeutenden Dichtern  
lesen: Die Muse für sie war ja der Hunger allein.*

und

*Stadtherr von Rimini ist der kleine Tyrann Malatesta,  
doch in der Welt erschallt mehr als von Kaisern sein Ruhm.*

*So machen eben die Dichter die Ameise zum Elephanten  
und zwingen Fliegen dazu, Blitze zu bringen dem Zeus.*

Aber Janus Pannonius macht sich auch direkt über Basinio oder Tommaso Seneca lustig. Den Letzteren nennt er<sup>47</sup> „triefäugig“ oder gleich „ganz blind“, und mit Basinio, dem um neun Jahre Älteren, den er schon seit seinem Eintritt in die Schule des Guarino, also seit 1447, kennt, treibt er seinen ganz besonderen Spott. Er nennt ihn rundheraus einen Esel<sup>48</sup> und verspottet ihn, weil das große Epos, die Hesperis, immer noch nicht fertig ist und wohl niemals zu Ende gebracht wird<sup>49</sup>, was ja dann auch in Wirklichkeit zutrifft: In seinem

<sup>45</sup> Zu Janus Pannonius siehe Blum, Glanzpunkte 193–205. Zwei Male war dieser Janus für längere Zeit in Italien: 1447–1454 in Ferrara in der Schule des Guarino von Verona und 1454–1458 als Student des Kirchenrechts in Padua und dann von April bis August 1465, wo er als offizieller Gesandter des ungarischen Königs von Papst Paul II. empfangen wird.

<sup>46</sup> Ausgabe: *Jani Pannonii Opera*, Nr. 252 und 253, S. 158. Die Übersetzungen stammen vom Verfasser.

<sup>47</sup> *Jani Pannonii Opera*, Nr. 264, S. 166.

<sup>48</sup> *Jani Pannonii Opera*, Nr. 115, S. 80 mit einem unübersetzbaren lateinischen Wortspiel: *Cum sis Basinus, cur esse Basinius optas? / Aptius ut fiat, littera prima cadat.*

<sup>49</sup> *Jani Pannonii Opera*, Nr. 259, S. 162–164.

Testament überlässt Basinio sein Exemplar der Hesperis dem Sigismondo, wobei er eingesteht<sup>50</sup>, dass dieses sein Epos eine „opera non ancora sottoposta all’ ultima lima“ ist.

## V. Der Verehrer des Georgios Gemistos Plethon

Wir haben gesehen, wie allenfalls durchschnittlich die humanistische Bildung war, über die Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta verfügte; im Grunde ersetzte er solide Kenntnisse durch mehr oder minder gespielte Begeisterung. Und doch: Es mag durchaus erstaunen, wie intensiv die Verehrung war, mit der er dem letzten Philosophen des mehr als tausendjährigen byzantinischen Reiches huldigte, Georgios Gemistos Plethon (ca. 1355–26. Juni 1452), den man den „Letzten der Hellenen“ genannt hat<sup>51</sup>. Bei der Suche nach äußeren Motiven für seinen Raub des toten Plethon können wir vorderhand drei angeben, die inneren Gründe sollen dann zu Ende des Beitrags aufgelistet werden.

1. Kleope Malatesta, die als eine enge Verwandte des Sigismondo in Rimini aufgezogen worden war, wurde am 19. Januar 1421 in feierlicher Hochzeit dem Theodor II. Palaiologos anvermählt. Dieser ist der zweite Sohn des Kaisers Manuel II. und lebt von 1407 bis 1443 als Despot – das Wort hat damals keinerlei pejorativen Beigeschmack – in der Morea, ist also der Herr der Peloponnes (verstorben ist er im Jahre 1448). Kleope war mit einem venezianischen Schiff nach Griechenland gereist<sup>52</sup>, auf demselben Schiff fuhr auch Sophia von Montferrat mit, die Theodors älteren Bruder, den Kaiser Johannes VIII. Palaiologos, heiraten sollte<sup>53</sup>. Diese Kleope nun ist die leibliche Schwester jenes Pandolfo Malatesta, der in den sechs Jahren von 1424 bis 1430 als lateinischer Erzbischof von Patras im Norden der Peloponnes seinen Amts- und Wohnsitz hatte. Wir können mit absoluter Sicherheit von der Annahme ausgehen, dass sich die

<sup>50</sup> Augusto Campana, in: *Dizionario Biografico* 7, 94.

<sup>51</sup> So im Titel des Werkes von Christopher M. Woodhouse: *George Gemistos Plethon, The Last of the Hellenes*. Neben diesem Standardwerk von Woodhouse sei noch auf folgende weitere Bücher zu Plethon verwiesen: Masai; Medvedjev: *Vizantijski Gumanism*; Blum und Blum-Seitter.

<sup>52</sup> Falcioni, „Cleofe“ 960 Anm. 19 zitiert eine zeitgenössische Quelle, wonach Kleope zunächst zu Schiff gereist sei, dann aber wegen widriger Winde doch den Landweg genommen habe – eine Behauptung, deren Wahrheitswert nicht mehr nachgeprüft werden kann, die aber durchaus plausibel ist, denn Kleope hat ihre Reise schon im August 1420 angetreten.

<sup>53</sup> Nicol 357 Anm. 1.

beiden Geschwister regelmäßig persönlich besucht und gesprochen haben, und zwar im Herzen der Peloponnes, in der Residenzstadt Mistra, in der neben dem Despoten und dessen Beamten des Hofes unter vielen anderen auch Plethon wohnte. Kleope hat sicher recht bald von Plethon gehört, war dieser doch nach dem Despoten Theodor und dessen Familie mit Sicherheit der bekannteste und berühmteste Bürger von Mistra<sup>54</sup>, und sie hat ebenso sicher sich mehrfach persönlich mit Plethon unterhalten (wofür es bei Hofe gewiss Dolmetscher gab). Kleopes Ehe mit dem Palaiologenprinzen war höchst unglücklich<sup>55</sup>, und so ist es für uns verständlich, dass sie schon vor ihrem 50. Geburtstag verstorben ist, und zwar im Frühsommer des Jahres 1433<sup>56</sup>. Anlässlich des Osterfestes des Jahres 1433 war sie dann doch noch zur Orthodoxie konvertiert, wiewohl sie vor einer solchen Konversion noch vor der Eheschließung von Papst Martin V. eindringlich gewarnt worden war<sup>57</sup>. Von dieser ihrer Konversion erfahren wir durch Plethons Grabrede auf die verstorbene Kleope<sup>58</sup>. Schon im Jahre 1430 hatte ihr Bruder die Peloponnes verlassen müssen, denn die Griechen hatten in diesem Jahre seine Bischofsstadt Patras zurückerobert, und so war er nach Italien zurückgekehrt. Ab 1433 ist er, zunächst gemeinsam mit seinen zwei Brüdern Carlo und Galeazzo, Stadtherr von Pesaro, ca. 30 km südlich von Rimini, und seit April 1435 existiert ein Friedensvertrag zwischen den Malatesta aus Pesaro und deren Verwandtem Sigismondo aus Rimini. Es ist gewiss davon auszugehen, dass der junge Sigismondo allerspätestens in diesem Jahr 1435 die erste Kunde von Plethon erhalten hat, eben durch seinen Verwandten, den Erzbischof von Patras.

2. Sigismondo hat am Konzil von Ferrara und Florenz nicht teilgenommen. Aber von zweien, die für unser Thema von größter Bedeutung sind, wissen wir ganz sicher, dass sie bei allen größeren Veranstaltungen 1438/1439 in Ferrara und Florenz anwesend waren: Es sind dies der eben genannte Pandolfo Malatesta von Pesaro, der sich immer noch „*Archiepiscopus Patracensis*“ nennt,

<sup>54</sup> Zu Mistra, zur Geschichte und zu den Bauten, siehe Medvedjev: *Mistra*; von Löhneysen; Runciman und Chatzidakis.

<sup>55</sup> Siehe ihre Briefe an ihre Schwester Paola di Gonzaga in Mantua: Falcioni, „Cleofe“ 966–968.

<sup>56</sup> Blum 13 Anm. 66. Das Jahr 1435 bei Blum-Seitter 47 ist ein Druckfehler, ebenso die dortige Angabe des Geburtsortes von Sigismondo: Das ist natürlich Brescia in Norditalien, nicht schon Rimini.

<sup>57</sup> Die Briefe des Papstes Martin V. bei Zakythinis 299–302.

<sup>58</sup> Blum 12–13; die deutsche Übersetzung bei Blum 97–103.

und Plethon, der heidnische Philosoph aus Mistra. Sollte also Sigismondo noch wirklich nichts von Plethon gehört haben, so hat ihm ganz gewiss sein bischöflicher Verwandter und Stadtherr von Pesaro von dem ungeheuren rhetorischen Erfolg berichtet, den Plethon im Frühjahr 1439 mit seiner Rede „über die Unterschiede zwischen Platon und Aristoteles“ gezeitigt hatte<sup>59</sup>; das ist umso wahrscheinlicher, als Pandolfos Beziehungen zu Cosimo dei Medici, dem Stadtherrn von Florenz, sich bis zu seinem Tod am 21. April 1441 kontinuierlich verbessert hatten<sup>60</sup>. Ein ganz sicheres und nachweisbares Faktum aber ist die Einladung, die der erst 22-jährige Sigismondo gegenüber dem mehr als 80 Jahre alten Greis ausgesprochen hat: Er lud Plethon, den er noch nie gesehen, von dem er aber schon viel gehört hatte, zu einem offiziellen Besuch nach Rimini ein<sup>61</sup>. Doch Plethon wollte dieser Einladung nicht folgen, er ist schon im Jahre 1440 aus Italien abgereist, um sein geliebtes Mistra wiederzusehen.

3. Sollten die bisher genannten Beziehungen als Motive für Sigismondo noch immer nicht vollständig überzeugend wirken, so können wir noch eine dritte entscheidende Begegnung anführen, die in die Jahre 1447 bis 1449 fällt. Das dritte Bindeglied ist der Kaufmann Ciriaco dei Pizzicolli, den wir heute unter dem Namen „Cyriacus von Ancona“ kennen. Dieser lebte von ca. 1391 bis ca. 1455, er war ein glühender Philhellene und Verehrer der klassischen Antike, deshalb bereiste er immer wieder aufs Neue die Gegenden Griechenlands, wobei er auch eine Vielzahl von Inschriften abschrieb und dadurch für die Nachwelt rettete. Cyriacus hatte mehrere persönliche Treffen mit Kaiser Johannes VIII., mit den zwei Despoten Theodor II. und dessen Bruder Konstantin<sup>62</sup> und mit vielen anderen hochrangigen Griechen gehabt, so auch mit dem Denker von Mistra, mit Plethon. Cyriacus hatte in seiner Heimat die beiden Jahre 1438 und 1439 als Teilnehmer die Verhandlungen des Konzils verfolgt, er hat

<sup>59</sup> Blum 13 Anm. 70. Die Übersetzungen dieser Schrift in moderne Sprachen sind die folgenden: Englisch, Woodhouse 192–214; Französisch, Lagarde; Deutsch, Blum 112–142.

<sup>60</sup> Der Brief, den Pandolfos Nichte Elisabetta an ihre Tante Paola nach Mantua gesandt hat mit der Schilderung der Umstände des Todes ihres Onkels, ist abgedruckt bei Patrignani in Falcioni (Hrsg.), Band 2, 915–916.

<sup>61</sup> Masai 365 Anm. 3; Woodhouse 147; Bertozzi 182.

<sup>62</sup> Dieser wird als Konstantin XI. Palaiologos der letzte Kaiser von Byzanz sein, am 29. Mai 1453 wird er im Kampfe gegen die Türken an dem Haupttor von Konstantinopel einen ehrenvollen Soldatentod finden.

gewiss auch Plethons Auftritt im Frühjahr 1439 persönlich genossen, und nun unternimmt er im Jahre 1447 eine neuerliche Reise in die Peloponnes<sup>63</sup>. Die Stadt Mistra empfand er, wie er selbst einmal schrieb<sup>64</sup>, als „Spiegel und Bronn einer jeden edelen Tugend“. In dieser damaligen Haupt- und Residenzstadt der Peloponnes war er zu Gast im Palast des Despoten Konstantin Palaiologos, hier begegnete er ein weiteres Mal am 30. Juli 1447 dem Plethon, den er als den „Weisesten von allen Griechen“ ehrte und verehrte: Dieses Urteil wird einer von Plethons Meisterschülern, Bessarion (ca. 1400–1472), der spätere Kardinal der römischen Kirche, wiederholen, indem er Plethon rühmt als „den weisesten Griechen nach Platon“<sup>65</sup>. Cyriacus hat sich mehrere Male mit Plethon zusammengesetzt, wobei er ihm einmal die Geographie des Strabon, ein andermal den römischen Kalender als Thema der Unterhaltung anbot. Den gesamten Winter 1447/1448 verbrachte Cyriacus in Mistra, und zwar ganz ausdrücklich „um des innigst geliebten Platonikers Gemistus willen“. Wenn wir uns dazu noch vor Augen halten, dass sich Cyriacus nachweislich im Juni 1449 in Rimini aufhielt, dann ist es wahrlich unwiderlegbar: Die endgültige Plethon-Begeisterung wurde dem Sigismondo von seinem Landsmann Ciriaco eingegeben<sup>66</sup>.

4. Nun aber ist Plethon am 26. Juni 1452 in Mistra verstorben, und Sigismondo dürfte relativ bald von Plethons Tod Kunde erhalten haben. Im Laufe der Jahre war der Machtbereich des Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta immer kleiner geworden, im Grunde war Riminis Stadtherr politisch wie auch militärisch vernichtet. So ist es nachvollziehbar, dass es ihn wieder einmal nach ganz neuen Unternehmungen drängte. Von März 1464 bis April 1466 war er, mit mehreren Unterbrechungen, als Capitano Generale im Dienst der Republik Venedig im Kampf gegen die Türken auf der Peloponnes tätig. Größere oder auch nur kleinere militärische Erfolge werden uns nicht berichtet, doch er hat immerhin die Unterstadt von Mistra (nicht die Frankenburg) für kurze Zeit in seine Gewalt gebracht: Aus dieser Unterstadt raubt er den Leichnam des Plethon, des von ihm so sehr verehrten Philosophen, und bringt ihn in seine Heimatstadt. So ruht also der heidnische Denker von Mistra bis heute in einer

<sup>63</sup> Das Folgende nach Woodhouse 227–228.

<sup>64</sup> Masai 72.

<sup>65</sup> Blum 17.

<sup>66</sup> Plethon wird aber auch von seinem Freund und Verehrer Cyriacus gelobt und gepriesen als „ein absolut zuverlässiger und vortrefflicher Mann“ (Baloglou 74).

Tumba an der Außenmauer des Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini, also neben mehreren Humanisten wie zum Beispiel Basinio Basini oder Roberto Valturio. Das einzige Denkmal überhaupt, das an Plethon erinnert, verdanken wir dem Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, denn dieser hat nicht nur Plethons Leichnam beisetzen lassen, sondern auch eine Inschrift veranlasst oder gar selbst verfasst, die in deutscher Übersetzung lautet<sup>67</sup>: Des Gemistus aus Byzanz Überreste, zu seiner Zeit des Ersten der Philosophen, hat Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, der Sohn des Pandolfo, Befehlshaber des Peloponnesischen Krieges gegen den König der Türken, wegen seiner ungeheuren glühenden Liebe zu gebildeten Männern hierher übertragen und hier aufstellen lassen, im Jahre 1465.

5. Nach der Behandlung sowohl der Persönlichkeiten als auch der äußeren Anlässe, durch die Malatesta auf Plethon aufmerksam geworden ist, müssen wir zu guter Letzt die Frage stellen, welche Gründe es dafür geben mag, dass Sigismondo dem Plethon eine derart außergewöhnliche Verehrung entgegenbrachte. Diese Frage zu beantworten ist deswegen so wichtig, weil Sigismondo von seiner gesamten Persönlichkeitsstruktur her durchaus nicht zu Plethon, dem Philosophen, Intellektuellen und Polyhistor, passt. Es sollen zunächst drei Tatsachen hervorgehoben werden.

- a) Sigismondo verstand kein Griechisch, konnte daher kein Wort aus Plethons Schriften lesen, überdenken oder gar genießen – und er hätte sich, wäre Plethon seiner Einladung nach Rimini gefolgt, mit diesem nur mit Hilfe eines Dolmetschers unterhalten können.
- b) So manches aus den Lehren des Plethon hätte Sigismondo für sich gewiss abgelehnt, so zum Beispiel dessen unumstößliche Überzeugung von der Unsterblichkeit der Seele des Menschen, also von deren Weiterleben nach dem Tode des Leibes<sup>68</sup>, oder die peinlich genauen, geradezu klösterlich-monastisch anmutenden Vorschriften Plethons zu täglichem Gebet und feierlicher großer Liturgie zur Verehrung der Götter<sup>69</sup>.
- c) Als letztes, wohl auch bedeutendstes Motiv, müssen wir ein weiteres Mal auf die Ruhmsucht des Sigismondo rekurren: Er durfte sich

<sup>67</sup> Der lateinische Urtext dieser Inschrift ist bequem nachlesbar bei Masai 365 oder Blum 6.

<sup>68</sup> Blum 90.

<sup>69</sup> Blum, Plethon der Heide 100–102.

immerhin der Hoffnung hingeben, ein wenig von dem Ruhme Plethons werde doch wohl auf ihn selbst zurückfallen.

6. Sigismondo hatte wahrlich nicht vieles mit Plethon gemeinsam. Daher können wir, abgesehen von seiner Gier nach Ruhm und Anerkennung, eigentlich nur zwei wirklich durchschlagende Gründe für seine Plethon-Manie angeben<sup>70</sup>.

- a) Der Leichnam Plethons ist ein grandioses Symbol für den Kampf der Griechen wie auch des gesamten lateinischen Westens gegen die muslimischen Türken. Dieser Kampf sollte weitergehen, auch nach 1453, wie ein Jeder im Westen wusste: Das war wohl der einzige Punkt, in dem Papst Pius II. und Sigismondo uneingeschränkt ein und derselben Meinung waren<sup>71</sup>.
- b) Für den Neuheiden Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta war Plethon ein Vorbild. Zwar hat er von Plethons Lehren nichts gewusst, aber es war ihm voll und ganz gegenwärtig, dass sich Plethon selbst allezeit als Heide verstanden hatte und dass er allseits als ein solcher anerkannt war. Aus genau diesem Grunde wollte er Plethons Leiche nach Italien überführen, und deshalb hat er ihn an seinem Tempio Malatestiano bestatten lassen, denn diesen Tempel wollte er ganz explizit als Bollwerk des Heidentums verstanden wissen.

<sup>70</sup> Das Wort ist gebildet in Anlehnung an die „Platon-Manie“, von der Franz Dölger mit Blick auf Plethon gesprochen hatte: Dölger 160.

<sup>71</sup> Es mag noch ein weiterer Punkt genannt werden, in dem sich Papst Pius II. und Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta gleichen, ihr Wunsch nach „Reliquien“ und deren Raub aus der Peloponnes. Hatte Malatesta im Jahre 1465 den Leichnam des Plethon geraubt, so war ihm sein Todfeind, immerhin der Herr der gesamten Christenheit, in dieser Hinsicht schon zuvorgekommen: Der Papst hatte schon 1462 das Haupt des Apostels Andreas aus der Peloponnes rauben und nach Rom bringen lassen. Hierauf weisen eine bildliche Darstellung und ganz besonders die Inschrift auf dem Grabmal von Pius II. hin – dieses stand zunächst in St. Peter und wurde im Jahr 1614 in die Kirche Sant' Andrea (!) della Valle versetzt, wo es heute noch steht –, deren Verfasser Francesco Kardinal Piccolomini ist, der leibliche Neffe des Papstes. In dieser Inschrift, die aus dem Jahre 1464, dem Todesjahr des Pius, stammt, ist die Rede von dem *caput Andreae Apostoli ... ad se ex Peloponneso advectum*. Besonders pikant sind die Umstände der Rückgabe dieses Apostelhauptes: Erst im Jahre 1964, also ganze 500 Jahre nach dem Tod Pius II., ließ Papst Paul VI. das Haupt des Andreas wieder zurückgeben an den Bischof von Patras im Norden der Peloponnes: In dieser Stadt nämlich soll Andreas am 30. November 60 den Tod am Kreuze erlitten haben.

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# Plethon's philosophy in the Byzantine context

## Constructing Pagan Platonism: Plethon's Theory of Fate and the Ancient Philosophical Tradition

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**Abstract:** Plethon is generally regarded as a Platonist. My paper aims to clarify the relationship between his account of fate and ancient Platonism. While ancient Platonists defended in various ways (i) genuine contingency, (ii) the compatibility of divine foreknowledge with contingency and responsible action, and (iii) the autonomy of the rational human soul, Plethon advances diametrically opposed views. First, he adopts a necessitarian causal and modal theory. Second, he adduces divine foreknowledge as a proof of complete causal determination, consciously ignoring the theoretical devices standardly used by Pagan Platonists after Iamblichus and by Christian theologians to reconcile foreknowledge with human freedom. Finally, he argues that the human soul is externally determined, despite the philosophical problems bound up with such a position. I conclude that Plethon's reconstitution of Platonism is motivated by an anti-Christian agenda, since he parts company with his Platonic authorities where they happen to agree with Christianity.

**Keywords:** Determinism; Necessitarianism; Divine foreknowledge; Human freedom; Pagan Platonism; Plethon; Bessarion; Ammonius; Epictetus.

## 1. The question of Plethon's Platonism

The Stoic theory of fate and the debates it has given rise to in ancient philosophy have been at the focus of interest in recent research.<sup>1</sup> We are currently in a better position to assess how Medieval and Renaissance treatments of fate and human autonomy relate to ancient strands of thought. I set out here to examine Plethon's theory of fate against the background of the ancient philosophical tradition. The particular problems I wish to address are the following. What is the relationship between Plethon's doctrine of fate and the corresponding ancient Platonic theories? What are his possible motives for adopting a deterministic position? What kind of Platonism does he propound, and how is it related to ancient Platonism? Before turning to the details of Plethon's doctrine of fate, let me first spell out the last question in some detail.

Plethon famously attacked Aristotle and embraced Plato as his primary philosophical authority in a work which initiated a long-standing dispute between Platonists and Aristotelians in Byzantine and Renaissance philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive and influential account of Stoic determinism and its Platonic and Peripatetic critics up to the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD, see Susanne Bobzien, *Freedom and Determinism in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). There is an expanding literature on Middle Platonic and Neoplatonic treatments of fate, providence and human autonomy. Relevant studies include George R. Boys-Stones, "Middle Platonists on fate and human autonomy," in *Greek and Roman Philosophy 100 BC–200 AD*, edited by R. W. Sharples and Richard Sorabji, *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, Suppl. vol. 94 (London, 2007), pp.431–448; Erik Eliasson, "Sur la conception plotinienne du destin dans le traité 3", *Les Études Philosophiques* 90 (2009), pp.407–430; Alessandro Linguisti, "Physis as Heimarmene: On some fundamental principles of the Neoplatonic philosophy of nature" in *Physics and Philosophy of Nature in Greek Neoplatonism*, ed. Riccardo Chiaradonna and Franco Trabattoni, *Philosophia antiqua*, 115 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), pp.173–188; Michael Frede, *A Free Will. Origins of the Notion in Ancient Thought* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2011). Most importantly, Platonic treatises on the subjects mentioned have recently been translated into modern languages and commented upon. See, for instance, Plotinus 2007, Proclus 2007, Ammonius and Boethius 1998.

<sup>2</sup> The treatise *On the Differences of Aristotle from Plato* (henceforth: *De differentiis*, 1439) provoked an answer from Georgios Scholarios, later Gennadios II, patriarch of Constantinople, in his work *Contra Plethonis ignoratorem de Aristotele*, to which Plethon reacted once again in *Contra Scholarii pro Aristotele objectiones*. The debate continued in Italy between George of Trapezunt, Bessarion and others over the following decades. For more on this see *Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist und Staatsmann. Funde und Forschungen*. Bd. I. Darstellung. Bd. II. Bessarionis In calumniatorem Platonis libri IV. Bd. III. Aus Bessarions Gelehrtenkreis, edited by Ludwig Mohler (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1923, 1927, 1942) = further Mohler I, pp.346–398, John Monfasani, *George of Trebizond. A Biography and a Study of His Rhetoric and*

That seems in itself to justify his standard classification as a Platonist in scholarly literature. However, given that Platonism is a rich tradition comprising several varieties, there is room for the question as to what 'Platonist' means in his particular case. Various suggestions have been formulated concerning his precise philosophical affiliations.<sup>3</sup> For instance, Karamanolis argues that Plethon draws on certain Middle Platonists as used by Eusebius.<sup>4</sup> He points out that Plethon's fundamentalist Platonic ideology according to which Plato's philosophy contains the complete truth, and, therefore, any deviation from it qualifies as error or even apostasy, is reminiscent of Numenius and Atticus. In his view, Plethon's particular objections to Aristotle's suspicious 'innovations' are largely based on Atticus' anti-Aristotelian polemics, and his argument that Plato accords better with Christian doctrine than Aristotle is borrowed from Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica* in which our *verbatim* fragments from Numenius and Atticus are preserved.<sup>5</sup>

Others regard the Neoplatonic Proclus as the main influence on Plethon. This connection was first made by Plethon's bitter enemy, Georgios Scholarios.<sup>6</sup> Scholarios' aim was to discredit Plethon in terms of religion as he saw

*Logic* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), pp.201–229, Christopher Montague Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p.365 ff., Brian P. Copenhaver and Charles B. Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp.87–90 and pp.140–143 with further literature. For Plethon's *De differentiis*, see Lagarde's edition with a commentary (Georges Gémiste Pléthon, *Des différences entre Platon et Aristote*, text, translation and commentary by Bernadette Lagarde, 2 vols. (Doctoral thesis, Université de Paris IV – Sorbonne, 1976)) and the English translation by Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, p.191 ff.

<sup>3</sup> My overview focuses on Plethon's relationship to ancient Platonism. On the Byzantine context of Plethon's Platonism, see Nikitas Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), Part I, esp. pp.62–124. Although Byzantine Platonism was an important precondition for Plethon's philosophy, his theory of fate seems to be highly unconventional, see section 7 below.

<sup>4</sup> George Karamanolis, "Plethon and Scholarios on Aristotle" in *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources*, edited by Katerina Ierodiakonou (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), pp.253–282, particularly pp.264–267.

<sup>5</sup> Plethon's appeal to the agreement between Plato and Christian dogma seems to me merely instrumental rather than reflecting his sincere conviction, see section 7 below.

<sup>6</sup> Gennadios Scholarios, *Letter to Joseph the Exarch*, text in Pléthon, *Traité des Lois*, edited by Charles Alexandre, translated by A. Pelissier (Paris: Librairie de Firmin Didot, 1858), p.424. Cf. Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, p.73.

in Proclus the exponent of a pagan Platonism revolting against Christianity. A number of modern scholars also see this connection as largely justified from a philosophical point of view as well.<sup>7</sup> Tambrun compares the relevant Proclan and Plethonic doctrines in detail,<sup>8</sup> pointing out both affinities and significant divergences. Her thorough analysis leaves us with the impression that Plethon was a post-Proclan Platonist who worked out a hierarchical ontology accommodating the gods of pagan mythology, but, at the same time, dispensed with numerous distinctive features of Proclus' system.

A third view of Plethon's philosophical affiliations is implied in Siniosoglou's ambitious thesis according to which Plethon's philosophy is a consequent articulation of 'the essence of Platonism', which is understood in terms of a definite theoretical and existential identity, intrinsically pagan and incompatible with Christianity.<sup>9</sup> In more narrowly historical terms, Siniosoglou suggests that Plethon relied not only on overtly anti-Christian Platonic writers such as Celsus, Porphyry or Julianus but also made use of the techniques of dissimulation developed by Neoplatonists living under Christian rule (including Proclus) who maintained their pagan Platonic identity but avoided explicit confrontation with Christianity.<sup>10</sup> In his view, Platonism managed to survive throughout the Byzantine period owing to these kinds of techniques, providing the soil for Plethon's radical Platonism.

The above overview suggests that Plethon draws on various layers of the Platonic tradition. If this is the case, what criteria does he use in selecting his positions and arguments from the rich pool of Platonic ideas? To what extent does he feel obliged by the doctrinal constraints placed on him by the ancient

Platonic tradition or by Plato's authority? In relation to the issue of fate and human freedom, these questions are particularly pressing, given that Plethon propounds a deterministic theory which recalls Stoic doctrine in many respects. Arabatzis has suggested that certain versions of Stoicism were formative of the doctrinal core of Plethon's philosophy, and has in particular examined the Stoic background of Plethon's doctrine of fate.<sup>11</sup> Other scholars have also discerned Stoic influences in Plethon.<sup>12</sup> However, the question as to what follows from this for Plethon's Platonism is rarely raised. In this connection, Karamanolis refers to the ancient Platonist practice of filling the gaps in the Platonic 'system' with Stoic or Aristotelian elements.<sup>13</sup> It is less than satisfactory to state, however, that Plethon follows suit when he lifts the Stoic doctrine of fate since in this case there was no gap to be filled. On the contrary, as I shall presently argue, Middle Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophers did have an established doctrine of fate which they worked out largely in opposition to the Stoics. What is more, they were in a position to support their theory with solid evidence from Plato's dialogues. The fact that Plethon sides with the Stoics against the mainstream Platonic tradition reopens the issue of his attitude toward Platonism as a whole.

With these questions in mind, let us turn to the problem of fate. I shall come back to the question of Plethon's philosophical allegiances in the last section of my paper.

## 2. The issue of fate in Plethon

The only section of Plethon's *opus magnum*, the *Book of Laws* (henceforth: *Laws*), which was circulated in his lifetime is the treatise *On Fate*, written prior to 1439.<sup>14</sup> The issue of determinism surfaces in *De Differentiis* (1439), and in

<sup>7</sup> Alexandre in Plethon 1858, LIX–LXIV, LXXX f.; Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, pp.72–78. Nikolaou, however, argues that Plethon's doctrine of the 'vehicle of the soul' is largely independent of Proclus. Theodore Nikolaou, "Georgios Gemistos Plethon und Proklos: Plethons 'Neuplatonismus' am Beispiel seiner Psychologie", *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* (1982), pp.387–399.

<sup>8</sup> Brigitte Tambrun, *Pléthon. Le retour de Platon* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2006), pp.153–168.

<sup>9</sup> For the elements of Siniosoglou's 'archetypal Platonism', that is, epistemological optimism, denial of divine ineffability and transcendence, deterministic metaphysics and utopianism, see Nikitas Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*, ix–xii and pp.403–408.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.54–62.

<sup>11</sup> Georges Arabatzis, "Le système de Pléthon et la nécessité" in TYXH - ΑΝΑΓΚΗ. *Hasard et nécessité dans la philosophie grecque*, edited by Evangelos Moutsopoulos, (Athens, 2005), pp.215–236 and Georges Arabatzis, "Pléthon et les stoïciens. Système et fragment", *Archiv für Mittelalterliche Philosophie und Kultur* 14 (2008), pp.312–317.

<sup>12</sup> For references, see Arabatzis, "Pléthon et les stoïciens. Système et fragment", p.308.

<sup>13</sup> Karamanolis, "Plethon and Scholarios on Aristotle", p.260 f.

<sup>14</sup> The *Laws* was only found after Plethon's death and was burned by Georgios Scholarios due to its paganism. The surviving table of contents testifies that the work contained further chapters relevant to fate and related issues (esp. I.29–30 II.4–5. III.1). On the destruction of the book, see Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, pp.357–363.



Plethon's reply to Scholarios (1448/49).<sup>15</sup> An exchange of letters between Plethon and his former disciple, Bessarion, then Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church, contains important clarifications of Plethon's position (and respectful criticisms of Bessarion).<sup>16</sup> As far as Plethon's doctrine is concerned, my discussion will be based on these source texts.<sup>17</sup>

Fate was among the issues raised by Plethon which continued to be discussed among Byzantine scholars both at home and in Italy in the second half of the century. Scholarios touches upon Plethon's determinism only briefly in his *Defence of Aristotle* (1443/44), but intended to refute his doctrine of fate either in a polemical work against the *Laws* or in a separate treatise.<sup>18</sup> This plan was not carried out perhaps because this task appeared less urgent after Plethon's

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Plethon's death is usually dated at 26 June 1452. John Monfasani argues for a later date. See John Monfasani, "Plethon's Date of Death [1454] and the Burning of his Laws", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 98/2 (2005), pp.459–463. For the dates of the works mentioned in the main text, I rely on Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*. For Plethon's *On Fate* I use the text in Alexandre's edition of the *Laws* (Plethon 1858).

<sup>15</sup> Plethon, *De differentiis*, ch. VIII in Lagarde's edition (Plethon 1976), ch. XVIII in *Patrologia Graeca* 160, ch. 33 in Woodhouse' numbering, id. 1986, p.203 f. Plethon, *Contra Scholarii pro Aristotele objectiones*. *Patrologia Graeca* 160, 1007A–1008A and 1018A–C, ch. 33 in Woodhouse' numbering, id. 1986, pp.304–6.

<sup>16</sup> *Epistles* 18–21, *Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist und Staatsmann. Funde und Forschungen*. Bd. III. *Aus Bessarions Gelehrtenkreis*, edited by Ludwig Mohler (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1942), pp.455–468 = further Mohler III. Mohler suggests that the letters were written after 1440 (*ibid.* p.455). Bessarion rejects universal determinism in his work *In calumniatorem Platonis libri IV*, where he argues that both Plato and Aristotle left room for human autonomy (*Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist und Staatsmann. Funde und Forschungen*. Bd. II. *Bessarionis In calumniatorem Platonis libri IV*, edited by Ludwig Mohler (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1927), p.180 ff.= further Mohler II).

<sup>17</sup> For modern discussions of Plethon's doctrine of fate, see François Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra* (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres", 1956), pp.186–199 and pp.238–244; Leonidas Bargeliotes, "Fate or Heimarmene According To Pletho", *Diotima* 3 (1975), pp.137–149; Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, p.203f., 262, 234–236, 304–306, 332–334; Nikitas Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*, pp.306–323; Vojtěch Hladký, *The Philosophy of Gemistos Plethon. Platonism in Late Byzantium, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy* (Ashgate, 2014), pp.144–150.

<sup>18</sup> John A. Demetracopoulos, "Georgios Scholarios – Gennadios II's *Florilegium Thomisticum II* (*De Fato*) and Its Anti-Plethonic Tenor", *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales*, 74:2 (2007), p.335ff. Demetracopoulos argues that the manuscript which he calls *Florilegium Thomisticum II* (Marc. gr. classis XI, 18, coll. 1042, saec. XV), is a copy from

death.<sup>19</sup> In any case, Scholarios' student, Matthaïos Kamariotes, wrote two treatises in which he argues against Plethon's theory of fate from the standpoint of religious orthodoxy.<sup>20</sup> Theodore Gazes, a Greek émigré in Italy, wrote an Aristotelian refutation of Plethon's account of fate and human action.<sup>21</sup> Laonikos of Chalkokondyles, a disciple of Plethon, used the notion of necessity to explain historical events.<sup>22</sup> Plethon's treatise *On Fate* was translated into Latin and dedicated to Nicolaus of Cusa.<sup>23</sup> Ficino, who maintained a Platonic view of human autonomy which was compatible with Christian doctrine, in all probability studied and critically annotated Plethon's treatise on fate.<sup>24</sup>

The theory of fate is important from a systematical point of view as well. This doctrine is intimately bound up with Plethon's theology, as a number of his arguments for determinism appeal to God's sovereignty, unchangeable nature, providence and unfailing knowledge of future events. The theory has an ontological aspect since fate is understood in terms of the necessity of all events, and the latter is underpinned by arguments from causality. Plethon's determinism also has a bearing on his account of human nature and on ethics in that self-determination is explained in terms of the correct relationship between reason and irrational desires, and punishment is

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Scholarios' notes which he compiled from Aquinas' *Summa contra gentiles* III as a preparation for the refutation of Plethon's theory of fate.

<sup>19</sup> Scholarios wrote a series of treatises on providence and predestination in which he maintains the orthodox Christian position. For a concise overview, see Hildebrand Beck, *Vorsehung und Vorherbestimmung in der theologischen Literatur der Byzantiner*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 114 (Roma: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1937), pp.151–157.

<sup>20</sup> On Matthaïos Kamariotes, see Hildebrand Beck, *Vorsehung und Vorherbestimmung in der theologischen Literatur der Byzantiner*, pp.108–11 and John A. Demetracopoulos, "Georgios Scholarios – Gennadios II's *Florilegium Thomisticum II* (*De Fato*) and Its Anti-Plethonic Tenor", pp.326–322.

<sup>21</sup> Text in *Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist und Staatsmann. Funde und Forschungen*. Bd. III. *Aus Bessarions Gelehrtenkreis*, III, pp.239–246.

<sup>22</sup> See Nikitas Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*, pp.322–323, with further references.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Oskar Kristeller, "A Latin Translation of Gemistos Plethon's *De Fato* by Johannes Sophianos Dedicated to Nicolas of Cusa" in *Niccolò Cusano agli inizi del mondo moderno*, edited by G. Santinello (Firenze: G.C. Sansoni, 1970), pp.175–193.

<sup>24</sup> A. Keller, "Two Byzantine Scholars and Their Reception in Italy", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 20:3/4 (1957), pp.364–366.

assigned a corrective-educative role.<sup>25</sup> The doctrine of fate seems to be a central tenet of Plethon's philosophy which cannot be ignored if we are to form a balanced view of his philosophical allegiances.

### 3. Fate and human autonomy in ancient Platonism

The problem of fate as such emerged in Hellenistic philosophy. The debate was triggered by the Stoics<sup>26</sup> who provocatively maintained that "everything happens according to fate" or, in other words, "according to antecedent causes".<sup>27</sup> Stoic determinism also has a teleological aspect in that fate coincides with divine providence, and brings about the best possible order in the universe. The theory of fate implies that our actions are predetermined down to the smallest detail before we are born. At the same time, the Stoics were committed to compatibilism. In their view, the all-embracing causal nexus does not exclude the fact that certain things "depend on us" (ἐφ' ἡμῖν) since the principal cause of any act of assent (leading to action unless prevented by external hindrances) is the human mind which has an individual profile, whereas the circumstances merely serve as auxiliary causes.<sup>28</sup>

Platonic philosophers attacked the Stoic theory of fate from the start, arguing against the universal scope of fate and casting doubt on compatibilism. In Middle Platonist circles, the doctrine of 'conditional fate' became the standard view from the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD onwards. According to this theory, the first principles from which the events derive are exempt from fate, whereas

the consequences flowing from them are subject to its laws.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, in contrast to divine providence which embraces all things, fate does not extend to the higher levels of the ontological hierarchy. The Middle Platonists appeal to contingency in order to make room for human autonomy.<sup>30</sup> Human agency decides between alternatives which are equally capable of being realized. In this scheme, human actions (or at least some of them) are not determined by antecedent causes. The Middle Platonic and the Peripatetic understanding of fate have much in common, although the latter seems to go further in the direction of a distinctly libertarian understanding of human agency.<sup>31</sup> Neoplatonists adjust the traditional Platonic understanding of fate and autonomy to their more refined ontology. An important Neoplatonic innovation is the reconciliation of divine foreknowledge with the genuine contingency of human actions.<sup>32</sup> Notwithstanding these innovations and the subtle differences between individual thinkers, Neoplatonic philosophers maintain the fundamental positions of the school. In particular, they limit the scope of fate to the physical world, and stress that the incorporeal nature of the soul guarantees rational autonomy.<sup>33</sup>

These Middle Platonic and Neoplatonic theses seem to have a solid basis in Plato's texts. Plato admittedly did not have a theory of fate, but his treatments of responsibility in the context of providence and theodicy prefigure later

<sup>25</sup> Plethon, *On Fate* 66 (God is not determined by anything), 68 and 70 (foreknowledge, providence and unchangeability); 64 (necessity and causality); 72 (reason and desire); 76–78 (punishment).

<sup>26</sup> There were other forms of determinism in Greek philosophy before the Stoics. Aristotle sets out and refutes an argument for logical determinism in *De interpretatione* ch. 9. Diodorus Cronus, a Megarian or 'dialectician' philosopher of the 4<sup>th</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, propounded the 'Master argument' for determinism (Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 2.19.). The idea of determinism was present in early atomism too (Leucippus fr. B2 DK, Democritus A1, 105 f. DK, A 39, A69, A83), later attacked by Epicurus (*Letter to Menoeceus* 133 f.; *On Nature* 34.21 f. and 26–30).

<sup>27</sup> Diogenes Laertius 7.149. For further texts, see Susanne Bobzien, *Freedom and Determinism in Stoic Philosophy*, p.56 f.

<sup>28</sup> For Stoic causal and teleological determinism, see Susanne Bobzien, *Freedom and Determinism in Stoic Philosophy*, pp.28–43; for compatibilism, *ibid.* pp.234–329.

<sup>29</sup> For conditional fate, see Pseudo-Plutarch, *On Fate*; Nemesius, *On the Nature of Man* 34, 36–37 and 43; Alcinous, *The Handbook of Platonism* 26; Calcidius, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* 142–190. On the traditional interpretation, the 'first principles' are certain human choices from which other things follow. Boys-Stones argues that they are the metaphysical principles of which the cosmos at large and individual agents consist. George R. Boys-Stones, "Middle Platonists on fate and human autonomy".

<sup>30</sup> Alcinous, *Didascalicus* 26.3; Pseudo-Plutarchus, *On Fate* 571b–c; Nemesius, *On the Nature of Man* c. 34.

<sup>31</sup> Alexander of Aphrodisias embraces an understanding of human action which implies that human agents are capable of acting independently not only of external circumstances but also of their own internal dispositions. See Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Fate*, text, translation and commentary by Robert W. Sharples (London: Duckworth, 1983), p.12, 180, 4 f. and 20. f. Bruns.

<sup>32</sup> On divine foreknowledge in late Neoplatonism, see Elias Tempelis, "Iamblichus and the School of Ammonius, Son of Hermeias on Divine Omniscience", *Syllecta Classica* 8 (1997), pp.207–217, Ammonius and Boethius 1998, and section 5 below.

<sup>33</sup> Erik Eliasson, "Sur la conception plotinienne du destin dans le traité 3"; Alessandro Linguisti, "Physis as Heimarmene: On some fundamental principles of the Neoplatonic philosophy of nature".

Platonic doctrines in many respects. In the 10<sup>th</sup> book of the *Laws*, he develops arguments to demonstrate that the cosmos is ruled by intelligent and beneficent self-moving soul(s), that is, by god(s),<sup>34</sup> and goes on to argue that god exercises providence over human affairs.<sup>35</sup> The issue of autonomy is raised in this context. Plato makes the Athenian stranger, the protagonist of the dialogue, argue that individual human souls are, like the cosmic soul, self-movers, that is, the causes of the changes they undergo are internal to them. God in his providential capacity does nothing more than allocates the self-moving souls to their appropriate places within the universe. Souls as self-movers qualify as autonomous agents bearing responsibility for what happens to them.<sup>36</sup>

Another particularly relevant Platonic text is the myth of Er in the 10<sup>th</sup> book of the *Republic*. Let me draw attention to two points in this complex and rich myth of otherworldly judgment and transmigration. Firstly, the mythical figures of Necessity and her daughters, the three Fates, and the guardian spirit overseeing the fulfillment of the form of life the souls choose for themselves<sup>37</sup> cannot be understood in terms of an all-embracing causal power, precisely because their activity is contingent on the prenatal choice of life the souls make, which in turn involves randomness to a minimal extent.<sup>38</sup> In fact, Plato combines the elements of necessity, chance and rational choice in a subtle way. Secondly, it cannot be reasonably doubted that within this combination the most emphatic component is autonomous human agency.<sup>39</sup> Socrates' mythical account culminates at the moment when the prophet of Lachesis warns the souls that are about to choose their future form of life that "responsibility lies with that who chooses; god is not responsible" (617e3 f.). Thus, human autonomy turns out to be indispensable for divine goodness and justice. The two aspects of the myth highlighted here justify both the limitation of the scope of fate and the emphasis on the independence from fate of the rational soul in later Platonism.

<sup>34</sup> Plato, *Laws* 893b–899d.

<sup>35</sup> Plato, *Laws* 899d–905c.

<sup>36</sup> Plato, *Laws* 903d3–905c4.

<sup>37</sup> Plato, *Republic* 616c4, 617b4–d2, 617e1–3.

<sup>38</sup> The order in which the souls choose among the 'patterns of life' is decided by lots, *ibid.* 616e6f.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 617e1–5; 618b6–619b6.

The ancient Platonic and Stoic ideas just mentioned will provide us with useful points of reference for interpreting Plethon's theory of fate and human freedom.

#### 4. Causal and modal aspects: Plethon's necessitarianism

Plethon deduces determinism from two causal principles both in his treatise *On Fate* and in *De differentiis*.<sup>40</sup> According to the first principle, everything that comes to be comes to be from a cause. This principle is already explicitly formulated by Plato, and is almost universally accepted in Greek philosophy.<sup>41</sup> The second principle, upon which Plethon's argument turns, maintains that every cause brings about its effect necessarily and in a determinate way.

Beyond doubt all things are determined. For if any event were to occur without being determined, either it would occur without its cause, and there would therefore be something which came into existence uncaused; or the cause which produced it would be operating in an indeterminate fashion, subject to no necessity, and there would therefore be a cause which did not produce its effects in a necessary and determinate fashion (ἀνάγκη ... ὀρίσμενως). Neither of these alternatives is possible.<sup>42</sup>

The claim that causes produce their effects in a necessary and determinate manner deserves closer examination. In her edition of *De differentiis*, Lagarde connects this principle with the Pseudo-Platonic *Epinomis* 982C, and with Aristotle's *De generatione et corruptione* II.10, 336a27–28. The first passage, which Plethon adduces as a Platonic proof-text for his determinism in a letter

<sup>40</sup> Plethon, *On Fate* 64; *De differentiis* ch. VIII., 46 Lagarde, ch. 33, 203 Woodhouse. See also Plethon's *Reply to Scholarios*, *Patrologia Graeca* 160, 1007B–C, ch. 33, 305 Woodhouse; *Ep.* 19, Mohler III, 461, pp.18–28.

<sup>41</sup> Plato, *Timaeus* 28A4–6; cf. Parmenides fr. B8, 7 ff. DK; Leucippus fr. B2 DK. The Epicureans invoke an atomic 'swerve' in order to explain the formation of compound bodies and account for human autonomy. Their critics protest against the 'uncaused motions' they postulated. See Cicero, *On Fate* 23; *Epicurea* fr. 280 Usener. In addition, Plutarch sets out an argument against determinism coming from an unnamed philosopher according to which our choice between two equivalent alternatives can only be explained in terms of 'adventitious motions' arising in our soul; he also reports Chrysippus' reply who insists that different effects must have different causes (*On Stoic Contradictions* ch. 23, 1045B–D).

<sup>42</sup> Plethon, *On Fate*, 64, translation by Woodhouse.

to Bessarion,<sup>43</sup> does not seem pertinent, as it treats the agency of the intelligent celestial souls (that is, gods) rather than causality in general, and does not invoke necessity in a technical sense.<sup>44</sup> The Aristotelian passage formulates a general causal principle: “for by nature the same [cause], provided it remain in the same state, always produces the same [effect].”<sup>45</sup> This statement comes closer to the problem at stake. It can be argued that it has deterministic implications, although this is a possibility which in all probability did not occur to Aristotle himself.<sup>46</sup> In any case, neither passage provides Plethon with the conceptual tools to construct his argument for determinism.

We find, however, a passage in the Neoplatonic Ammonius (435/445–517/526 AD) which contains a formulation which is strikingly close to Plethon's second causal principle. In the introduction to his exegesis of Aristotle's treatment of *futurum contingens* in *De interpretatione* ch. 9, Ammonius argues that the problem is relevant, among other branches of philosophy, to metaphysics as well:

You will also find that this study extends to first philosophy. For the theologian too will investigate how the things in the world are governed by providence, and whether all that comes to be arises in a definite

<sup>43</sup> Plethon, *Ep.* 21, Mohler III, p.466, ff.

<sup>44</sup> 982b5–c5: “The necessity of the soul that possesses intelligence is far the most powerful of all necessities. For it is a ruler, not a subject, and so ordains its decrees. When a soul reaches the best decision in accordance with the best intelligence, the result, which is truly to its mind, is perfectly unalterable. Not even adamant could ever be mightier and more unalterable. Truly, three Fates hold fast whatever has been decided through the best counsel by each and all of the gods, and guarantee that it is brought to pass.” Translation by R. D. McKirahan.

<sup>45</sup> τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχον αἰετὸ αὐτὸ πέφυκε ποιεῖν. Translation by H. H. Joachim, modified. The principle is invoked in a proof for the plurality of motions on the cosmic level. Aristotle argues that generation and perishing, being opposites, must have opposite causes, and, consequently, more than one motion has to be posited in order to account for them. Another pertinent Aristotelian passage is *Physics* II.4, 195b36–196a3: “Some people wonder even whether there are any such things [sc. luck and the automatic] or not. They say that nothing comes to be as an outcome of luck, but that there is a definite cause of everything (πάντων εἶναι τι αἴτιον ὀρισμένον) which we say comes to be as an automatic outcome or as an outcome of luck.” Translation by W. Charlton. In spite of the similarity of the wording to Plethon's second causal principle, the problem Aristotle is dealing here with is in fact closer to the object of Plethon's first causal principle, namely, the question of whether there are events without a cause, see the example adduced at 196a3–5.

<sup>46</sup> He contrasts necessary and non-necessary being in *De generatione et corruptione* II.11.

manner and of necessity (ὀρισμένως καὶ ἐξ ἀνάγκης), like what holds in the case of eternal things, or there are also some things which occur contingently, whose coming to be one must ascribe to causes which are, obviously, particular and at each time different.<sup>47</sup>

Ammonius is setting up a dilemma between the acceptance of universal necessity of all events and a view accommodating certain contingent occurrences as well.<sup>48</sup> Plethon's dilemma is the same, except for some minor variations in terminology.<sup>49</sup> In the argument for the determinist option, Plethon goes on to describe the relationship between the cause and the effect in the very same terms (ἀνάγκη ... ὀρισμένως) by which Ammonius characterizes “becoming” or the events taking place in the cosmos (ὀρισμένως καὶ ἐξ ἀνάγκης) in the first horn of his dilemma. In my view, Ammonius' text must have been among Plethon's inspirations with regard to his second causal principle. This suggestion is corroborated by the fact that Plethon's argument in favor of fate primarily revolves around the question of divine foreknowledge, the problem Ammonius addresses in a lengthy digression after the passage just quoted.<sup>50</sup> The important thing, nevertheless, is that in terms of doctrine Plethon does not follow the Neoplatonic Ammonius who is at pains to preserve genuine contingency. On the contrary, he embraces the determinist thesis which Ammonius opposes

<sup>47</sup> Ammonius, *On Aristotle On Interpretation*, 131, 4–10, translation by David Blank.

<sup>48</sup> The terminology of ‘definiteness’ or ‘determinateness’ (ὀρισμένως) is primarily used by Ammonius in relation to propositions. He repeatedly states that in contradictory pairs of future contingent propositions truth and falsity are not distributed definitely (e.g. 131, 2–4; 140, 13); for further occurrences and discussion see Sorabji's Introduction in Ammonius 1998, pp.8–13. The idea ultimately goes back to Aristotle's claim that in contradictory pairs of future contingent propositions “it is necessary for one member ... to be true or false—not, however, this one or that one, but however it chances” (*On interpretation* 19a36–38). Ammonius also frequently employs the term ὀρισμένως in connection with divine foreknowledge (e.g. 132, 11–13; 134, 25). There is a passage, however, in which the term is used to characterize the way in which a cause produces its effect. If someone goes out in order to see a friend but on his way happens to buy a book, the latter event merely supervenes on the original intention, and there is “no proximate cause which did this in a definite manner” (142, 26 f.).

<sup>49</sup> The dilemma is first stated in terms of a contrast between determination and fate (ὀρίσται τε καὶ εἵμαρται) on the one hand and chance (ὅπως ἂν τύχοι) on the other, but in the argument fate and necessity are treated as equivalent (οἱ τὴν περὶ τῶν ἐσομένων ἀνάγκην τε καὶ εἵμαρμένην ἀναφοῦντες, Alexandre, 64). The problem is rephrased in terms of necessity and contingency in *Ep.* 19. Mohler III, p.21 ff., cf. *Ep.* 21, Mohler III, p.466, 21 ff.

<sup>50</sup> Ammonius, *On Aristotle On Interpretation*, 132, 8–138.11.



both in his independent discussion of divine foreknowledge and in the exegesis of Aristotle's text. We can conclude, I think, that Plethon merely exploited Ammonius' text as a source for the determinist position.<sup>51</sup>

There is sufficient evidence that Plethon relies not only on the determinist position which is entertained as a theoretical possibility and firmly rejected by Aristotle and his commentators, but also on the robust theory advocated by the Stoics.<sup>52</sup> It is part of the Stoics' theory that fate is inescapable and unalterable. At the same time, Alexander of Aphrodisias, a Peripatetic philosopher (2<sup>nd</sup> century CE) whose polemical treatise is among the main sources of the Stoic doctrine, reports that the Stoics claimed to preserve contingency:

The possible and the contingent is not done away with, if all things come to be according to fate, on these grounds: (i) It is possible for that to come to be which is not prevented from coming to be, even if it does not come to be. (ii) The opposites of the things that come to be in accordance with fate have not been prevented from coming to be (for which reason they are still possible even though they do not come to be).<sup>53</sup>

Apparently, the Stoics consider the necessity of human actions and personal responsibility as incompatible,<sup>54</sup> and, for this reason, insist that certain events which actually take place are not necessary in the technical sense of the word.<sup>55</sup> Alexander is not impressed by their argumentation, however. He protests that

<sup>51</sup> Michael Psellus literally quotes the Ammonius passage in a text devoted to the issue of divine foreknowledge (*Opuscula* II, 155), although one does not have to assume that Plethon knows it secondhand, as he seems to be well-versed in the Neoplatonic commentators of Aristotle, cf. Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, p.68.

<sup>52</sup> Plethon, unlike Aristotle and Ammonius, formulates his doctrine in terms of 'fate' (εἰμαρμένη) in his treatise on the subject. In a letter in which he sets out to answer the doubts raised by Bessarion concerning his theory of fate, he appeals, along with Plato's authority, to the Stoics, and quotes Cleanthes' celebrated verses on destiny (πεπρωμένη), see *Ep.* 19, Mohler III, p.462, 22–27.

<sup>53</sup> Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Fate*, text, translation and commentary by R. W. Sharples (London: Duckworth, 1983), p.10, 176, 14 ff.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Cicero, *On Fate* 39, 41; Augustinus, *On the City of God* V.10.

<sup>55</sup> In Chrysippus' system of modalities there are propositions which are true but not necessary, and propositions which are false but possible, that is to say, his theory accommodates contingency (even if he does not use a single term for this concept). On modalities in Chrysippus, Susanne Bobzien, *Freedom and Determinism in Stoic Philosophy*, pp.112–119.

the Stoics must admit that events that cannot take place otherwise than they in fact do are necessary.<sup>56</sup> From the perspective of an external critic such as Alexander, the Stoic thesis, according to which fate is all-embracing, inescapable and unalterable, boils down to the claim that all events are necessary. Plethon accepts the latter interpretation of the determinist theory of fate, but, unlike the ancient writers who describe the Stoic doctrine in these terms, he wholeheartedly subscribes to it.

This can be seen from his exchange of letters with his former pupil, Bessarion. In a restatement of his doctrine of fate, Plethon points out that the two causal principles he appeals to entail the abolition of contingency (τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον). He also criticizes the Aristotelians who, in his interpretation, locate contingency "inclined to both sides" (ἀμφίρροπον) in the will.<sup>57</sup> At a later stage of their exchange, Plethon distinguishes between necessity interpreted in terms of what cannot be otherwise (τὸ μὴ ἐνδεχόμενον ἄλλως σχεῖν) on the one hand and necessity understood in terms of force (βία) on the other.<sup>58</sup> He argues that the workings of reason are even more necessary than the violent necessity of desire.<sup>59</sup> Which sense of 'necessity' does he have in mind here? The necessity of reason is opposed to the violent kind of necessity of desire, but, at the same time, both reason and desire are said to be necessary, presumably in the same sense of the word. Plethon's point must be that our actions are necessary in the modal sense, that is, we cannot act otherwise than we actually do.

Plethon's rejection of contingency and his necessitarianism stands in sharp contrast to the Middle Platonic and Neoplatonic tradition which saw contingency as requisite for human autonomy. What is more, he goes beyond the Stoics themselves in maintaining that all events are necessary in the technical, modal sense of the word. It is not clear as to whether he was inspired by the necessitarianism of radical ancient thinkers such as Diodorus Cronus. I would instead assume that he draws on the (more or less hostile) Platonic and Peripatetic portrayals of the Stoic position which equated Stoic causal

<sup>56</sup> Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Fate* 9, 174, 30–175, 8; 10, 177, 27–178, 7. For this type of criticism of Stoic theory, which questions the Stoic understanding of modal notions, see Susanne Bobzien, *Freedom and Determinism in Stoic Philosophy*, pp.129–131.

<sup>57</sup> Plethon, *Ep.* 19, Mohler III, p.461, 21 ff.

<sup>58</sup> Plethon, *Ep.* 21, Mohler III, p.466, 21–24.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* p.466, 24–467, 3.



determinism with necessitarianism. He once again uses these texts as sources and appropriates the view which the Platonists traditionally opposed. He does not seem to be particularly bothered by the anti-Platonism or by the radical character of the position he is adopting.

### 5. The argument for determinism from divine foreknowledge

In addition to the demonstration based on the two causal principles I have examined, Plethon's primary argument for determinism seems to be his appeal to divine foreknowledge and divination.

Furthermore, if future events have not already been determined, there could be no foreknowledge of them not only by men, but also by any of the gods, since it is impossible that there be knowledge of what is absolutely indeterminate; for it would not be possible to decide which member [of the contradictory pair] is true, and to say either that such-and-such will happen or that it will not. As it is, the gods surely do know future events, since they also determine them [...].<sup>60</sup>

The important premise of this argument is that knowledge essentially depends on the nature of its object, that is to say, only determinate objects can be known. In this framework, the existence of divine foreknowledge and divination entails that future statements (presumably including future statements concerning particulars) have a definite truth value, and that future events are fixed in advance. Simply put, divine foreknowledge seems to be incompatible with indeterminism, and this can be adduced in favor of the determinist thesis.

Alexander of Aphrodisias discusses the issue of divine foreknowledge in connection with the Stoic theory of fate (*On Fate* 30). The Stoics postulated that the knowledge of the gods extends to all future events, and they argued that this is only possible if future events are predetermined, that is to say, if everything happens according to fate.<sup>61</sup> Alexander is at one with the Stoics in assuming that divine foreknowledge (and divination) stands or falls with the

<sup>60</sup> Plethon, *On Fate*, 68, my translation.

<sup>61</sup> Chrysippus appeals to divination (which depends on divine foreknowledge) in the following argument for determinism: oracles could not be true if not everything happened according to fate; but divination exists; consequently, everything happens according to fate (reported by Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 4.3.1–2).

complete causal determination of events: if future events are predetermined, then it is possible to know them in advance, if they are not, then there cannot be foreknowledge. Alexander commits himself, however, to the existence of contingency, and argues that foreknowledge is impossible in relation to contingent states of affairs. Future contingents cannot consequently be known by the gods either: what is impossible is impossible for the gods, as well. The same dilemma could have partially motivated the Middle Platonic view according to which fate is a *law* which comprises the infinity of the particular cases in a general form and that, in this way, renders them determinate and suitable objects of divine knowledge.<sup>62</sup>

In his commentary on Aristotle's *De interpretatione*, Ammonius states the same dilemma which occupied Alexander (135, 1 ff. Busse). If the gods have a definite knowledge of future events and exercise providence over them, the contingent character of the events will be abolished; on the other hand, if future events are contingent, no divine providence and foreknowledge will be possible. Ammonius is in a position, however, to avail himself of a solution to this problem which was suggested by Iamblichus and which became standard in Neoplatonic circles.

[...] we answer in accordance with the teaching of the divine Iamblichus and we shall think it right to distinguish the various degrees of knowledge by saying that knowledge is intermediate between the knower and the known, since it is the activity of the knower concerning the known [...] and it sometimes knows the known in a way better than the nature of the knowable thing itself, sometimes worse, and sometimes on the same level.

[...] they [sc. the gods] know the contingents in a manner better than the contingents' own nature, which is why these things have an indefinite nature and can both occur and not occur, while the gods, who have preconceived the knowledge of the contingents in a manner better than their nature, know these things too in a definite manner.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Pseudo-Plutarch, *On Fate* 570A.

<sup>63</sup> Ammonius, *On Aristotle On Interpretation*, 135, 14–19; 136, 11–15, translation by D. Blank.

The central idea is that the character of cognition depends, not so much on the nature of the object known, as on the nature of the knowing subject. In this way, divine knowledge can be extended to the contingent temporal world, without compromising the eternal and necessary way of being of the gods.<sup>64</sup> Through this move, the Neoplatonists manage to preserve both their theological tenets, particularly, divine omniscience and providence on the one hand, and unchangeability and eternity on the other, and the genuine contingency of the sublunary world which is deeply rooted in the Platonic and Peripatetic traditions.

It is extremely unlikely that Plethon was unaware of the standard Neoplatonic way of reconciling divine foreknowledge and contingency. In my view, he ignores this possibility on purpose in the treatise *On Fate*. In any case, when Bessarion reminds him of this doctrine,<sup>65</sup> he is quick to dismiss it:

[...] those who attempt to refute the argument according to which God's foreknowledge is abolished together with the abolition of fate, do not succeed in their refutation, when they say that God knows what is indeterminate in a determinate manner. For if 'indeterminate' were some relation such as 'double', which is, being a relation, double in relation to one object but – although it remains one and the same thing – half in relation to another, those who speak in this way would perhaps seem to make some kind of sense. But since, if anything, 'indeterminate' is non-relative, what they say is rather as if they maintained that God knows a cow as a man or a man as a star. What kind of knowledge

<sup>64</sup> Proclus concisely states the standard Neoplatonic solution: "The gods themselves know what is generated without generation, what is extended without extension, and what is divided without division, and what is in time eternally, and what is contingent necessarily." *In Tim.* 1, 352, 5 ff. Diehl, translation by R. W. Sharples; cf. id., *On Providence*, 64. In the Latin tradition, this kind of solution was known in Boethius' version, *Consolatio* V, prose 4–6. On the Iamblichean solution and Ammonius, see Elias Tempelis, "Iamblichus and the School of Ammonius, Son of Hermeias on Divine Omniscience", pp.207–217 and Sorabji's studies in Ammonius 1998; on Boethius' version, William Lane Craig, *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez* (Leiden/New York/København/Köln: E. J. Brill, 1988), ch. 3.

<sup>65</sup> Bessarion, *Ep.* 18, Mohler III, p.458, 9–13. Bessarion refers to Proclus' *Elements of Theology* (see prop. 124) and to Ammonius' treatment of contingency in his commentary on Aristotle's *De interpretatione*.

is it that consists in knowing something different about the object of knowledge from what it actually is?<sup>66</sup>

Whatever the philosophical difficulties of the mainstream Neoplatonic solution, Plethon's irreverence is striking, as the doctrine in question was initiated by the "divine Iamblichus", and was maintained by respected Platonists such as Proclus and Ammonius. The treatment of divine foreknowledge reveals, once again, that Plethon uses his possible sources selectively (not to say tendentiously). He extracts from Platonic authors, and possibly from Alexander of Aphrodisias, the Stoic doctrines and arguments that are being criticized, and he himself adopts the Stoic position. The argument from divine foreknowledge is particularly interesting because in this case Plethon ignores later developments within the Platonic tradition, and consciously returns to an earlier phase of the debate in which divine foreknowledge of particular events and their genuine contingency were considered as incompatible alternatives.<sup>67</sup>

## 6. Freedom and the external determination of human reason

The question of moral responsibility, to which the final part of the treatise *On Fate* is devoted,<sup>68</sup> is a notorious difficulty which all determinists have to face. The objection Plethon attempts to answer goes as follows. If everything is predetermined and happens through necessity, human beings will not be

<sup>66</sup> Plethon, *Ep.* 19, p.463, 4–12, my translation.

<sup>67</sup> Another way to reconcile divine foreknowledge with contingency and human autonomy was propounded by Origen who argues that foreknowledge does not *cause* the events foreknown and does not render them necessary (*Against Celsus* II.20; *Philocalia* 23 and 25). On Origen's solution, see William Lane Craig, *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez*, p.80. István Bugár, "Sceptical Theology", *Rhizai* 2 (2006), pp.299–319 suggests that Origen's strategy of severing the logical and the causal orders goes back to a remark by Carneades (Cicero, *De Fato* 14.32). Plethon seems to reject Origen's approach as he connects divine foreknowledge with causation. In his view, the gods know the future events by being their cause, by arranging and determining them (*On Fate*, 68–70 Alexandre), rather than by being affected by them. The notion of causal knowledge has Stoic roots, cf. Richard T. Wallis, "Divine Omniscience in Plotinus, Proclus, and Aquinas", in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought: Essays in Honour of A.H. Armstrong*, edited by H. J. Blumenthal and Robert Austin Markus (London: Variorum Publications, 1981), p.225. Causal knowledge is recognized by Ammonius (*On Aristotle On Interpretation* 132, 13 ff.), but he qualifies divine agency in such a way as to leave room for human autonomy.

<sup>68</sup> Plethon, *On Fate*, pp.70–78.

either masters of themselves (κύριοι ἑαυτῶν) or free (ἐλεύθεροι), and, given that bad people are necessarily bad, divine punishment cannot be just.<sup>69</sup>

In reply to this objection, Plethon interprets freedom (ἐλευθερία) in terms of “living as one wants to”, and insists that “well-being”, the state which every-one wants to achieve, does not require the agent to be exempt from causal determination and from necessity. Freedom should be contrasted with slavery rather than with necessity.

If, then, someone defines freedom in this rather than in that way, namely, in terms of being hindered or not to live as one wishes to (τῷ κωλύεσθαι ἢ μὴ κωλύεσθαι τινα ζῆν ὡς βούλεται) – everyone wishes to fare well and to be happy – , then everybody who fares well will be free, no matter whether or not he is subject to rule.<sup>70</sup>

This interpretation of freedom resembles the traditional Stoic understanding of this notion which becomes central in Epictetus.<sup>71</sup> Let me quote a characteristic statement of this view:

He is free who lives as he wills (ἐλεύθερός ἐστιν ὁ ζῶν ὡς βούλεται), who is subject neither to compulsion (ἀναγκάσαι), nor hindrance (κωλύσαι), not force, whose choices are unhampered, whose desires attain their end, whose aversions do not fall into what they would avoid.<sup>72</sup>

In Epictetus' view, one can avoid frustration and fulfill her desires only if she manages to confine them to what is under her exclusive control (that is, to certain aspects of her mental life), and thus refrains from pursuing external things which might enslave her. This notion of freedom ultimately goes back to Socrates who argued, according to Xenophon, that freedom can be achieved by self-control (ἐγκράτεια), the rule of reason over irrational desires, which is the only way to make sure that one is not “hindered (κωλύεσθαι) in doing what is

most honorable” or “forced (ἀναγκάζεσθαι) to do what is most dishonorable”.<sup>73</sup> We might admit that this kind of freedom is compatible with determinism. There is a problem, however. The internal freedom is a normative ideal which cannot serve as the basis for moral responsibility.<sup>74</sup> This is obvious, since moral responsibility must extend to every rational agent, while freedom is the privilege of a select few. Furthermore, Plethon seems to disregard an important aspect of the Stoic doctrine, namely, the emphasis on the contrast between internal and external. Plethon maintains that external determination and freedom are compatible, whereas Epictetus interprets freedom, in line with the Stoic tradition, in terms of autonomy as opposed to heteronomy.<sup>75</sup>

The latter difficulty can be brought out more clearly by examining Plethon's treatment of self-mastery. Plethon suggests that human beings are masters of themselves (κύριοι ἑαυτῶν) to the extent to which reason is capable of controlling irrational desires.<sup>76</sup> In his view, the fact that different people may react differently to the same situation reveals the individual differences of their minds which can be explained in terms of nature and training (φύσις, ἀσκησις). Plethon's view is that the individual nature of reason is bestowed on us by the gods. Training, by which we shape ourselves, depends on our opinion (δόξα). The latter is, however, likewise implanted into us by the gods.<sup>77</sup> In short, Plethon argues for the external determination of reason rather than for its autonomy. ‘Being master’ traditionally refers to the fact that an activity originates from the agent herself and is completely under her control, as opposed to succumbing to *external* influences.<sup>78</sup> In contrast, Plethon limits

<sup>73</sup> Xenophon, *Memorabilia* IV.5.3–5 and 7. The phrases above are taken from IV.5.4, translation by E. C. Marchant, modified. It should be noted that in the Stoics' monistic psychological theory irrational desires involve mistaken judgements formed by reason itself, while Xenophon seems to contrast reason and desire in a less sophisticated manner.

<sup>74</sup> Susanne Bobzien, *Freedom and Determinism in Stoic Philosophy*, p.330 ff. argues that normative freedom (ἐλευθερία) and the autonomy requisite for moral responsibility (‘that which depends on us’, τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν) are distinct notions that serve to articulate different philosophical problems.

<sup>75</sup> Susanne Bobzien, *Freedom and Determinism in Stoic Philosophy*, ch 7.

<sup>76</sup> Plethon, *On Fate*, pp.70–74.

<sup>77</sup> Plethon, *On Fate*, p.72.

<sup>78</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1113b32, *id.*, *Eudemian Ethics* 1223a5; [Aristotle], *Magna Moralia* 1207a19–25; Epictetus, *Diss.* I.11.37; IV.12.7; Plotinus, *Ennead* VI.8.13, 10; 15, 9;

<sup>69</sup> Plethon, *On Fate*, p.70.

<sup>70</sup> Plethon, *On Fate*, pp.74–76, translation by Woodhouse.

<sup>71</sup> Epictetus, *Diss.* IV.1.1; cf. IV.1.128; II.1.23–2. Cf. Cicero, *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 34; *De officiis* I. 69 ff.; Persius: *V. Sat.*; Philo, *Quod omnis probus* 59 f., cf. 97; Dio Chrysostomus, *Or.* 14.17.

<sup>72</sup> Epictetus, *Diss.* IV.1.1, Oldfather's translation.

'self-mastery' to the intrapsychic relationship between reason and irrational desire.<sup>79</sup> This analysis is less than satisfactory in the present connection, as it fails to address the question of the threat posed by external determination to moral responsibility.<sup>80</sup>

The fact that Plethon allows for, or rather insists on, the external determination of the mind is all the more surprising as the major ancient philosophical schools vindicate human autonomy in some form. The Stoics solve the problem of moral responsibility by claiming that the external circumstances and the representations conveying them to the mind are merely auxiliary causes of assent, the act that launches the psychic process leading to action, which means that its main cause must be *internal* to the agent.<sup>81</sup> It is vital to Stoic compatibilism that human action is autonomous, that is, not necessitated or induced by external factors. The Peripatetic Alexander of Aphrodisias, while he propounds a novel libertarian notion of 'that which depends on us', is presupposing all along, in the footsteps of Aristotle, that the principle of action is internal to human agents.<sup>82</sup>

As for the Platonists, we saw above that they emphasize the independence of the human soul from external (particularly to physical) influences. Plato himself suggested that the soul, due to its self-moving nature, is the ultimate

Porphyry, *Quaest. Hom. ad Odysseiam*, I.5.46; Simplicius, *Commentary on Epictetus' Enchiridion* 64, 16; 67, 29.

<sup>79</sup> "Men are masters of themselves not in the sense that they are ruled by absolutely no one, neither by other beings nor by the gods themselves, but in the sense that they have within themselves their sole ruling principle, namely their intelligence (τὸ φρονεῖν), and their other elements are ruled by it." Plethon, *On Fate* 72, translation by Woodhouse.

<sup>80</sup> Plethon dispenses with the problem of divine justice by arguing that punishment coming from the gods is divine assistance aimed at correction rather than retaliation (*On fate*, 76–78). This is based on Plato's penology set out in the *Gorgias* and in the *Laws*, but it is hardly adequate as a solution to the difficulty at stake, as it evades the problem of personal responsibility. If divine punishment benefits the wrongdoer, the question as to whether he deserves it becomes less pressing.

<sup>81</sup> Chrysippus' argument for compatibilism invoking the distinction of causes is better preserved in the Latin sources than it is in the Greek ones (Cicero, *De Fato* 40.2–43, Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 7.2). See, however, Plutarch, *De Stoicorum repugnantiis* 1055f–1056a and 1057a–b, with Susanne Bobzien, *Freedom and Determinism in Stoic Philosophy*, pp.271–274.

<sup>82</sup> Alexander, *On Fate* ch. 15, 185, 12–22, cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1110b15–17; 1111a22–24; 1113b17–21.

origin of motion both on a cosmic scale and in the individual organisms, and used this doctrine to establish moral responsibility. In a letter to Plethon, Bessarion takes up this thread, and, invoking Simplicius' authority, urges that choice and volition (προαίρεσις) must be regarded as being in one's own power (αὐτεξούσιος) and in no way necessitated, otherwise the self-moving quality (τὸ αὐτοκίνητον) of the soul and thereby its essence is abolished.<sup>83</sup> Bessarion's objection to Plethon's determinism is embedded in his more general critique of Plethon's theory of causality. Bessarion draws attention to the (Neo)platonist doctrine of self-constitution. According to this theory, the dependence of intelligible entities on higher causes is not to be understood in terms of deterministic one-way causation since souls and intellects qualify as self-constituting entities (αὐθυπόστατα), that is, they cooperate with their principles in bringing about their own nature.<sup>84</sup> Self-constitution tells against Plethon's doctrine of fate (in particular, against the thesis of the external determination of the soul), even if Bessarion does not state this in so many words.<sup>85</sup> Plethon replies to this objection that self-motion and self-constitution must be comprehended in a restricted sense.<sup>86</sup> He argues that so-called self-movers can be analyzed into a part which moves and another part which is moved. In the case of the soul, which as a whole qualifies as a self-mover, the impulse, the will, and the emotions "are moved by our thinking part (τὸ φρονεῖν) and they are ruled by it, whereas it [the thinking part] itself is moved from the outside."<sup>87</sup> The thinking part owes its motion to the external circumstances or to God. Plethon borrows the strategy, invoking a distinction within the alleged

<sup>83</sup> Bessarion, *Ep.* 18, Mohler III, p.457, 23–30. Bessarion's short remark recapitulates a long argument in Simplicius' *Commentary on Epictetus' Enchiridion* (8, 37–14, 24 Dübner, see particularly 13, 49–14, 2). For self-motion as the essence of the soul, see Plato's *Phaedrus* 245e–246a and *Laws* 895e–896a.

<sup>84</sup> Bessarion, *Ep.* 18, Mohler III, p.455, 6–456, 22. Bessarion sees a parallel between self-constitution and self-motion, both of which can be used to demonstrate the immortality and indestructibility of intelligible substances.

<sup>85</sup> Note that Bessarion introduces the theory of self-constitution as a qualification of the principle of causality (*Ep.* 18, Mohler III, p.455, 6–10), on which Plethon's theory of fate rests.

<sup>86</sup> Plethon discusses self-motion at length in his reply to Bessarion's first *quaestio* concerning self-constitution (*Ep.* 19, Mohler III, p.459, 13–460, 5, esp. 459, 23 ff.). In his reply to Bessarion's fourth *quaestio* concerning fate (*ibid.*, p.461, 81–463, 19), he restates his argument against self-motion (see esp. *ibid.*, 461, 35–462, 3).

<sup>87</sup> Plethon, *Ep.* 19, Mohler III, p.462, 10–11, reading ἐξωθεν αὐτὸ κινούμενον instead of Mohler's ἐξωθεν αὐτοκινούμενον.



self-movers, from Aristotle's anti-Platonic analysis of the origin of motion,<sup>88</sup> and additionally applies the same strategy to self-constitution. In his view, self-constitution likewise involves a part which brings about the other parts, and the former depends on God for its being. He interprets external causation in relation to allegedly self-moving and self-constitutive entities in deterministic terms, that is, he assumes that the external cause *necessitates* its effects.<sup>89</sup>

We can conclude that the thesis according to which the soul is externally determined is Plethon's considered view. In this point, he goes against the consensus of mainstream ancient philosophical traditions, including Plato and his followers.

## 7. The legacy of ancient philosophy and the construction of a new pagan Platonism

One might wonder what Plethon's motives were for departing from the Platonic tradition concerning causation and human autonomy, and adopting instead an extreme determinist, or rather necessitarian, position which leaves little room for autonomous human action. It is, of course, completely natural to assume that a philosopher coming up with a provocative theory is simply elaborating an intuition the truth of which he is firmly convinced of. Furthermore, it has been suggested that Plethon's theory of fate is motivated, at least partly, by a theology of history which makes the political success of a community dependent on their faith in divine predestination. Islamic fatalism could have served as a model for such a theory.<sup>90</sup> In addition to these factors, another motive seems particularly relevant, namely, Plethon's anti-Christianism.

Human autonomy was a central concern in Christian thought from the time of the apologetes onwards. Divine omnipotence, goodness and justice can

only be preserved by demonstrating that the responsibility for evil lies with man and other rational creatures rather than with their Creator. Christian writers engaging in polemics against Gnostic and astrological determinism borrowed their arguments from pagan Platonic and Aristotelian philosophers who attacked the Stoic theory of fate. In spite of their heated debates in other areas, pagan Platonists and Christians of late antiquity found themselves on the same side in the dispute on fate and human autonomy. In fact, Origen's account of human freedom, which has become very influential in subsequent Christian thought, is based on Stoic and Platonic conceptions of autonomy.<sup>91</sup> John of Damascus, who sums up the patristic tradition in the 7–8<sup>th</sup> centuries, takes over the late Neoplatonic strategy to reconcile divine foreknowledge and human freedom.<sup>92</sup>

The view of the causal structure of the world and of human action which emerges from Plethon's theory of fate is the negative of the image of the world and man which had come to be generally accepted among orthodox Christians in Patristic times. Plethon interprets fate in terms of an all-embracing necessitating power, he plays out divine foreknowledge against contingency and human freedom, and champions the external determination of the soul instead of autonomy. In all these issues, he is opposing crucial Christian tenets. It is plausible to suppose that Plethon abandoned mainstream Platonism concerning fate and human autonomy because of its agreement with the standard Christian view. When he decided to break with Christian doctrine and to

<sup>88</sup> Aristotle, *Physics* VII.1; VIII.4–6; *De motu animalium* 1–4.

<sup>89</sup> The object of volition (βουλητόν) and beliefs (δόγματα), which are implanted into the soul from the outside, are said to cause human action in a necessary manner (σὺν ἀνάγκῃ), *Ep.* 19, Mohler III, p.461, 32–35 and 462, 30f. This is entailed by Plethon's second causal principle ('the cause produces its effects in a necessary and determinate fashion', see section 4 above), unless causal responsibility is distributed among more than one cause, possibly belonging to various types. Plethon does not seem, however, to be interested in making such qualifications.

<sup>90</sup> Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*, p. 222 f.

<sup>91</sup> Origen, *On principles* III.1. For an analysis, see Frede, *A Free Will. Origins of the Notion in Ancient Thought*, pp.102–124. Frede's main thesis is that the notion of a free will emerged in imperial Stoicism, and it was taken over by Platonism and Christianity through which it found almost universal acceptance. It should be remarked, however, that Christian thinkers of late antiquity, while they were indebted to the Stoics on the conceptual level, combatted their determinism. For the context of Origen's account in earlier Christian thought, see István Bugár, "Where Does Free Will Come From? Some Remarks Concerning the Development of the Concept of Human Autonomy Before Origen" in *Origeniana Nona: Origen and the Religious Practice of His Time*, edited by G. Heidl and R. Somos, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 228 (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), pp.625–36.

<sup>92</sup> John A. Demetracopoulos, "In Search of the Pagan and Christian Sources of John of Damascus' Theodicy: Ammonius, the Son of Hermeias, Stephanus of Athens and Josph Chrysostom on God's Foreknowledge and Predestination and Man's Freewill" in *Byzantine Theology and Its Philosophical Background*, edited by Antonio Rigo, Studies in Byzantine History and Civilization, 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), pp.50–86 has shown in detail that John's account of divine knowledge goes back to Ammonius' and Stephanus' commentaries on Aristotle's *De interpretatione*.



work out a theological and philosophical alternative, he turned to the Stoics for inspiration, and advanced a causal theory resembling the Stoics' doctrine of fate as portrayed by their Platonic and Peripatetic opponents. It is not the case, however, that Plethon somehow came under the Stoics' spell and simply adopted their doctrine of fate and autonomy. When it comes to the all-important issue of human autonomy, he also parts company with the Stoics. It might be suspected that his motive for doing so is, once again, the desire to set up a position radically opposed to Christianity. In short, the main doctrinal features of Plethon's theory of fate and human freedom can be understood in terms of an anti-Christian agenda.<sup>93</sup>

A doctrinal comparison reveals that Plethon breaks with mainstream Platonism in the central issues of fate and human autonomy. Can we continue calling him a Platonist? I believe that this question should be answered in the affirmative, notwithstanding Plethon's departure from the Platonic tradition concerning the problems I have scrutinized in this paper. Plethon's thought is in many ways indebted to Plato and the ancient Platonists both in doctrine and in the form of speculation. His philosophy is permeated by Platonic elements such as the distinction between the sensible and intelligible reality, hierarchical ontology, the integration of pagan mythology into the metaphysical scheme, political utopianism and the conception of the tradition of ancient wisdom, to name but a few examples. Moreover, as I have mentioned above, he actually sides with Plato against Aristotle in *De differentiis*. Finally, when Bessarion invokes Plato and ancient Platonists in his objections, Plethon makes an attempt to create a Platonic pedigree for his doctrines.<sup>94</sup>

Plethon's thought cannot be regarded, however, as a direct continuation of ancient Neoplatonism.<sup>95</sup> In this respect, his reaction to Bessarion's criticisms is

<sup>93</sup> For an argument for Plethon's paganism, with an overview of the scholarly debate on whether Plethon's paganism should be taken at face value, see Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*, pp.148–160. Vojtěch Hladký, *The Philosophy of Gemistos Plethon Platonism in Late Byzantium, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2014) argues for the possibility that Plethon's *Laws* is a literary experiment rather than a pagan confession. – The analysis of Plethon's motives to abandon Christianity lies beyond the scope of the present paper.

<sup>94</sup> For Plethon's exegetical arguments for the Platonic character of his doctrine of fate, see his *Ep.* 19, Mohler III, p.462, 21–39 and *Ep.* 21, *ibid.*, p.466, 8–31.

<sup>95</sup> I differ here from both Karamanolis, "Plethon and Scholarios on Aristotle", and Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon* (for their respective approaches, see section 1 above). Unlike Karamanolis, I believe

particularly instructive. While Bessarion appeals to the 'confraternity' (θίασος) of Platonists,<sup>96</sup> Plethon prefaces his reply with a *diaphonia* argument in relation to the Platonic tradition.<sup>97</sup> By emphasizing the disagreements among Platonists, he immunizes himself against the charge of deviation from Platonic orthodoxy. Furthermore, Plethon dismisses Plato's myth of Er, adduced by Bessarion against determinism, as a narrative that cannot be taken as an exact statement (δι' ἀκριβείας λεγόμενα).<sup>98</sup> This contravenes the exegetical norms of ancient Neoplatonists who, from Iamblichus onward, attempted to account for every detail of Plato's dialogues in their own terms. We should also recall that Plethon does not shrink from the drastic step of rewriting Plato's text when he has doctrinal qualms with it.<sup>99</sup> Through these methods, he manages to free himself from the doctrinal constraints, which Plato's texts or their traditional Platonic interpretations might place on him, while still claiming the authority of that tradition. It has been observed that Plethon alternates between the plural first and the third persons when talking about the Platonists, and at one point even explicitly distances himself from Plato's view.<sup>100</sup> I take it that these formulations are not to be explained merely in terms of tactical considerations on Plethon's part. They instead reflect the fact that Plethon maintains a greater distance from Plato and the Platonic traditions than the ancient Platonists usually do. The case of his theory of fate reveals that he is capable of almost completely detaching himself from traditional Platonic commitments.

that Plethon's claims to be an orthodox Platonist cannot be taken at face value. Similarly, Siniosoglou's suggestion of the survival of ancient Platonism through Byzantine times does not help to explain Plethon's doctrine of fate and autonomy, as he manifestly breaks with the standard ancient Platonic (and, at some points, even with the Stoic) doctrines. It is not easy to find direct precursors to his deterministic understanding of fate in Byzantine thought (cf. Hildebrand Beck, *Vorsehung und Vorherbestimmung in der theologischen Literatur der Byzantiner*, pp.198–206). Psellus, a prominent Byzantine Platonist, restricts fate to the physical world and insists on contingency and human autonomy (Beck, *Vorsehung und Vorherbestimmung in der theologischen Literatur der Byzantiner*, pp.90–92; Demetracopoulos, "Georgios Scholarios – Gennadios II's *Florilegium Thomisticum II (De Fato)* and Its Anti-Plethonic Tenor", p.307 f. with note 18).

<sup>96</sup> Bessarion, *Ep.* 18, Mohler III, p.455, 11.

<sup>97</sup> Plethon, *Ep.* 19, Mohler III, p.458, 21–459–12.

<sup>98</sup> Plethon, *Ep.* 19, Mohler III, p.462, 33–34.

<sup>99</sup> Fabio Pagani, "Damnata verba: censure di Pletone in alcuni codici platonici", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 102:1 (2009), pp.167–202.

<sup>100</sup> Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, p.216, referring to *De differentiis* chs. 12, 23, 37 and 42 (his numbering).

Plethon treats the ancient philosophical tradition as a whole in a similar spirit. In the preface to his great work, the *Laws*, he promises “a theology according to Zoroaster and Plato”, “an ethics according to the same sages, and also according to the Stoics” and “a physics according to Aristotle, for the most part”.<sup>101</sup> Plethon acknowledges his reliance on a complex philosophical heritage, but accords pride of place to the Pythagorean-Platonic tradition from Pythagoras to Iamblichus. He emphasizes, quite in the vein of fundamentalist Platonic ideology,<sup>102</sup> that the ancient sages and eminent philosophers (mostly Platonists) are in agreement on the most important issues.<sup>103</sup> There is, however, another important facet to his self-presentation. In the *Laws*, he sets out from a *diaphonia* argument (I.1), and, having listed “the best guides to truth”, indicates that he reserves for himself the right of adjudicating the debated issues in accordance with the views of those ancient authorities “who thought most correctly on each occasion”, using “reason, the most efficient and most divine of our discriminatory faculties”.<sup>104</sup> In this way, he creates a space for free thought, while claiming to be the heir of ancient wisdom.

As Plethon's theory of fate indicates, his actual philosophical practice squares well with these programmatic statements. The doctrinal features of this theory cannot be explained in terms of Platonic or Stoic *influences* – a causal model of explanation does not seem to be adequate here. Ficino, who relies basically on the same ancient texts, constructs a Christian Platonism. I have suggested that Plethon's theory of fate reflects an anti-Christian agenda. It is not the case, however, that he simply revives the pagan Platonism of late antiquity. This can be seen from the fact that ancient Neoplatonists and Christians do not clash over the issue of fate and human autonomy, whereas Plethon radically rejects their shared views. An examination of Plethon's theory of fate leads to the conclusion that he reconstitutes pagan Platonism in a daring and sovereign spirit, freely making use of his ancient Platonic and Stoic sources.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Plethon, *Laws*, 2–4.

<sup>102</sup> See section 1 above and Karamanolis, “Plethon and Scholarios on Aristotle”.

<sup>103</sup> Plethon, *Laws* I.2, 32.

<sup>104</sup> Plethon, *Laws*, I.2, 34.

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# Plethon's Philosophy of the Concept

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**Abstract:** The central hypothesis of the analysis here is that the concept in Plethon is mediated by the ideas of the history of philosophy and the philosophy of history. In Plethon, the communality of notion is fostered against supernatural revelation and the *consensus omnium* constitutes a form of natural revelation. For Plethon, Plato is the criterion for the verity of Christianity; his work is about the confrontation between Hellenism and the Christian Middle Ages. Plethon, thus, is an anti-medieval spirit who opposes secular ethics to the ascetic ideal. The first notion of a philosophical system in Plethon is found in his morals and, more specifically, in his *Treatise on virtues*. Plethon's ethical metaphysics is a turn in onto-theology, concentrating on the work of ethics rather than on the contemplation of moral ideas. Plethon is quite anti-contemplative in his *Treatise on virtues* in two ways: first, he seems to introduce the idea of time into concept: the pedagogical movement of virtue-values realizes the knowledge of traditional virtues. Second, he insists on the idea of difference: each virtue-value is characterized by its own qualities but also by its particular position into a finite-closed system of virtue-values. Plethon shares with the Stoics an insistence on a first initial reflection, i.e. *oikeiosis*, which is for him a societal thinking stemming formally from a natural or, better, original sociability. It is the Platonic anti-naturalism that is adopted by Plethon and not the Aristotelian naturalism, although there are strong concessions made to the natural but in the sense of primacy of the societal or the public self.

**Keywords:** Philosophy of History; History of Philosophy; Stoicism; Platonism; Aristotelianism

## Plethon and Cosmopolity

It is common today to consider Plethon as a national(ist) figure. In the words of Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker:

*Pléthon a pour projet initial de restaurer l'intégrité de la Grèce; un souci nationaliste le pousse à œuvrer pour faire de son pays une nation digne de son glorieux passé. Or, selon le penseur de Mistra, c'est la religion chrétienne qui est coupable de la ruine de la Grèce; il lui semble que la pensée chrétienne secrète des valeurs morales qui rendent les hommes faibles.<sup>1</sup>*

Yet, not so long ago Plethon was considered a cosmopolitan thinker who influenced philosophers and movements all over Europe. For H.W. Haussig, Plethon's denial of Christian providence stimulated Machiavelli's and Guicciardini's effort to relate history to nature. The exact degree of Plethon's influence on Leonardo Bruni, Lorenzo Valla, Marsiglio Ficino and Nicholas of Cusa is not yet determined, nevertheless it cannot be denied; the utopian thought of Thomas More and Tommaso Campanella is also said to carry his mark. The French poetry of *La Pléiade* is allegedly under the impact of the philosopher of the Mistra. As to the currents of ideas, the French physiocrats or the Protestant reformation are said to be akin or associated to Plethon. The Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi has written that Plethon predicted the reformation a hundred years before its appearance and Fritz Schulze, author of a monograph on Plethon, ascertained his influence on German reformation<sup>2</sup>; for Philip Sherrard, Plethon is a precursor of Nietzsche<sup>3</sup>.

Since all the above are dated judgments, one can easily claim that the more or less modern research has rendered them obsolete. On the other hand, the liberation of Greece (1821) has often placed Plethon in the position of a precursor of national resurgence and this was not contrary to the European

mentality of the time. Yet, a nationalist historian like the Greek Constantine Paparrigopoulos saw in him a socialist<sup>4</sup>. Thus, the move from the cosmopolitan Plethon to the nationalist one is not self-evident and both cosmopolitanism and nationalism can aspire to Plethon's heritage. In the subsequent analysis, I will focus on Plethon's *Treatise on virtues* and his chapters from the *Book of Laws* concerning "Fate"<sup>5</sup> and the "Names of the Gods"<sup>6</sup> in an effort to elucidate the philosopher's output and mainly his position on the major topic that is the philosophical concept. The central hypothesis of my analysis will be that the concept in Plethon is mediated by the idea of the history of philosophy and the philosophy of history.

## The struggle for interpretation

In the light of Plethon's dreams of political revival for a part of Byzantium, i.e. Mistra, one may wonder what is the extent of Plethon's anti-byzantinism. For him and his political dreams Neoplatonic speculation would not be sufficiently helpful. Plethon's thinking on politics is much broader than his political projects to redress a part of ancient Greece and Masai speaks of « un climat d'hellénisme héroïque »<sup>7</sup>. In this sense, the names of Greek Gods in his philosophy as formal causes of the categories of the real<sup>8</sup> do constitute an allegory or a reference? Furthermore, the unity of the first principle, Zeus, a sort of super Being, does imply the unity of virtue and is Plethon vaguely monotheist, maybe due to his Christian culture? The Byzantine conservatism is often considered to be a position of resolute anti-novelty where no compromise of revelation can be possible. The humanistic part of the Plethonian philosophy is said to comprise a theory of ideas and the soul, the rejection of scholasticism and the refutation of Averroes<sup>9</sup> that will finally be misunderstood by the Westerners who were advancing a blend of Platonism and Christianity. Plethon

<sup>1</sup> Georges Gémiste Pléthon, *Traité des vertus*, edited by Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker (Athens: Academy of Athens, Leiden: Brill, 1987), XXXVI. Yves Hersant who quotes this passage notes: "le mot 'national' [au lieu de nationaliste] eût mieux convenu, bien qu'également anachronique"; see Yves Hersant, "Un Hellène chez les Latins", *Études Balkaniques*, 6 (1999), p.126.

<sup>2</sup> George A. Papacostas, *George Gemistos-Plethon. An Overview of his Life and Thought with a Comprehensive Bibliography*, (Harrisburg, 1979), pp.38–41.

<sup>3</sup> Philip Sherrard, "Η συμβολική σταδιοδρομία του Γεωργίου Γεμιστού Πλήθωνος" [=The Symbolic Career of George Gemistos Plethon], *Deucalion*, 4:13 (1975), pp.129–145.

<sup>4</sup> Constantin Paparrigopoulos, "Ελλην σοσιαλιστής της δεκάτης πέμπτης εκατονταετηρίδος" [=A Greek socialist of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century], *Pandora*, 1 (1850–51), pp.154–155.

<sup>5</sup> Pléthon, *Traité des Lois*, edited by Charles Alexandre, (Amsterdam, Adolf M. Hakkert, 19662), pp.64–79.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.130–133.

<sup>7</sup> François Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1956), p.65.

<sup>8</sup> Hersant, "Un Hellène chez les Latins", p.127.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*



formulates against Aristotle the hypothesis that morals have a metaphysical foundation and his objective is, via his critique of Aristotelianism, to dissociate Hellenism from Christianity. Against Neoplatonism also he appears concerned with the immanence of his political plans; against the Empire, he endows a return to Greek tradition, in the sense that the *presbyteron* (the remote) would be more benign than the *neoteron* (the recent), a position which is a major Byzantinist characteristic.

On the other hand, in Plethon, the communality of notion is fostered against supernatural revelation and the *consensus omnium* constitutes a form of natural revelation. This is contradictory to any original Platonism. The common notions originate in Chrysippos as the criteria of truth or innate gnosiological trends; these are for Plethon the antique notions. It is a pity that the chapter of the *Book of Laws* entitled “πρόληψις κοινῶν εννοιῶν” was not spared from the Gennadian condemnation. The common notions must be the true doctrines, innately detained by all humans, which is a mark of their universality; yet, for Plethon, the main influence is said to be neither Chrysippos nor Plutarch, but Proclus<sup>10</sup>. Despite his Greek traditionalism, or because of it, Plethon is thus shown to be the most original figure in Byzantine philosophy, a remark that raises again the question of originality in Byzantium<sup>11</sup>. For Masai, in contrast, “le platonisme de Pléthon était trop peu critique, trop peu historique”,<sup>12</sup> raising questions about the precise nature of his radicalism.

Christianity is considered to be the crucial element in Plethon's struggle to detach himself from Aristotle and the Western scholasticism may have played the role of the trigger for combating the Stagirite. The *De differentiis* appears thus as a turning point, departing from the treatises *On Zoroaster* and *On virtues* and maybe also from the commentary *On Chaldean Oracles*<sup>13</sup>. The criticism of

<sup>10</sup> Theodoros N. Nikolaou, Πληθωνικά [=Plethonian Studies] (Thessaloniki: Vanias, 2004), pp.31–33.

<sup>11</sup> On the idea of originality in Byzantium, see Paul Julius Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople: Ecclesiastical and Image Worship in the Byzantine Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), p.51) who makes a distinction between the originality of the pioneer and the originality of selecting from the cultural heritage what is suitable to a specific period and a new set of problems; the Byzantine originality would be of the second type.

<sup>12</sup> Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra*, p.166.

<sup>13</sup> George Karamanolis, “Plethon and Scholarios on Aristotle”, in *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources*, edited by Katerina Ierodiakonou (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), p.259.

Aristotle is limited on the areas where this last differentiates himself from Plato and the critical methodology is probably taken from Plutarch. Aristotle is seen as a degraded Platonist while Platonism is the philosophy that represents the complete truth; this would be the Esoteric Platonism or *Philosophia Perennis*, implying that no progress has been made post Plato. Yet, in the *Book of Laws*, Plethon says that he follows Aristotle's Natural Philosophy; does he refer thus to an inferior truth? In the Neoplatonist exegetical tradition Platonism and Aristotelianism are compatible but complementary as well<sup>14</sup>. Plethon's unified Platonism would be thus a Hellenic Philosophy turned against the spirit of (Western) scholasticism.

Plethon in the *De differentiis* sees in Aristotle a clear anti-Christian position. It would be a misconception to think that he is supporting here Christianity. Aristotle's philosophy is said to be contrary to the Christian doctrine but Aristotelian philosophy for Plethon is a bad philosophy. Does this mean that Christian doctrine is a good one? No, it is a bad religion. Plato's philosophy thus is closer to Christianity for being closer to religion. Plethon's effort in the *De differentiis* is to appeal to Italian humanists inspired by Christian Platonism against the Christian Aristotelians<sup>15</sup>.

Plethon's dependence on Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica* is crucial here<sup>16</sup>; (and on Clement of Alexandria for his Ethics as it is shown elsewhere<sup>17</sup>). Plethon is criticizing Aristotle for following Epicurus' pleasure theory; anti-Epicureanism is a classical byzantine philosophical stand that we witness also, for example, in the Byzantine commentator of the 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Century Michael of Ephesus (*In Eth. Nic. X*, 598.19–24). In this sense, Plethon's sympathy for the Stoic ethics may be based on its similarity to Plato's<sup>18</sup>. This is debatable; in his *Book of Laws* Plethon states that he has been subject to the moral influence of

<sup>14</sup> Richard Sorabji, “The Ancient Commentators on Aristotle”, in *Aristotle Transformed. The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence*, edited by Richard Sorabji (London: Duckworth, 1990), pp.3–5.

<sup>15</sup> Karamanolis, “Plethon and Scholarios on Aristotle”, pp.258–263.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.265.

<sup>17</sup> Georges Arabatzis, “Πλήθωνος Περί αρετῶν και στωική ηθική. Έρευνες για τις πηγές και τη χρονολόγηση του έργου” [=Plethon's On virtues and Stoic Ethics. Research on the sources and the date of the work], *Φιλοσοφία*, 33 (2003), pp.218–232.

<sup>18</sup> Karamanolis, “Plethon and Scholarios on Aristotle”, pp.272–274.

Plato and the Stoics and Zoroaster following rather an idea of allegiance to the Ancient doctrines. In any case, he turns against Aristotle's conception of virtue as mean, that in practice may lead either toward the good or the evil. Plethon's full intellectualism states that God created the intelligible forms and then the sensibles and that matter originates in the intelligible realm; it is a double-scale creation like in Longinus' theory (see Proclus, *In Tim.* I. 322, 18–26). For Aristotle, God is a celestial entity much like the other ones and yet, his unmoved mover is not situated amidst the celestial spheres. For Plethon, Aristotle thinks of God as source of movement but not as existence (all the same, change is a form of existence in Aristotle). Under the influence of Philoponus, Plethon thinks that Aristotle's God is a moving cause but not an efficient one while Plato is a creationist in the sense of the Ancient doctrines<sup>19</sup>.

In order to explain Plethon's national viewpoint, one may be reminded of the fact that Renaissance is primordially an Italian phenomenon – i.e. a national phenomenon – in dialectic relation to Greek culture. The history of philosophy is cemented to the opposition between Platonism and Aristotelianism, i.e. the struggle between the teacher and the apprentice. Plethon is simultaneously an original thinker and a pioneer in helping Platonism to prevail in Italy. The Late Hellenistic philosophy was also a salvation-oriented way of thinking and thus closer to Platonism while the Aristotelian distinction between the poetic and the passive intellect has facilitated the relationship between Platonism and the philosophies of individual redemption. This movement was also facilitated by a new proximity to Pythagoreanism and to the question of the One. It is in this way that the man of the Hellenistic period searched for a God transcending the cosmos. The world of the ideas or Logos would mediate between the two and the Logos should be at the same time immaterial and divine; it should be also human in order to bridge the gap between Man and God. Christianity is taking the exact same path and Plato is the thinker that presides over Christianity. The Neoplatonists were seeing Aristotle as a Platonist philosopher; Plato is for them the divine philosopher and Aristotle the demonic one according to Proclus; and demons are the mediators between the humans and the divine<sup>20</sup>. Yet, the struggle between the two universal thinkers does not cease; the Scholastic

principle “*universalia sunt realia ante rem*” is Platonic, while for Aristotle the universals are “*in re*”. The systematic effort of the Scholastics requires for the appeal to the Aristotelian logic and Aristotle will thus rise to conquer the Western medieval philosophy. Thomas Aquinas marks the agreement between Aristotle and Christian philosophy but the Aristotelian texts cannot support it; the original Greek text reveals the inconsistencies between the two philosophies. Nominalism will question the foundations of the agreement by claiming that general terms are “*nomina*”, giving way to renewed philosophical and ideological clashes. Pomponazzi will be the philosopher that makes evident the autonomy of the Aristotelian theories from Christianity, Averroes or Plato. His work of elucidation leads to a preference for Plato, which is caused mainly by Plethon's arrival to Italy<sup>21</sup>. Plethon would thus stand for a desire to emancipate Byzantine society from Christianity, while in parallel he contributed to the immanentism of Italian political philosophy (Machiavelli, Giucardini) and to the Greek mythologisation of Renaissance art.

For Plethon, Plato is the criterion for the verity of Christianity. In essence, his work is about the confrontation between Hellenism and Christian Middle Ages. Plethon, thus, is an anti-medieval spirit who opposes secular ethics to the ascetic ideal. He is the initiator of a philosophical mythology where mythos is contrasting sterile mimicry. Yet, in Plethon, universal determinism surpasses the theory of ideas. Plethon in any case seems to have understood the *zeitgeist*. He is at the same time a philosopher of the (Platonic) tradition and a revolutionary philosopher. His personal tragedy was his strong relation to the Byzantine status quo<sup>22</sup>.

Plethon is seen as an anti-clerical revolutionary Hellene and in the origin of the formation of the modern Hellenic nation-state. But he was also

<sup>19</sup> For the above, see Karamanolis, “Plethon and Scholaris on Aristotle”, p.274.

<sup>20</sup> Theodossios N. Pelegrinis, “Magie et commentaire dans l'orient chrétien”, in *L'actualité de la pensée byzantine*, edited by George Arabatzis, *Byzantinische Forschungen XXXI*, (2013), pp.1–24.

<sup>21</sup> For a refutation of that theory see James Hankins, “The Myth of the Platonic Academy of Florence”, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 44/3 (1991), pp.429–75.

<sup>22</sup> For the remarks in the previous two paragraphs, see Ioannis N. Theodoracopoulos, *Τα Μαθήματα της δευτέρας και της τρίτης περιόδου. Μάιος και Οκτώβριος 1975. Ελευθέρα Σχολή Φιλοσοφίας ο Πλήθων* [=The Lessons of the Second and Third Period. May and October 1975. Free School of Philosophy “Plethon”] (Athens, 1979), pp.161–196 and Ioannis N. Theodoracopoulos, *Τα εγκαίνια και τα μαθήματα της πρώτης περιόδου. 20–27 Ιανουαρίου 1975. Ελευθέρα Σχολή Φιλοσοφίας ο Πλήθων* [=The Inauguration and the Lessons of the First Period. 20–27 January 1975. Free School of Philosophy “Plethon”] (Athens, 1975), pp.37–50.

a Humanist<sup>23</sup>, while his super-Being, Zeus, is of historical significance as much as of transcendental importance. Plethon was proposing to the Byzantines “the revival of their Hellenic cultural heritage as the sole expression of their national identity”<sup>24</sup>. Plethon, contrary to what Masai affirms, “held that critical thinking constitutes the best approach to gaining valid and/or true knowledge”<sup>25</sup>. The realization of a Greek state implies for Plethon the return to polytheism. His world is said to be governed by “naturalism and determinism”<sup>26</sup> and his dualistic conception of the universe is like the Stoics’. Is the Plethonic religion, a theology? We would rather say that “Plethon espoused Stoicism”<sup>27</sup> to produce a Neo-hellenic theology and religion.

The Plethonian ontology is developing around the Divine Being – or the Being of the Divinity. There are for Plethon three ontological levels: there is Zeus, the thought of pure Being, the sovereign principle of Being, the transcendental and uncaused cause. Zeus is not solely power, essence, a sum of attributes, or activity, but all together, i.e. a single idea of Being. The second level comprises Poseidon, Zeus’ instrument of creation that stands for the active forms; the archetypes, the efficient causes are represented by a limited number of divinities that constitute the third ontological level. General and particular forms are natural reasons marked by determinism; because of this last, there is foreknowledge in nature. The natural world is distinguished from man who is divine and mortal, soul and body in temporal union and not through the Platonic reincarnation. The soul comes from the universal soul (Nous), i.e. Poseidon and is the efficient cause of the body (represented by the *phronein*) while the body stands for *voulesis* (will) and *horme* (impulse). The *voulesis* is understood as the active rational (by nature) being, as dependent (because of determinism) as well as free being (since it is reasonable). Plethon promotes living according to reason; thus, there is the need for ethics, more precisely for

<sup>23</sup> In 1466, the famous Italian condottiere Sigismondo Padolfo Malatesta exhumed Plethon’s remains and brought them to Italy where he gave them an honorable burial in Rimini’s Temple Maletestiano; would such an effort be undertaken if Plethon was of no importance for Italy and the Italian humanism? See George A. Papacostas, *George Gemistos-Plethon. An Overview of his Life and Thought with a Comprehensive Bibliography* (Harrisburg, 1979), p.6.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17.

a code of ethics, socially enhanced. To determine what kind of laws should be promulgated in a harmonic state, there is also the need for Zeus, i.e. for a providential divinity penetrating everything and also for a fixed role for man<sup>28</sup>.

The *Book of Laws* forms a coherent system that cannot be achieved by Christian religion, not because of Christian realism but because of Christian idealism. Plethon uses the Greek cultural singularity against Christianity. He embraces a positive theory of the good – an instrumental or a deontological ethics? – where the Good is God (Zeus); rather than theology, one should speak of philosophical religion. In his ethics, pleasure is a means to happiness (piety). “Plethon’s ethics” is said to be “deontological” since it is constituted by an imperative set of virtues. There is a call for a Hellenic epistemology against the Christian poets and sophists, against subjectivism and skepticism. Thus, his religion is not a natural theology (like the Sophists<sup>29</sup>) because the religious person is in need of the mediation of ethics (thus, it is rather a natural religion like the Stoics’).

If in Plethon we witness the nationalistic sentiment together with Hellenic humanistic ideas, yet, some of Plethon’s cultural heroes were not Hellenes: Zoroaster, the Roman King Numa, the Brahmin of India, the Magi of Media and the ancient Iberian sages<sup>30</sup>; all of them representatives of the Barbaric philosophy of which Diogenes Laertius spoke (D.L., Prologue, 1–9). This universalism of wisdom may be based on (a) universal ideas, (b) consensual notions or (c) an anciently established body of knowledge.

What is the precise case of Plethon’s philosophy and how his system escapes the specific political actuality is what I will try to demonstrate.

<sup>28</sup> For the above, see Papacostas, *George Gemistos-Plethon. An Overview of his Life and Thought with a Comprehensive Bibliography*, pp.17–22.

<sup>29</sup> George Arabatzis, “The Sophists and Natural Theology” in *The Sophists: An Introduction*, edited by Patricia O’Grady, (London: Duckworth, 2008), pp.204–213.

<sup>30</sup> Papacostas, *George Gemistos-Plethon. An Overview of his Life and Thought with a Comprehensive Bibliography*, p.32.

## Plethon on virtues

Plethon broke with the Byzantine consensus of Platonism and Aristotelianism. His neo-paganism is pushing the limits of the religious tolerance of his time. Plethon's Platonic-Zoroastrian Theology is doubled by Stoic Morality (in his own words) and we see a great number of Stoic influences in his work; morality seems thus to precede ontology.

The first notion of a system in Plethon is found in his morals and, more specifically, in his *Treatise on virtues*. He appears there intellectually opposed to Michael Psellos who is the philosophical figure in Byzantium to whom Plethon's philosophical work and Christian skepticism can be the most compared to. Psellos' morals are anything than systematic and seem always mediated by Neoplatonic supernaturalism or transcendence to conceptuality. Plethon's views are quite different. Morality in Plethon obeys to a formalism not of duty (like Kant) but of the knowledge of the state of things, of exercise and practice – thus, morality means firstly understanding the state of moral things and putting into practice this understanding. Yet, Plethon's is not a cognitivist moral theory and his position is quite dissimilar to Socratism. Immorality in Plethon is a question of not knowing *and* not practicing the order of morals and, thus, it is a question of less being; in other terms, less being not tending to full being is immoral. Marsiglio Ficino considered this view as fatalism,<sup>31</sup> yet Plethon's voluntarism combats melancholy that characterized Ficino. It is quite characteristic that Masai speaks of a “postulat d'optimisme”<sup>32</sup> in Plethon. Sociologically, in the situation of rapid decline of the Byzantine inner land, Plethon's theory signifies a practice of counter-degeneration that insists rather on individual responsibility than fate.

The date of the *Treatise* is very important since it allows placing it in his early or his mature philosophy. Masai dates the *Treatise* at about 1439, post the Ferrara/Florence Council; Tambrun-Krasker speaks of an early work, contemporary to his political treatises. Karamanolis also thinks of it as prior to Plethon's arrival to Italy. I have dated it after 1414 on the basis of a text by Plethon commenting

<sup>31</sup> A. G. Keller, “Marsiglio Ficino and Gemistos Plethon on Fate and Free Will”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 20, (1957), p.365.

<sup>32</sup> Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra*, p.199.

upon a *Discourse* by Manuel Chrysoloras<sup>33</sup>. In that sense the work belongs to the author's period of maturity. The *treatise on virtues* is characterized by the influence of both Plato and Epictetus. The preoccupation with Epictetus is distinctive of the Mistra cycle of intellectuals as we see in a member of the cycle, Ioannes Eugenikos<sup>34</sup>, who happens to be the scribe of one of the mss. of Plethon's work *On virtues*<sup>35</sup>.

Plethon is offering in this work general social advices against luxury, on self-sufficiency, a Stoic ideal, and asceticism, which is also in part a Stoic ideal. He promotes the tolerance about corporeal matters. The principles of Stoic influence are the following:

1. The difference between soul and body and the ontological superiority of the soul
2. The imperative to hold one's place
3. The compel to act for the general good
4. To never be feared of what does not depend on one's self
5. To obtain moral excellency through cognition and practice.

Plethon does not refer to the *Manual* (Enchiridion) of Epictetus as broadly as he does to the *Epictetian Discourses*. The *Manual* had been by the time of Plethon and since long a standard work of Christian moral education, often in the form of paraphrases<sup>36</sup>. Plethon makes five crucial references to the *Manual*. He insists thus on:

1. The importance of opinion
2. The imperative to hold one's place

<sup>33</sup> Georges Arabatzis, “Πλήθωνος *Περὶ ἀρετῶν* και στωική ηθική. Έρευνες για τις πηγές και τη χρονολόγηση του έργου” [=Plethon's On virtues and Stoic Ethics. Research on the sources and the date of the work], *Φιλοσοφία*, 33 (2003), pp.218–232.

<sup>34</sup> *The Encheiridion of Epictetus and its Three Christian Adaptations*, edited by Gerard Boter, (Leiden: Brill, 1999), p.282 ff.

<sup>35</sup> Georges Gémiste Pléthon, *Traité des vertus*, edited by Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker, XLV–XLVI.

<sup>36</sup> See *The Encheiridion of Epictetus...*, *ibid.*

3. The attribution to everyone of his due
4. The teleology of the good and
5. The action according to one's good.

Plethon prefers the *Discourses* to the *Manual* because there it is argued more extensively that the instrumental value of logic is inferior to moral perfection. This is Epictetus' use of Plato and Plethon's reference to the Stoic philosopher is doubled by the absence of the Neoplatonic One in his ethical work.

As to Plethon's typology and practice of the virtues, he follows the distinction of Stoic origin between what depends on the individual and what does not, which is used by Plethon with typological and didactic ambitions. The distinction of virtues in capital and derived ones makes that each virtue has a value according to the place it holds in the system of virtues, thus a virtue-value, and not solely by itself. So, the aretaic totality comes before the essence of virtue or the unity of virtue. In the system of virtues, the distinction is not only hierarchical but mainly according to an articulated model of interlaced virtues in a symmetrical fashion; thus, symmetry for the ethics of Plethon comes before the One. This is a resolutely anti-Neoplatonic idea.

Plethon organizes the virtues with an ambition for totality where derived virtue-values are constituents of the system of virtues. The *Treatise* is divided into two Parts; in the first, Plethon presents the cardinal virtues and how these are subdivided into derivative ones, three virtue-values for each cardinal value. In total, there are twelve derivative virtues. What differentiates the cardinal virtues is their domain of ethical relevance: to one's self (prudence), to some other (justice), or to the worst part in us (the courage is to cope with the involuntary passions and the temperance with the voluntary ones). In the second part, the *Treatise* is offering a model of education and exercise of the derivative virtues but, paradoxically, it follows a different order than in the first part. Plethon does not give any reason for the interlaced model but the influence here of Platonism and Stoicism is certain. The problem of this strange order is not limited to the question of its philosophical sources, but concerns primarily its reasons. The approximation of the lowest virtue-value, decency, to the highest, religion, with which begins the second part of the treatise and the overall structure of the rest are serving a purpose that must be consistent with Plethon's general philosophy.

The table of virtues is as follows:

(a) *Virtues*: Prudence – Justice – Courage – Temperance

(b) *The moriology of virtue* (*Treatise on Virtues*, I):

Prudence is divided into: understanding of nature – good advice – religion

Justice into: piety – civic spirit – honesty

Courage into: nobility – fortitude – goodwill

Temperance into: decency – liberality – moderation

(c) *The activity of virtue-values* (*Treatise on Virtues* II):

Decency – > religion : (nobility – fortitude – moderation – liberality – goodwill) + (honesty – good advice – understanding of nature – civic spirit – piety)

or

$A \rightarrow A' : (BB+AA+B) + (B'B'+A'A'+B')$

I should add that I am not convinced by the schema inserted at the end of the *Treatise*<sup>37</sup>, which does not represent Plethon's ideas correctly but gives a trichotomic and consecutive serial image of the virtues, ignoring the interlaced character of the system of virtues.

(d) *The levels of the acquisition of virtue-values are the following*:

- nature – providence
- reason – science
- exercise – practice

One should compare Plethon's fixed division and systematization with Psellos' method of Aretaic division and multiplication of virtues. Plethon is insisting in the *Book of Laws* on the importance of measure and proportion and the great weight of public life and the rituals; all this seems to have played a great role in the structure of virtues.

<sup>37</sup> Georges Gémiste Pléthon, *Traité des vertus*, p.15.



One might say that the Treatise follows a kind of analogy of Being in the following way:

$$\frac{A}{BB} \frac{BB}{A} = \frac{C}{D} \frac{DD}{C}$$

But the above analogy of Being does not take into account that decency is the initiation and religion the end of the system of virtue-values; these two are closely related in the beginning of Part II, as we see in (c), representing in a way, apart from the analogy itself, the efficient and the final cause. Besides, one may wonder to what the Plethonian *good for us* refers. Is it self-determination or free will? That cannot be the case since Plethon defends a strong necessitarianism, for which he was greatly criticized.

Plethon's causality is neither Epicurean nor Aristotelian. The typology of moral necessity pairs with a critique of deliberation in a perspective intensively opposed to hazard. The Stoic influence is there prominent. The Stoic chain of things is ofAdrastean nature, though in Middle Stoicism we see the loosening of rigid necessitarianism. The limited necessitarianism of Middle Stoicism is evident in the paradigm of the theatre that constitutes a turn from sage ethics to social ethics of habit and introduces a distinction in causality between the exterior and interior causality. Plethon, in contrast, is a complete necessitarian<sup>38</sup> and Plethonian necessity ignores the exterior/interior distinction while it is rigorously connected to law.

As to Plethon's exact degree of Stoic influence, the problem is whether he opted for the restricted or the extended view of Stoicism. The restricted view is based on the middle Stoics' preference for quietude instead of totality but Plethon is quite naturally much closer to the Greek desire for totality. Michael of Ephesus had already pointed to two types of stoicism, the early, morally demanding, and the later, rather morally conciliating (*In Eth. Nic.* X, 598.19–24). A common ground between the two is the search for moral perfectionism that marks the history of Stoicism as much as does Plethon's idea of ethics. The corporeality of Plethon in the *Treatise*, instead of Epicurus' moderate use of pleasures is rather referring to the Stoics, to their idea of the body intimate as well as the body social (in opposition to Michael of Ephesus that repudiated the body-like, see *In Eth. Nic.*, 569, 8–14). Plethon has taken distances from the

<sup>38</sup> Georges Arabatzis, "Le système de Pléthon et la nécessité", Τύχη-Ανάγκη. *Hasard et nécessité dans la philosophie grecque* (Athens: Academy of Athens, 2005), pp.215–236.

Neoplatonists; none fusion with the One is proposed and the whole structure of the education of the virtues is an indirect rejection of the critic of symmetry found in Plotinus, *Enn.* I, 6 [1], 1, or Plotinus' *On virtues*, *Enn.* I, 2. We should note also that Plethon gives a fair description of only the derivative virtues. The cardinal values are characterized only by the antiquarian's appraisal for traditional nomenclature.

The Stoics had advanced the social ideal of the autonomous Sage but progressively they had to renounce to it up to a measure because of its unattainable character. They introduced thus the notion of theatre, which is more adaptable to the aretaic capacities of each person, more akin then to social ethics than the socially intangible ideal of the sage. On the other hand, Stoic theology, on the basis of fate, insists intensively on the full necessity of causality. Plotinus, in his part, focuses on the insufficiency of the Stoic categories. The first principle, the One, is simple, pure, perfect and thus good. It is prompt to a certain description but not conceptual in nature. The world is the unfolding of the One, first in the Intellect, then in the Soul and then down to the dark matter. This last term is absolutely critical for not being conceivable. Only form individuates and makes something distinguishable from matter up to the One that is situated beyond the forms. The One rests nevertheless crucial for any individuation. Iamblichus sees the ineffable One as approachable through theurgy; this constitutes a radical condemn of the violence of categories. There may be thus no conceptual simplicity since the simple is the negation of the composite and the categories are forms of violence. Neoplatonism is in this way moving between the possibility to inform and the impossibility to represent.

In general, Plethon's ethical metaphysics is a turn in onto-theology, concentrating on the work of ethics rather than the contemplation of moral ideas. Plethon's idea of ethics is based on a societal model more than on spiritual elevation and there is in him a predominance of the public or the social-related self. His nomenclature traditionalism is also an anti-eclecticism. The structure of the virtues is like a seminal logos, not a participatory model as in the Neoplatonists who were mainly trying to account for the ontological emergence of the world. Plethon's idea of the prevalence of symmetry or analogy of proportion is equally turned against the *Analogia entis*.

## Plethon and System

The system of Plethon concerns also the question of common notions. For Michael Psellos, the common notions reveal the mental mechanism, but for Plethon they refer to the idea of public use. The notion of System is connected positively or negatively to that of the mixture of genres. In philosophy, much use is made of a deductive procedure with referential objectives and concerns but often there is a mixture of genres like in Plethon, i.e. deductive texts and intuitive texts in different proportion of deduction and intuition. The idea of the system is totally different, since its aim and concern is totality. The system fully embodies the idea of philosophical architecture; the “system” is a Greek word (συν-ίστημι) and a notion very much present in Stoic philosophy; it was also used in Greek medicine (σύστημα του σώματος) and in military art (σύστημα της φάλαγγος). From a notion of material organization, the term passed to abstraction in great part because of Astronomy. Thus the κόσμος is a σύστημα ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς and the Latin Stoics spoke of a *Systema mundi*. It is Galileo who made the passage to the conceptual thought as an organized complexity of ideas. Even more, the term system, in the limits of the history of philosophy, came to mean an attack to doxography<sup>39</sup>.

A system is characterized by: 1) completeness, 2) consistency, 3) economy of concepts. On the formal aspect, a system has a small number of principles, a netting structure and circularity; the circularity implies the auto-reference and auto-demonstration of the system. Thus, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* proves the *Phenomenology of Spirit*<sup>40</sup>.

A small number of principles and an organic whole are very difficult to match without some ambition to a real accomplishment. The principles in view of an accomplishment must be in motion, i.e. in move and even auto-contradictory. The method itself must be moving, tracing the ever-changing contents of notions. The concepts necessarily produce things and transcend terms and notions. The systematic necessity is something beyond simple causality

<sup>39</sup> Daniel Parrochia, “La notion de système en philosophie”, *Recherches sur la philosophie et le langage*, 8 (1987), pp.95–115.

<sup>40</sup> What made the Hegelian system necessary was the obscure theory of schematism in Kant. The schema was a blind spot in conscience, a sum of sensation and ideality but in what precise way, one cannot say. So, schematism means lack of formalism.

– it implies also the counter-causal, mirroring the moving nature of things themselves while reason becomes decision<sup>41</sup>.

Another aspect of the Plethonian system is Plethon's systematic necessity. Plethon's thought has at least one systematic precondition: the need for internal necessity. Plethon's necessitarianism is opposed to fatalism. It is a kind of universal legalism where gods do not possess the future, they cannot administer it and, therefore, the universal order is predetermined. Zeus is necessarily Zeus, he is fully being while self-fulfilling being and necessity is one of the conditions of being. There is no idea of altering the future and God is the future in its necessity, i.e. necessity is God's vision of future. In this perspective, we have predetermination and, consequently, the possibility of divination/prescience as in the Stoics: some chosen ones may get to know the future but their knowledge is not independent from the overall necessity, i.e. it is a knowledge that signifies insufficiency of knowledge. If the chosen ones try to alter the future, they realize it; this may be called the cunning of necessity. In other terms, the concept of fate and individual fate are not distinguished in Plethon's necessitarianism; all these are quite Hegelian. Free-will is before everything else a matter of soul and intellect and not a question of the state of things.

If Plethon is pro-Plato and anti-Aristotelian, then this view has doctrinal grounds: in presenting his division of causality into theology and necessity, Aristotle acknowledges his debt to Plato's *Timaeus*. The Timaeian duality consists however of necessity and reason or the divine (see 68 e 3–7). Reason is always in command, according to the Timaeian necessity, guiding towards the good or the second best. In any case, the good in itself is not identified with neither of the two causes (see Aristotle's criticism of Plato in *Met.* A 7 988 b 6–11). Plato's teleology is based on the view that the order in the universe is due to an extra-natural divine reason and necessity is persuaded by reason. Because of that, Aristotle, in the above passage of the *Metaphysics*, includes Plato among the thinkers who defend that “for the sake of which” is a cause,

<sup>41</sup> To speak of system in Plethon must be followed by an epistemological caution: Plethon's opus magnum, the *Book of Laws*, survives only in fragments. Fragmentation makes the need for a system desirable and obtainable through reconstruction, a procedure that reflects the desire of the interpreter to systematize the passages in hand. Plethon's work being fragmentary one may feel compelled to make a system out of it. The real system, if there is one in Plethon, is marked by the variation and richness of his texts. The systematic organization of virtues is a paradigm of his system, if any. See Georges Arabatzis, “Pléthon et les Stoïciens. Système et fragment”, *Archiv für mittelalterliche Philosophie und Kultur*, 15 (2008), pp.305–332.

but not naturally a cause<sup>42</sup>. In Plato, thus, necessity (the natural necessity also) bends in front of the divine (the reason) and thereupon Aristotle points to the anti-naturalism of Plato. Consequently, Plethon as a Platonist, at least on the question of absolute necessity, must be called an anti-naturalist; knowledge in Plethon is a state of things but not necessarily the nature of things.

Pseudo-Plutarch has made a distinction in necessity between the essence of necessity (or else the soul of the world) and the activity of necessity (*De fato*, 1–2, 568 C–E). Plethon sees necessity as the things in their actuality and not in an idealized worldview. In any case, necessity is not of syllogism and Plethon is criticizing the Aristotelian predicative logic as Stoics have already done. More precisely, Plethon criticized the logical nexus between proof and predication in Aristotelian syllogism. There is here a clear indication concerning concepts. The implication is that in criticizing the concept as definition in classical ontology he accepts no static view of the concept. What is then the concept in Plethon? Is it the neoplatonic concept, a reflection of the One from which, nonetheless, this last keeps always evading? In being a necessitarianist, Plethon refutes the Plotinian critique of Stoic categories. The One as absolute transcendence in Plotinus is not compatible with Plethon's philosophy. Plethon is much closer to pseudo-Aristotle's *Du mundo* where Stoic influences are prominent. There, the early Stoic perception of Plato has been turned against the Aristotelian theology's anti-providentialism. For the Stoics, God is providence just as she is also in Plato's *Laws*. Plethon in each of these aspects is openly anti-contemplative. Divinity in Plethon is actively virtuous and not ineffable.

### Stoicism, Neostoicism and Plethon: ethics and system

As we have seen Plethon talks about *moria* (parts) of virtue and not virtues; these parts may be called values. In that, he appears again to follow the Stoics. The Stoics were very proud for the coherence of their system. The force of their system was like the force of a (natural) law. Happiness for them equals virtue and the idea of a pedagogical order of virtues was very highly regarded; we may speak with reason for an ethical metaphysics in the case of the Stoics. Stoic Ethics is distinguished in *telos* (finality), virtue, and value (*axia*) construed around the triad of necessity, responsibility, and fate. Something similar appears in Plethon, replacing the Platonic triad of sameness, difference and being

<sup>42</sup> James G. Lennox, *Aristotle. On the Parts of the Animals I–IV* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.148.

or the Neoplatonist triad of the one, the mind and the soul. The Stoic ideal was to live in accordance (*homologeîn*) to reason (according to nature was added later, an implication made by Stobaeus; see *infra*). There is a theory of needs in Plethon and the idea of an a priori publicity of human action as we can see in his ideas about incest. Decency, the first and lower virtue-value in Plethon, shows that passions cannot be eliminated only tamed by publicity. An example from the *Book of Laws* is the chapter on incest<sup>43</sup>. Incest is a banished sexual act because of decency; the sexual drive for Plethon is all-powerful but the intra-family sexual activity goes against publicity or society, which is the crucial characteristic of man. Thus, *Homoiosis* to God (Godlikeness), for Plethon, is not only the goal but also a kind of beginning (*Αρχή*), since humans are not strictly speaking animals although their animal tendencies are very difficult to eliminate. Thus, in *On virtues* II, decency can be placed next to religion. There are also here some very strong Aristotelian resonances in a thinker that is considered to have shaken the Byzantine consensus on the harmony of Plato and Aristotle in favor of Plato.

Plethon shares with the Stoics an insistence on a first initial reflection, i.e. *oikeiosis*, which is for him a societal thinking stemming formally from a natural or, better, original sociability. Questions of constitution in the form of seminal reason (*ratio*) were also important for the Stoics and the Stoic values stand somewhere between nature and reason. Cicero, in his *De finibus* III, 3 reproduces the four degrees of Stoic virtue-values (*aestimabilia* – *axian ekhonta*): 1) the values conforming to nature in itself; then, the *kathekonta*, the moral obligations which aim 2) to conserve one in his natural state, 3) to prefer the conformity to nature and reject the opposite, 4) to choose one's proper *kathekon* and persist to it. The three last are related to the conceptual sphere because they are accessible only to humans possessing notions or concepts and not to animals. This is close to the Hegelian system of evolution toward pure reason or pure spirit. As to the relation and differences between Stoic and Neoplatonists, the Neoplatonic philosophy was constructed far beyond the stoic corporeal sensible world of the Stoics, although Porphyry spoke about a hidden stoicism in the Plotinian *Enneads* (*Life of Plotinus*, 14). The Stoic seminal reasons are organized into a cosmic sympathy while the Neoplatonists were opposed to the spatio-temporal soul. Plethon seems in his *Treatise* to defend a spatio-temporal soul as the expression of a social (public) soul.

<sup>43</sup> Pléthon, *Traité des Lois*, pp.86–91.

The difference is also between obeying fate according to the Stoics or elevating oneself to the sphere of intellectual vision according to the Neoplatonists. The Middle Platonists like Antiochos of Ascalon proposed a blending of Plato and the Stoics; the Stoic Posidonius also. Atticus stood equally for an ethical metaphysics. On the other side, Alexander of Aphrodisias criticized the Stoics for their theory of the corporeality of the souls. The soul for Alexander is a form linked to the body and the intellect is identified to its object – a position that had greatly influenced Plotinus. The union of body to soul is not the union of two corporeal entities. The Stoics defended the idea that icons-images of space may comprehend perception<sup>44</sup>. Such form of icon-images may be found in Plethon but not in Plotinus. There is a dualism of the soul in Plotinus, between the superior and the inferior, and the fate is for the inferior soul. For Plethon, necessity concerns the totality of the soul; for Plotinus, there is no exclusive symmetry for Beauty but for the Stoics, beauty *is* symmetry and this is also the case for Plethon.

The sage in Plethon is engaged and not detached, and closer to the systematic aspect of early Stoicism than the existential role-player of Middle Stoicism. The moral stoicism post-Panetius is quite different from systematic stoicism. The late minor Stoicism stands for the quietude in the ethico-political sphere; on the contrary, the major Stoicism of Chrysippos is marked by actual morality connected to metaphysics. The systematic stoicism is mostly that of Chrysippos. Michael Psellos is referring to him in his *Letter to Xiphilinos* where he recuses the heritage of Plato and Chrysippos. But why Chrysippos? Was the Stoic's influence so great in Byzantium that one had to reject his legacy? Instead Psellos considers in the same letter the Aristotelian syllogistic as a common value of philosophers and theologians alike. In all these aspects, Plethon appears to be opposed to Psellos. Stoicism has influenced morals in what may be called perfectionism and in relation to it, one can better comprehend Plethon's moral rigorism.

In Neostoicism, there is a relation between the force of man and the force of his reason<sup>45</sup>. The glorification of the effort is the translation into action of the Stoic *tonos*. Cosimo de Medici, to whom Plethon is said to be intimately

related, is a model for this Stoic attitude. The best of human practices is to be confident of one's own nature and to develop freely and harmoniously its powers. In this grandiose extension of Ego in confidence, the intellect holds the higher place under the condition that the will should be the expression of universal reason; this is a movement of rationalization that was often turned into a quest for quietude in the troubled times of the Renaissance. This is not Plethon's position and in this aspect, he is not a Renaissance humanist. One should be reminded of some lines by Giovanni Pontano from his Stoic treatise *De fortitudine*: "quas passiones fortitudo moderatur, de toleranda paupertate, de tolerandis incuriis et contumeliis". We perceive here what is the aim of this moral stand but this is not Plethon's stoicism. The Neo-Stoicism in the above perspective is a superficial morality. Even more, Neostoicism tries to destroy old science in order to elaborate a new one and to struggle rightly against the vain logomachy of syllogism that facilitates dogmatism. Plethon would agree with the second but not with the first. The Greek foundations of science were for him perennial since they reflect the old and proven knowledge. Petrarch who was the originator of Neostoicism established a bridge between Stoic and Christian moralism; this is the morals of Epictetus' *Manual*. Plethon opts, as we have seen, for the systematic stoicism.

Pomponazzi has examined the problem of Providence and concluded that Stoic necessity may escape the crucial problems of Christian providentialism; so he writes: "secundum autem Stoicos, Deus non potest aliter facere quam facit, quia si mala sunt in universo, hoc exigit universi natura; secundum vero Christianos posset Deus, sed non vult, quod longe maiorem malitiam arguit, quandam secundum Stoicos nulla in Deo sit militia."<sup>46</sup> Yet, Pomponazzi does not admit the Stoic system in its totality, although this one resolves the problem of the evil in the world, because he insists on the crucial distinction between faith and science. Stoic necessity saves the truth but for the rest of the question it refers to the idea that God is and is not the cause of our actions. Plethon rejects this ecclesiastic stoicism of practical morals and also the idea of a Stoic science surpassed by religious confidence.

For the Stoics, happiness is separated from social institutions and related to a director of conscience – it is the cosmos rather than society that would be directly linked to morality. Stoic ethics is the morality of the *homme honnête*, not that of the saint. The sage is anthropologically different from the

<sup>44</sup> Jacques Brunschwig, "Les Stoïciens" in *La philosophie grecque*, edited by Monique Canto-Sperber (Paris: PUF, 1997), pp.511–562.

<sup>45</sup> Léontine Zanta, *La renaissance du stoïcisme au XVIe siècle* (Paris: H. Champion, 1914).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p.43.



common person. The sage's happiness is acquired not progressively but suddenly through a total transformation; it is not a progress but a new kind of identity (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* IV, 6 (SVF, III, 221); Sen., *Epist.*, 75, 9; Cic., *De fin.*, III, 14, 45 (SVF, III, 140, 32)). The sage is closer to God than the other, common persons (D.L., VIII, 87). This is a first difficulty as to Plethonian moral system's relation to stoicism and a major difference with his idea of a pedagogy of morality through progressive practice and action. Yet, the qualities of the sage are interconnected and each one comes from another in a coherent whole (cf. Dio Chrys., SVF, III, 584) as Plethon also states.

Here, there is a topic directly related to the Byzantine heritage of Stoic philosophy. Chrysippos (SVF, III, 4) thinks that for Zeno the end of all good is the life according (to reason) and not in accordance to nature; this idea is presented in Stobaeus, SVF, III, 5, 16<sup>47</sup>. The idea of living in accordance with nature surpasses the Platonic model of internal psychological harmony toward the harmony with the whole of nature of which each one is nothing but a fragment, in such a way that sanctity becomes identical to honesty. For Aristo of Chios, already, there is here a contradiction; the good is what is searched for in the virtuous act and not some part of a naturalistic whole. (SVF, I, 83, 11; 85, 11). For Chrysippos, the link between good and virtue is provided precisely by the common notions (SVF, III, 72). In particular, in the notion of the good, where reason has none other function than the generalizing one, the determinant factor is the natural whole. The natural end (the good) is to be in harmony with Zeus or nature and the wisdom is to comprehend the attachment to the physical system or the state of the things. We found here a thematic that is very close to Plethon's thought.

In the same thematic, there is also the question of values. The indifference is not the refutation to make choices but a value in itself that permits to pass into the domain of practical reason. The rules of practical reason are possible only in a hierarchy of values; the criterion is the progress of values, very similar to the Peripatetic classification of the goods in goods of the soul, goods of the body and external goods (SVF, III, 127; Stobaeus, 136). The grades of value are not virtues properly, i.e. the dispositions of will, but natural qualities or

objects of will. The natural tendencies of humans can be instinctual or social and familial (each one being an *axia*; SVF, III, 30, 10). Thus, beside the morals of the sage we have another morality that is supporting the first. This produces a moral dualism consisting of theoretical and practical morals, or rather purely philosophical morals and educative morals. The distinction is part of the Stoic intellectualism and even more an extreme one.

Is virtue an object of intellectual education or the achievement of practice? (D.L., V, 18). Moral amelioration shows that virtue is naturally spontaneous (SVF, III, 223). The determinant factor is the *hegemonikon*. Man confuses the pleasure with the good because of social institutions and more particularly the women's care of children. Plato and Aristotle stand for the unity of virtue where activity is unified and not apprehended in parts. For Zeno and Chrysippos, virtues are modes of the being of reason and this is the way that Aristo comprehends them (SVF, III, 60, 15–17). Aristo opposes theoretical morals to practical ones (SVF, I, 357). The problem with prescriptive morality is that it multiplies to infinity the moral commands (SVF, I, 358, 359). Plethon's system of morals avoids this precise danger by establishing a closed moral system. Virtues are not subordinated to a master virtue but only coordinated. (cf. Chrysippos in SVF, 61, 34–35 against Aristo, SVF, III, 60, 16–17); the virtues are interlaced so to form an unbreakable whole; each one implies the other. (SVF, III, 72, 31; II, 73, 13). Olympiodorus thinks that this moral problem is particularly linked to polytheism (SVF, III, 74, 23); Plethon is of the same precise idea.

Virtues are qualities that have to be completed by other qualities (virtues). Olympiodorus talks about a physical co-penetration but arts and sciences appear as virtues in Stobaeus (SVF, 65, 31–39). Stobaeus talks of the inseparable character of virtues (SVF, III, 69, 6). Their inseparability is not coming from deduction but from common points that attach each one to another (Chrysippos, SVF, III, 297). Plethon's morals are very related to this last idea.

Intellectualism absorbs voluntarism and the morals of the elected turn against the morals of the simple people. Wisdom, of course, is not an expertise as Sophists used to think. Here appears the problem of the political action or the question of the relation between ethics and politics. For Zeller, the Stoics have not presented a political man of worth for lack of practical reason. The Stoics accept the Cynical theory of the conventional character of the states-cities and undertake an effort of synthesis. Society, though conventional, is a sage being (cf. Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, IV, 26; SVF, III, 80, 42). The abstracted idea of the state leads to political renunciation and resignation. The intimate conviction of

<sup>47</sup> For a different approach see Émile Bréhier, *Chrysippe et l'ancien stoïcisme* (Paris-London-New York: Gordon & Breach, 1971), pp.220–1, n. 2. For Bréhier, the author in Stobaeus confuses the end of all good with the internal harmony of the virtues (SVF, III, 198, 199, 200).



the Stoics is that the world is already a perfect state and Zeus is its eternal law while the cosmic city is closer to the world of society than to an extended city. The individual is the unity of virtue (atomism). For Chrysippos, justice comes from Zeus and nature (SVF, III, 326). For Plethon, justice comes from Zeus and societal reason, not through interior harmony but through the relation to the others (see also SVF, III, 288)<sup>48</sup>.

### Why Platonism is not sufficient for Plethon's morals

The question would then be why Plethon, so heavily influenced by Plato, was not limited to Platonic morals and had to turn to the Stoics. The answer has to do with the two problems that were greatly present in his philosophy: unity and religion.

For Terry Penner, the Platonic unity of virtue refers to cognitive or substantial unity of virtue<sup>49</sup>. More precisely, there are two forms of unity of virtue: (1) for one to be prudent, one must be just, courageous and temperate (causation) or (2) prudence equals justice equals courage equals temperance (the unity of virtues as equation). The (2) signifies that besides courageous people there is a thing called courage different from courageous people that is characterized by consequentialism. This other thing besides courageous people may be a thing or a meaning. Yet, the meaning of all virtues is not identical – so what can be the unity of virtue? Maybe virtues are one thing in virtue, precisely, of a common essence. The question thus, moves from the conceptual to the substantial level. In the case of Socrates, this common essence is knowledge and the Socratic theory of morals shows itself to be a cognitivist theory; Plethon's theory, as himself describes it, is not a pure cognitivist theory. For Socrates being courageous is to have knowledge or true belief about what is courage. Thus, the sentences "virtue is one" and "virtue is knowledge" are co-extensive. Of course, there are popular virtues that require no knowledge and could not stand the test of the Socratic elenctic process (*elenchus*). On the level of behavior, are virtues tendencies or states of the soul? In other words, the unity of virtue is the unity of soul or the unity of a (moral) faculty or part of the soul.

<sup>48</sup> The above analysis is based on Bréhier, *Chrysippe et l'ancien stoïcisme*, pp.212–270.

<sup>49</sup> Terry Penner, "The Unity of Virtue" in *Plato*, edited by Gail Fine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.560–586.

The tendencies of the soul are often explained by conceptual means while the states of the soul are often absorbed by natural dispositions. The unity of virtue is discussed in *Protagoras*, where virtues are said to be parts of one capital virtue like the parts of a face which are considered parts of something; thus, not at all in the way of a piece of gold being considered as part of gold (329c6–d1). But if in the face each part has its own power how then the moral attitude can have a consequential nature to implicate all virtues? The difference of power constitutes an opposition to the initial identity statement. All refutations of the above opposition comprise a form of activity and, thus, present identity through activity.

One way to surpass the difficulty is to point to a common element opposite to virtues. All virtues are unified as much as they oppose a common anti-moral or immoral element. This does not bridge the conceptual mismatch of virtues into a unified thing but it permits to identify their common anti-immoral position. Secondly, the practice in virtue permits one to acquire confidence in his overall moral attitude. Moral confidence is the common element that points to the unity of virtue. Thirdly, virtue may be seen as causality. If morality is unified in one virtue, then anti-morality may also be unified and thus, virtue acquires a causal character that permits one to move from the unity of immorality to the unity of virtue. Causality here does not point to a fixed meaning but to a teachable attitude. Thus, we have the double question in *Protagoras* (360e8): what is virtue? and is virtue teachable? The unity of virtue is here affirmed by a certain psychological elaboration that creates virtuous states of the soul, based on the knowledge-science of how one can become happy. This last science must be an art of measuring moral things (360b6–7), which points precisely to the construction of a measured way to access virtues.

On the other hand, we have seen in Plethon that moral happiness (to which pleasure may be a means) is godlikeness (*homoiosis*). The godlikeness ideal was a common standard in late Roman Empire and of course in Byzantium<sup>50</sup>. In the *Symposium*, the generation principle is promoted as a way to surpass the purely additive but not qualitative succession of one's states of the soul<sup>51</sup>. The ideal of the generation of gods is also present as model in Plethon's *Laws*. Generation

<sup>50</sup> See for example John Damascenus, *Fountain of Knowledge, On philosophy* where godlikeness is one of the definitions of philosophy.

<sup>51</sup> David Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness", in *Plato, op. cit.*, pp.791–810.

is not a pure addition. One main presentation of Platonic godlikeness is to be found in *Theaetetus* where Plato criticizes Protagoras man-measure argument or moral relativism. Socrates defends the idea that values are objective standards (172b–177c). Yet, when we speak of standards (*paradeigmata*), do we speak of forms? Socrates makes clear that by speaking of moral standards, we refer to God to whom one must become similar so far as possible (176a5–c3); this perfectionism under caution is to be found also in Plethon. The same idea is exposed in the Platonic *Laws*, 716 c.

What is the evolution of the presence of God in Plato's moral theory? In the early dialogues, Socrates presents a fivefold of virtues, the four known cardinal virtues with the addition of holiness (*hosiotes*). In the *Republic* we have the four virtues that Plethon reproduces in his treatise, while propelling religion into prudence. In *Theaetetus*, holiness reappears maybe in order to combat moral relativism. In *Protagoras*, as we saw, Plato advanced the idea of a numerical or qualitative unity of virtue. Holiness permits to summarize the virtues into service to gods, to facilitate their embodiment instead of proposing a simple model of Aretaic structure. God of course does not create the standards, she is only the first perfect exemplar. In Plethon holiness is included in the moral system that points to religion.

In *Republic* 10, 613a–b, happiness is a gift that gods offer to everyone who resembles them. In Iamblichus also as well as in Marinus of Naples, the appearance of Gods is a gift conditioned by a certain form of theurgic appeal. In *Phaedrus* (252c–253c), a polytheistic undertone is present and the plurality of godlikeness is played against the unity of virtue. The other basic text on godlikeness is *Timaeus*, 29e, where God appears to desire everything to be like him. The likeness here equals intelligence and Plato uses the metaphor of the head. One of the elements of godlikeness of the head is its circular shape. Thus, the likeness is linked to circular movement, which is far superior to rectilinear movement. Thought is also circular and movements must be symmetrical. Likeness is a *telos*, but more like a supreme achievement than a simple goal. This achievement may be essentially moral or point to an intellectual assimilation like Plotinus thought it to be. David Sedley links this achievement to Aristotelian contemplation in the end of *Nicomachean Ethics*<sup>52</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp.809–810.

Plethon is quite anti-contemplative in his *Treatise on virtues* in two ways: first, he seems to introduce the idea of time into concept. The pedagogical movement of virtue-values realizes the knowledge of traditional virtues. Second, he insists on the idea of difference. Each virtue-value is characterized by its own qualities but also by its particular position into a finite-closed system of virtue-values. Plethon defends rather a structural theory by insisting on the differences inside a finite-closed system of virtues and for that he had to appeal to Stoic moral theory.

### Open ethics and the insufficiency of the concept in Psellos

In order to see more clearly the relation between Plethon and Psellos, and the particularity of Plethonian virtue theory, we should look in Psellos' Neoplatonist theory of virtues<sup>53</sup>. Psellos formulates a complex scale of virtues that starts with three levels of morality and later is decomposed in further aretaic degrees. Psellos' morals are based on Porphyry's *Sentence* 32 (34) that elaborates Plotinus' *Enn.*, I, 2 [10] and there might also be the influence of a lost moral treatise of Iamblichus that complicates even more the aretaic degrees. In his *Omnifaria Doctrina*, 66–75, Psellos divides the virtues in political, purifying and theoretical virtues, corresponding to the ontological hierarchy of the divine, the angels and the humans. God of course is situated beyond virtue following Proclus who distinguishes three modalities of being: according to participation, to existence and to causality. Psellos continues by presenting another scale of virtues consisting of natural virtues (for irrational animals), moral virtues (for the common man), political virtues (for the rational and the wise) and above them, the purifying, the intellectual and the theurgical virtues. To this scale of virtues, Psellos adds more virtues complicating the overall picture: thus we have the paradigmatic and supra-substantial virtues that contain no element of accident. This multiplication process is characteristic of the Neoplatonic tradition where Marinus of Naples' morals appear more complex than Porphyry's; Iamblichus seems to have played here a major part.

Psellos in his short treatise *On virtues* is depending on Porphyry; in his *De omnifaria* he depends on a more complex model by introducing virtues above the theurgical ones. Thus, in the *De omnifaria*, Psellos introduces another

<sup>53</sup> Aris Papamanolakis, "L'échelle néoplatonicienne des vertus chez Psellus et Eustrate de Nicée" in *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, edited by Cristina d'Ancona (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp.231–242.

scale according to human completeness: holiness, justice, wisdom have their corresponding virtues. In fact, human virtues occupy generally only a small part of the aretaic spectrum, where the transcendental origin of virtues is of capital importance. Regarding Psellos' scale of virtues, we must talk of an eclectic system that tends like Plethon to the *homoiosis theō* (godlikeness).

If Psellos is to be excepted as influence to the Plethonian system of morals, we may distinguish in Plethon other references to the Byzantine philosophy of the 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Thus, decency as we have seen is in him the lowest virtue but in reality it constitutes the introduction to the system of morality and differentiates men from animals on the criterion of the agreeable and disagreeable. This may be a hidden reference to Michael of Ephesus commenting upon Aristotle's *Encomium of Biology* (*In de Part. Anim.*, 22.25–23.9). In Plethon, like in Michael of Ephesus, the distinction is not between the sensible and the intellectual but between the sensible consciousness (*σωματοειδής*) and the intellectual one<sup>54</sup>. Unlike Michael of Ephesus, the measure imposed on pleasure by Plethon resonates like an Epicurean idea or a body-like thinking as Michael of Ephesus would say. Could it then be that Plethon's introduction to morality is of Epicurian character? Most probably, we see here a difference between moral particularity and moral subjectivism in relation to the idea of the body, quite similar to Stoic corporeality.

Eustratius of Nicaea, commentator of Aristotle in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, on his part, tried to combine the Neoplatonic complexity with the Aristotelian formal distinction. Eustratius distinguishes between the virtues that tame passions and the superior virtues acquired after the independence from passionate life is assured. Political virtues are thus immanent to passionate life while purifying, theoretical and theurgical virtues transcend it. For Psellos, also, prudence has the weight of a turning point from the inferior to the superior virtues. Eustratius, thus, proposes an articulation between Aristotelian *metriopatheia* (moderation) and Stoic *apatheia* (quietude) and in any case, he stands in the limits of the Psellian paideia. Plethon's position on the same issues is quite other, combating equally the ethics of the mean and the ethics of quietude.

<sup>54</sup> Georges Arabatzis, "Réflexion et vertu chez Pléthon" in *Actes du XXXe Congrès de l'Association des Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française*, 24–28 août 2004, edited by Pierre Billouet, Joël Gaubert, Nelly Robinet, André Stanguennec (Paris: Vrin, 2006), pp.385–388.

For Michael Psellos, the opposition between concepts does not lead to a dynamic system but to a philosophy of reconciliation or consensus of the opposites or the intermediates. Following Proclus, he thematizes the instrument of mediation. The mediating terms, blends of the higher and the lower, establish a form of likeness between the higher unparticipated, the higher participated, the lower unparticipated, the lower participated and so on. Psellos views these mediations as a mixture of opposing terms. His intellectualism touches its limits in front of the unknown. The unknown is a kind of a blind spot of the conscious life that is placed in art as well as in religion and a man of intellectual skill must account for it as being precisely other than intellect.

In order to understand more clearly the kind of relations of concepts described by Psellos, one must follow the idea of the concept in Neoplatonists. In Proclus (*Th.* III, 123–4), we see a profound valuation of intermediate terms. Thus two terms, A and B, are mediated in the following way<sup>55</sup>:

(a) A – AB – B

But in the descending diffusion of the higher principle, the concepts appear in the following way:

(b) AA – AB  
|  
BA – BB

Or, more generally

(c) AA(A) – AB (a<sup>n</sup>)  
| |  
BA(B) – BB (b<sup>n</sup>)

<sup>55</sup> See David Jenkins, "Psellos' Conceptual Precision" in *Reading Michael Psellos*, edited by Charles Barber and David Jenkins (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp.131–151.

By the same, for the ascending participation to the higher reality we come up with a somehow opposite to the (b) relation:

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{(d) AA} - \text{AB} \\ | \\ \text{BB} - \text{BA}^{56} \end{array}$$

This schema shows the difficulties of the participatory model and the subsequent choices made by Psellos. Psellos owes his conceptual precision to Proclus but in him this precision is associated rather to a mixture of opposites (*μίξις των εναντιων*) than to a participatory model. The Neoplatonic triad is linked to the Neoplatonic theory of causation that solidifies the participatory model and is governed by two principles: plurality participates to unity; plurality is posterior to the One. The intermediate terms in Proclus are divided into “participated” and “unparticipated”. Thus, in the sequence A AB BA BB, AB is the higher participated and BA is the lower unparticipated. But then, how is the reversion of the direction possible through likeness, since the lower unparticipated must be in some way participated. The schema is reversed as to its higher level – this reveals a problem, that of two different ideas about mediation.

There are three ontological statuses for entities in Proclus: (i) the one; (ii) the one yet not-one; (iii) the not-one yet one. And yet there is each time two levels of reality in the triadic schema, i.e. the higher reality and the lower reality. For Psellos, this higher level is the *κρείττονα* and the lower the *χείρονα*, terms with a distinct ethical rendering. For Psellos’ pupils, John Italos and Eustratios of Nicaea, the mind-soul duality is replaced by the genre-form duality. Psellos defends the clear evidence of the Aristotelian logic in his *Letter to Xiphilinos* where he makes the apology of his philosophical interests but, the discursive for him is at the end irresolute (like in Pascal as well as in the mystics<sup>57</sup>). Plethon on his part is skeptical about private language and stands rather for the relation of private to public. For Psellos, the indefinite character of the middle terms may exceed *ad infinitum*, especially for their space-time constituents. For him, the middle retains the opposition integral, making it a living paradox that breathes in contradiction; Psellos appears to combine mind and pleasure (*Letter* 160). And, thus, the continuously actual opposition inside the concepts

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.135–138.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p.142

is transposed into the problem of the relation between philosophy and rhetoric; the two must be practiced together according to Psellos.

Plethon made a choice in his virtue theory that instead of entities one should speak of values in the Stoic sense. Psellos’ turn to Neoplatonism is due to the loosening of the stoically inspired Christian ethics and his partial paganism signifies the meeting of Neoplatonist ideas with common notions. In Plethon, we see the general purification of Stoic ethics from Christianity. This explains why Plethon values rather the sophisticated Stoic ethics than the popular Stoic ethics of Epictetus’ *Manual*.

### Plethon and reference

In the 32<sup>nd</sup> chapter of the *Book of Laws* intitled “On the names of the gods”, Plethon proposes a historical theory of godly names delimited by an intersubjective moral normativity. In this theory, Plethon appears to blend a descriptive and a genetic theory of names. More particularly, Plethon suggests that:

- (a) morality is based on religious opinions;
- (b) the historical names of Greek gods must be maintained;
- (c) the names of the gods were negatively colored in time due to use;
- (d) the users of names mark negatively the godly names because of their low morality;
- (e) the morally lacking subjects or users are not in position to damage the historical validity of godly names.

As in his theory of fate, Plethon is concerned primarily with the moral blame as opposed to necessity. Following the Stoics, moral praise belongs only to the individual recognition of the rational necessity of the world and, in no way, to fatalism (Plethon’s voluntarism is already mentioned). What is then his precise theory of names? Historicity and necessity lead to a causal theory of names. Plethon appears hostile to a definitional approach when he underscores that paraphrasing the actual name is very difficult and constitutes an obstacle to the understanding of the common people or the multitude

(“ου γαρ και τοις πολλοίς ράδιον το τοιούτον”<sup>58</sup>). Plethon rejects also the constructivist theory of names as well as the use of common names (“ουτ’αυτούς [=τους θεούς] καινά ονόματα θεμένων, ή βάρβαρα επαγαγομένους”) and he thus advances the national-traditional names (“ενόν πατρίοις χρήσασθαι”<sup>59</sup>). National names is a way to deal with the popular misuse of names. A possible objection would be, as Plethon says, in a movement of Xenophanean and Platonic-like critique, that these names were abused and profaned by the poets in their fallacious myths.

Plethon thus introduces in relation to the names of the gods the notion of “use”. This last notion, attached to the idea of moral blame, which cannot exist without a minimum of description, seems to imply a certain amount of nuancing in Plethon’s original position that subscribed to a causal theory of names. A genetic/historical theory of Names would be anti-dialectic as well as anti-systematic. Ultimately, the question is now, how does Plethon understand reference.

Following the section on the names of the Gods, there is an extended section of poetic appeals to Gods to be made in various times of the day and among them, at evening, the third and most basic appeal to Zeus<sup>60</sup>. Here Plethon gives the description of God as sole, self-sufficient full being, self-fulfilling being and thus as extremely good, the morally best being<sup>61</sup>. We have here a description or a cluster of descriptions where goodness follows ontological identity, singularity, reflexivity and purity. In such a way, Plethon’s view on reference seems like a mixing of causality and description. The space covered by the Plethonian thought is situated between the ideas of « opinion » and « use ».

In the beginning of chapter 32, Plethon underscores the importance of religious opinions about the good – see the place of religion in *On virtues* II – and vileness of behavior. The idea of “opinion” is not alien to the Stoic philosophy and there are here important differences with the Neoplatonic approach to reference. Stoic philosophy persists extremely on the mental mechanism identified as “the opinions about the things” and Stoic Aretalogy is quite more rigid in relation to Platonism and Aristotelianism. In Platonism, virtue is relativized

by time since it is not the individual who is in the first place morally decisive but the individual in relation to ideas. Aristotle, on his part, insists on the weight of initial objective conditions like health.

One should not ignore that many aspects of the Stoic system persisted in Christian thought, grammar theory, and literature, and Stoic linguistic theories, through that transition, affected medieval allegorical narrative<sup>62</sup>. Signification is the central problem of allegory and the Stoic (or Stoic-originated) linguistic doctrines help to demonstrate how allegorical signification works. Thus, one must undertake the deconstruction of the ontology of medieval allegory: allegory is habitually defined as a genre of literature that has two levels of meaning; the allegorical level concerns the deeper one that contains a hidden or veiled, truer meaning. It is often proclaimed that a distinction between a source text like the Bible and an interpretation of it accounts for medieval allegory. As to the allegorical personification and the grammatical basis of it, some suggest that there is not a real ontological ground but is mere wordplay. For others, it is the Aristotelian language of substance and accident that explains allegory. In sum, the analysis of the genre appears to consist in transposing aspects of the debate about universals whether from the nominalist or the realist point of view.

The Stoic theory insists on the interplay of language and the cosmos, i.e., the theory of grammatical case, which is not only about declension but has metaphysical implications since it corresponds to a case arrangement of real objects. The Stoics distinguish the case theory from the Platonic idea of objects participating in concepts and from the Aristotelian notion that objects have properties or qualities. For the Stoics, the proper names are connotative, quite different from the modern idea of proper names as deictic, denotative, or even *unisemous*. Thus, in allegory, proper names cannot be deictic. Personified virtues refer to qualified substances, to dispositions of a body acting in the world and not to Platonic forms or realist universals. Far from a realist reading that asserts the nature of universals, the allegory here rather destabilizes the ontological clarity. Bodies are not intrinsically bad or good but have qualities according to their disposition. The body, the extension in Stoic linguistics, remains the same; what changes is the Stoic intension or how the body is presented, or disposed, in action.

<sup>58</sup> Pléthon, *Traité des Lois*, p.130.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.168–183.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p.170.

<sup>62</sup> See Jeffrey Bardzell, *Speculative Grammar and Stoic Language Theory in Medieval Allegorical Narrative* (New York: Routledge, 2009).



For Aristotle words are used to express inner experience and thought (i.e., meaning) while for the grammarians, words express things themselves (i.e., reference). The Stoics explicitly defend the idea that we can learn about reality just by studying language. Predicates are utterances, not things. In ordinary Aristotelianism, individuals are considered to belong to their species, which fall under their genus and this one under its own genus up to the most general genus, which completes their ontological filiation. One distinguishes between falling under and signifying categories. To belong to categories is undignified because individuals signify differently according to the species and the genera to which they fall under. Both Stoics and nominalists see a stronger connection between words and things than Aristotle; a species falls under a genus only insofar as it is a species, otherwise it does not. The primal name-giver imposes utterances on things, a myth embraced also by the Stoics<sup>63</sup> (for them, the language is part of the fate of the cosmos and so they repudiate any contractualistic theory of language). Universals may fail on two accounts: as to their relation to real things and as to the clarity of comprehension. Universals produce an understanding that does not arise from things but pertains to each one of them. That which pertains to things is a properly third signification, that the Stoics call *lekta*, external to both thoughts and things.

Words are archetypal and remind of the language of the name-giver in a way that bares the mark of Stoic cosmopolitanism. Through the study of grammar the structure of cosmos is revealed. There appears to be a true convertibility between grammar and truth and thus a vice is not like bad grammar, it *is* bad grammar and by violating grammar the fabric of the cosmos is torn apart.

The deconstruction of the ontology of allegory goes thus: instead of the research for a second level of meaning, is proposed a view on allegory as a literary discourse that signifies through presentative constructivism and not through the representation of second-level realities. This argument points implicitly to the ancient opposition between philosophy and poetry and to the Stoic theories of allegory that were of great importance even after the arrival of Christianity.

A comparison between Stoic language theory and Stoic interpretations of allegory would be most fruitful for the understanding of Plethon's transposition

of Stoic philosophy into early Renaissance. Even more, it would be crucial for the understanding of Plethon's idea and construction of his philosophical system.

### Plethon and Concept

Plethon in his *De differentiis* criticizes the Aristotelian idea that the middle can have an inferior status as to the initial or the final statements. In his model of moral pedagogy, the middle terms have a clearly reinforced status. The morality of virtue and not the simple trichotomy of each cardinal virtue was also a subject of scholastic philosophy. We know that Thomas Aquinas adopts also a classification of virtues according to their object – the self, the others, the higher and lower self against the passions; the common source of Plethon and Aquinas is Plato's *Alcibiades* 127e–131c.

If we can see a common filiation here then one should study Aquinas' idea about the parts of virtue: for him, "there are three kinds of parts: integral parts, such as the walls, roof and foundation of a house; subjective parts, such as cattle and lion of animal; and potential parts, such as the nutritive and sensory parts of the soul." Things necessary to the complete act of virtue are integral parts while the different kinds of virtue are its subjective parts. The theoretical aspect of a virtue refers to its potential parts like philosophy or rhetoric (*ST* II-II, Q. 48, a. 1, translated by Richard J. Regan).

Here ends the moral similitude between Aquinas and Plethon. It is the Platonic anti-naturalism that is adopted by Plethon and not the Aristotelian naturalism although there are strong concessions made to the natural but in the sense of primacy of the societal or the public self. There is also in him the repudiation of the Stoicism of quietude. Morality is different from natural necessity and the moral imperative concerns living according to reason and not to nature. Moral education takes the place of participation to a ladder of virtues. Moral education is also an education in classical studies and thus Plethon is a humanist, but he is a modern in his idea of the concept that does not permit either interior harmony or essential immobility.

Plethon's symmetrical and interlaced moral model transposes the opposition that in Psellos is activated between concepts, in the interior of the concept itself. It is true that there are opinions or positions of principle. But in the interior of each primary concept, through analysis, we find instances that meet the instances of another principle. Yet, this mirroring of partial

<sup>63</sup> Anthony A. Long, *Stoic Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp.70–71.

instances of conceptual principles is not a form of mediation. It is the totality of the world itself, which is given by the conceptual elements. This is the moral meaning of the world that only misplaced or lost souls may misinterpret and by doing so they simply validate its necessity. Plethon, as it is said, made a choice in his virtue theory that instead of entities we should speak about values in the Stoic sense. For Plethon, a radical distinction is to be made between philosophy and sophistry. He presents virtue-values in a descriptive manner although he is anti-descriptivist himself as to the higher levels of signification – the cardinal virtues. In him, this becomes the distinction between virtues per se and virtue-values. Plethon, by insisting on the traditional, only partly descriptive, value of cardinal virtues, is following the well-known Byzantine antiquarianism or traditionalism. This is evident in his chapter on the names of the Gods. On the other hand, in front of the Byzantine followers of a philological perception of philosophy, identifying it to lived philosophy or gnomology, Plethon is opposing a systematic philosophy marked by a preference for systematic Stoicism. Virtue-value for Plethon is not instrumental morality but a deeply philosophical issue. Thus, he adopts a Socratic attitude to morals by placing himself against instrumentality of virtue. But for him ethics is not solely knowledge but knowledge combined to action as we see in his levels of acquisition of virtue. He presents not a trichotomous model but rather a *moriological* one in the manner of the parts (*moria*) of a living thing. The whole universe is a living thing in the opinion of the Stoics. Virtue itself is of the living things with the difference that man is not a solitary soul but a political (social) animal; a position clearly of Aristotelian inspiration. On the overall, Plethon's central attempt seems to be a serious effort to introduce time into the concept.

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# Plethon and Scholarios on Deliberation in Art and Nature

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**Abstract:** This article reconstructs the debate between Plethon and Scholarios concerning the role of deliberation in art and nature. It analyzes the arguments advanced by Plethon in *De Differentiis*, then by Scholarios in his treatise *Contra Plethonem* and, finally, in Plethon's reply to these objections. The contribution shows that Plethon considered deliberation to be a constitutive element of art and, *a fortiori*, of nature; he conceived deliberation in terms of the anticipation of the goal by the intellect. Scholarios, on the contrary, pointed out that a correct reading of Aristotle understands deliberation as a synonym of *zetesis* and *skepsis*, i.e. in terms of doubt and hesitation about the means that lead to an end.

**Keywords:** Plethon; Scholarios; Art; Nature; Deliberation

## I. Introduction

During his sojourn in Florence in 1439 Georgios Gemistos (Plethon) composed a short treatise *Περὶ ὧν Ἀριστοτέλης πρὸς Πλάτωνα διαφέρεται* that is frequently referred to as *De differentiis*.<sup>1</sup> The publication of this treatise must be

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<sup>1</sup> This conventional title is misleading, as it may be read as implying that this treatise discusses some important points of disagreement between Plato and Aristotle in an impartial manner, while it is actually far removed from being an unbiased comparison of the teachings of the two philosophers. It is, in fact, a vigorous attack on Aristotelian philosophy from a Platonic point of view, as Plethon understood it. Text in Bernadette Lagarde, "Le 'de differentiis' de Pléthon d'après l'autographe de la Marcienne", *Byzantion*, 43 (1973), pp.312–343. Cf. also Bernadette Lagarde, *Georges Gémiste Pléthon: Des différences entre Platon et Aristote*. Thèse présentée et soutenue par Bernadette Lagarde. Univ. de Paris IV, Sorbone, 1976. Engl. tr. in Christopher Montague Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of Hellenes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp.192–214.

considered an event of paramount importance for Byzantine intellectual history of the period, as this text stimulated a number of acute debates on a variety of philosophical questions both among scholars in Byzantium and among Byzantine émigrés in Western Europe.<sup>2</sup> These debates flared up on different occasions and in different circles, and concentrated on different and often unrelated philosophical questions. A history of the entire Plato-Aristotelian controversy, i.e. an exhaustive analysis of *De differentiis* and all the debates that were fueled by the opinions expressed by Plethon in this short but dense treatise, has yet to be written from a historical, textual or philosophical perspective.

The present article will concentrate on one particular point of controversy that arose on account of a single observation advanced by Plethon in *De differentiis*. The overall aim of the contribution is the reconstruction of Plethon's argument, the objections raised by his intellectual archenemy Gennadios Scholarios and the subsequent reply of Plethon to Scholarios.<sup>3</sup>

## II. Starting point of the debate: Plethon's remarks in *De differentiis*

In chapter VII of *De differentiis* Plethon directs his criticism at a well-known passage from the second book of Aristotle's *Physics*, in which Aristotle maintains that it is absurd to deny that nature acts for the sake of an end only because it does not appear to deliberate and argues that art does not deliberate either, for if art were in a piece of wood, it would act in the same way as nature.<sup>4</sup> Taking aim at this Aristotelian passage, Plethon writes the following words, not without some animosity:

<sup>2</sup> As pointed out by Monfasani, the initial reception of *De differentiis* took place almost exclusively among Greek intellectuals. The evidence that this work was known and used by the Italian humanists is actually very scarce. Cf. John Monfasani, *George of Trebizond: a biography and a study of his rhetoric and logic* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), p.204.

<sup>3</sup> The same thesis that triggered a reply from Scholarios and a response to the reply by Plethon, as discussed in the present article, lead several years later to a heated debate in the circle of Bessarion. The debate of the same issue among Theodoros Gazes, Georgios Trapezuntios and Bessarion, which eventually lead to the composition of *De natura et arte*, is discussed in Sergei Mariev, "Der Traktat 'De natura et arte' des Kardinals Bessarion" in *Inter graecos latinissimus, inter latinos graecissimus*, edited by Claudia Märkl, Christian Kaiser and Thomas Ricklin (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2013), pp.361–389, and in the introduction to the forthcoming edition of *De natura et arte* prepared by Sergei Mariev, Monica Marchetto and Katharina Luchner.

<sup>4</sup> Plethon, *De differentiis*, edited by Bernadette Lagarde, 1973, p.331, 32–332, 23 and Arist., *Phys.*, II 8, 199 b 26–28.

Οὐκ ἀφεκτέα δὲ οὐδὲ τοῦ ἐν τῇ φυσικῇ αὐτῷ ἀκροάσει μάλιστα δὴ οὐ καλῶς ἐκείνου εἰρημένου. Ἀτοπον δὲ φησι τὸ μὴ οἶεσθαι ἕνεκα τοῦ τι γίγνεσθαι, ἂν μὴ ἴδωσι τὸ ποιοῦν [Arist.: τὸ κινεῖν] βουλευσάμενον. Καίτοι καὶ ἡ τέχνη οὐ βουλευεταί φησιν; εἰ γὰρ ἦν ἐν τῷ ξύλῳ ἡ τέχνη [Arist.: ναυπηγική], οὐκ ἂν ἐβουλευετο [Arist.: ὁμοίως ἂν τῇ φύσει ἐποίει]. (Plethon, *De differentiis*, ed. Lagarde 1973, p.331, 31–36)

One should not ignore the wholly misconceived argument in his lectures on Physics. For he says that it is absurd not to think that a thing comes in being for the sake of an end unless the productive cause is seen to have deliberated. And indeed art does not deliberate either, says he [i.e. Aristotle]: if art were in a piece of wood, it would not deliberate.

Plethon's rendering of the arguments of Aristotle in the passage quoted above differs in a few respects from the actual Aristotelian text. Plethon substitutes the Aristotelian τὸ κινεῖν (that which sets in motion, that which effects the change) with τὸ ποιοῦν (productive cause), the ναυπηγική (art of shipbuilding) with ἡ τέχνη (art), and ὁμοίως ἂν τῇ φύσει ἐποίει (it would act in the same way as nature) with οὐκ ἂν ἐβουλευετο (it would not deliberate). Plethon is notorious for his correcting textual interventions.<sup>5</sup> However, in this particular case it is not clear if the alterations should be taken as an indication that Plethon thought that the text of Aristotle was wrong or rather that he wanted to adapt the quotation to suit his own arguments against it.<sup>6</sup> In his reply to Plethon's remarks (see below) Scholarios would simply refer to the transmitted Aristotelian text without pointing out Plethon's departure from it.

<sup>5</sup> The most notorious are his emendations to the manuscripts of Plato, in which he deleted or corrected entire passages, cf. Fabio Pagani, "Damnata verba: censura di Pletone in alcuni codici platonici", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 102 (2009), pp.167–202.

<sup>6</sup> The substitution of ναυπηγική with ἡ τέχνη makes the quote into a statement on art in general, not an example drawn from a particular art. This alteration could have helped Plethon to reinforce the impression that his criticism targets Aristotle's teachings on nature in general, not just a single point. The substitution of ὁμοίως ἂν τῇ φύσει ἐποίει with οὐκ ἂν ἐβουλευετο makes it clear to the reader how Plethon understood this Aristotelian passage. If Plethon had left ὁμοίως ἂν τῇ φύσει ἐποίει in the text, the quote, especially since it is taken out of its original context, would remain ambiguous and require some additional explanations. If viewed from a philosophical perspective, the substitution of τὸ κινεῖν with τὸ ποιοῦν can be considered to be very significant. As was pointed out by Bernadette Lagarde, *Georges Gémiste Pléthon: Des différences entre Platon et Aristote*, p.160, this substitution "est déjà révélatrice du rejet par Pléthon d'une cause qui ne soit qu'un principe de mouvement." However, this does not quite explain why Plethon changed the text of Aristotle when quoting it, rather than pointing out this, as he believed, serious defect of the Aristotelian philosophy.



Having recapitulated the Aristotelian view about the relationship between deliberation, on the one hand, and art and nature, on the other hand, as he understood this relationship, Plethon proceeds to formulate his objections. He opens his arguments by first addressing the question whether there is deliberation in art. He remarks that art would not remain art if it did not deliberate about its products beforehand. Further, he stresses that deliberation is that which constitutes art as such and explains that the orientation towards the goal implies that an intellect considers the goal in advance and anticipates it within itself:

καὶ πῶς τέχνη ἔτι ἔμεινεν οὐ τῶν ἔργων προβουλευομένη; ἢ τί ἄλλο τὸ τέχνην μάλιστα συνιστῶν ἢ τὸ βουλευέσθαι; Πῶς δ' ἂν καὶ ἐπὶ τι τέλος ὀτιοῦν ἐνεχθεῖ μή τινας νοῦ αὐτοῦ προβουλευομένου καὶ τὸ τέλος ἐκεῖνο ἐν ἑαυτῷ δὴ μάλιστα προειληφότος; (Plethon, *De differentiis*, ed. Lagarde 1973, p.331, 36–332,2)

But how could art remain art if it did not deliberate about its products beforehand? What else constitutes art if not above all the deliberation? How could something be brought to a goal of any kind unless some intellect deliberates about this goal beforehand and anticipates it within itself?

This passage contains in a succinct way the central elements that are characteristic of the Plethonian concept of art. Art is defined by Plethon in terms of the deliberation about its products (τῶν ἔργων). In addition, Plethon stresses the necessity that an intellect should anticipate (προβουλευέσθαι and προλαμβάνεσθαι) the end of the productive process within itself.

Having expressed his view of art, Plethon proceeds to the exposition of his understanding of nature. He remarks that since art imitates nature and nature serves as the model for art, it must follow that what constitutes art also constitutes nature but to a much higher degree:

Εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἡ τέχνη μιμεῖται καὶ κατ' αὐτὸν Ἀριστοτέλη τὴν φύσιν, οὐ τὴν φύσιν ἔδει τῆς τέχνης ὑπολείπεσθαι, ἀλλὰ τὸ μάλιστα δὴ τοῦτο τὴν τέχνην συνιστῶν πολλῷ πρότερον τὴν φύσιν ἔχειν καὶ μεγαλειότερον. (Plethon, *De differentiis*, ed. Lagarde 1973, p.332, 2–6)

For if art imitates nature, as Aristotle himself teaches, then nature should not be inferior to art. On the contrary, nature must possess that which constitutes art in a far superior and elevated way.

He continues his explanation by pointing out that even if art makes use of some elements that do not deliberate, like an instrument of an artist or his assistants, it is not in these irrational elements that art resides, but in an artist [literally a contriver, director of works] who is equipped with λόγος and can deliberate:

Εἰ δέ τι καὶ ἐν τῇ τέχνῃ φαίνεται οὐ βουλευόμενον οἷον ὄργανον ἢ τις διάκονος, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐν ἐκείνῳ ἡ τέχνη ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ ἀρχετέκτονι. (Plethon, *De differentiis*, ed. Lagarde 1973, 332, 6–8)

And even if in art there appears to be an element that does not deliberate, such as an instrument or an assistant, it is not in them that art lies, but in the director of works.

In a similar way, if an element devoid of λόγος appears to be in nature, this does not mean that nature should be identified with this element and understood as something devoid of λόγος. Nature is a divine institution and as such cannot be irrational.

Οὐδέ γε εἰ ἐν τῇ φύσει φαίνεται τι ἄλογον, οὐκ ἐν ἐκείνῳ ἡ μάλιστα δὴ τοῦργον δρῶσα φύσις. ἡ γὰρ φύσις θεοῦ θεσμός ἐστι, θεοῦ δὲ θεσμός οὐκ ἄλογος. (Plethon, *De differentiis*, ed. Lagarde 1973, 332, 8–10)

Similarly, if one observes something irrational in nature, then the nature that accomplishes the work certainly does not lie therein; for nature is a divine institution and a divine institution cannot be irrational.

### III. Scholarios' Criticism of Plethon

This view on the role of deliberation in art and nature becomes an object of criticism which Georgios Scholarios expressed in his polemical work *Contra Plethonem* (1443/1444).<sup>7</sup> The general aim of this work was to defend Aristotle against the attacks of Plethon. However, Scholarios was motivated not so much by the love of Aristotelian philosophy as by his desire to defend the Christian religion with which he considered Aristotle to be compatible, in spite of some grave errors, as Scholarios would have characterized them.<sup>8</sup> The passage in *Contra Plethonem* in which Scholarios counters the opinions which Plethon had expressed in the seventh chapter of *De Differentiis* aims at demonstrating that Aristotle was right in maintaining that art does not deliberate. In effect, as Scholarios points out by recalling some passages from the *Nicomachean Ethics*,<sup>9</sup> according to Aristotle the most distinct arts do not have recourse to σκέψις and do not need to reflect or to have doubts about their works:

<sup>7</sup> George Scholarios Gennadios, *Contre les difficultés de Pléthon au sujet d'Aristote*, in *Oeuvres complètes de Gennade Scholarios*, edited by Louis Petit, Martin Jugie and Xenophon A. Siderides, vol. IV, (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1935), pp.1–116. A recapitulation of the content of *Contra Plethonem* is found in Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of Hellenes*, pp.240–266. On the controversy between Plethon and Scholarios cf. George Karamanolis, “Plethon and Scholarios on Aristotle” in *Byzantine Philosophy and Its Ancient Sources*, edited by Katerina Ierodiakonou (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), pp.253–282. On Scholarios cf. Franz Tinnefeld, “Georgios Gennadios Scholarios” in *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, edited by Carmelo Giuseppe Conticello and Vassa Contoumas-Conticello (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), pp.477–549. Cf. Igor Ševčenko, “Intellectual Repercussions of the Council of Florence”, *Church History*, 24 (1955), pp.291–323. Cf. Marie-Hélène Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios Scholarios (vers 1400–vers 1472): un intellectuel orthodoxe face à la disparition de l'Empire byzantin* (‘Archives de l’orient chrétien’, 20; Paris: Institut français d’études byzantines (IFEB), 2008). Cf. also Marie-Hélène Blanchet, “Georges-Gennadios Scholarios et la question de l’addition au symbole” in *Byzantine theologians, the systematization of their own doctrine and their perception of foreign doctrines*, edited by Antonio Rigo and Pavel Ermilov (Roma: Università degli studi di Roma “Tor Vergata”, 2009), pp.181–191.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. George Scholarios Gennadios, *Contre les difficultés de Pléthon au sujet d'Aristote*, p. III.

<sup>9</sup> Aristoteles, *Eth. Nic.*, 1112 a 34–1112 b 2: “καὶ περὶ μὲν τὰς ἀκριβεῖς καὶ αὐτάρκειας τῶν ἐπιστημῶν οὐκ ἔστι βουλή, οἷον περὶ γραμμάτων (οὐ γὰρ διστάζομεν πῶς γραπτέον)”; Aristoteles, *Eth. Nic.* 1112b 7–9: “μᾶλλον γὰρ περὶ ταῦτα διστάζομεν. τὸ βουλευέσθαι δὲ ἐν τοῖς ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ, ἀδήλοισι δὲ πῶς ἀποβήσεται, καὶ ἐν οἷς ἀδιόριστον.”

ὅλως σαφές ἐστὶ τὰς τῶν τεχνῶν σαφεστάτας ἥκιστα τῇ σκέψει χρῆσθαι περὶ τῶν ἔργων. (Scholarios, *Contra Plethonem*, ed. Petit et al., p.100, 39–40)

It is entirely clear that the most distinct arts engage as little as possible in reflection upon their works.

Later on in the text of Scholarios we find a passage that shows close dependence on the commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* by Thomas Aquinas.<sup>10</sup> Scholarios remarks that only those artists who have not reached sufficient precision still need to have recourse to deliberation; once they have firmly grasped the fixed principles of their art, they deliberate no longer, but follow the instructions by means of which the art guides them:

καὶ τοὺς ἐνδεῶς ἔχοντας ἀκριβείας καὶ διὰ τοῦτο βουλευομένους, ἐπειδὴν σαφοῦς τινος τῆς τέχνης ἀρχῆς ἐπιλάβωνται, παύεσθαι δεῖ λοιπὸν σκεπτομένους, καὶ ἢ ἂν ἐκείνη ὑφηγοίτο, ταύτη καὶ ἐπεσθαι· ἢ καὶ κιθαρωδὸς ἀφνέστατα ἂν ᾄδοι καὶ ἀμουσώτατα, εἰ σκέπτοιτο χορδῆς ἐκάστης ἀπτόμενος (Scholarios, *Contra Plethonem*, ed. Petit et al., p.101, 3–7)

Once the artists who lack precision and therefore deliberate, have attained some clear principles of a particular art, they thereafter cease to ponder and follow the principle by means of which the art guides them; a cithara player would indeed sing in a most unsuitable and discordant manner if he pondered every time he touched each string.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In Phys.*, edited by Angelo Maria Pirotta, II, lectio 14, n.8: “unde artes certissimae non deliberant, sicut scriptor non deliberat quomodo debeat formare litteras. Et illi etiam artifices qui deliberant, postquam invenerunt certum principium artis, in exequendo non deliberant: unde citharaedus, si in tangendo quamlibet chordam deliberaret, imperitissimus videretur.” (Cf. P. Fr. Angelo Maria Pirotta O. P., S. *Thomae Aquinatis in octo libros 'De physico auditu' sive 'Physicorum' Aristotelis commentaria* (Napoli: Auria, 1953)) Cf. eng. tr. by Richard J. Blackwell, Richard J. Spath and W. Edmund Thirlkel, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics [of] St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Dumb Ox Books, 1999), p.133f.: “Hence the most certain arts do not deliberate, as the writer does not deliberate how he should form letters. Moreover, those artisans who do deliberate, after they have discovered the certain principles of the art, do not deliberate in the execution. Thus one who plays the harp would seem most inexperienced if he should deliberate in playing any chord.”

For Scholarios the fact that art does not involve deliberation does not mean that it is not purposive, but on the contrary that it comprises a clear understanding of the means that are necessary to achieve the end and therefore does not need to ponder or to doubt (σκέπτεσθαι). Scholarios not only defends here a different concept of art, but also advances a different understanding of deliberation, which for him is not an ability of an intellect to grasp the end in advance, as Plethon viewed it, but rather a σκέψις, i.e. an incertitude about how to proceed.

Moving from a consideration of art to a consideration of nature Scholarios points out that just as in the case of art the lack of deliberation does not imply an absence of purpose, so nature too proceeds in an orderly way towards its *telos* without deliberation. Deliberation is intended here again in the sense of “being at loss” or “being doubtful”:

Ἐντεῦθεν οὖν δῆλόν ἐστιν, ὡς εἴ τι ποιοῦν μὴ βουλεύοιτο, οὐ τῷ εἰκῇ καὶ πρὸς οὐδὲν τέλος ποιεῖν, ἀλλὰ τῷ σαφῇ τε καὶ ὠρισμένα μέσα τοῦτω προκεῖσθαι δι’ ὧν ἂν μέλλοι ποιεῖν, ἀνεκδοῶς ἔχει τοῦ σκέπτεσθαι. Οὕτω δὲ καὶ ἡ φύσις αὐτὴ διὰ τινων ὠρισμένων μέσων ἐπὶ τὸ πέρας εὐτάκτως ἰοῦσα, οὐκ ἂν δέοιτο σκέπτεσθαι, ὥσπερ ἐνδοιάζουσα καὶ ἀμφιγνοοῦσα· (Scholarios, *Contra Plethonem*, ed. Petit et al., p.101, 8–13)

From this it is clear that when art produces something without deliberation, it does so not at random and for the sake of no end, but because it has clear and definite means at its disposal through which it will proceed and has no need to doubt. In this way nature itself also proceeds by definite means towards a goal in an orderly manner and does not need to ponder just as though it were at loss or doubtful.

Scholarios proceeds to a consideration of the last sentence of the Aristotelian passage that had been used by Plethon in his attack on Aristotle.<sup>11</sup> He explains that, since Aristotle had used art as an example to illustrate his view on nature, he [Aristotle] then tries to make the example more plausible and to preempt objections by showing that art and nature differ from each other only in that

<sup>11</sup> Aristoteles, *Phys.* II 8, 199 b 28–29: “καὶ εἰ ἐνὴν ἐν τῷ ξύλῳ ἡ ναυπηγικὴ, ὁμοίως ἂν τῇ φύσει ἐποιεῖ.” Vgl. Plethon, *De differentiis*, edited by Bernadette Lagarde, 1973, VII, p.331: “εἰ γὰρ ἦν ἐν τῷ ξύλῳ ἡ τέχνη, οὐκ ἂν ἐβουλεύετο.”

art is an external principle with respect to its products and nature is an internal principle of movement. They differ so little from each other that if art were in a piece of wood, it would act in the same way as nature. According to Scholarios, it follows that, for Aristotle, nature is nothing other than the rational principle (λόγος) of a higher art that is placed within things themselves:

ἄτε δὲ τῷ κατὰ τὴν τέχνην παραδείγματι ταύτην τὴν περὶ τῆς φύσεως πλάνην τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐκείνων ἀπορραπίσας, μὴ καὶ δόξη τισὶν ἀπεικέναι πως τὸ παράδειγμα, δείκνυσιν ὡς οὐδὲν διενήνοχεν ἡ φύσις τῆς τέχνης, εἰ μὴ τῷ ταύτην ἔνδοθεν ἀρχὴν οὖσαν τῶν γινομένων, ἐκείνης ἔξωθεν οὔσης, ταύτη μόνον πλεονεκτεῖν. Εἰ γὰρ ἡ ναυπηγικὴ, φησὶν, ἔνδοθεν ἐνήργει τοῦ ξύλου τῷ τῆς φύσεως τρόπῳ, ἐγίνετ’ ἂν ὑπὸ τῆς φύσεως ναῦς, ὡς νῦν ὑπὸ τῆς τέχνης εἴωθε γίνεσθαι· καὶ τοῦτο γένοιτ’ ἂν μάλιστα δῆλον ἐπὶ τῆς τέχνης τῆς ἐνυπαρχούσης τῷ κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς κινουμένῳ, οἷον τῷ ἑαυτὸν ἰατρεῦοντι· ταύτη γὰρ ἡ φύσις μάλιστα τῇ τέχνῃ ὁμοίωται. Ὅθεν δῆλόν ἐστιν, ὡς ἡ φύσις λόγος τίς ἐστι τέχνης ὑψηλοτέρας ἐνιδρυμένος τοῖς πράγμασιν, ᾧ πρὸς ὠρισμένον κινοῦνται τέλος, ὥσπερ εἴ τινα δύναμιν ὁ ναυπηγὸς εἶχε κινεῖσθαι ποιεῖν τὰ ξύλα ἐξ ἑαυτῶν πρὸς τὸ τῆς νηὸς εἶδος, καὶ μὴ δεῖσθαι τινος τοῦτ’ εἰσάγοντος ἔξωθεν (Scholarios, *Contra Plethonem*, ed. Petit et al., p.101, 13–26).

Seeing that he has corrected this error of those people with regard to nature by using an example taken from art, he shows – lest this example appear unreasonable to some people – that nature does not differ from art at all, except for the fact that it [i.e. nature] is an internal principle of things that come into being and art is an external principle. Nature is superior to art only in this single respect. For if the shipbuilder’s art, says Aristotle, were active from inside a piece of wood in the manner of nature, then [the piece of wood] would naturally become a ship as now it becomes a ship through art. This may become especially clear with regard to the art which is contained in a thing that is set in motion accidentally, such as in the case of a physician who heals himself: he [i.e. Aristotle] likens nature above all to this kind of art. From this it is clear that nature is a certain rational principle of a higher art which is ingrained in things, by means of which they are set in motion towards a definite end, as if a shipbuilder had a certain power to make pieces

of wood change by themselves into the form of a ship and had no need of someone who introduces this [i.e. the form] from outside.<sup>12</sup>

Contrary to Plethon, who maintains that deliberation is a constitutive element of art and must therefore also be a constitutive element of nature but to a much higher degree, Scholarios has been able to show that since art, if it is precise, produces for the sake of an end without having any need to deliberate, this must also be true of nature, which is far superior to art, and therefore must also be able to produce for the sake of an end without any deliberation at all.

Οὕτω γοῦν πάνυ τῆς τέχνης ὁμοίας οὔσης τῇ φύσει, εἴπερ ἡ τέχνη, καὶ μὴ βουλομένη, ἕνεκά του ποιεῖ, οὐ δι' ἔλλειψιν λόγου ἀλλὰ δι' ὑπερβολὴν ἀκριβείας, ἅτε δι' ὠρισμένων μέσων ἐπὶ τὸ πέρας ἀνενδοιάστως προβαίνουσα, εὐδὴλον ὡς εἰ μηδὲ ἡ φύσις βουλευόιτο, ἅτε πολὺ τὴν τέχνην ἀκριβείᾳ νικῶσα, πολλῶ ἂν μᾶλλον ἕνεκά του ποιοίη (Scholarios, *Contra Plethonem*, ed. Petit et al., p.101, 26–30).

Given that art is very similar to nature and since art produces for the sake of an end, even if it does not deliberate, not because it lacks reason, but owing to an excess of precision, for it proceeds by definite means

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *In Phys.*, edited by Angelo Maria Pirota O. P. (Napoli: Auria, 1953), II, lectio 14, n. 8.: “In nullo enim alio natura ab arte videtur differre, nisi quia natura est principium intrinsecum, et ars est principium extrinsecum. Si enim ars factiva navis esset intrinseca ligno, facta fuisset navis a natura, sicut modo fit ab arte. Et hoc maxime manifestum est in arte quae est in eo quod movetur, licet per accidens, sicut de medico qui medicatur se ipsum: huic arti enim maxime assimilatur natura. Unde patet quod natura nihil est aliud quam ratio cuiusdam artis, scilicet divinae, indita rebus, qua ipsae res moventur ad finem determinatum: sicut si artifex factor navis posset lignis tribuere, quod ex se ipsis moverentur ad navis formam inducendam.” On Thomas Aquinas in Byzantium, cf. John A. Demetracopoulos, “Latin Philosophical Works Translated into Greek” in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, edited by Robert Pasnau and Christina Van Dyke (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), vol. II, pp.822–826; idem, “Demetrius Cydones’ Translation of Bernardus Guidonis’ List of Thomas Aquinas’ Writings and the Historical Roots of Byzantine Thomism” in 1308: *eine Topographie historischer Gleichzeitigkeit*, edited by Andreas Speer and David Wirmser (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2010), pp.829–881; idem, “Georgios Gemistos-Plethon’s Dependence on Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa contra Gentiles* and *Summa Theologiae*”, *Archiv für mittelalterliche Philosophie und Kultur*, 12 (2006), pp.276–341; idem, “Georgios Gennadios II-Scholarios’ Florilegium Thomisticum: His Early Abridgment of Various Chapters and Quaestiones of Thomas Aquinas’ *Summae* and his Anti-Plethonism”, *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales*, 69 (2002), pp.117–171. Cf. also Marcus Plested, *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

towards a goal without any hesitation, it is easy to see that if nature does not deliberate, for it greatly surpasses art in precision, it is much more likely that it should be productive for the sake of an end.

The outcome of the first part of Scholarios’ arguments now becomes clear. Nature and art do not lack λόγος, i.e. the capacity to determine the means that lead to a certain goal. On the contrary, nature determines these means with exactness and precision that characterize the most exact art. This does not simply imply that they make no use of deliberation, but, moreover, they do not *need* to deliberate.

Having examined the Aristotelian passage criticized by Plethon and having demonstrated that nature and art can produce for the sake of an end and have λόγος without having recourse to deliberation, Scholarios proceeds to an examination of the meaning which Plethon had attributed to the verb βουλευέσθαι and the substantive βουλή. He explains that when Plethon claims that deliberation is a constitutive element of art, he clearly intends βουλευέσθαι (to deliberate) in the sense of διανοεῖσθαι (to think). In fact, as Scholarios admits, if βουλευέσθαι is intended in this sense of “to think”, it follows that nature can reach its goal only if the intellect exercises the activity of προβουλευέσθαι, i.e. anticipates this goal in advance and prefigures it in itself (τουτέστι διανοουμένου καὶ τὸ τέλος ἐν ἑαυτῷ προδιατυπώντος). Scholarios points out that this is not the meaning of these words in Aristotle:<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Scholarios brings βουλή into relation with φρόνησις, which already in Aristotle is concerned with human affairs (cf. Aristoteles, *Eth. Nic.* VI 7, 1141 b 8–15: “Ἡ δὲ φρόνησις περὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα καὶ περὶ ὧν ἔστι βουλευέσθαι· τοῦ γὰρ φρονίμου μάλιστα τοῦτ’ ἔργον εἶναι φαμεν, τὸ εὖ βουλευέσθαι, βουλευέται δ’ οὐδεὶς περὶ τῶν ἀδυνάτων ἄλλως ἔχειν, οὐδ’ ὅσων μὴ τέλος τι ἔστι, καὶ τοῦτο πρακτὸν ἀγαθόν. ὁ δ’ ἀπλῶς εὐβουλος ὁ τοῦ ἀρίστου ἀνθρώπῳ τῶν πρακτῶν στοχαστικός κατὰ τὸν λογισμόν. οὐδ’ ἐστὶν ἡ φρόνησις τῶν καθόλου μόνον, ἀλλὰ δεῖ καὶ τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστα γνωρίζειν.” Prudence on the other hand is concerned with the affairs of men, and with things that can be the object of deliberation. For we say that to deliberate well is the most characteristic function of the prudent man; but no one deliberates about things that cannot vary nor yet about variable things that are not a means to some end, and that end a good attainable by action; and a good deliberator in general is a man who can arrive by calculation at the best of the goods attainable by man. Nor is prudence a knowledge of general principles only; it must also take account of particular facts), and with the things that vary and that are within one’s power to do (cf. Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1140 a 30–33: “ὥστε καὶ ὅλως ἂν εἴη φρόνιμος ὁ βουλευτικός. βουλευέται δ’ οὐθεὶς περὶ τῶν ἀδυνάτων ἄλλως ἔχειν, οὐδὲ τῶν μὴ ἐνδεχομένων αὐτῷ πράττειν.”). Deliberation is also described as the ability to deliberate about what is advantageous as a means to the good life in general (cf. Arist. *Eth. Nic.* VI 5 1140 a 28). Aristotle differentiates between the εὐβουλία (good council, soundness of judgement) and εὐστοχία



ἔπειτα τοῦτ' εἶναι φησι τὸ τέχνην μάλιστα συνιστῶν, τὸ βουλευέσθαι, ὃ ἦν τις αὐτῆς ἀφέλη, οὐδ' ἂν ἔτι τέχνη μείνειεν. Ἄπαν δὲ τοῦναντίον ἐστίν· εἰ μὲν γὰρ βουλευέσθαι τὸ διανοεῖσθαι λέγει, ἀνάγκη μὲν πάντα ἐπὶ τὸ οἰκεῖον ἀφικνεῖσθαι τέλος, νοῦ τινος προβουλευομένου περὶ αὐτῶν, τουτέστι διανοουμένου καὶ τὸ τέλος ἐν ἑαυτῷ προδιατυπώοντος, ὡς αὐτὸς φησιν. Ἄλλ' οὐχ οὕτω τὸ βουλευέσθαι οὐθ' οἱ κατὰ τῆς φύσεως ἐπιχειροῦντες, οὐτ' Ἀριστοτέλης ἐλάμβανεν, ἀλλ' ὡς μάλιστα τῷ βουλευέσθαι χρῆσθαι σύνηθές ἐστιν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις, καὶ ὡς ἂν μάλιστα κυρίως νοοῖτο· (Scholarios, *Contra Plethonem*, ed. Petit et al., p.102, 1–9)

Thereafter he says that this is above all what constitutes art, namely the deliberating, and that if someone deprived art of this, it would not remain art anymore. Quite the contrary: for if he says that βουλευέσθαι (to deliberate) means διανοεῖσθαι (to think), it is necessary that all things achieve their own ends, because some intellect considers them in advance, i.e. thinks and prefigures in itself the end in advance, as he says. However, the βουλευέσθαι was not intended in this sense either by the natural philosophers or by Aristotle. Rather it should be taken in the most common sense in which this word is used in the texts and as it is commonly understood in the proper sense.

Scholarios then proceeds to explain that according to Aristotle βουλή (deliberation) means ζήτησις (investigation), which pertains to the matters of action and therefore is more peculiar to human beings *qua* human beings than any other activity:

βουλή γάρ ἐστι κυρίως, ζήτησις τις τοῦ λόγου περὶ τὰ πρακτά, ἐν οἷς ὁ τῶν ἀνθρώπων βίος συνίσταται· οὐ χάριν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐνεργειῶν ἰδιαίτερόν ἐστι τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὸ βουλευέσθαι· (Scholarios, *Contra Plethonem*, ed. Petit et al., p.102, 9–11)

(skill in shooting at a mark, good aim, and then, metaphorically, sagacity, shrewdness, often translated as conjecture) in *Eth. Nic.* VI 9, 1142 b 1–5: “ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδ' εὐστοχία· ἄνευ τε γὰρ λόγου καὶ ταχύ τι ἢ εὐστοχία, βουλευόνται δὲ πολὺν χρόνον, καὶ φασὶ πράττειν μὲν δεῖν ταχὺ τὰ βουλευθέντα, βουλευέσθαι δὲ βραδέως” (not yet is it skill in Conjecture: for this operates without conscious calculation and rapidly, whereas deliberating takes a long time). English transl. from Arist. in 23 volumes, trans. by Horace H. Rackham, (London: W. Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1934).

deliberation (βουλή) in the proper sense is the investigation of reason with regards to matters of action, in which consists the life of men. On account of this, to deliberate (βουλευέσθαι) is more peculiar to men than any other activity.

Scholarios goes even further. First, he stresses that deliberation pertains to the means or the actions that are necessary to achieve the end, not the end itself. Second, the deliberation is appropriate only in those cases in which it is not possible to make use of an exact art, but only of πείρα (i.e. experience, trial, test, attempt) which, connected with skill in shooting at a mark, becomes the ability to hit that which is suitable and useful:

[...] οὐδὲ περὶ τοῦ τέλους ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ περὶ τῶν πρὸς τὸ τέλος λυσιτελούντων, ἐν οἷς πολλή τις ἐστὶν ἡ ἀμφιβολία [...]. Οὐτε τοίνυν περὶ τοῦ τέλους ἐστὶν ἡ βουλή, οὔτε περὶ τῶν πρακτῶν ἀπάντων, ἀ πρὸς ὅτιον φέρουσι τέλος, ἀλλὰ μάλιστα μὲν περὶ ὧν οὐκ ἔστι τέχνη, ἀλλὰ πείρα τις εὐστοχία συναπτομένη τοῦ πρέποντος ἢ τοῦ συμφέροντος στοχαστική γίνεται [...]. (Scholarios, *Contra Plethonem*, ed. Petit et al., p.102, 11–13 and 19–22)

[...] and it does not concern the end, but that which is of advantage towards achieving the end and that which involves much uncertainty [...]. The deliberation does not concern the end nor all matters of action that lead to some end, but above all that with regard to which there is no art, but a certain experience which, connected with skill in shooting at a mark, becomes mastery in aiming at that which is suitable and useful [...].

In the following passage Scholarios makes reference to the field of human actions and the stochastic arts, and concedes that βουλευέσθαι (to deliberate) is unavoidable with respect to that which is of advantage to the life of a polis in general or to life of an individual in general, which is, according to Aristotle, the area of activity of *phronimos* in the Aristotelian sense. He also concedes the use of βουλευέσθαι in the context of artistic production, especially in those cases in which the precision is not possible, either because the scope is not definite or the rules are only very general, so that the outcome must remain unsure on account of the matter:



[...] οἷον περὶ τῶν τῇ πόλει συμφερόντων καθόλου, ἢ περὶ τῶν ἐκάστῳ πρὸς γε τὸν ξύμπαντα βίον· τούτων γὰρ οὐδεμία ἐστὶ τέχνη, ἣν τις μαθὼν, τὰ τε κοινά, τὸν τε ἑαυτοῦ βίον ἄνευ συμβούλων ὡς ἄριστα δύναιτο διοικεῖν [...] Περί τε τοίνυν τῶν τοιούτων ἔστι βουλευέσθαι καὶ περὶ ὧν τέχνην μὲν τινα ἔχομεν· οὐ δυνάμεθα δὲ ἀκριβῶς πράττειν, ἢ μὴδ' αὐτῆς τῆς τέχνης πάνυ τὴν ἀκριβείαν ἐπιδεχομένης διὰ τὴν ὕλην, ἢ αὐτοὶ διὰ ῥαθυμίαν οὕτω τῆς κατ' αὐτὴν ἀκριβείας ἐπειλημμένοι. (Scholarios, *Contra Plethonem*, ed. Petit et al., p.102, 22–25 und 29–32)

[...] as is the case with respect to that which is of advantage to the polis in general or of advantage to the entire life of an individual. For with respect to these things there is no art which one could learn and become able to conduct public affairs and one's own life in a best way without any advisors. [...] One has to deliberate about these matters as well as about those for which we have an art but are unable to act with precision either because the art itself does not admit of precision at all on account of the matter or because we ourselves have not attained precision in this art on account of indolence.

Further on Scholarios lists some other cases in which an artist who practices a non-stochastic art has recourse to deliberation. According to him this is the case, first, if an artist has not attained precision in his art on account of his own indolence (as already explained in the previous passage). If he were able to practice his art in a rigorous way, he would not need to deliberate, for in this case it would be the rule of art to suggest to him what to do (ὡς ὁ τῆς τέχνης ὑπαγορεύει λόγος). Second, it could also happen that an architect deliberates whether or not he should take upon himself the trouble of constructing a house, but in this case he would be deliberating *qua* a man who happens by chance to be an architect and not as an architect *per se* (οὐχ ἢ οἰκοδόμος, ἀλλ' ἢ ἄνθρωπος). Third, it can also happen that an architect gives some advice to others, which does not imply that he himself deliberates.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> This last consideration becomes understandable if one takes into account the fact that the verb συμβουλεύω in the active voice means "to give advice to others" whereas in the middle voice it means "to ask for advice", cf. *A Greek-English lexicon*, compiled by Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) *ad vocem*.

[...] οὐ δυνάμεθα δὲ ἀκριβῶς πράττειν, ἢ μὴδ' αὐτῆς τῆς τέχνης πάνυ τὴν ἀκριβείαν ἐπιδεχομένης διὰ τὴν ὕλην, ἢ αὐτοὶ διὰ ῥαθυμίαν οὕτω τῆς κατ' αὐτὴν ἀκριβείας ἐπειλημμένοι. Ἔως δ' ἂν ἀκριβῶς τῇ τέχνῃ χρῆσθαι δυνάμεθα, οὐκ ἂν ποτε βουλευσαίμεθα περὶ οὐτοῦν ὧν δεῖ πράττειν, ὡς ὁ τῆς τέχνης ὑπαγορεύει λόγος· καὶ οὕτω γὰρ καὶ οἰκοδόμος, εἰ μὲν βουλευοίτο πότερον δεῖ οἰκοδομοῦντα πονεῖν ἢ μὴ, οὐχ ἢ οἰκοδόμος, ἀλλ' ἢ ἄνθρωπος οὕτω βουλεύεται. Ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ περὶ τοῦ μεγέθους ἢ σχήματος τοῦ ἔργου, ὁπόσην τινα ὕλην καὶ ποῖαν ἐτοιμάζειν αὐτῷ δεῖ, ἑαυτῷ μὲν οἰκοδομῶν ἢ ἄνθρωπος βουλεύεται, ᾧ συμβέβηκεν οἰκοδόμῳ εἶναι, ἄλλῳ δὲ πράττειν μέλλων τὸ ἔργον καὶ συμβουλεύσει ἢ οἰκοδόμος, οὐκ αὐτὸς δὲ βουλεύεται, ἀλλ' ἅμα ἐρωτηθεὶς ἕκαστα ἀποκρινεῖται, εἰ φρόνιμός τις εἴη καὶ οἰκοδομεῖν ἱκανός. (Scholarios, *Contra Plethonem*, ed. Petit et al., p.102, 30–103, 3)

[...] if we are not able to act with precision – be it because the art itself does not admit of precision at all on account of the matter or because we have not yet attained precision in this art on account of indolence. As long as we are able to use an art with precision we will never deliberate about anything that has to be done, because this is prescribed by the rule of the art. In this way an architect too, if he deliberated whether or not he should labor at constructing a house, would deliberate in this manner not *qua* an architect but *qua* a man. In a similar way, if he deliberated about the size or the shape of the work or about how much material and of what kind he should prepare, since he is constructing for himself, he will deliberate *qua* a man who happens [by chance] to be an architect at the same time. If he is about to do a work on behalf of someone else and is asked to give advice as an architect, he will not be deliberating himself, but will give an immediate response to every single question if he is intelligent and has the competence to be an architect.

These considerations enable Scholarios to validate the thesis previously advanced by Aristotle, namely that art does not deliberate. He is now able to reverse Plethon's thesis, according to which the βουλή (deliberation) is a constitutive element of art, since according to Scholarios that which constitutes art is the ability to produce without deliberation (τὸ ἀβουλεύτως ποιεῖν δύνασθαι). Given that the βουλή is for Scholarios synonymous with the investigation of that which is dubious or uncertain, art is able to produce without deliberation precisely because the rules of art dictate every single step. In this way, the art *stricto sensu*, i.e. understood as knowledge of the rules that allow

one to determine the appropriate actions in every situation without hesitation and to reach the goal in a sure way, and which is opposed to all the activities that are based on experience and have recourse to a specific ability that is termed εὐστοχία and στοχαστική [τέχνη], can be shown to exclude ζήτησις and βουλευέσθαι:

Ὅστε πανταχόθεν δῆλόν ἐστι τὴν τέχνην, ἥ καὶ Ἀριστοτέλει δοκεῖ, μὴ βουλευέσθαι, καὶ τοῦτ' εἶναι τὸ τὴν τέχνην μάλιστα συνιστῶν, τὸ ἀβουλευτῶς ποιεῖν δύνασθαι, ὡς δὴ τῆς μὲν βουλῆς ζητήσεως οὐσης, τοῦ δὲ τῆς τέχνης λόγου βεβαίως ἕκαστα ἐπιτάττοντος. (Scholarios, *Contra Plethonem*, ed. Petit et al., p.103, 15–19)

So that it is obvious from all sides that art, also in the opinion of Aristotle, does not deliberate and that this is what above all constitutes art, namely the ability to produce without deliberation, since deliberation is investigation and the rule of art prescribes with certainty every single [step].

In the eyes of Scholarios, art proceeds towards its goal with certainty because it is characterized not by inquiry but by judgement. In this way it becomes quite obvious that nature proceeds towards its goal because it does not deliberate and not because it has the ability to deliberate. It does not proceed towards its goal in an orderly way because an intellect preconceives in advance the goal towards which it is directed – as Plethon thinks – but, on the contrary, because it is far removed from the discursive reasoning and does not require any examination, since it is sustained by the firmest judgement and the most precise faculty of reason, which is understood as the ability to determine and to establish the rules:

Διὸ πράττει μὲν ἕνεκά του, ὡς δὴ μετὰ νοῦ τε καὶ φρονήσεως οὐσα-σκέψεως δὲ ἀνενδεής ἐστιν, ὡς οὐ ζητήσει, ἀλλὰ κρίσει γινωριζομένη, καὶ ὠρισμένοις καὶ σαφέσι μέσοις ἐπὶ τὸ οἰκεῖον εὐθυποροῦσα τέλος, [...]. Ταύτη δὲ καὶ πολλῶ μᾶλλον εἰκός ἐστι τὴν φύσιν ἕνεκά του ποιεῖν, ὡς ἀπὸ μείζονος διανοίας οὐσαν, καὶ σκέψεως οὐδαμῇ οὐδαμῶς δεῖσθαι, ὡς βεβαιωτάτῃ κρίσει καὶ μείζονι καὶ ἀκριβεστέρα λόγου δυνάμει ἕκαστα ἐπιούσαν καὶ δι' ὠρισμένων μέσων εὐτάκτως προβαίνουσιν, δι' ὧν χαλεπὸν ἐστὶν ἀποσφαλῆναι τοῦ τέλους. (Scholarios, *Contra Plethonem*, ed. Petit et al., p.103, 19–26)

For this reason it [i.e. art] produces for the sake of an end, since it is endowed with intellect and intelligence; but it requires no investigation, because it is characterized not by inquiry but by judgement and proceeds straight to its goal through the definite and clear means [...]. For this reason it is much more likely that nature produces for the sake of an end since it is further removed from discursive reasoning and because it does not need examination at all, of any kind, since it approaches every task with a most certain judgement and even a greater and more precise power of reason, and proceeds in an orderly way through definite means on account of which it is very difficult for it to fail in achieving its goal.

It is clear that the λόγος is understood here as an ability to determine its object, but also as the determination of that which is right and as a definite knowledge. The determination in case of a perfect art (and nature) takes place without deliberation (βουλή), which for Scholarios means “being unsure, doubtful”. Aristotle himself presents the βουλευέσθαι and λογίζεσθαι, which take place with λόγος, as a determination:

βουλευτὸν δὲ καὶ προαιρετὸν τὸ αὐτό, πλὴν ἀφωρισμένον ἤδη τὸ προαιρετὸν· τὸ γὰρ ἐκ τῆς βουλῆς κριθέν προαιρετὸν ἐστίν. (Arist., *Eth. Nic.*, 1113 a 2–5)

The object of deliberation and the object of choice are the same, except that when a thing is chosen it has already been determined, since it is the thing already selected as the result of our deliberation that is chosen. (trans. by H. Rackham)

According to Aristotle κρίνειν takes place in [the process of] deliberation.<sup>15</sup> A number of actions are considered in view of the final goal, then they are

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Friederike Rese, *Praxis und Logos bei Aristoteles: Handlung, Vernunft und Rede in Nikomachischer Ethik, Rhetorik und Politik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), pp.160–161: “Jemand, der über die ‚Mittel‘ zu einem Ziel zurategeht, geht im Geiste alle möglichen ‚Mittel‘ und Wege durch, durch die er das angestrebte Ziel verwirklichen könnte, bzw. die ihn zu dem angestrebten Ziel führen würden. Der Hinblick auf das Ziel erlaubt es ihm, zunächst einen Bereich möglicher Handlungen, durch die er das angestrebte Ziel verwirklichen kann, von anderen Bereichen möglicher Handlungen zu unterscheiden. Innerhalb dieses Bereichs von möglichen Handlungen kann er dann verschiedene Handlungen oder Handlungsketten voneinander abheben [...]. Die voneinander unterschiedenen Handlungen bzw. Handlungsketten können anschließend daraufhin betrachtet werden, welche von ihnen die leichteste und schönste Verwirklichung des Zieles bedeuten würde.”

distinguished one from the other, some are discarded, while others are judged to be suitable means for achieving a given end. For this reason Aristotle can say that the object of the προαίρεσις (choice), even though it is the same as the object of the βουλή, has already been determined and selected. According to Aristotle, after we have deliberated and the deliberation has led to a judgment, we fix our desire according to the result of our deliberation. It means that the choice (προαίρεσις) takes place through a combination of the deliberation and desire:

ὄντος δὲ τοῦ προαιρετοῦ βουλευτοῦ ὀρεκτοῦ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν, καὶ ἡ προαίρεσις ἂν εἴη βουλευτική ὀρεξις τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν· ἐκ τοῦ βουλευσασθαι γὰρ κρίναντες ὀρεγόμεθα κατὰ τὴν βούλευσιν. (Arist., *Eth. Nic.*, 1113 a 9–11)

Since namely the object of choice is something within our power which after deliberation we desire, choice will be a deliberate desire of things in our power, for we first deliberate, then select and finally fix our desire according to the result of our deliberation (transl. by H. Rackham)

The strategy of Scholarios consists in isolating the moments of ζητεῖν καὶ ἀναλύειν and of κρίνειν and in attributing the investigation (ζήτησις) – which is negatively connotated in the sense of “having doubt” and “be waivering” – to the βουλή; at the same time Scholarios attributes κρίνειν – which he understands as a judgement which may be a result of a deliberation, but is not necessarily linked to it – to λόγος. It is possible that Scholarios has in mind the Aristotelian theory of the λόγος ὁρθός, which is determined as the mean between the excess and deficiency,<sup>16</sup> but what he has in mind above all is the theological tradition that

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Arist., *Eth. Nic.*, 1138 b 18–20: “Ἐπεὶ δὲ τυγχάνομεν πρότερον εἰρηκότες ὅτι δεῖ τὸ μέσον αἰρεῖσθαι, μὴ τὴν ὑπερβολὴν μηδὲ τὴν ἑλλειψιν, τὸ δὲ μέσον ἐστὶν ὡς ὁ λόγος ὁ ὁρθός λέγει, τοῦτο διελέωμεν.” F. Rese interprets the λόγος ὁρθός as a result of a mediation: “das Allgemeine wird durch die Charakterzüge des Handelnden vorgegeben und lässt sich auch als das erläutern, was der Handelnde grundsätzlich für gut hält und in seinem Handeln anstrebt. Das Einzelne meint hingegen die einzelne Handlung in der konkreten Handlungssituation. Wenn der Handelnde nun angesichts der konkreten Handlungssituation das Mittlere zu bestimmen versucht, dann ist seine praktische Vernünftigkeit vor die Aufgabe gestellt, das Mittlere, worauf der Handelnde aufgrund seines guten Charakters grundsätzlich ausgerichtet ist, mit den konkreten Bedingungen der Handlungssituation zu vermitteln. Das Resultat dieser Vermittlung ist jedoch der ὁρθός λόγος, der angibt, worin das Mittlere in dieser konkreten Handlungssituation besteht“ (pp. 128–129). What is important is that the ὁρθός λόγος is not a deliberation, but the result of deliberation, i.e. a judgement that determines. Cf. Friederike Rese, *Praxis und Logos bei Aristoteles: Handlung, Vernunft und Rede in Nikomachischer Ethik, Rhetorik und Politik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), p. 129 and 162–163.

concerns the problem of attributing the choice (προαίρεσις) to God or to Christ,<sup>17</sup> or, what is even more problematic, deliberation,<sup>18</sup> which is presupposed by choice according to Aristotle.

<sup>17</sup> John of Damaskos stresses, e.g. the impossibility of attributing to Christ the doubt, the investigation, the deliberation, but also judgement *stricto sensu*, cf. John of Damaskos, *De fide orth.*, (III.14) 58, 155–162: “Ἐνὼμην δὲ καὶ προαίρεσιν ἐπὶ τοῦ κυρίου λέγειν ἀδύνατον, εἴπερ κυριολεκτεῖν βουλόμεθα. Ἡ γνώμη γὰρ μετὰ τὴν περὶ τοῦ ἀγνοουμένου ζήτησιν καὶ βούλευσιν ἦτοι βουλὴν καὶ κρίσιν πρὸς τὸ κριθέν ἐστι διάθεσις. Μεθ' ἣν ἡ προαίρεσις ἐκλεγόμενη καὶ αἰρουμένη πρό τοῦ ἐτέρου τὸ ἕτερον. Ὁ δὲ κύριος οὐ φιλος ὢν ἄνθρωπος ἀλλὰ καὶ θεός καὶ πάντα εἰδὼς ἀνευδεῖς σκέψεως καὶ ζητήσεως καὶ βουλῆς ὑπῆρχε καὶ κρίσεως καὶ φυσικῶς τὴν τε πρὸς τὸ καλὸν εἶχεν οἰκείωσιν καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὸ κακὸν ἀλλοτρίωσιν.” John of Damaskos takes up Maximus Homologites, cf. *Disputatio cum Phyrro, Patrologia Graeca* 91, 308 C 10–312 C (German translation “*In allem uns gleich ausser der Sünde*”: *Studien zum Beitrag Maximus' des Bekenners zur altkirchlichen Christologie. Mit einer kommentierten Übersetzung der Disputatio cum Phyrro*, translated by Guido Bausenhart, (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1992). On the Latin side, Thomas Aquinas points out that if John of Damaskos excludes the choice (προαίρεσις, electio) with respect to Christ, since it can coinvolve doubt, the doubt taken in itself is not essential for a choice which goes hand in hand with doubt only in an ignorant nature: “Dicit enim Damascenus, in III libro, gnomen autem (idest sententiam, vel mentem, vel cogitationem) et proaeresin (idest electionem) in domino dicere impossibile est, si proprie loqui volumus. Maxime autem in his quae sunt fidei est proprie loquendum. Ergo in Christo non fuit electio. Et per consequens nec liberum arbitrium, cuius actus est electio. Praeterea, philosophus dicit, in III Ethic., quod electio est appetitus praeconsiliati. Sed consilium non videtur fuisse in Christo, quia non consiliamur de quibus certi sumus; Christus autem certitudinem habuit de omnibus. Ergo in Christo non fuit electio. Et sic, nec liberum arbitrium. [...] Ad primum ergo dicendum quod Damascenus excludit a Christo electionem secundum quod intelligit in nomine electionis importari dubitationem. Sed tamen dubitatio non est de necessitate electionis, quia etiam Deo competit eligere, secundum illud Ephes. I, elegit nos in ipso ante mundi constitutionem; cum tamen in Deo nulla sit dubitatio. Accidit autem dubitatio electioni, in quantum est in natura ignorante. Et idem dicendum est de aliis de quibus fit mentio in auctoritate praedicta.” (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theol.*, Pars III<sup>a</sup>, q. 18 a. 4 arg. 1 e 2 e a. 4 ad 1). Furthermore, according to Thomas Aquinas, if the choice presupposes βουλή (consilium) already for Aristotle, it does not, according to Aristotle, originate in the βουλή, but in the fact that the βουλευέσθαι has led to a judgement, since Aristotle says that τὸ γὰρ ἐκ τῆς βουλῆς κριθέν προαιρετόν ἐστιν (Arist., *Eth. Nic.*, 1113 a 4–5). Therefore, since it is possible to arrive at a judgement without the necessity of it being preceded by a doubt and an investigation, this should be sufficient for making a choice: “Ad secundum dicendum quod electio praesupponit consilium, non tamen sequitur ex consilio nisi iam determinato per iudicium; illud enim quod iudicamus agendum post inquisitionem consilii, eligimus, ut dicitur in III Ethic. Et ideo, si aliquid iudicetur ut agendum absque dubitatione et inquisitione praecedente, hoc sufficit ad electionem. Et sic patet quod dubitatio, sive inquisitio, non per se pertinet ad electionem, sed solum secundum quod est in natura ignorante.” (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theol.*, Pars III<sup>a</sup> q. 18, a. 4 ad 2).

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Aquinas poses the problem whether *prudencia* and *consilium* can be attributed to God and teaches that this is possible only if *prudencia* and *consilium* are intended as a judgement of that which has been the object of *consilium*. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Contra*

Having drawn a dividing line between σκέπτεσθαι and the λόγος that characterizes nature, Scholarios can now confront the final part of the Plethonian argument. In particular, Scholarios takes aim at Plethon's view that even if the instruments or the assistants do not possess λόγος, the art is not located in them but in the artist (or the architect), and that even if nature has elements devoid of λόγος it still cannot be identified with these elements and conceived as ἄλογος. In his response Scholarios accuses Plethon of having misunderstood Aristotle completely. He points out that Aristotle claims that nature and art do not deliberate, not because he considers them to be irrational (οὐ γὰρ ὑπ' ἀλογίας) but, on the contrary, because they produce with precision (ἀκρίβεια) and λόγος, i.e. with a precise knowledge of the rules:

Καὶ πάλιν ὡς δὴ Ἀριστοτέλους οἰομένου τὴν μὲν τέχνην μὴ σκέπτεσθαι ἐκ τοῦ τὰ τε ὄργανα τοὺς τε διακόνους τῆς τέχνης ὄντα μὴ βουλευέσθαι, τὴν δὲ φύσιν τῷ ἄλογον εἶναι, αὐτὸς οὔτε τὴν τέχνην ἐν ἐκείνοις εἶναι φησιν, ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ ἀρχιτέκτονι, οὔτε τὴν τῆς φύσεως δραστηριότητα ἐν τῷ δοκοῦντι ταύτης ἀλόγῳ. Ἄ μὲν οὖν αὐτὸς φησι Πλήθων ὡς ἐπ' Ἀριστοτέλους διορθώσει, ταῦτ' ἐξ αὐτοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους ἔχει λαβών. ἐξ ὧν δὲ οἶται κεκινήσθαι Ἀριστοτέλη, τούτων ἐκείνος τάναντία βούλεται. οὐ γὰρ ὑπ' ἀλογίας, ἀλλ' ἀκριβείας χάριν καὶ τοῦ σὺν λόγῳ ἐπιχειρεῖν τὴν τε φύσιν περὶ τῶν γινομένων καὶ τὴν τέχνην περὶ τῶν σκευαστῶν ἀξιῶ μὴ βουλευέσθαι, τὴν δὲ φύσιν καὶ πλέον. (Scholarios, *Contra Plethonem*, ed. Petit et al., p.103, 36–104, 6)

*Gentiles*, lib. 1 cap. 93 n. 10: "Sicut prudentia quantum ad actum bene consiliandi Deo non competit. Cum enim consilium sit quaedam quaestio, ut dicitur in VI Ethic.; divina autem cognitio non sit inquisitiva, ut supra ostensum est: non potest sibi consiliari esse conveniens. Unde Iob 26-3: cui dedisti consilium? Forsitan ei qui non habet intelligentiam? Et Isaiae 40-14: cum quo iniit consilium, et instruxit eum? Secundum autem actum illum qui est de consiliatis iudicare et approbata eligere, nihil prohibet prudentiam de Deo dici. Dicitur tamen interdum consilium de Deo. Vel propter similitudinem occultationis: nam consilia occulte aguntur; unde quod est in divina sapientia occultum, per similitudinem consilium dicitur, ut patet Isaiae 25-1, secundum aliam litteram: consilium tuum antiquum verum fiat. Vel inquantum consulentibus satisfacit: est enim etiam sine discursu intelligentis instruere inquirentes." Thomas Aquinas expresses this point even more clearly in the *Summa Theol.*, I-II, Quaestio 14 a.1 ad 2: "ea quae dicuntur de Deo, accipienda sunt absque omni defectu qui invenitur in nobis, sicut in nobis scientia est conclusionum per discursum a causis in effectus; sed scientia dicta de Deo, significat certitudinem de omnibus effectibus in prima causa, absque omni discursu. Et similiter consilium attribuitur Deo quantum ad certitudinem sententiae vel iudicii, quae in nobis provenit ex inquisitione consilii. Sed huiusmodi inquisitio in Deo locum non habet, et ideo consilium secundum hoc Deo non attribuitur. Et secundum hoc Damascenus dicit quod Deus non consiliatur, ignorantis enim est consiliari." [cf. John of Damaskos, *De fide orth.*, II. 22]

And again, since Aristotle is of the opinion that, on the one hand, art does not ponder, given that its instruments and assistants do not deliberate and that, on the other hand, nature does not ponder because it is irrational, Plethon says that art does not reside in those things [i.e. in the instruments or assistants] but in the director of the works, nor does the efficacy of nature lie in that part of it which appears irrational. The words that Plethon intends as a correction of Aristotle are in fact drawn by Plethon from Aristotle himself, but that which he considers to be a valid objection to Aristotle is in fact contrary to what Aristotle thinks: for it is not on account of the lack of reason, but for the sake of precision and because it sets to work with reason that he [i.e. Aristotle] claims that nature does not deliberate about the things that come into being and art [does not deliberate] about that what it produces, and nature even more so.

#### IV. Plethon's reply

In his treatise *Contra Scholarii obiectiones* of 1448/9<sup>19</sup> Plethon gives a reply to the objections raised by Scholarios in his *Contra Plethonem*. Plethon begins his reply by citing the passage from *Contra Plethonem* in which Scholarios 1) states which meaning – according to Scholarios – Plethon had attributed to βουλευέσθαι and 2) points out that this meaning attributed to βουλευέσθαι by Plethon does not correspond to the sense in which this word was used by Aristotle:

Εἰ μὲν γὰρ βουλευέσθαι τὸ διανοεῖσθαι λέγει, ἀνάγκη μὲν πάντα ἐπὶ τὸ οἰκεῖον ἀφικνεῖσθαι τέλος, νοῦ τινος προβουλευομένου περὶ αὐτῶν, τουτέστι διανοουμένου καὶ τὸ τέλος ἐν ἑαυτῷ προδιατυπώντος, ὡς αὐτὸς φησιν. Ἀλλ' οὐχ οὕτω τὸ βουλευέσθαι οὔθ' οἱ κατὰ τῆς φύσεως ἐπιχειροῦντες, οὔτ' Ἀριστοτέλης ἐλάμβανεν. (Plethon, *Contra Scholarii pro Aristotele Obiectiones*, ed. Maltese, p.39, 4–8)

<sup>19</sup> *Georgii Gemisti Plethonis Contra Scholarii pro Aristotele Obiectiones*, edited by Enrico V. Maltese (Leipzig: Teubner, 1988). Cf. also Bernadette Lagarde, ed., *Georges Gemiste Plethon: Contre les objections de Scholarios en faveur d'Aristote (Réplique)*, Byzantion, 59 (1989), pp.354–507. A summary of this reply is found Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, pp.283–307.



For if he [i.e. Plethon] takes “to deliberate” in the sense of “to think”, it is of necessity that everything achieves its own end, because some intellect deliberates about them in advance, i.e. thinks and prefigures the goal in itself, as he [i.e. Plethon] says. However, “to deliberate” was not understood in this way either by the natural philosophers or by Aristotle.

In order to confront this objection and especially given the fact that Scholarios maintains that βουλευέσθαι in its proper sense means “to be ignorant”, “be in doubt”, “to search for something that is not known”, Plethon recalls that Scholarios is of the opinion that Aristotle in *Phys.* II 8 directs his polemics against those philosophers who claim that all that does not exercise deliberation does not produce for the sake of an end (ἐκείνων γὰρ ἀξιούντων ἅπαν μὴ βουλευόμενον μὴδ’ ἔνεκά του ποιεῖν)<sup>20</sup> and asks in a polemical way if Scholarios thinks that there have ever existed these people who are convinced that all that does not exercise deliberation (which, according to Scholarios means doubt and investigation) does not act for the sake of some end. In other words, that there have been people who think, on the one hand (μὲν νομίζοντες), that an Intellect presides over the productive process of nature and who, on the other hand, do not want to maintain (καὶ ἔπειτα [...] οὐδέ ἀξιούντας) that the Intellect guides things for the sake of some end because it does not inquire (διὰ τὸ μὴ ζητεῖν), but has a perfect knowledge (ἀλλ’ εὖ εἰδέναι). Plethon asks polemically if Scholarios thinks that there have ever existed people who – if one turned these words into a positive statement – maintain that the Intellect guides the entities for the sake of some end, because – since it does not possess knowledge – it has to search, but does not know:

καὶ μοι ἐκεῖνο πρῶτον εἰπέ· μὲν σὺ ἡγῇ ἢ εἶναι ἢ γεγονέναι ποτέ τινας ἀνθρώπων νοῦν μὲν τινα τοῖς φύσει γιγνομένοις ἐφεστάναι νομίζοντας, καὶ ἔπειτα διὰ τὸ μὴ ἀγνοοῦντα ζητεῖν, ἀλλ’ εὖ εἰδέναι, ἐφ’ ὃ τι δεῖ ἕκαστον τῶν φύσει γιγνομένων ἀφικνεῖσθαι, οὐδ’ ἂν ἔνεκά του αὐτὰ

<sup>20</sup> George Scholarios Gennadios, *Contre les difficultés de Pléthon au sujet d’Aristote*, in *Oeuvres complètes de Gennade Scholarios*, edited by Louis Petit, Martin Jugie and Xenophon A. Siderides, vol. IV, (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1935), p.101, 31–36: “Οὕτω μὲν Ἀριστοτέλης καλῶς τε καὶ πάνυ διαλεκτικῶς πρὸς τὴν τρίτην τῶν τὴν φύσιν ἀδικούντων μοῖραν ἀπήντηκεν· ἐκείνων γὰρ ἀξιούντων ἅπαν μὴ βουλευόμενον μὴδ’ ἔνεκά του ποιεῖν, τοιοῦτον δὲ καὶ τὴν φύσιν εἶναι, αὐτὸς ἀπὸ τῆς τέχνης ἐνστάς, δείξας δὲ καὶ τὴν αὐτῆς ὁμοιότητα πρὸς τὴν φύσιν εἰς κατασκευὴν τῆς ἐνστάσεως, καὶ τὸ ἀζῖωμα προχείρως οὕτω καὶ τὸ συμπέρασμα συναεῖλεν.”

ἄγειν ἀξιούντας; (Plethon, *Contra Scholarii pro Aristotele Obiectiones*, ed. Maltese, p. 39, 11–15)

And tell me this thing first: surely you do not think that there are or ever have been people who are, on the one hand, of the opinion that an intellect presides over all that happens through nature and who then, on the other hand, do not believe that [this intellect] guides these things for the sake of some end, only because it does not inquire, but has a perfect knowledge regarding the goal which every thing that comes into being through nature has to achieve.

Plethon makes evident the aporia to which the arguments of Scholarios lead when he attributes the meaning “to seek” or “to doubt” to βουλευέσθαι. He continues his polemics against Scholarios by stating that if his adversary insists on the possibility that there have been people who maintain that something does not act or produce for the sake of an end if this something does not waver or is in doubt, then he must be a fool. If, on the other hand, he does not believe that there have been people who hold such an opinion, then there is no reason why he in *Contra Plethonem* contends that this is the opinion of those who are contradicted by Aristotle in *Physics* II 8:

εἰ μὲν γὰρ οἶε τοιούτους σὺ ποτέ τινας γεγονέναι, ἀφρονέστατος εἴ ἂν ἀνθρώπων· εἰ δ’ οὐδὲ πώποτ’ ἂν ἐγένετο τις τοιοῦτος καὶ οὕτω νομίζων, πῶς τοῖς τοιοῦτοις σὺ Ἀριστοτέλη ἀντιλέγειν φῆς, τοῖς οὐτ’ ἂν γεγονόσιν οὐτ’ ἂν ποτε ἐσομένοις; (Plethon, *Contra Scholarii pro Aristotele Obiectiones*, ed. Maltese, p. 39, 15–19)

If you are of the opinion that such men have ever existed, then you are the biggest fool; if, however, no person who thought this way has ever existed, then why do you say that Aristotle is responding to such people who neither have existed nor will exist?

According to Plethon it is evident that Aristotle does not intend βουλευέσθαι in the sense of “seeking to grasp something without knowing it” or “be wavering or unsure”, but in the sense of λογίζεσθαι, i.e. “to calculate, take into account, consider”. Just as it is also evident that – and also is a principle which is accepted by men – that nothing that acts or produces for the sake of an end can conduct the process or the product towards this end without using intellect:



ἀλλὰ Ἀριστοτέλης μὲν καὶ πάντῃ δηλὸς ἐστὶν ἐνταῦθα τὸ βουλευόμενον ἐπὶ τοῦ ὅλως λογιζομένου λαμβάνων, καὶ οὐ τοῦ ἀγνοοῦντος μὲν, ζητοῦντος δέ. τὸ δὲ πρᾶγμα ἔστι τοιόνδε· ἦν κοινὸν ἀνθρώπων ἀπάντων ἀξίωμα, καὶ ἔστι γε αἰεὶ τοῖς εὖ φρονοῦσι, μηδὲν τῶν ἕνεκά του τὶ ποιοῦντων ἄνευ νοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ οὐ ἕνεκα ἄγειν τὸ ποιοῦμενον. (Plethon, *Contra Scholarii pro Aristotele Obiectiones*, ed. Maltese, p. 39, 19–23)

Therefore it is quite evident that Aristotle applies “that which deliberates” to “that which calculates in general” and not to “that which seeks to grasp something but does not know”. This is how things stand; this was an axiom common to all men and continues to be so to all those who think rightly that none of the things that produce for the sake of an end can conduct the process towards its end without intellect.

By making reference to this “axiom” Plethon distinguishes two groups of thinkers and shows the particular position of Aristotle with respect to either group. The one group consists of those who discern the purposiveness of the natural entities (πολὺ τὸ ἕνεκά του ἐν αὐτοῖς) which are, considered in themselves, irrational and devoid of intellect (αὐτὰ δ’ ἄλογα τε ὄντα καὶ ἀνόητα), and who believe that divine intellect presides over their activity from the outside (ἔξωθεν). The other group is reluctant to assume an external intellect and prefers to believe that nature does not act for the sake of an end, finding a confirmation of this view in the irrational character of the natural products themselves (ἰσχυριζόμενοι τῷ ἀλογίστῳ αὐτῶν τῶν φύσει γιγνομένων). According to Plethon, Aristotle, on the one hand, wants to share the view of those who assume that nature acts for the sake of an end (τὸ μὲν ἕνεκά του ποιεῖν τὴν φύσιν συγχωρεῖ τοῖς γε οὕτω νομίζουσι), but, on the other hand, he is reluctant to admit that an external intellect presides over nature (νοῦν δὲ τῇ φύσει ἔξωθεν θεῖον ἐπιστῆσαι ὀκνήσας), and, in doing so, ends up denying the aforementioned “axiom” and defends an absurd position:

τούτου δὲ μένοντος βεβαίου τοῖς πρὸ Ἀριστοτέλους τοῦ ἀξιώματος, οἱ μὲν τὰ βελτίω φρονοῦντες τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὁρῶντες τὰ φύσει γιγνόμενα ὁμοίως μὲν τοῖς κατὰ τέχνην γιγνόμενα καὶ πολὺ τὸ ἕνεκά του ἐν αὐτοῖς, αὐτὰ δ’ ἄλογα τε ὄντα καὶ ἀνόητα, νοῦν τινα θεῖον ἐνόμισαν αὐτοῖς ἔξωθεν τε ἐφεστᾶναι καὶ ἕνεκά του ἄγειν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν, ὥσπερ καὶ τοῖς σκευαστοῖς τῶν γε ἀνθρώπων οἱ δημιουργοὶ ἐφεστᾶσιν. οἱ δὲ τὸ μὲν νοῦν τινα ἐφίστάναι θεῖον τοῖς φύσει γιγνομένοις ὥκνησαν ὑπὸ ἀθεότητος, τὴν δὲ φύσιν μὴ ἂν ἕνεκά του ποιεῖν ἂ ποιεῖ ἐνόμισαν,

ἰσχυριζόμενοι τῷ ἀλογίστῳ αὐτῶν τῶν φύσει γιγνομένων. τούτων οὕτω διαφορομένων ἀλλήλοις, Ἀριστοτέλης, ἰδίας αἰρέσεως λόγων σοφιστῆς γεγὼς, τὸ μὲν ἕνεκά του ποιεῖν τὴν φύσιν συγχωρεῖ τοῖς γε οὕτω νομίζουσι, νοῦν δὲ τῇ φύσει ἔξωθεν θεῖον ἐπιστῆσαι ὀκνήσας καὶ αὐτὸς κατὰ τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐκείνους τοὺς ἀθεωτέρους, ὃ δὴ λοιπὸν ἦν, κατὰ τοῦ κοινοῦ ἐκείνου ἀξιώματος χωρεῖ, ἄτοπον εἶναι φάσκων τὸ μὴ οἶεσθαι ἕνεκά του τὶ γίγνεσθαι, ἂν μὴ ἴδωσι τὸ ποιοῦν βουλευσάμενον, ὃ ἐστὶ λογιζάμενον. καὶ πειράται δὴ τὸ λογιζεσθαι τοῦτο καὶ τῶν τεχνῶν τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἀφελέσθαι, πάντῃ τὲ ἀλογίστως λέγων καὶ ἀσχημονῶν [...]. (Plethon, *Contra Scholarii pro Aristotele Obiectiones*, ed. Maltese, p. 39, 24–40, 5)

While there persists this established axiom of the predecessors of Aristotle, who were very sage among men, and who – seeing that what comes into being through nature is similar to what is produced through art and that many things are purposive, even though the things themselves are irrational and devoid of intellect – came to believe that some divine intellect presides over these things from the outside and directs each of them for the sake of an end just like a master of works presides over what is constructed by men. Others, on account of their godlessness, were reluctant to admit that some divine intellect presides over what happens through nature and believed that nature was not bringing about its products for the sake of an end, finding confirmation [of their opinion] in those entities that come into being through nature and are completely devoid of intellect. While both groups differ in their opinions one from the other, Aristotle, who professed his own philosophical principles and was a master of words, shared on the one hand the opinions of those who believed that nature was producing for the sake of an end, but was himself reluctant to admit that a divine intellect presides over nature from outside in accord with those extremely godless men, but for the rest he opposed that common axiom and said that it is absurd not to believe that something happens for the sake of an end unless one observes that the productive cause deliberates, that is to say that it calculates, and tries even to exclude this “calculating” from the arts of man, speaking thoughtlessly and disgracing himself [...].

However, it is necessary to admit that an intellect presides over the production of the natural entities and, therefore, that which produces exercises βουλευεσθαι not in the sense of “having doubt”, as Scholarios believes, but

in the sense of λογίζεσθαι, i.e. it calculates and considers within itself that which is to be produced for the following reason: on the one hand, the *telos* which a natural being seeks to achieve is not already present at the beginning of the development process (τὰ τέλη [...] οὐ καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν εὐθὺς φυομένοις παρέσθιν αὐτοῖς). On the other hand, since this *telos* is the final cause of a process, it must already be present (εἶναι γὰρ δεῖ τὸ αἰτίον του γιγνόμενον, οὐχὶ μὴ εἶναι) and the only way in which the *telos* can be present in the process of development of a natural being before this process has achieved its end, is by being conceived in advance, i.e. anticipated in some intellect (προειληφθαι ἄρα δεῖ ἐν τινι νῷ) that is in charge of the development process:

ὅτι δ' ἀνόητόν ἐστι τὸ μὲν ἔνεκά του ποιεῖν τὴν φύσιν συγχωρεῖν, νοῦν δ' αὐτῇ μὴ ἐφιστάναι, ἐνθὲνδε δῆλον· τὰ τέλη ἐφ' ἃ τῶν φύσει γιγνομένων ἕκαστα ἔεται οὐ καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν εὐθὺς φυομένοις παρέσθιν αὐτοῖς, ἀλλ' ὕστατα δῆπου παραγίγνεται. σκοπῶμεν δ' αὐτὸ ἐφ' ἑνὸς τοῦδε· τῇ ἀμπέλου ἔλικι τέλος ἐστὶ τὸ ἐτέρου φυτοῦ πτόρθω περιελιχθεῖσαν ἐκεῖν τὴν ἀμπελον ἀναδῆσαι τῷ φυτῷ, ταύτην ἐν τοῖς φυτοῖς τὴν φύσιν εἰληχυῖαν, ἐπαλλόκαλον εἶναι· οὐκοῦν τὸ ἐτέρου φυτοῦ πτόρθω τὴν ἔλικα περιελιχθεῖσαν ἀναδῆσαι τὴν ἀμπελον οὔτε τῇ ἀμπέλῳ φυομένη οὔτε τῇ ἔλικι εὐθὺς παρέσθιν, ἀλλ' ὕστατόν γε παραγίγνεται. οὐδὲν μέντοι ἦττον τοῦ φύεσθαι ὅλως ἔλικα τῇ ἀμπέλῳ αἴτιον τελικὸν ἢ ἐφ' ἐτέρῳ φυτῷ ἀνάδεσιν αὐτῆς ἐστίν. ἀμήχανον δὲ τὸ μὴ δέ πω ὄν μὴ δ' ἐν τοῖς οὐσι τεταγμένον ὄντος του ἤδη αἴτιον γίγνεσθαι· εἶναι γὰρ δεῖ τὸ αἰτίον του γιγνόμενον, οὐχὶ μὴ εἶναι. προειληφθαι ἄρα δεῖ ἐν τινι νῷ τὴν τῆς ἀμπέλου ἐφ' ἐτέρῳ φυτῷ ἀνάδεσιν, ὅς αὐτῇ ἐπιστατῶν, ὥσπερ δημιουργὸς ἀνὴρ σκευαστοῖς, καὶ τὴν ἔλικα αὐτῇ τῆς τοιαύτης ἔνεκα ἀναδέσεως φύσει, ἥ καὶ θαυμασίως, ἐὰν μὲν μηδὲν τι αὐτῇ τοιοῦτον παρακέρηται οἷω περιελιχθῆναι, ἐπ' εὐθύ πως φαίνεται φερομένη, ἐὰν δὲ πτόρθος τις παρῇ, εὐθὺς περιελίχθη· οὐτ' οὖν τὴν ἔλικα τῇ ἀμπέλῳ μὴ οὐ τοῦτου ἔνεκα φύεσθαι, ὅπως ἐτέρῳ αὐτὴν φυτῷ ἀναδῆσαι, νοῦν ἔχει τὸ μὴ ἀξιῶν, οὔτε τὸ μὴ νοῦν τοῖς τοιούτοις ἐφιστάναι ἔχει ἂν καὶ ὄντινόν λόγον. (Plethon, *Contra Scholarii pro Aristotele Obiectiones*, ed. Maltese, p. 40, 27–41, 11)

That it is senseless, on the one hand, to concede that nature produces for the sake of an end and, on the other hand, not to concede that an intellect presides over nature, is clear from the following: the ends towards which each product of nature tends are not immediately present in the growing entities at the beginning, but arrive at the very last [mo-

ment]. Let us consider this point in this one example: the *telos* of a tendril of a vine is to bind the vine to another plant by winding around a branch of that plant, for it is the nature of the vine to cling to another plant. It is surely not possible for a vine or for a tendril at the moment of growth to bind the vine by winding a tendril around the branch of another plant, but this occurs [i.e. this becomes possible] only at the very last moment. The final cause for which a tendril is grown by a vine at all none other than the binding of the vine to another plant. It is not possible for something that does not yet exist, nor has been placed in the order of the things that exist, to become the cause of what already exists. For it is necessary for the cause of that which becomes to be and not, not to be. Therefore it is necessary that the binding of the vine to another plant should be anticipated in some intellect that presides over it [i.e. over the vine], – just like some craftsman [presides] over the things produced [by art] – and makes the vine grow the tendril for the sake of this kind of binding, which tendril – in a miraculous way – appears to grow in a straight line if there is nothing at hand around which it can wind itself, but immediately winds around as soon as some branch comes up. Neither does it make sense not to be of the opinion that the vine grows the tendril in order to bind the vine to another plant nor would it be reasonable not to believe that an intellect presides over such matters.

## V. Conclusions

The aim of the present contribution has been to reconstruct the debate between Plethon and Scholarios concerning the role of deliberation (βουλή) in art and nature. The analysis of the arguments advanced by Plethon in *De Differentiis*, then by Scholarios in his treatise *Contra Plethonem* and, finally, in Plethon's reply to these objections has shown that Plethon considered deliberation to be a constitutive element of art and, a fortiori, of nature, which is a model for art, and conceived deliberation in terms of the anticipation of *the goal* by the intellect.

Scholarios, on the contrary, pointed out that a correct reading of Aristotle understands βουλή in a different sense, namely as a synonym of ζήτησις and σκέψις, i.e. in terms of doubt and hesitation about *the means* that lead to an end. He pointed out that deliberation in this sense does not form a constitutive element of art for Aristotle. Only those who practise less exact arts can have

recourse to deliberation. Contrary to what Plethon believed, art is characterized by the ability to produce without deliberation, since art is conceived in terms of certain principles that should be followed in order to reach the desired end. And so nature, too, is purposive, but not because it deliberates, but rather because it does not need to deliberate at all.

In his reply Plethon defended his own understanding of art and nature by pointing out that to take “deliberation” in the sense of ζήτησις and σκέψις, as Scholarios proposed, would create insurmountable problems for the understanding of the Aristotelian passage around which the argument on the both sides revolves, for this interpretation would mean that Aristotle criticizes those people who believe that only that which has doubt can direct a process to an end, which is absurd. In addition, Plethon points out that without an Intellect that anticipates within itself the *logos* of that which is about to come into being, it would not be possible to explain how a generative process of natural entities can preserve its continuity and orientation towards a *telos* and securely attain its end.

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## Hermonymos Christonymos Charitonymos’ *Capita decem pro divinitate Christi: A Posthumous Reaction to Plethon’s Anti-Christianism*

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**Abstract:** In 1458/60, Hermonymos Christonymos Charitonymos (died shortly after 1467), an admirer of Plethon who wrote a *Hymnody* upon his death (1452 or 1454), wrote the *Capita decem pro divinitate Christi* (a *unicum* in Byzantine literature), which he dedicated to the prince of Mistras Thomas Palaiologos. Contrary to what was argued in 1611 and 2003, i.e., that this writing addressed the Muslims’ disbelief in the divinity of Jesus Christ, it is shown that Christonymos intended to refute the repudiation of Jesus and His disciples as “charlatans” in Plethon’s *Laws*. Christonymos’ arguments were meticulously drawn from Origen’s *Contra Celsum*, Eusebius of Caesarea’s *Demonstratio Evangelica*, Book III (used by Plethon as well), (Ps.-?) John Chrysostom’s *Quod Christus sit Deus*, Riccoldo da Monte Croce’s *Contra legem Saracenorum* (in Demetrior Cydone’s translation) and several writings by George Scholarios-Gennadios II. Christonymos’ apologetic writing went hand in hand with Scholarios’ project to suppress Plethon’s neo-paganism.

**Keywords:** Hermonymos Christonymos Charitonymos; George Gemistos or Plethon; George Scholarios-Gennadios II; Origen; Eusebius of Caesarea; John Chrysostom; Riccoldo da Monte Croce; Byzantine Thomism; Byzantine neo-paganism; Jesus Christ



“Tota fides Christiana  
circa divinitatem et humanitatem Christi versatur”  
(Thomas Aquinas, *De articulis fidei et Ecclesiae sacramentis*, 1)  
*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia jussu Leonis XIII P.M.*,  
vol. 40A, Rome 1979, p.245,14–16.

## I. Status quaestionis

### 1. Neolatin scholarship

In<sup>1</sup> 1611, the erudite in theology, philosophy and philology Johannes Wegelinus (1568–1627) edited, with an annotated translation, for the first time an apologetic work by “Charitonymus Christonymus”<sup>2</sup> under the title: *Capita decem*

<sup>1</sup> This study is the result of research which was begun and, to a large extent, completed in 2006–07 at the Thomas-Institut (University of Cologne), sponsored by the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung (Bonn). I would like to express my gratitude to Marie-Hélène Blanchet (CNRS), Charalambos Dendrinos (Royal Holloway, University of London), Sébastien Morlet (Université de Paris-Sorbonne) and Brigitte Tambrun (CNRS) for their valuable suggestions and help on various issues of the study.

<sup>2</sup> According to Maria P. Kalatzi, who authored a doctoral dissertation on this issue (*Hermonymos. A Study in Scribal, Literary and Teaching Activities in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries*, Athens 2009), and John Monfasani (see his book-review of Kalatzi's dissertation in: *Renaissance Quarterly* 63/4 (2010), pp.1256–57), Hermonymos Christonymos Charitonymos (Ἑρμώνυμος Χριστόνυμος Χαρίτωνυμος) (registered as “Hermetianos” in PLP 6126) and Georgios Hermonymos (Γεώργιος Ἑρμώνυμος) are two distinct persons; Christonymos was the shadowy admirer of Plethon, who, in the *Mon. gr. 490*, signs the *Capita decem* (the writing I am concerned with here) as “Hermonymos Christonymos Charitonymos” and probably died shortly after 1467, whereas Georgios is the well-known scribe and teacher of Greek in various places in Europe, who was probably born around 1440 and died around 1510. (In so stating, Kalatzi revised her former estimation in “Are the Two Greek Scribes, George Hermonymos and Charitonymos Hermonymos, One and the Same Person?”, *Θησαυρίσματα* 26 (2006), pp.105–118). Christian F. Boerner (*De doctis hominibus graecis litterarum Graecarum in Italia instauratoribus liber* (Lipsiae: J.F. Gleditschius 1750), pp.192–198, at p.197), rejecting the common view (see, e.g., Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Das Grosse vollständiges Universallexikon Aller Wissenschaften und Künste*, vol. 10 (Halle / Leipzig 1735), pp.1011–1012) established by L. Allatius, seems to have been the first to assume the existence of two Hermonymi (cf. the *Forschungsbericht* in Kalatzi, *Hermonymos*, pp.19–21). Jacobus Morellius, in explicit disagreement with L. Allatius and H. Hodus, shared Boerner's

*pro divinitate Christi et Christianae religionis veritate* (Ὅκτώ εἰσι ταῦτα κεφάλαια σὺν ἄλλοις δυσὶν ἀποδεικνύντα ὡς ὁ Χριστὸς ἐστὶν υἱὸς Θεοῦ καὶ Θεὸς ἀναντιρρήτως καὶ ἀναμφιβόλως, καὶ ἄλλως ἀδύνατον; *Here are Eight Chapters that, along with Two Additional Ones, Demonstrate, with no Objection Left Possible and beyond any Doubt, that Christ Is the Son of God and God, and that It Is Impossible not to Be So*; hereafter: *Capita decem*). Wegelinus edited this text<sup>3</sup> as the last ring in a chain of certain texts on the divinity of Jesus Christ, the remaining ones being a collection of anti-Nestorian arguments by Cyril of Alexandria, certain anti-Nestorian chapters from John of Damascus' *Expositio fidei orthodoxae* (under the title “Contra Nestorianos”), and Michael Psellos' *Capita undecim theologica de Sancta Trinitate et persona Christi ad Michaellem*

view (J. Morellii *Bibliothecae Regiae divi Marci Venetiarum custodies Bibliotheca manuscripta Graeca et Latina*, tomus I [Bassani: ex typographia Remondiniana 1802], p.125). Still, it was quite common to see “Christonymos Charitonymos” as a pseudonym of Georgios Hermonymos (see, e.g., Antoine-Alexandre Barbier, *Dictionnaire des ouvrages anonymes et pseudonymes composés, traduits ou publiés en français et en latin... Tome III* (Paris: Barrois l'aîné, 1824<sup>2</sup>), p.514, N° 20147; Emil Weller, *Die maskierte Literatur der älteren und neueren Sprachen. I. Index Pseudonymorum. Wörterbuch der Pseudonymen oder Verzeichniss aller Autoren, die sich falscher Namen bedienten* (Leipzig: Falcke & Rössler, 1862<sup>3</sup>), 29b). Christopher Montague Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p.8), also, opted for the existence of two persons. On George Hermonymos, see also the chapter “Georges Hermonyme de Sparte” in *La France des humanistes. Hellénistes II*, edited by Jean-François Maillard and Jean-Marie Flamand (avec la collaboration de Marie-Élisabeth Boutroue et Luigi-Alberto Sanchi (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010). Christonymos also wrote an *Hymnody on the Most Wise Teacher George Gemistos* (Ἱερωνύμου Ὑμνωδία τῷ σοφωτάτῳ διδασκάλῳ κυρίῳ Γεωργίῳ τῷ Γεμιστῷ; dated to 1452 or 1454, depending on the date of Plethon's death; see *infra*, p.227, note 287) and a *Funeral Oration on the Late Princess Katerina Palaiologina, Wife of Our Prince, the Porphyrogennetos Despot Thomas Palaiologos* (Ἐπικήδειος τῇ ἀοιδίμῳ βασιλίδι τοῦ θειοτάτου ἡμῶν ἡγεμόνος κύρ Θωμᾶ δεσπότης Παλαιολόγου τοῦ πορφυρογεννήτου κυρᾶ Αἰκατερίνῃ τῇ Παλαιολογίνῃ; edited by Spyridon P. Lambros, *Παλαιολόγεια καὶ πελοποννησιακά*, vol. 4 (Athens 1930; repr. 1972; ausp. I.K. Voyatzides), pp.267–273), who died on August 26, 1462 (see Kalatzi, *Hermonymos*, pp.27; 34–35). To prevent confusion, when referring to the author of the *Capita decem*, I am using ‘Christonymos’ throughout in this study.

<sup>3</sup> S. Cyrilli Alexandrini et Ioh. Damasceni *Argumenta contra Nestorianos; Quaestiones item et Responsiones de fide; praeterea Michaelis Pselli Capita undecim theologica de S. Trinitate et persona Christi ad Michaellem Commenum imperatorem; ac denique Charitonymi Christonymi capita decem ad Anonymum pro divinitate Christi et Christianae religionis veritate adversus Mahometistas et alios infideles, jam primum e manuscriptis codicibus Bibliothecae Augustanae eruta, latine versa et notis declarata*, edited by Johannes Wegelinus (Augustae Vindelicorum: apud Davidem Francum 1611), pp.163–185.



*Commeneum imperatorem*.<sup>4</sup> Wegelinus' edition of Christonymos' text was based on *Monacensis graecus 490*; as we now know (see *infra*, p.234), the relevant folia came from Christonymos' own hand<sup>5</sup> and contain the author's draft.

Wegelinus thought that Christonymos' text was written "adversus Mahometistas et alios infideles",<sup>6</sup> arguing as follows: "Argumenta *Capitum* non sunt ex sacrarum literarum testimoniis confecta, sed ex aliis rationibus deducta:

<sup>4</sup> In detail, the texts edited by Wegelinus are as follows. (A) Cyril of Alexandria: p.1,5–25 = ed. E. Schwartz, *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum* (Berlin 1914–40), tome 1.1.4, pp.54,37–55,9; 3,5–19 = *op. cit.*, tome 1.1.5, 86,16–24; 3,20–5,12 = *op. cit.*, 86,34–87,6; 5,13–7,22 = *op. cit.*, 87,19–40; 7,23–11,8 = *op. cit.*, 88,5–25; 11,9–12 = *op. cit.*, 88,35–37; 11,13–13,24 = *op. cit.*, 89,22–90,3; 13,25–15,8 = *op. cit.*, 92,9–15; 15,9–24 = *op. cit.*, 93,7–15; 15,25–17,7 = *op. cit.*, 90,5–10; 17,8–20 = *op. cit.*, 90,18–25; 17,21–19,2 = *op. cit.*, 91,4–8; 19,3–18 = *op. cit.*, 91,34–42; 19,19–23,3 = *op. cit.*, 32,18–36; 23,4–25,5 = *op. cit.*, 32,4–17; 25,6–18 = *op. cit.*, 108,30–37; 25,19–27,6 = *op. cit.*, 111,22–28; 27,7–22 = *op. cit.*, 109,1–9; 27,23–29,18 = *op. cit.*, 109,18–29; 29,19–31,4 = *op. cit.*, 110,6–11; 31,5–18 = *op. cit.*, 110,24–31; 31,19–33,12 = *op. cit.*, 111,1–11; 33,13–35,6 = *op. cit.*, 117,23–33; 35,7–18 = *op. cit.*, 118,1–7; 35,19–37,17 = *op. cit.*, 31,29–32,3; 37,18–41,9 = *op. cit.*, 59,11–30; 41,10–43,7 = *op. cit.*, 32,17–33,11; 43,8–45,19 = *op. cit.*, 44,10–45,17; 45,20–47,23 = *op. cit.*, 34,3–17; 49,1–51,3 = *op. cit.*, 56,23–57,1; 51,4–53,3 = *op. cit.*, 84,6–19; 53,4–8 = *op. cit.*, 116,33–117,2; 53,9–17 = *op. cit.*, 113,23–34; 53,18–25 = *op. cit.*, 116,18–22; 57,1–59,18 = *op. cit.*, 102,31–103,17; 59,19–61,5 = *op. cit.*, 103,18–24; 61,8–63,10 = *op. cit.*, 28,24–29,3; 63,11–67,9 = *op. cit.*, 36,38–37,29; 67,10–73,7 = *op. cit.*, 29,4–30,9; 73,10–77,10 = *Quod unus sit Christus*, PG 75: 1262B8–1269A11; 77,11–79,17 = ed. Schwartz, *op. cit.*, tome 1.1.5, 21,17–22,8; 79,18–85,11 = *op. cit.*, 26,25–28,7; 85,13–87,11 = ed. Schwartz, *op. cit.*, tome 1.1.4, 24,19–25,1; 87,13–91,24 = *op. cit.*, 27,5–29,15; 93,3–95,8 = *op. cit.*, 3,16–4,7; 95,11–97,3 = *op. cit.*, 8,27–9,5; 97,6–105,10 = ed. Schwartz, *op. cit.*, tome 1.1.5, 63,36–65,16. (B) John of Damascus: 105,12–115,10 = *Expositio fidei 56 in toto* (ed. B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos. II. Expositio fidei / Έκδοσις ἀκριβής τῆς ὀρθοδόξου πίστεως* (Berlin / New York: W. de Gruyter, 1972), pp.133–137). (C) Cyril of Alexandria: 115,12–117,16 = *Expositio fidei 66 in toto* (ed. Kotter, *op. cit.*, pp.164–165); 117,18–121,6 = *Expositio fidei 71,4–29* (ed. Kotter, *op. cit.*, pp.170–171); 121,10–125,9 (locum non inveni; stylus vero Cyrillum redolet). (D) John of Damascus (dub.): 125,13–130,17 = *De sancta Trinitate in toto* (PG 95: 9A–17A); Michael Psellus: pp.141,1–161,22 = *De omnifaria doctrina* 1–9, 10/11 and 13 (*Michael Psellus. De omnifaria doctrina. Critical Text and Introduction*, edited by Leedenr Gerrit Westerink (Utrecht: Beijers, 1948), pp.171,1–21,14; 23,2–13; cf. p.9). The above list is meant to replace the passing remarks on the provenance of Wegelin's Cyrillian material offered in PG 68: 66–67 (= Johannes Albertus Fabricius and Gottlieb Christian Harles, *Bibliotheca Graeca*, vol. IX (Hamburg: apud Carolum Ernestum Bohn, 1804), p. 473).

<sup>5</sup> Kalatzi, *Hermonymos*, pp.111; 120; 140; 154–155; 158–159. Cf. Ignaz Hardt, *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum Bibliothecae regiae Bavaricae*. Edidit Io. Christoph. L. Baro de Aretin... *Voluminis primi, codices Graecos ab Ign. Hardt recensitos complexi, tomus V* (Monachii: Seidel, 1812), p.151.

<sup>6</sup> See Wegelinus, *S. Cyrilli Alexandrini*, title page; A3.

quia hic [sc. Christonymus] contra infideles, Turcas et similes agere voluisse videtur, qui sacras Bibliorum literas non omnes admittunt, sed aliis rationibus fidei Christianae veritatem sibi probari volunt".<sup>7</sup> His supposition of Christonymos' intention is presumably the reason why Wegelinus made this text cohabit in the same volume with certain pieces by two Greek champions of the Orthodox dogma<sup>8</sup> and a similar 11<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine text. Indeed, it must have been the first piece's title, which reads: "Συλλογή ρητῶν τινῶν εὐαγγελικῶν τε καὶ Ἀποστολικῶν ἀποδεικνύοντων ὡς Θεός ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς καὶ οὐ ψιλὸς ἄνθρωπος",<sup>9</sup> which reminded the editor of the title of Christonymos' writing ("...ἀποδεικνύντα ὡς ὁ Χριστὸς ἐστὶν υἱὸς Θεοῦ καὶ Θεός"). Additionally, most of Cyril's pieces frequently contain the declaration that Jesus Christ is not only man but also God; indeed, Wegelinus at times intentionally interrupts a text at the very point where this declaration is made.

One can better surmise what Wegelinus' purpose was on the basis of what he says in the prefatory letter (to Michael Geizkofler; 1527–1614). The notion of the existence of God, Wegelinus states,<sup>10</sup> can be reached by means of one's natural faculties. In contrast, the triunity of God as well as the mystery of the Incarnation as the final part of God's Dispensation, which are fundamental Christian dogmas, are accessible to man only due to God's self-manifestation through the sayings of Jesus Christ, which have an absolute authority because they were pronounced by God himself. These sayings were laid down in the New Testament, which, as interpreted by the Holy Fathers of the Church, is the necessary medium for everyone to have access to those supernatural truths. Hence, man, in his road to salvation, cannot bypass the "verbum Evangelii" and allegedly move to God directly by means of one's own powers, "ut Enthusiastae somniant"; "vera Dei notitia et Christiana fides" have acquired a valid written form in books by such holy men as Cyril of Alexandria and John of Damascus. By editing, therefore, the above-mentioned Patristic pieces,

<sup>7</sup> Wegelinus, *op. cit.*, p.258,3–10.

<sup>8</sup> See Wegelinus, *op. cit.*, A3: "Hi enim non tantum viva voce, sed etiam scriptis veram Dei notitiam et Christianam fidem tradiderunt et felici successu propagaverunt".

<sup>9</sup> Wegelinus, *op. cit.*, p.3.

<sup>10</sup> Wegelinus, *op. cit.*, A2.

Wegelinus intended to combat the Enthusiasts, who, as is known,<sup>11</sup> were accused by Catholic as well as by many Protestant Churches, *inter alia*, of denying the double nature of Christ, compromising the authority of the Holy Scripture and challenging the necessity of the Church as the mediator between human beings and God. One must thereby presumably construe his “alios [sc. non-Muslim] infideles” as referring to some religious aberrants and not to some sort of secular or heathen dissenters.

Further, Wegelinus, commenting on ch. 8 of Christonymos' writing, whose argument for the divinity of Jesus Christ is drawn “a consensu doctrinae Christi cum laudabilibus omnium sapientum scriptis ab orbe condito”,<sup>12</sup> parallels its content with chapters 16, 17 and 19 “Confessionis Gennadii Scholarii ad Ameram Sultanum Mahometem”,<sup>13</sup> i.e. of the abridged version of George Scholarios-Gennadios II's *Περὶ τῆς μόνης ὁδοῦ πρὸς τὴν σωτηρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων*.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Michael Heyd, “Be Sober and Reasonable”: *The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Century* (Brill Studies in Intellectual History, 63; Leiden / New York / Köln: Brill, 1995), pp.23–24. Cf. Johann Jacob Fenner, *Dissertatio historico-theologica solennis de haeresi Enthusiastarum abominabili* (Rintheii: H.A. Enax, 1703), p.11.

<sup>12</sup> Wegelinus, *op. cit.*, p.182. Cf. *infra*, pp.193–195.

<sup>13</sup> *Op. cit.*, p.281.

<sup>14</sup> Γενναδίου τοῦ Σχολαρίου ἅπαντα τὰ εὐρισκόμενα. *Œuvres complètes de Gennade Scholarios*. Tome III, edited by Martin Jugie, Louis Petit and Xenophon A. Sideridès (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1930), pp.434,1–452,37 (extended version); 453,1–458,7 (abridged version; in PG, the abridged version occurs at vol. 160, 333A–352A; see also the recent edition by Machi Paizi-Apostolopoulou and D.G. Apostolopoulos, *Ἐπίσημα κείμενα τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως: τὰ σωζόμενα ἀπὸ τὴν περίοδο 1454–1498* (Athens: NHRF / INR, 2011), pp.40–45). Martin Jugie (*op. cit.*, pp.XLI–XLII) offers a list of the editions of the abridged version (cf. Marie-Hélène Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios Scholarios (vers 1400–vers 1472). Un intellectuel orthodoxe face à la disparition de l'empire byzantine* (Archives de l'orient chrétien, 20; Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines (IFEB), 2008), pp.41–43). Wegelinus, as he published his edition of Christonymos' writing in 1611, could in principle have access to two or three of them: (i) by Johannes Alexander Brassicanus (*Gennadii Scholarii, patriarchae Constantinopolitani, de sinceritate Christianae fidei dialogus, qui inscribitur 'Περὶ τῆς ὁδοῦ τῆς σωτηρίας ἀνθρώπων', idest 'De via salutis humanae'. Amurates Turcus – Gennadius patriarcha* (Vienna: U. Alantsee 1530), pp.114,8–160,4); (ii) by Martinus Crusius (*Turcograeciae libri octo, quibus Graecorum status sub imperio Turcico in Politia et Ecclesia, Œconomia et Scholis jam inde ab amissa Constantinopoli ad haec usque tempora luculenter describitur* (Basileae: per Leonardum Ostenium 1584), col.109a–119b); and, possibly, (iii) by Johannes Fuchte, *Sapientissimi viri D. Gennadii cognomento Scholarii patriarchae Constantinopolitani Dialogus Περὶ τῆς ὁδοῦ τῆς σωτηρίας ἀνθρώπων, idest De via salutis humanae: in quo Mahometi sectatores, atque omnes qui sacrosanctam et adorandam Trinitatem in divina essentia negant et*

As will be seen (*infra*, pp.195–199), Wegelinus' remark that there are “convenientia plura” (i.e. many common elements) between Christonymos' and Scholarios' writing is correct. This similarity between the *Capita decem* and an anti-Muslim writing might have stimulated the editor to consider it as one of the kind.

In the *Bibliotheca Graeca* of Johannes Albertus Fabricius (1668–1736), published in 1705–28 and enriched by Gottlieb Christian Harles (1738–1815) in 1790–1812, “Georgius Hermonymus sive Charitonymus”<sup>15</sup> figures between the two most famous Byzantine “Georgii” of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, namely, Gemistos and Scholarios. As far as the *Capita decem* is concerned, Christonymos is described as arguing against “infideles et Turcas potissimum, qui sacra non admittunt”, and the remark is made that, for that reason, he does not argue from the Holy Scripture or the Church Fathers, but “ex aliis rationibus”.<sup>16</sup> A comparison of Fabricius' wording<sup>17</sup> with Wegelinus' (see *supra*, pp.146–147) shows clearly that Fabricius simply reproduced Wegelinus' position and argument on the tenor of the *Capita decem*.

Christonymos' text was republished, on the basis of Wegelinus' edition, in 1728 by Michael Reis from Nurnberg, with some new comments, as a “disputatio theologica” approved by the “Academia Altorfina” in Alsatia. Reis, who, in another writing of his, declares proudly that he is not afraid of reading and

*impugnare conantur solide et erudite confutat, graece et latine quam emendatissime editus. Cui subiungitur ejusdem De fidei nostrae articulis confessio* (Helmaestadii: typis Iacobi Lucii 1611), pp.43–56). The 1530 and 1611 editions are fragmentary; they run up to p.456,55 of Jugie's edition (see Jugie, *op. cit.*, pp.XXXII, note 5; XXXVII–XXXVIII). Wegelinus' references to this writing are to the remaining part of it; this shows that he actually used the 1584 edition, whose division into chapters he follows (the 1530 and 1611 editions do not provide the writing with any chapter or paragraph division). Wegelinus' reference to this writing as “Confessio ad Ameram Sultanum Mahometem” (*op. cit.*, p.281,7–8) was based on this part of the Greek title of the writing in Crusius' edition (*op. cit.*, col.109a50–51): “ἐρωτηθεὶς γὰρ παρὰ τοῦ Ἀμπαρὰ Σουλτάνου τοῦ Μαχουμέτου...”.

<sup>15</sup> J.A. Fabricii *Bibliotheca Graeca sive notitia scriptorum veterum Graecorum... Editio quarta...* curante G.C. Harles..., Vol. X (Hamburgi: sumtu viduae Liebezetae et Theodori Christophori Felginer, 1793; 1721; repr. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1966), pp.758–760, par. 56.

<sup>16</sup> *Op. cit.*, p.760.

<sup>17</sup> “Argumenta cum in infideles, et Turcas potissimum, qui sacra non admittunt, producantur, neque ex sacrarum literarum neque Patrum testimoniis, sed ex aliis rationibus deducuntur.” (*ibid.*).

combating what the pagans of the Antiquity had dared to say of Jesus Christ and His life as depicted in the books of the New Testament,<sup>18</sup> describes Christonymos as “rationibus non infirmis adversus incredulos depugnans,”<sup>19</sup> vaguely listing, in this respect, “atheos, Epicureos, deistas, idololatrias, Judaeos et ‘Muhammedanos.’”<sup>20</sup> Obviously, Reis’ interest was not historical, but apologetic; his purpose was not to reconstruct the historical setting of Christonymos’ arguments, whose time he confesses he ignores,<sup>21</sup> but to gain a certain profit from their possible intrinsic value for his own (otherwise unknown to me) early 18<sup>th</sup>-century battle against the enemies of the Christian faith in some debate (or debates) on which “religion” is the “true” one.<sup>22</sup>

Humphredus Hodius (1659–1706), based on Wegelinus’ edition, mentioned the *Capita decem* in his list of Christonymos’ writings in 1742<sup>23</sup> but with no care as to its content and its possible addressees. As the very title of his book shows, Hodius’ scope was different; he was primarily interested in Christonymos —whom he identified, on the basis of the author’s signature in *Mon. gr.* 490 (see *supra*, p.144, note 2), with Hermonymus of Sparta— as a humanist rather than a theologian.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Reis, *Dissertatio theologico-historica, qua Josephi silentium Evangelicae historiae non noxium esse... ostenditur et ad placidam ventilationem sistitur* (Noribergae: typis Magni Danielis Meieri, 1730), pp.3–4.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Reis, *Disputatio theologica, qua Charitonimi Christonymi Capita theologica de veritate religionis Christianae... additis quibusdam scholiis...* (Altorfii: H.A. Enax, 1728), p.24.

<sup>20</sup> Reis, *op. cit.*, pp.23–24.

<sup>21</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp.22; 24–25. Reis simply states that his author lived in the Middle Ages, and consoles himself with the idea that for one to know what is said by an author is more important than to know whose idea is (*op. cit.*, p.25). Additionally, Wegelinus had said nothing on the date issue.

<sup>22</sup> Reis, *Disputatio theologica*, p.35.

<sup>23</sup> Humphrey Hodius, in his *De Graecis illustribus linguae graecae literarumque humaniorum instauratoribus, eorum vitis, scriptis et elogiis libri duo...* (London 1742), p.236. Cf. Ernest Jovy, François Tissard et Jérôme Aléandre. *Contribution à l’histoire des origines des études grecques en France (1<sup>re</sup> partie)* (Vitry-le-François 1899; repr. Geneva 1971), pp.9–10, note 2.

## 2. The modern edition

This is all I could find about Christonymos’ *Capita decem* in the Neo-latin scholarly literature, of some importance at least.<sup>24</sup> It was only in 2003 that a better edition of the *Capita decem* was produced, by Maria P. Kalatzi.<sup>25</sup> Kalatzi found that the text is preserved in four manuscripts; three of them, including the Munich codex used by Wegelinus (see *supra*, p.146, note 2), offer a *recensio prior* (hereafter: *versio A*), whereas the fifth one, *Laur. Plut. 10.25*, preserves the final version of the writing (Δέκα ταῦτά ἐστι κεφάλαια ἀποδεικνύοντα πιθανοῖς τε καὶ ἀναντιρρήτοις λόγοις καὶ ἀποδείξεσιν ὡς ὁ Χριστὸς ἐστὶν υἱὸς Θεοῦ καὶ Θεὸς ἀληθῆς ἀναντιρρήτως καὶ ἀναμφιβόλως, καὶ ἄλλως ἀδύνατον; *Here are Ten Chapters that Demonstrate, by Means of Persuasive and Unobjectionable Arguments and Demonstrations, that Christ Is beyond any Objection and Doubt the Son of God and God, and that It Is Impossible to Be Otherwise*”; hereafter: *versio B*), which is longer (253 instead of 168 lines) than, but not substantially different from, the draft.<sup>26</sup>

According to the editor, “this quasi-polemical work was written at a period when similar tracts were composed, as a response to the Ottoman advance and Islam”;<sup>27</sup> “Charitonymos’ treatise seems to be addressed to non-Christians, but

<sup>24</sup> The *Capita decem* was from time to time included in various lists of writings; see, e.g., Georg Matthias König, *Bibliotheca vetus et nova: in qua Hebraeorum, Chaldaeorum, Syrorum, Arabum, Persarum, Aegyptiorum, Graecorum et Latinorum per universum terrarum orbem scriptorum... patria, aetas, nomina, libri, saepius etiam eruditorum de eis elogia, testimonia et judicia* (Altorfii: typis H. Meyeri, 1678), col.189a; M.D. Barrister, *A Supplement to the Dissertation upon the Latin Drama, styl’d Pallas Anglicana, Being a Continuation of the Critical History of all sorts of Writers and Writings, and in particular of Converts and Proselyts that turn’d from, or to the Church of England, out of the Oxford and Cambridge Writers and Writings, and Others*, in: *Athenae Britannicae: or, A Critical History of the Oxford and Cambridge Writers and Writings, with Those of the Dissenters and Romanists, as well as other Authors and Worthies, both Domestick and Foreign, both Ancient and Modern* (London 1716), p.4.

<sup>25</sup> “Charitonymos Hermonymos’s *Decem Capita*”, edited by Maria P. Kalatzi, *Θησαυρίσματα* 33 (2003), pp.179–213; ead., *Hermonymos*, p.38, note 73 (where one manuscript –Athens, National Library of Greece, 2041– is added).

<sup>26</sup> Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, pp.181; 184–185. Punctuation, accentuation and the use of iota subscriptum in the edition are often misleading or mistaken. The *apparatus fontium* includes a great deal of material of unequal relevance; certain additions to it are made in Part III, par. 1.3 of this study. Cf. Appendix I.

<sup>27</sup> Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, pp.181; 213.

in all probability to Muslims".<sup>28</sup> The last sentence echoes Fabricius' description of the purpose and audience of Christonymos' work (see *supra*, p.149).

### 3. The present proposal

I would like to suggest here that Christonymos' *Capita decem* might plausibly be set in the mid-15<sup>th</sup>-century quarrel over George Gemistos or Plethon's (ca. 1360–1452 or 1454) neo-paganism; it was a reaction to the allusive yet thorough and unambiguous repudiation of the most sacred figures of Christianity, namely, Jesus Christ and His Apostles, in the introductory chapters from Plethon's *Laws*, which is also attested to by one of the earliest readers of the *Laws*, i.e. George Scholarios – Gennadios II. The spirit of Christonymos' addressees as depicted in his writing is very close to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century AD pagan polemics against Jesus (and His disciples), which presented Him as a mean "charlatan" ("γόης") or magician ("μάγος"), launched by authors such as Celsus, Porphyry, Hierocles and Julian the Emperor,<sup>29</sup> and was indignantly refuted by Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea and Cyril of Alexandria. This matches with Plethon's negative description of the founders and sponsors of Christianity in its early history as well as with Scholarios' report of Plethon's relevant

<sup>28</sup> *Art. cit.*, p.182; see also Kalatzi, *Hermonymos*, p.37.

<sup>29</sup> On this sort of depiction of Jesus and His disciples in Antiquity, see, inter alia, Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, Wellingborough, 1978 (on the Jews' depiction of Jesus as a demon-inspired sorcerer and on some real similarities between the Gospel description of Jesus' miracles with some magical practices and beliefs current in His age); Eugene V. Gallagher, *Divine Man or Magician? Celsus and Origen on Jesus* (Chicago: Scholar Press, 1980); Robert M. Berchman, *Porphyry against the Christians* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2005), pp.88–89; 114; Matthew W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London / New York: Routledge, 2001), pp.233–243; Stephen Benko, "Pagan Criticism of Christianity during the First Two Centuries", in *Die Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.23.2, edited by Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1980), pp.1055–1117; Xavier Leveils, *Contra Christianos. La critique sociale et religieuse du christianisme des origines au Concile de Nicée (45–325)* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2007), pp.277–290. See also the informative study of Donald Howard Brombley, *Jesus: Magician or Miracle Worker?* (MA thesis, Faculty of Ashland Theological Seminary, 2004). As has been shown (Harold Remus, "Does Terminology Distinguish Early Christian from Pagan Miracles?", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101:4 (1982), pp.531–551; Robert M. Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law in Greco-Roman and Early Christian Thought* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1952), p.156), terminology on miracles (δύναμις, θαύμα, θαυμάσιον, σημεῖον, and τέρας) did not help one distinguish between the allegedly 'good' or 'bad' supernatural, as well as between true or faked, provenance of them; so, it was not difficult for one to place Jesus on either side.

views. In this sense, Christonymos' writing stands as a *unicum* in Byzantine literature, since it is the only Byzantine attempt at establishing the divinity of Jesus Christ on rational grounds.

Such a reading of Christonymos' writing was rather unthinkable for most scholars before 1858, when the Catholic scholar C. Alexandre edited the extant fragments of Plethon's *Laws*<sup>30</sup> and showed conclusively the pagan identity of its author. For instance, in the "Epistola nuncupatoria" of the first Plethonic writing ever printed, the *De Virtutibus*, the editor (wrongly) praises the author for being "ex Christianorum numero, ut ex hoc scripto constat".<sup>31</sup> It was thereby objectively impossible for Wegelinus, by writing "...et alios infideles", to have in mind Plethon's paganism.<sup>32</sup> It would seem that he was referring, e.g., to Jews or some errant Christian sects, whose errors were so grave that they were rendered equal to 'infidels' in the strict sense of the term.

<sup>30</sup> Pléthon. *Traité des Lois, ou recueil des fragments, en partie inédits, de cet ouvrage. Texte revu sur les manuscrits, précédé d'une notice historique et critique. Traduction de A. Pellissier*, edited by Charles Alexandre (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1858); 1<sup>st</sup> reprint: Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1966; 2<sup>nd</sup> partial reprint: *Une cité idéale au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle: L'utopie néo-païenne d'un Byzantin. Pléthon. Traité des Lois. Présentation de R. Brague* (Paris: Vrin, 1982).

<sup>31</sup> Georgii Gemisti Plethonis elegans ac brevis Quatuor Virtutum explicatio, graece et latine, nunc primum edita. De moribus philosophorum locus ex Platonis Theaeteto, item graece et latine, eodem interprete. Adjunximus Aristotelis De virtutibus et vitiis libellum..., edited by Adolph Occo (Basileae: Oporinus 1552), a4–5 (cf. P.R. Blum's article in this volume, p. 406). On the non-Christian (in fact, anti-Christian) character of this writing, see Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker, Γεωργίου Γεμιστοῦ Πλήθωνος Περὶ ἀρετῶν. Georges Gémiste Pléthon. *Traité des vertus. Édition critique avec introduction, traduction et commentaire* ('Corpus philosophorum Medii Aevi – Philosophi Byzantini', 3; Athens 1987), pp.48; 64; 82; 100; ead., "Allusions antipalamites dans le Commentaire de Pléthon sur les Oracles chaldaïques", *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 38 (1992), pp.168–179, at 178; ead., "Plethos Abhandlung Über die Tugenden", in Georgios Gemistos Plethon. *Reformpolitiker, Philosoph, Verehrer der alten Götter*, edited by Wilhelm Blum and Walter Seitter ('*Tumult*-Schriften zur Verkehrswissenschaft', 29; Zurich / Berlin: Diaphanes, 2005), pp.101–117. This writing passed as Christian in spirit as late as the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (see, e.g., a book-review of Angelo Mai's edition of it in the short-lived scholarly Greek journal edited by the archimandrite Anthimos Gazes, Ἐρμῆς ὁ λόγιος 8 (1818), pp.6–23, at 22), where this writing is described as a sample of Christian Platonism). On the Christianisation of Plethon, see John Monfasani, "George Gemistos Pletho and the West: Greek Émigrés, Latin Scholasticism, and Renaissance Humanism", in *Renaissance Encounters: Greek East and Latin West*, edited by Marina Scordilis Brownlee and Dimitri H. Gondicas (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2013), pp.19–34. On the scholarly dispute over Plethon's view of Christianity, see also *infra*, p.207, nt.212.

<sup>32</sup> It would be too much to hypothesise that Wegelinus had access to the manuscript form of Scholarios' and Matthaïos Camariotes' writings which were to reveal the possibility that Plethon was a neopagan to Leo Allatius some decades later (see *infra*, pp.207–208); at any rate, there is no evidence for such a possibility.



To establish this alternative interpretation of the *Capita decem*, I will try – *modo Scholastico*– to: (i) show that the arguments for construing the *Capita* as an anti-Muslim work are not ‘necessary’; (ii) argue, on the basis of the previous and contemporary anti-Muslim literature, that such a reading of the *Capita* does not fit the way Christonymos defended the divinity of Christ; and (iii) argue that Christonymos’ arguments for the divinity of Jesus Christ make full sense if seen in the light of the mid-15<sup>th</sup>-century Christiano-pagan debate caused by the formulation and diffusion of the only non-Christian *Weltanschauung* in Byzantium, namely, Plethon’s paganism.

## II. The non-anti-Muslim tenor of the work

### 1. A refutation of the arguments for the anti-Muslim character of the work

This is a list of the arguments for the alleged anti-Muslim character of Christonymos’ writing; each argument is accompanied by a brief refutation.

(1) That Christonymos by his treatise addresses Muslims “is evident from the title of the work (...): ‘that Christ is the Son of God and therefore undoubtedly God’. Muslims... believe that only God (Allah) is the sole God-Creator (...), while Christ is [just] one of the prophets”.<sup>33</sup>

(i) Indeed, calling Jesus Christ “υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Θεός” is explicitly described in the famous ch. 100/101 of John of Damascus’ *De haeresibus* as a Christian belief rejected by Muslims.<sup>34</sup> Yet, Christians had coined and applied the phrase ‘υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Θεός’ to Christ long before the appearance of their anti-Muslim literature; the phrase appeared for the first time in the Christological debates of the late 3<sup>rd</sup> and early 4<sup>th</sup> century<sup>35</sup> and goes back to the celebrated prologue of the Gospel of John (Joh. 1:1).

<sup>33</sup> Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.182.

<sup>34</sup> John of Damascus, *De haeresibus* 100, ll. 61–62; *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos. IV. Liber de haeresibus. Opera polemica*, edited by Bonifatius Kotter (Berlin / New York: W. de Gruyter, 1981), p.63.

<sup>35</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *De ecclesiastica theologia* I,14,2: “Καὶ τὸν Σαμοσατέα δὲ ... τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀλλότριον ἀπέφηναν οἱ ἐκκλησιαστικοὶ πατέρες, ὅτι μὴ καὶ υἱὸν Θεοῦ καὶ Θεὸν πρὸ τῆς ἐνσάρκου γενέσεως ὄντα τὸν Χριστὸν ὠμολόγει”; I,20,21: “...μὴ χρῆναι

(ii) It is only in the title of Christonymos’ writing that the phrase “υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Θεός” occurs.<sup>36</sup> In the body of the text, he does not treat of the Filiation of the person of Christ and the Son’s relation with God the Father. This means that Christonymos’ “υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Θεός” is simply a well-established phrase referring to Jesus Christ, which reveals nothing as to Christonymos’ purpose and the identity of his addressees. In the body of the text, Christonymos’ “necessary arguments” typically conclude, in a context completely irrelevant to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, that Jesus Christ is “Θεός” in the sense that He is “ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων” (“a supra-human being”).<sup>37</sup>

νομίζειν βλάσφημον εἶναι τὸ καὶ υἱὸν Θεοῦ καὶ Θεὸν ὁμολογεῖν...” (Eusebius Werke. Band 4: Gegen Marcell. Über die kirchliche Theologie. Die Fragmente Marcellis, edited by Erich Klostermann and Günter Christian Hansen (‘Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller’, 14; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1972), pp.74,17–21; 84,23–25); Ps.-Gregory of Nyssa, *In annuntiationem Deiparae*, ll. 109–110: “Υἱὸς γὰρ Θεοῦ καὶ Θεὸς πρὸ αἰώνων ὑπάρχων...” (“La lode alla Theotokos nei testi greci dei secoli iv–vii”, edited by Davide Montagna, *Marianum* 24 (1962), pp.536–539, at 539); John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei orthodoxae* 48,31–32: “...ἐξ ἐνὸς τῶν μερῶν καὶ υἱὸς Θεοῦ καὶ Θεός ὀνομάζεται...” (ed. Kotter, *Die Schriften. II*, p.117); 56,28–29: “... αὐτὸς ἐστὶν ὁ μονογενὴς υἱὸς Θεοῦ καὶ Θεός ὁ ἐκ τῆς Παρθένου γενόμενος ἄνθρωπος” (*ibid.*, p.134); 87,85–86: “Τεγέννηται τοῖνυν ἐξ αὐτῆς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Θεός σεσαρκωμένος” (*ibid.*, p.201); 99,3–4: “...τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Θεὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθέναι καὶ εἶναι Θεὸν τέλειον” (*ibid.*, p.232); *De imaginibus* I,21,61–63: “...ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Θεός, ὁ ἀπαθὴς ὢν τῇ θεότητι, τῷ προσλήμματι πέπονθε” (*Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos. III. Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres*, edited by Bonifatius Kotter (Berlin / New York: W. de Gruyter, 1975), p.109); III,18,26–28: “Διὰ Πνεύματος οὖν ἁγίου γινώσκομεν τὸν Χριστὸν υἱὸν Θεοῦ καὶ Θεὸν καὶ ἐν τῷ Υἱῷ καθορώμεν τὸν Πατέρα” (*ibid.*, p.127); *Contra Jacobitas* 92,5–6: “Οὕτε γὰρ ἄνθρωπος ὢν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Θεός ἠφάνισεν τὴν θεϊκὴν μορφήν...” (*Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos. IV. Liber de haeresibus. Opera polemica*, edited by Bonifatius Kotter (Berlin / New York: W. de Gruyter, 1981), p.144) et al.; Theodore of Cyrus, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* VIII,9: “...υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Θεός προαιώνιος καὶ τῶν ἀπάντων ποιητὴς καὶ δημιουργὸς ὁ τὴν ἀνθρωπείαν ὑποδὺς φύσιν” (*Théodore de Cyr. Thérapeutique des maladies helléniques. Texte critique, introduction, traduction et notes*, edited by Pierre Canivet (‘Sources chrétiennes’, 57.2; Paris: du Cerf, 1958), p.313); Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarii in “Johannem”* VII (*ad Joh. 10:30*): “...λέγων ἑμαυτὸν υἱὸν Θεοῦ καὶ Θεόν” (*Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini in D. Joannis evangelium*, vol. II, edited by Phillip Edward Pusey (Oxford: e typographeo Clarendoniano, 1872; repr. Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1965), p.557,16–17); *Thesaurus* XXXII: “...Υἱός τε εἶη τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Θεὸν αὐτὸν ἀληθινὸν παραδεξάμενοι...” (PG 75: 468C).

<sup>36</sup> *Versio A*, Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.195,3; *versio B*, *art. cit.*, p.203,4–5. Cf. Ch. 5, pp.201,1 (*versio A*) and 210,1 (*versio A*), where it is said that Christians adore Jesus Christ as “υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Θεός.”

<sup>37</sup> *Versio A*, Ch. 1, p.195,20; Ch. 2, pp.197,10; 197,21; Ch. 3, p.198,6; Ch. 4, p.199,7; Ch. 5, p.199,25; Ch. 8, p.202,12–14; *versio B*, Ch. 1, p.203,21; Ch. 2, pp.205,3; 205,14; Ch. 3, p.205,25; Ch. 4, p.208,1; Ch. 5, p.209,4; Ch. 8, p.211,13–14.



(iii) As will be seen (*infra*, pp.164–170; 177–178; 182), Chapter VII of Book III of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Demonstratio Evangelica* is one of the principal sources of Christonymos' writing. There, one can read that the miracles performed by Jesus Christ convinced His contemporaries that He is "Θεοῦ Λόγος" or "Θεοῦ παῖς" and that He made them in terms of His being God ("οἷα Θεός").<sup>38</sup> Therefore, it is plausible to assume that Christonymos' phrase "υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Θεός" is a simple adaptation of this pre-Nicean Eusebian description of Jesus Christ to the later standard Christian phraseology.

(2) Christonymos, "in Ch. 2 in text A" uses the word "ἀντίχριστοι", which means that he addresses Muslims.<sup>39</sup>

(i) Indeed, Muslims were often called by Christians "ἀντίχριστοι" ("enemies of Christ"), "enemies of the cross of Christ" or even "forerunners of the Anti-christ".<sup>40</sup> This Christian insult was not a Muslim privilege, however; to Epiphanius of Salamis<sup>41</sup> and John of Damascus,<sup>42</sup> "anybody who denies the full divinity and humanity of Christ (namely, almost every type of heretic) is the 'anti-Christ'". Let us recall that this insulting word figures as early as in two writings of the New Testament;<sup>43</sup> indeed, it has so long a history and so wide

<sup>38</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* III,7, 7; 18; 21; 28 (Eusebius Werke. Band 6, edited by Ivar A. Heikel ('Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte', 23; Leipzig: J.C.Hinrichs, 1913), pp.143,24–26; 144,1–2; 145,10–14).

<sup>39</sup> Kalantzi, *art. cit.*, p.182.

<sup>40</sup> See, e.g., John of Damascus, *De haeresibus* 100,1–2, in *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. IV, p.60, edited by Bonifatius Kotter). Cf. Alain Ducellier, "Mentalité historique et réalités politiques: l'Islam et les musulmans vus par les Byzantins du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle", *Byzantinische Forschungen* 4 (1972), pp.31–63 (at 42–43; 58–59); Richard Kenneth Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages. A Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art and Literature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), pp.67–68. – Incidentally, the phrase πρόδρομος τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου was coined and insultingly applied to heretics by Gregory Nazianzen (*Oration XXI*, 21, l. 21; Grégoire de Nazianze. *Discours* 20–23. *Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes*, edited by Justin Mossay and Guy Lafontaine ('Sources chrétiennes', 270; Paris: du Cerf, 1980), p.154).

<sup>41</sup> Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* (Epiphanius. Band 1, edited by Karl Holl ('Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller', 25; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1915), p.295,11–15).

<sup>42</sup> John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei* 99,1–2 (ed. Kotter, *Die Schriften*, II, p.232).

<sup>43</sup> I Joh. 2:18; 22 ("Τίς ἐστιν ὁ ψεύστης εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀρνούμενος ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός; Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀντίχριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν Πατέρα καὶ τὸν Υἱόν. Πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν Υἱὸν οὐδὲ τὸν Πατέρα ἔχει"); 4:3; II Joh. 7:3.

a range of application that it can hardly be taken with safety as indicating per se any concrete non-Christian (or heretical) group.

(ii) The context of Christonymos' use of the word "ἀντίχριστος" does not allow for taking the word as an allusion to Muslims. Christonymos says that "even the enemies of Christ would concede that" the historical success of Jesus Christ "was not due to an alleged exceptional human wisdom" ("φρονήσει... οὐκ ἴσχυσεν ἀνθρωπίνῃ").<sup>44</sup> The fact that Jesus Christ had not received any higher education is something accepted by both Christians and non-Christians; this is exactly what Christonymos implies by saying that "even all the enemies of Christ would say so". There is consequently no special connection with Muslims in what Christonymos says at that point.

(iii) "Πάντες" does not allow for construing the phrase "πάντες οἱ ἀντίχριστοι" as equivalent to 'all Muslims'; for, it would be overtly meaningless to take Christonymos as saying that there is no Muslim who would be prepared to describe Christ as an educated person. Christonymos is instead saying that all sorts of deniers of the divinity of Christ (presumably including Muslims, but not in a special place) would agree that Jesus Christ was not a well-educated person.

(iv) In *versio B*, Christonymos replaces "πάντες οἱ ἀντίχριστοι" with "πάντες οἱ ἀντίφρονες" ("all dissenters"),<sup>45</sup> i.e. 'all those who go against the conviction' that Jesus Christ is God. "Ἀντίφρονες" is a simple synonym for an even more neutral term, "ἀντεμβαίνοντες" ("adversaries" or "those who scuffle with us Christians" or "disagree and raise objections"), which Christonymos uses in the same chapter.<sup>46</sup>

(v) As will be seen (*infra*, p.169), Christonymos' "οἱ ἀντίχριστοι" and "οἱ ἀντίφρονες" is simply a substitute for the phrase "οἱ κακολογούντες αὐτόν [sc. Christ]" from Origen's *Contra Celsum* I,29, which is a fundamental source

<sup>44</sup> *Versio A*, ch. 2 = *Versio B*, ch. 2 (ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, pp.196,4–5; 203,29–204,1).

<sup>45</sup> *Versio B*, ch. 2 (ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.204,1). Cf. *infra*, Appendix II, p.238.

<sup>46</sup> *Versio A*, ch. 2 = *Versio B*, ch. 2 (ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, pp.197,11; 205,4). That this is the meaning of this word in Christonymos' lines is deduced with safety from the fact that it is explicitly used as the opposite to "συνηγορούντες" ("those who agree with us" or "argue in the same direction with us"; *art. cit.*, pp.197,10–11; 205,3). 'Ἀντεμβαίνειν' means "fit into each other, of hinge-joints" (Liddell / Scott) or "interpenetrating" (Lampe). Christonymos' usage and meaning results from ascribing to ἀντί the air of conflict (instead of simple direction or reciprocity in holding each other).

of Christonymos' 2<sup>nd</sup> argument. Therefore, it is a *limine* impossible for this word to have any anti-Muslim implication.

(3) Christonymos, "in Ch. 5, contrasts Christ with Mohammed, only to point out that the one was divine, while the other was simply a man and had all the defects pertaining to human nature".<sup>47</sup>

This is quite true, however, one should not fail to recognise that the context of this contrast assigns it a different meaning. Christonymos does not mention Mohammed in order to show that he is inferior to Jesus Christ but in order to address a possible objection to his 5<sup>th</sup> argument. Christonymos' point in ch. 5 (see *infra*, p.182) runs that Jesus Christ must be taken as God, because His doctrine successfully spread all over the world by none of the ordinary means used by people for that purpose; then, simply to render his argument invulnerable to the possible objection that Mohammed's religion has also spread over practically the entire world, Christonymos discusses the case of the Muslim prophet (see *infra*, p.186). This passing reference to Mohammed is additionally the only one throughout the *Capita decem*.

## 2. Arguments against the anti-Muslim character of Christonymos' defence of the divinity of Christ

One can additionally argue for the irrelevance of the Muslim religion in Christonymos' writing.

(1) Christonymos' arguments are not drawn from the Holy Scripture or the Church Fathers, but "ex aliis rationibus".<sup>48</sup> If one reads through the dozens of anti-Muslim writings throughout the Byzantine era, one would see that none of them uses exclusively –or even mainly– non-religious, rational arguments; a great deal of the evidence appealed to by their authors is based on the Scriptures, because Islam belongs to the monotheistic 'religions du livre' and sees itself as the culmination or perfection of the divine revelation, which began with certain God-inspired men such as Abraham and Moses and continued with Jesus.

As for the Muslims' disbelief in the divinity of Jesus Christ, this disbelief did not originate from some negative view of the personality and teaching of Jesus

Christ, but from an extreme insistence on the unity and the uniqueness of God, which excluded both the doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation. All the Byzantine authors of anti-Muslim writings before Christonymos were consequently trying to demonstrate to the other side, when addressing the issue of the divinity of Christ, was that the Old Testament had predicted the advent of Christ as God, that the status of the Greek text of the New Testament, which testifies to the divinity of Christ, is reliable and that the Koran goes against what Muslims themselves accept as divine revelation, i.e. against the Jewish and Christian Holy Scriptures.<sup>49</sup>

(2a) Most –if not all– Byzantine anti-Muslim authors explicitly describe –usually in the title and the prologue and, of course, in the body of the text– their works as polemical and as addressing Muslims. To mention but a few, let us recall Bartholomew of Edessa's *Ἐλεγχος Ἀγαρηνοῦ* (10<sup>th</sup> cent.),<sup>50</sup> Gregory Palamas' *Ἐπιστολή πρὸς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ Ἐκκλησίαν* (1354) and *Διάλεξις πρὸς Χιόναν*,<sup>51</sup> Riccoldo di Monte Croce's (1243–1320) *Contra legem Sarracenorum* in Demetrius Cydones' translation (*Ἀνασκευὴ τῆς παρὰ τοῦ καταράτου Μαχουμέθ τοῖς Σαρρακηνοῖς τεθείσης θρησκείας*; mid-14<sup>th</sup> cent.),<sup>52</sup> John VI Cantacouzenos' *Ἀπολογία πρὸς Μωάμεθανούς*<sup>53</sup> and *Κατὰ Μωάμεθ λόγοι τέσσαρες* (second

<sup>49</sup> John VI Cantacouzenos' and Manuel II Palaiologos' relevant writings (see *infra*, pp.160; 185, nt.138) are typical examples of these lines of argument.

<sup>50</sup> PG 104: 1384A–1448A.

<sup>51</sup> *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ συγγράμματα*, vol. IV, edited by B.D. Phanourgakes (Thessaloniki: Kyromanos, 1988), pp.120–141; 148–165.

<sup>52</sup> PG 154: 1035–1170. Of course, this is not an apologetic but a polemical writing; still, it does include some apologetic arguments. Cf. *infra*, pp.187; 193–194; 198.

<sup>53</sup> PG 154: 371A–584A. The opening chapter of this writing is entitled: *Ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστὶ καὶ Θεὸς ὃν γέγονεν ἄνθρωπος, ὡς οἱ θεηγόροι προφητῶν διακελεύονται* (PG 154: 377C). See also John's *Contra Mahometem* III,5: *Ἀρνεῖται... Μωάμεθ τὸ τὸν Χριστὸν Υἱὸν εἶναι Θεοῦ καὶ Θεόν... καὶ ῥητῶς ὑπεράνθρωπον τοῦτον καλεῖ, Θεὸν δὲ καὶ Υἱὸν Θεοῦ οὐδαμῶς* — to which John replies that he has already "demonstrated" the double nature of Christ (*ἀποδέδεικται ὁ Χριστὸς Θεὸς τε καὶ ἄνθρωπος*) (PG 154: 669C). The verbal similarities with the title of Christonymos' writing should not mislead us; Cantacouzenos' arguments are mainly built upon the authority of the Old Testament, whose books (at least some of them) are held to be God-inspired by Muslims as well. His additional appeal to the miraculous dissemination of Christianity does not alter the fact that he is addressing Muslims.

<sup>47</sup> Ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.146.

<sup>48</sup> Wegelinus (see *supra*, p.146); cf. Fabricius / Harles, *supra*, p.149.

half of the 14<sup>th</sup> cent.),<sup>54</sup> Joseph Bryennios' *Μετά τινος Ἰσμαηλίτου διάλεξις* (late 14<sup>th</sup> cent.),<sup>55</sup> and Manuel II Palaiologos' *Διάλογος, ὃν ἐποίησατο μετὰ τινος Πέρσου τὴν ἀξίαν μοντερίζη ἐν Ἀγκύρᾳ τῆς Γαλατίας* (ca. 1400), which was written against "τῆς τῶν Τούρκων ἀπιστίας ἢ ψευδωνύμου πίστεως".<sup>56</sup> This is not the case, however, with the *Capita decem*.

(2b) Most of these authors argue for the cause of Christianity on the basis of certain writings of the Holy Scripture. For instance, John VI Cantacouzenos inscribes the "First Apology" of his *Κατὰ Μωάμεθ λόγοι τέσσαρες* in a way very similar to Christonymos' title of the *Capita decem*, i.e. "Ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστὶ καὶ Θεός, καὶ τέλειος Θεός ἐστὶ, καὶ Θεὸς ὢν γέγονεν ἄνθρωπος, ὡς οἱ θεηγόροι προφήται διακελεύονται".<sup>57</sup> His arguments in Book I (which is much lengthier than the entire writing of Christonymos) are nevertheless explicitly described as based on the Holy Scriptures, which are also accepted as divinely inspired by Muslims,<sup>58</sup> and the author exhorts his Muslim addressees to stop arguing against Christianity *modo Hellenico*, i.e. on the basis of "proofs" and "human reasoning".<sup>59</sup> Christonymos, in contrast, argues exactly in the opposite way (see *supra*, pp.146–147; *infra*, pp.162–163). Likewise, George Scholarios – Gennadios II, in his *Ἐρωτήσεις καὶ ἀποκρίσεις περὶ τῆς θεότητος τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* (*Questions and Replies on the Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ*; 1470),<sup>60</sup> addressing Muslims' questions,<sup>61</sup> tries to demonstrate the divinity of Jesus on the basis of His own description in the Gospels in combination with the Muslims' acceptance of the Sacred Gospel as a book "venerable and honourable" and of Jesus Christ himself as a "saint", "prophet",

<sup>54</sup> PG 154: 583A–692C.

<sup>55</sup> "Ἰωσήφ τοῦ Βρυεννίου *Μετά τινος Ἰσμαηλίτου διάλεξις*", edited by Asterios Argyriou, *Ἐπετηρίς Ἐταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν* 35 (1966/67), pp.141–195.

<sup>56</sup> Manuel II. Palaiologos. *Dialogue mit einem "Perser"*, edited by Erich Trapp, ('Wiener byzantinistische Studien', II; Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1966), p.5,4–5.

<sup>57</sup> John VI Cantacouzenos, *Contra sectam Machometicam apologiae* IV, I, prol. (PG 154: 377C8–11; see also *op. cit.* I,1, PG 154: 381C11–12; I,19, PG 154: 433B3–4; 437D7–8).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. (PG 154: 381A4–8).

<sup>59</sup> *Op. cit.* I,19 (PG 154: 433B5–437D8).

<sup>60</sup> Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, III, pp.458,9–475,29.

<sup>61</sup> *Op. cit.* I; 2 (eds. L. Petit et al., *op. cit.*, pp.458,20–459,2).

"word of God" and "spirit of God" — in which case there is no reason at all to produce any argument for the high qualities of His.<sup>62</sup> This is quite the opposite of what happens in Christonymos' *Capita decem*, where the worst depiction of the figure of Jesus ever appeared (Jesus as an impostor or sorcerer) is seriously placed into the agenda of his discussion (and refuted, of course).

(3) As has already been said (*supra*, p.158), Christonymos mentions Mohammed only once and marginally; should one remove this reference, Christonymos' argument for the divinity of Christ maintains its value.

### III. An alternative interpretation:

#### Christonymos' writing as a reply to Plethon's paganism

Since it is unfitting that the content and method of the *Capita decem* be construed as a defence of Christianity against the Muslim religion, then against whom did the author intend to rationally defend the divinity of Jesus Christ? As already suggested (*supra*, p.152), Christonymos' purpose was to refute Plethon's rejection of the divine nature of Jesus Christ and depiction of the founder of Christianity and His disciples as "sophists" and "charlatans". As will be seen in par. 1, the premises of Christonymos' arguments exhibit no connection with any particular religion or religious sect; instead, in Chs. 1–5, Christonymos evaluates Jesus Christ as a historical person through common sense and assesses the religion He founded from a historical point of view. This brings us right back to certain fundamental aspects of the pagan-Christian debates in the 3<sup>rd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> century. All the objections he addresses and the majority of his strategies to refute them can be traced back to Origen's *Contra Celsum*, Eusebius of Caesarea's *Demonstratio Evangelica* and (Ps.-?) John Chrysostom's *Quod Christus sit Deus*. To substantiate this claim, I will summarize Christonymos' relevant arguments (primarily, but not solely, as formulated in *versio B*) by quoting their most important parts in Greek, since their wording reveals

<sup>62</sup> Scholarios, *Ἐρωτήσεις καὶ ἀποκρίσεις περὶ τῆς θεότητος τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* 3: "τὴν ἀγαθὴν περὶ αὐτοῦ (sc. Jesus Christ) δόξαν οὐ χρεια νῦν ἀποδείξει βεβαίον, οὐδὲ ὑφ' ὑμῶν ἀμφιβαλλομένην... Ὑμεῖς... ἀγαθὴν περὶ αὐτοῦ δόξαν ἔχετε· ἄνθρωπον γὰρ ἅγιον λέγετε αὐτὸν καὶ 'προφήτην' καὶ 'λόγον Θεοῦ' καὶ 'πνοὴν Θεοῦ' καὶ τοιαῦτα πολλὰ περὶ αὐτοῦ ἔνδοξα καὶ φρονεῖτε καὶ λέγετε... Τὸ ἱερὸν Εὐαγγέλιον..., ὃ καὶ ὑμεῖς δι' αἰδοῦς ἔχετε καὶ τιμῆς..." (eds. Petit et al., *op. cit.*, p.461,12–23).

Christonymos' direct sources, which I will also be quoting and discussing. Paragraphs 2 and 3 are followed by an explanation of Plethon's revival of the pagan Late Antique critique of Jesus Christ and His followers as well as by a description of Scholarios' indignant exposition of Plethon's attack on Christ and Christianity. This chain of Late Antique and Late Byzantine authors will enable us to reliably contextualise Charitonymos' defence of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

## 1. The sources of the negative image of Christ refuted by Christonymos and the origins of the method, target and arguments

### 1.1. Method

Christonymos' intention, as declared in the very title as well as in various places in his writing, is to demonstrate the divinity of Jesus Christ by means of certain arguments “ἀποδεικνύοντα πιθανοῖς τε καὶ ἀναντιρρήτοις λόγοις καὶ ἀποδείξεσιν... ἀναντιρρήτως καὶ ἀναμφιβόλως” and that it is impossible not to be so (“ἄλλως ἀδύνατον”).<sup>63</sup> The author optimistically and ostensibly claims that “γεωμετρικαῖς... ἀνάγκαις τὰ τοιαῦτα δεικνύμενα δείκνυται, ἐκ τῶν κοινῇ καὶ πᾶσι δοκούντων τὰς ἀποδείξεις ἔχοντα”.<sup>64</sup> This is an echo of the very title of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Εὐαγγελικὴ ἀπόδειξις*. In the first two chapters (“Ὅπως οἱ παρ’ Ἑβραίοις προφητῆται τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἐκήρυττον” and “Ὅπως περὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ προανεφώνουν”) of Book III, Eusebius demonstrates the divinity of Jesus Christ on the basis of the Holy Scriptures, whereas in the remaining five<sup>65</sup> he sets out to produce for “the unbelievers” (“οἱ ἀπειθοῦντες ταῖς προφητικαῖς Γραφαῖς”; “οἱ ἄπιστοι”) a separate chain of arguments on “the basis of clear evidence” (“ἐξ ἐναργῶν τῶν ἀποδείξεων”).<sup>66</sup> This he re-assures

during the course of his argument: “βεβασανισμένη τε καὶ ἐξητασμένη τῇ κρίσει κατεδεξάμεθα... Ἐξήτασται παρ’ ἡμῖν καὶ βεβασάνισται ταῦτα καὶ δι’ ἐτέρων πραγμάτων ἐναργῶν, πάντα καλυπτόντων λόγον... πλὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ τῆς λογικωτέρας μεθόδου, ἣν προσάγειν εἰώθαμεν τοῖς οὐ παραδεχομένοις τὰ προειρημένα”.<sup>67</sup> The fact that the verbal similarities are not so close here should not raise our scepticism. As will become apparent, Christonymos' utilization both of the content and the phraseology of the body of Book III of Eusebius' writing is extensive. Still, as will be seen (pp.197–198), this optimistic apologetic was inspired by Scholarios.

If Eusebius is the source of Christonymos' plan to “rationally demonstrate the divinity of Christ”, the wording in which he puts the plan in the title of his writing seems to have been shaped by the title of a similar writing by (Ps.-?) John Chrysostom, i.e. the *Πρὸς Ἕλληνας ἀπόδειξις, ὅτι Θεὸς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστός* (*A Demonstration Addressed to the Greeks that Christ is God*; hereafter: *Quod Christus sit Deus*).<sup>68</sup> (Ps.-?) John explicitly states that it is a “Hellenic” challenge that he is addressing in his writing and that this fact makes him exclusively use certain evidence shared by his addressees as additional starting points for his arguments: “Εἰ γὰρ δὴ λέγοι ὁ Ἕλλην· ‘πόθεν... δῆλον ὅτι Θεὸς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστός;’... πόθεν αὐτὸν ἐνάξομεν... ἀλλ’ ἢ ἀπὸ τῶν παρ’ ἐμοῦ καὶ αὐτοῦ κοινῶς καὶ ἀναντιρρήτως ὁμολογουμένων καὶ πρὸς ἅ ἀμφιβόλως οὐκ ἔχει;” (cf. Christonymos' “ἀναντιρρήτως καὶ ἀναμφιβόλως”).<sup>69</sup> Some exclusive verbal similarities of Christonymos' 4<sup>th</sup> argument to this (Ps.-?) Chrysostomic writing (see *infra*, pp.170; 179–181), certify Christonymos' direct dependence on the *Quod Christus sit Deus*.

<sup>67</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* III,4,30–31 (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, p.115,16–22). On Eusebius' encounter with paganism see Ariele Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea against Paganism* (Boston / Leiden: Brill, 2002).

<sup>68</sup> Ed. Norman G. McKendrick, “*Quod Christus sit Deus*” of Saint John Chrysostom. *Doctoral Thesis* (Fordham University 1966), pp.37–135 (= PG 48: 813–838). As has already been shown (p.147), certain similar phrases in Cyril of Alexandria's *œuvre*, which presumably motivated Wegelinus to co-edit some Cyrilian pieces with the *Capita decem*, cannot be taken as possible sources of Christonymos, because, despite the verbal similarity, Cyril's arguments are purely Scriptural. In the most recent study of the *Quod Christus sit Deus* (Sébastien Morlet, “La source principale du *Quod Christus sit Deus* attribué à Jean Chrysostome: la *Démonstration évangélique* d'Eusèbe de Césarée”, *Revue d'études augustiniennes et patristiques* 58:2 (2012), pp.261–285), certain reservations are expressed as to its traditional attribution to Chrysostom.

<sup>69</sup> (Ps.-?) John Chrysostom, *Quod Christus sit Deus* 1 (ed. McKendrick, *op. cit.*, pp.138,12–139, 10 = PG 48: 813).

<sup>63</sup> Ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.203,2–4; cf. pp.203,21; 205,26; 208,31; 209,4–5.

<sup>64</sup> Ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.205,26–28.

<sup>65</sup> “Πῶς πρὸς τοὺς πλάνον ὑπειληφότας γεγονέναι αὐτὸν ἀντενεχθσόμεθα. Περὶ τῶν θειοτέρων ἔργων αὐτοῦ. Ὅτι μὴ πλασάμενοι οἱ αὐτοῦ μαθηταί, τῇ δὲ ἀληθείᾳ ἐμαρτύρουν τὰς ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ πραχθείσας παραδοξοποιούς ἱστορίας. Ὅτι μὴ κατὰ γοητείαν, ἐνθὲν δὲ ἀρετῇ καὶ δυνάμει τὰ παράδοξα διεπράξατο. Ὡς καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς ἐνεργείας αὐτῆς συνοραῖται τοῖς φιλαληθέσιν ἢ τῆς περὶ αὐτὸν ἐνθέου ἀρετῆς δύναμις.” (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, p.93).

<sup>66</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* III,2,78 (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, p.108,18–23).



## 1.2. Strategy

Eusebius, in order to demonstrate that Jesus is “Θεοῦ Λόγος” or “Θεοῦ παῖς” (see *surpa*, p.156),<sup>70</sup> follows this way: “...when He has been shown to be far greater and more excellent in solitary preeminence than all the most lauded of all time, I may then take the opportunity to treat of His diviner nature, and show from clear proofs, that the power in Him was not of mere humanity”; “we ought surely to ascribe divinity to Him”; “...to witness and confess that He was indeed divine, and that He altogether transcended humanity...”; “if, then, He was such, He could only have attempted His miracles by divine and unspeakable power”; “...by a power more divine, and more powerful than man’s”; “...reckoning it impossible to think that what was done was the work of a human being, but ascribing it to God” (“...ὁπόταν πάντων τῶν ἐξ αἰῶνος βοηθέντων ἐν ἀνθρώποις πολὺ κρείττων ἀσυγκρίτῳ ὑπεροχῇ καὶ διαφέρων ἀναφανῇ, τὸ τηνικαδὲ καὶ τὰ περὶ τῆς θειοτέρας αὐτοῦ φύσεως κατὰ καιρὸν διαλάβωμεν, ...παριστῶντες ὡς οὐκ ἀνθρωπείας ἄρα ἦν φύσεως ἢ περὶ αὐτὸν δύναμις”; “θείας φύσεως χρῆν ὁμολογεῖν αὐτόν”; “θεῖον ἀληθῶς χρῆμα γεγενῆσθαι καὶ πᾶσαν ἀνθρώπου φύσιν ὑπερβεβηκέναι τὸν δηλούμενον”; “ἐπεχειρεῖ ταῖς θαυματουργίαις... θεία καὶ ἀπορρήτῳ δυνάμει”; “θειοτέρᾳ καὶ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπου δυνάμει”; “μὴ δύνασθαι θνητῆς ἔργα φύσεως εἶναι νομίζειν τὰ δρώμενα, ἀλλὰ Θεοῦ”).<sup>71</sup>

This is precisely Christonymos’ strategy; he attempts to establish that “τούτων ἀπάντων [sc. of all the successful historical figures] μείζων ὁ Χριστὸς δεικνύται... ὡς ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων ἐστίν...”; that “ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων... ἄλλη τινὶ δυνάμει ἰσχύσαι...”; “ἐτέρᾳ τινὶ δυνάμει, δηλαδὴ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων... ὡς ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων ἢ τοιαύτῃ δυνάμει ἦν... καὶ θεία”; “...ὑπὲρ ἀνθρωπίνην πᾶσαν ἀξίαν τε καὶ τάξιν καὶ φύσιν ἢ τοῦ Χριστοῦ νομοθεσία· εἰ δὲ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρωπίνην,

ἤδη καὶ θεία”; “...ὁ Χριστὸς πάντων ὑπερاناβέβηκε τούτων... ὡς κρείττων πάντων αὐτὸς ὁ Χριστὸς· εἰ δὲ κρείττων, καὶ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων”.<sup>72</sup>

Parallel (or, better, prior) to this, Eusebius was well aware that he had a long way to go before reaching his target; he should effectively address the common pagan view that Jesus was quite the opposite, i.e. “πλάνος καὶ γόης” or “γόης καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς πλάνος” or “ἀνὴρ πλάνος” or “γόης καὶ ἀληθῶς λαοπλάνος” or “ἀπατεῶν τε καὶ γόης”, who used “γοητεία... ἐπὶ πλάνῃ τῶν ὁρώντων”.<sup>73</sup> Likewise, Christonymos also had to cope with the same problem, i.e. the possibility that Jesus’ success was due to “γοητεία”,<sup>74</sup> since this is a possibility accepted by “some” (“κατ’ ἐνίου”).<sup>75</sup>

Let us now examine Christonymos’ ten arguments one by one. This is intended to demonstrate that he utilized Origen’s, Eusebius’ and (Ps.-?) Chrysostom’s anti-pagan defence of Jesus Christ down to fine details, as well as Scholarios’ relevant arguments in several writings of his.

## 1.3. The Arguments

**1<sup>st</sup> Argument.** No emperor, king, lawgiver or philosopher, however successful he may have proved on earth, has ever managed to be worshipped as ‘God’ in the full sense of the term, as Jesus Christ has been. This, since it supersedes what any man has ever succeeded, is an infallible sign of His divinity:

Τεσσάρων ὄντων μεγίστων ἐν ἀνθρώποις [1] ἀξιωματῶν, βασιλείας [2], στρατηγίας [3], νομοθεσίας [4], φιλοσοφίας [5], τῶν μὲν στρατηγῶν [3] ἀπάντων ἐνδοξότερος [6] γέγονεν [7] ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος, τῶν δὲ βασιλέων [2] ὁ Αὐγουστος Καῖσαρ, τῶν δὲ γε νομοθετῶν [4] ἀπάντων ἐνδοξότερος [6] Μωυσῆς, παγκόσμιος ἅτε καὶ αὐτὸς νομοθέτης [4] γεγωνῶς [7] καὶ ἄχρι καὶ τήμερον δὲ ὧν, τῶν

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* III,5,57: “...Θεὸν εἶναι καὶ Θεοῦ παῖδα κηρύττειν” (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, p.121,11); III,7,21: “τοῦτον γὰρ εἶναι τοῦ μόνου καὶ ἐπὶ πάντων Θεοῦ μόνον ἀγαπητὸν καὶ μονογενῆ παῖδα” (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, p.144,1–2). Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum* V,51,7–8: “...τὸν μαρτυρούμενον... Θεὸν Ἰησοῦν ὡς Υἱὸν Θεοῦ παρεδεξάμεθα” (Origène. *Contre Celse. Tome III: livres V et VI. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes*, edited by Marcel Borret (‘Sources chrétiennes’, 147; Paris: du Cerf, 1969), p.144).

<sup>71</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* III,2,78; 6,26; 6,27; 6,9; 7,22; 7,28 (ed. I.A. Heikel, *op. cit.*, pp.95,31–32; 136,27–28; 137,5–7; 133,22–23; 144,15; 145,13–14); translated by William John Ferrar, *The Proof of the Gospel being the Demonstratio Evangelica of Eusebius of Caesarea*, vol. I (London / New York: Macmillan Co, 1920), pp.117; 150; 151; 146; 159; 160). Cf. III,1,6: “...ποία δυνάμει κρατήσει, ὅτι μὴ ἀνθρωπεία;” (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, p.95,31–32).

<sup>72</sup> Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, pp.203,18–20 (cf. 205,2–3); 205,12–13; 205,12–13; 205,23–25; 207,28–29; 208,25–209,4.

<sup>73</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* III,2,78; 3,1; 3,2; 3,4; 3,6; 3,7; 3,8; 3,12; 4,31; 4,43; 5,110; 6,1; 6,4; 6,6; 6,8; 6,11; 6,12; 6,26; 6,31; 6,33 (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, pp.108,23–24; 108,28; 109,20; 109,27; 110,14; 110,23; 115,24–25; 118,27; 131,25–26; 131,30–132,4; 132,17; 133,1; 133,11; 133,20–21; 134,3–4; 134,12; 136,21–22; 137,28; 137,35; 138,15).

<sup>74</sup> Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.195,24.

<sup>75</sup> Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, pp.195,24; 196,3; 197,1–15; 197,17 (*versio A*); 203,27–28; 204,24–205,10; 205,12; 206,19–20 (*versio B*).



δὲ φιλοσόφων [5] ἀπάντων ἐνδοξότερος [6] κατὰ μὲν τινὰς Πλάτων [8], κατ' ἐνίους δὲ Ἀριστοτέλης... Τούτων οὖν ἀπάντων μεγίστων ὄντων καὶ φανέντων αὐτῇ πείρᾳ πάντων τῶν [1a...] ἀπ' αἰῶνος [9] ἀνθρώπων [...1b], μείζων ὅμως ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστός [10]· οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἄνθρωποι, ὁ δὲ Θεὸς ἐδοξάσθη καὶ σέβεται παρὰ τοσούτων καὶ τοιούτων ἀνθρώπων καὶ γενῶν καὶ διὰ τοσούτων ἤδη τῶν χρόνων [9]. Εἰ δὲ τούτων ἀπάντων μείζων ὁ Χριστός [10] δεικνύται, καίτοι πολλὰ καὶ αὐτῶν βουληθέντων μὲν, μὴ δυνήθεντων [11] δὲ τῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ δοξασθῆναι ἄξια, εὐδελον ἤδη ὅτι καὶ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρωπὸν ἐστίν.<sup>76</sup>

A substantial part of this is an adaptation of the following lines by Eusebius to the typical form of argument (premises – conclusion):

Βασιλέων [2] δὲ δόγμασιν καὶ παλαιῶν [9] νομοθετῶν [4], φιλοσόφων [5] τε καὶ ποιητῶν καὶ θεολόγων ἐξ ἐναντίας θέσθαι νόμους τοὺς κατ' εἰδωλολατρίας, καὶ τούτους κρατῦναι, ἀμάχους τε καὶ ἀηττήτους εἰς μακρὸν ἐπιδείξει αἰῶνα [9], τίς πώποτε γοήτων διανενοῖται; Ὁ δὲ Σωτὴρ [10] καὶ Κύριος ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐνενόησεν μὲν, οὐ τετόλημκεν δὲ ἐπιχειρῆσαι, ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἐπεχείρησεν μὲν, οὐ κατώρθωσεν δέ, ἐνὶ δὲ ῥήματι καὶ μιᾷ φωνῇ φήσας πρὸς τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ μαθητὰς 'πορευθέντες μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου, διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν' (Mt. 28:19), ἔργον ἐπῆγε τῷ λόγῳ.<sup>77</sup>

Christonymos adds generals ("στρατηγοί") to Eusebius' list of the kinds of leaders in history. Although this element does not occur in Eusebius, it does occur in a passage from Origen's *Contra Celsum* which is the underlying source of Eusebius' passage:

Ὁ... Ἰησοῦς [10] δεδύνηται [11] σείσαι τὴν πᾶσαν ἀνθρώπων οἰκουμένην [1] οὐ μόνον ὑπὲρ Θεμιστοκλέα... ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑπὲρ Πυθαγόραν καὶ Πλάτωνα [8] καὶ τινὰς ἄλλους τῶν ὁποιοποῦν τῆς οἰκουμένης σοφῶν [5] ἢ βασιλέων [2] ἢ στρατηγῶν [3]. ... Οἱ ἐν ἀνθρώποις [1] ἐνδοξοὶ [6] ... ὁ μὲν ἐπὶ σοφίᾳ [5],

<sup>76</sup> Versio B (Kalatzi, art. cit., p.203,5–20). Throughout this study, I mark the words and phrases that are common in the authors compared, using numbers in brackets for verbal similarities and braces for similarities *quoad sensum*.

<sup>77</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* III,6,31–32 (ed. Heikel, op. cit., p.137,28–31).

ἄλλος δ' ἐπὶ στρατηγία [3], βαρβάρων δὲ τινες ἐπὶ ταῖς παραδόξοις ἐξ ἐπιδόμων δυνάμεσι..., καὶ ἄλλοι ἐπ' ἄλλοις οὐ πολλοῖς... ἐνδοξοὶ [6] γεγένηνται [7].<sup>78</sup>

**2<sup>nd</sup> Argument.** Success in obtaining followers can normally be achieved either by wisdom or power (via money and military force) or sophisticated deception. Christ, however, did not use any of these human means. He must have thereby possessed certain supra-human –i.e. divine– power:

Πολλῶν ὄντων καὶ μεγάλων, δι' ὧν ἂν τις ἐλκύσαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους εἰς μέγα τι δυνήθῃ, τρία ταῦτά ἐστι μάλιστα· φρόνησις ἄκρα, δύναμις ἄκρα καὶ γοητεία δὲ κατ' ἐνίους. Ὁ οὖν Χριστὸς ἐνὶ τούτων τῶν τριῶν τρόπων Θεὸς δοξασθῆναι ἐπὶ γῆς ἴσχυσεν· ἢ γὰρ φρονήσει ἄκρα ἢ δυνάμει ἄκρα (περιουσία δηλαδὴ χρημάτων καὶ στρατευμάτων) ἢ γοητεία.

(1) Ἀλλὰ μὴν φρονήσει μὲν οὐκ ἴσχυσεν ἀνθρωπίνῃ [1], ὥς καὶ πάντες ἂν οἱ ἀντίφρονες [2] φαίεν [3]. Εἰ δὲ φρονήσει μεγίστη καὶ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων ἴσχυσε, καὶ τοῦτο ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν. Ἡ γὰρ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων φρόνησις πάντως ἢ δαιμονώδης ἢ ἀγγελικὴ ἢ θεία.

(1.1) Ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδεὶς ἂν δαίμων τοσοῦτον ἰσχύσειε πώποτε· εἰ δέ τις, ἤδη καὶ πάντες... Ἀλλὰ μὴν τοῦτ' ἀδύνατον.

(1.2) Ὅτι δὲ οὐδ' ἀγγελικῇ, δηλον. Ψευσθῆναι γὰρ ἄγγελον τῶν ἀδυνάτων ἢ τινα δύναμιν ὅλως τῶν κρείττωνων γενῶν... Ἀλλως τε εἰ μία τοῦτ' ἂν ἰσχύσειε δύναμις, καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ πάντως ἂν ἰσχύσειαν, καὶ οὕτω πάμπολλοι καὶ τοῦτ' ἂν τρόπῳ γένοιοντ' ἂν θεοί. Ἀλλὰ μὴν τοῦτ' ἀδύνατον.

(2) Ὅτι δὲ οὐδὲ δυνάμει [4], εὐδελον, πάντων ἄτε ἀνθρώπων ἀνθρωπίνως πενέστερος [5] καὶ εὐτελέστερος [6] καὶ ἀσθενέστερος ὧν [7]· ἀλλ' ὅμως τοιοῦτος [8] ὧν [7] καὶ τοιούτους ἄλλους εὐαριθμήτους προσλαβὼν [9] πάντων [10] ἀνθρώπων ἀγενεστάτους τε καὶ ἀμαθεστάτους, τοσοῦτον ἴσχυσε κατορθῶσαι [11] καὶ μετὰ τοσαύτης ἐξουσίας.

(3) Λέιπεται δὴ τὸ τρίτον, ἡ γοητεία κατ' ἐνίους. Εἰ οὖν γοητεία κατ' ἐνίους ὁ Χριστὸς ἴσχυσεν, ἡ τοιαύτη γοητεία ἢ προὑπῆρχε τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἢ αὐτὸς ὁ Χριστὸς εὗρεν αὐτὴν ἢ οὐδαμῇ οὐδαμῶς οὐδεπώποτε ἦν.

<sup>78</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* I,29–30 (Origène. Contre Celse. Tome I: livres I et II. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes, edited by Marcel Borret ('Sources chrétiennes', 132; Paris: du Cerf, 1967), pp.152–158); see also I,27, quoted *infra* (p.177).

(3.1) Εἰ μὲν οὖν μηδαμὴ μηδαμῶς [12] οὐδεπώποτε ἦν... πῶς οὖν ὁ Χριστὸς ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἂν ἰσχύσειεν;...

(3.2) Εἰ δὲ αὐτὸς [13] ὁ Χριστὸς εὗρεν [14] αὐτήν, ἥδη καὶ οὕτως ἐστὶν ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων [15], ἐπειδὴ γε ὅπερ οὐδεὶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐξ αἰῶνος [16] εὗρεῖν [14] ἠδυνήθη, ὁ Χριστὸς εὗρεν [14]...

(3.3) Λεῖπεται δὴ... ὅτι προϋπῆρχε τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ τοιαύτη δηλαδὴ γοητεία. Εἰ οὖν προϋπῆρχε τοῦ Χριστοῦ, μύριοι καὶ ὑπὲρ ἀριθμὸν ἂν ἐγεγέννητο κατὰ Χριστὸν θεοί, ὅσοι δηλαδὴ καὶ σοφοί. Ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδεὶς ἄλλος ἢδη γέγονεν· ὥστε καὶ τοῦτο ψευδές.

(Conclusion) Ἐπειδὴ οὖν οὔτε φρονήσει ἄκρα ὁ Χριστὸς ἰσχυσεν οὔτε δυνάμει ἄκρα οὔτε μὴν γοητεία, λεῖπεται δὴ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων ἄλλη τι δυνάμει αὐτὸν ἰσχύσαι.<sup>79</sup>

Here Christonymos paraphrases Origen's classification of the means of historical success (σοφία, στρατηγία and ἐπωδαί) in the passage from which, as has just been seen (pp.166–167), Christonymos derived “στρατηγία”. Out of “many great” means (“πολλὰ καὶ μεγάλα”; a strange paraphrase of Origen's “ἄλλα οὐ πολλά”), Christonymos picks up “φρόνησις”, “δύναμις” and “γοητεία”; in so doing, he produced a list of means which is very close to Origen's list. Christonymos does not neglect to mention riches (“περιουσία χρημάτων”) as a constituent of power, just as Origen explains (“πλούσιος χορηγῶν τοῖς προσιοῦσι”<sup>80</sup>).

Origen's “βαρβάρων τινές” quoted above (p.167) is the source of Christonymos' “ἔνιοι” quoted *supra* (pp.165; 167), which regards “γοητεία”. Christonymos' additional recourse to Origen shows that he was aware that the *Contra Celsum* was a fundamental source of Book III of the *Demonstratio Evangelica*.

Christonymos' point (1), i.e. that Jesus' human education (“φρόνησις” “ἀνθρωπίνη”) could not secure anything parallel to His eventual success for Him is a paraphrase of what Origen says in respect to this issue in the same context:

...τίνα τρόπον ἐν εὐτελείᾳ [6] καὶ πενίᾳ [5] ἀνατεθραμμένος καὶ μηδεμίαν ἐγκύκλιον παιδείαν παιδευθείς... πῶς ἂν ὁ τοιοῦτος [8] καὶ οὕτως

<sup>79</sup> Versio B (ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, pp.203,22–205,13).

<sup>80</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* I,30,13 (ed. Borret, *Origène. Contre Celse*, I, p.158).

ἀνατεθραμμένος καὶ μηδὲν –ὡς καὶ οἱ κακολογοῦντες αὐτὸν {2} ὁμολογοῦσι {3}– σεμνὸν παρὰ ἀνθρώπων [1] μαθών...; etc.<sup>81</sup>

Was it possible that Jesus' exceptional φρόνησις (i.e. cunningness)<sup>82</sup> (as one must assume from His exceptional historical success) had some other origin, i.e. was bestowed upon Him by some demon or angel or something of this nature? Christonymos seems to reproduce Origen's reference to Celsus' idea that Jews, taught by Moses, used to adore angels<sup>83</sup> as well as to Celsus' Jewish in origin critique of Jesus as “a demon” and His followers as collaborating with “demons”.<sup>84</sup> He refutes this position by applying the pattern of Eusebius' argument to it against the possibility that Jesus' success was due to some sort of γοητεία (3): if a demon possessed such immense power, it would have long ago exercised it and become God.<sup>85</sup>

(2) What about the means of power? Christonymos makes a separate entry for this, just because Origen does the same. As for the way in which he addresses it, he combines Origen's depiction of Jesus' disciples, which highlights both their secular ignorance and inability to carry out any political, military or missionary project or expedition:

Καὶ σὺ δ' ἂν αὐτὸς καταμάθοις τὸ ἔνθεον τῆς περὶ αὐτοῦ [sc. Jesus'] δυνάμεως [4], εἰ λογίσαιο, τίς ποτε ὦν [7] ἄρα τὴν φύσιν καὶ πηλίκος, ἄνδρας εὐτελεῖς [6] ...προσοικειωσάμενος {8}, τοῦτοις κέχρηται διακόνους ἐπὶ κατορθώσει [11] πράγματος πάντα καλύπτοντος λόγον... Τοῖς πάντων ἀγροικωτάτοις καὶ

<sup>81</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* I,29,14–24 (ed. Borret, *Origène. Contre Celse*, I, p.154).

<sup>82</sup> On the use of μάγος, γόης, ψεύστης, ἀπατεῶν and σοφιστής as equivalent in the ancient Greek literature, see Marguerite Morrat, in *Eusèbe de Césarée. Contre Hierocles. Texte grec établi par É. des Places. Introduction, traduction et notes par M. Morrat* (‘Sources chrétiennes’, 333; Paris: du Cerf, 1986), pp.59–61; 220–224.

<sup>83</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* I,26,1–5: “...Συκοφαντεῖ Ἰουδαίους ὁ... Κέλσος, λέγων αὐτοὺς σέβειν ἀγγέλους καὶ γοητεία προσκείσθαι, ἥς ὁ Μωϋσῆς αὐτοῖς γέγονεν ἐξηγητής. Ποῦ γὰρ τῶν γραμμάτων Μωϋσέως εὔρε τὸν νομοθέτην παραδιδόντα σέβειν ἀγγέλους, λεγέτω...” (ed. Borret, *Origène. Contre Celse*, I, p.144).

<sup>84</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* I,6 (ed. Borret, *Origène. Contre Celse*, I, pp.90–92); VIII,39,5–8 (*Origène. Contre Celse. Tome IV: livres VII et VIII. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes*, edited by Marcel Borret (‘Sources chrétiennes’, 150; Paris: du Cerf, 1969), p.258).

<sup>85</sup> On Christonymos' argument against the possibility that some “angel” presumably aided Jesus' success, see pp.171–172.

εὐτελεστάτοις [6] ἡγήσατο χρῆσθαι τῆς οἰκείας βουλῆς ὑπηρέταις... ..τοῖς εὐτελεστάτοις [6] ἐκείνοις αὐτοῦ μαθηταῖς...<sup>86</sup>

In *versio B*, Christonymos reinforced his point by adding that Jesus was so weak that, in the end, He was put to the most ignominious kind of death, i.e. execution by crucifixion: "...καὶ τοσοῦτον, ὥς καὶ θανάτῳ ἐπονείδιστῳ [1], σταυρῷ [2] δηλαδή {3}, κατακριθῆναι [4]".<sup>87</sup> This is a verbally close reproduction of the crescendo of the same argument in par. 1 from John Chrysostom's *Quod Christus sit Deus*: "...καὶ ταῦτα ποιῆσαι πολεμούμενον παρὰ πάντων καὶ σταυρὸν [2] ὑπομεμενηκέναι χλευαζόμενον καὶ θάνατον ἐπονείδιστον [1]".<sup>88</sup>

Thomas Aquinas, in ch. 7 ("Qualiter sit accipiendum quod dicitur: verbum Dei esse passum et mortuum, et quod ex hoc nullum inconueniens sequitur") of his *De rationibus fidei*, develops a similar argument, apparently based, more or less, on the same or similar Patristic sources as Christonymos. This writing was translated into Greek, in all probability by Demetrios Cydones, in mid-14<sup>th</sup> cent. (probably between 1355 and 1361/62) as well as by some otherwise unknown translator named Atoumes.<sup>89</sup> Two relevant (and partially overlapping) passages, one from each version, exhibit some close similarities with Christonymos' lines:

...ὁ Χριστὸς πένητας μὲν εἴλετο γονέας..., πτωχὸν βίον εἵλκεν..., ἐστερμημένος ἀξιώματος διεβίω..., πόνον, λιμόν, δίψαν, μαστίγας ὑπέμεινεν ἐν τῷ σώματι..., θάνατον ὑπέμεινεν ἔσχατον... "Ἰνα δὲ μηδεὶς ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀληθείας τὸν ἐπονείδιστον ἐκτρέπεται θάνατον [1], αἰσχύνῃς γέμον<sup>90</sup> εἶδος "θανάτου" προεἴλετο, τουτέστι {3} τὸν διὰ "σταυροῦ" [2] (Phil. 2:8).<sup>91</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* III,7,5–9 (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, pp. 141,3–142,5). Cf. III,4,44: "...ἀπαίδευτο καὶ παντελῶς ἰδιώται..." (*op. cit.*, pp.118,33–119,1); III,5,60: "...εὐτελεῖς ἄνδρες καὶ ἰδιώται..." (*op. cit.*, p.121,25).

<sup>87</sup> Ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.204,18–19. Cf. *infra*, Appendix II, p.239.

<sup>88</sup> (Ps.-?) John Chrysostom, *Quod Christus sit Deus* 1 (edited by Norman George McKendrick, p.41,6–8 = PG 48: 814). Christonymos was to make use of this paragraph again (see *infra*, pp.178–181).

<sup>89</sup> See Stylianos G. Papadopoulos, *Ἑλληνικαὶ μεταφράσεις θωμιστικῶν ἔργων. Φιλοθωμιστὰ καὶ ἀντιθωμιστὰ ἐν Βυζαντίῳ. Συμβολὴ εἰς τὴν ἱστορίαν τῆς βυζαντινῆς θεολογίας* ('Βιβλιοθήκη τῆς ἐν Ἀθῆναις Φιλεκπαιδευτικῆς Ἑταιρείας' 47; Athens 1967), pp.56–60; Marie-Hélène Blanchet, "Atoumès, un nouveau traducteur byzantin de Thomas d'Aquin", forthcoming).

<sup>90</sup> Ex cod. γέμων corr.

<sup>91</sup> Cod. Vat. Gr. 1570, fols. 214v–215v (translation by Demetrios Cydones).

...(Jesus) πάντα "τὰ ἀσθενῆ καὶ ἐξουθενημένα προεἴλετο" (I Cor. 1:27), λέγω πτωχὴν μητέρα, βίον ἐνδεῆ, μαθητὰς καὶ κήρυκας ἰδιώτας, ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι τε καὶ κατακριθῆναι [4] πρὸς τοῦτοις "μέχρι θανάτου [1]" (Phil. 2:8) παρὰ τῶν ἄρχηγῶν τοῦ κόσμου' (Eph. 6:12).<sup>92</sup>

We will come back to the possibility that Christonymos underwent some influence by Thomas either directly or (more probably) through Scholarios' Thomism, when we will examine the last argument of the *Capita decem* (see *infra*, pp.197–199).

(3) As Celsus linked the Jews' cult of angels with γοητεία, Christonymos now had to ask if it might be reasonably claimed that Jesus' success was due to this strange sort of power. This is what one can conclude from how Christonymos argues against the possibility that some "angel" presumably lurked behind Jesus. An allegedly good being ("κρεῖττον γένος"), he says, is not supposed to reinforce one's mind (φρόνησις) so as to enable one to deceive others; for, this would set it out from being a 'good' being. This means that such φρόνησις borders on γοητεία, a fundamental element of which is "ἀπάτη".<sup>93</sup>

Regardless of that, Christonymos argues, this γοητεία either pre-existed Jesus or was invented by Him—or is something completely non-existent. (1) and (2) of this tripartition and their denial are a summary of par. 26–30 of Ch. 6 of Book III of Eusebius' *Demonstratio Evangelica*; as for (3), it seems to have been awkwardly inspired by Eusebius' phrase "μηδὲν μηδαμῶς" from the exposition of (2):

Ἄρ' οὖν πρῶτος αὐτὸς [13] καὶ μόνος εὐρετῆς [14] κατέστη τοῦ πράγματος, ἢ... εἰς διδασκάλους ἀναπέμειν χρή τὰ αἷτια; Εἰ μὲν γὰρ... αὐτὸς [13]... εὐρετῆς [14] γέγονε τῆς ἐπιχειρήσεως, μηδὲν μηδαμῶς [12] παρ' ἑτέρων μαθῶν..., πῶς οὐ θείας φύσεως {15 *e contrario*} χρῆν ὁμολογεῖν αὐτόν, ὅς... αὐτομαθῆς τοιούτων πραγμάτων εὐρετῆς [14] ἀναπέφηνεν; ...Οὔτε βαναύσου τέχνης οὔτε λογικῆς ἐπιστήμης οὐδέ γε τῶν πρώτων στοιχείων τὴν μάθησιν δίχα ποδηγοῦ καὶ διδασκάλου τινὸς ἀναλαβεῖν δυνατόν, μὴ οὐχὶ τὴν κοινὴν ἐκβεβηκότα φύσιν {15 *e contrario*}, ...καίτοι μικρὰ ταῦτα καὶ ἀνθρώπεια· τὸ δὲ φάναι τὸν τῆς ἀνθρώπων εὐσεβείας ἀληθοῦς διδάσκαλον τοιαῦτα τεθυματουρηκότα...

<sup>92</sup> Cod. Laur. Plut. IV.12, fol. 61v (Atoumes' translation).

<sup>93</sup> See Origen, *Contra Celsum* II,49,30–34 (ed. Borret, *Origène. Contre Celse*, I, p.396); VI,45,31–34 (ed. Borret, *Origène. Contre Celse*, III, p.292).

καὶ τοιαύτας παραδόξους τερατείας πεποιηκότα... ἐκ τοῦ αὐτομάτου τοιοῦτον φῦναι... τί ἄλλο ἢ μαρτυρούντων ἐστὶ καὶ ὁμολογούντων θεῖον ἀληθῶς χρῆμα {15 *e contrario*} γεγονέναι καὶ πᾶσαν ἀνθρώπου φύσιν ὑπερβεβηκέναι {15 *e contrario*} τὸν δηλούμενον; Ἀλλὰ διδασκάλοις αὐτὸν φῆς προσεσηκέναι πλάνοις, μὴδὲ λαθεῖν αὐτὸν τὰ σοφὰ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων... Τί δῆτα οὖν, ἢ τινες ἄλλοι κρείττους αὐτοῦ πεφίνασιν καὶ πρότεροι τῷ χρόνῳ {16}...; Τί οὖν οὐχὶ κάκεινων... ἔφθασεν εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἡ φήμη...; Τίς δὲ τῶν ἀπ' αἰῶνος {16} πῶποτε γόης... τοιούτων κατέστη διδάσκαλος...;<sup>94</sup>

The fact that Eusebius' exposition is lengthy can also account for the comparative length of Christonymos' chapter.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Argument.** Christ, in His attempts to obtain followers, abstained from promising his audience the usual human goods, i.e. life, health, wealth, glory and pleasure. The fact that He proved successful despite His abstaining from the means traditionally used by human leaders to manipulate the masses indicates that His power was divine:

Πέντε ταῦτά ἐστι πράγματα τὰ μάλιστα φιλούμενα [1] ἐν ἀνθρώποις [2]· ζωὴ [3] (φιλόζων [4] γὰρ ζῶν ὁ ἄνθρωπος [2]), υἡγία (ἢς γλύκιον οὐδέν), πλοῦτος [5], δόξα [6], ἡδοναί [7]. Ὁ οὖν Χριστὸς ἢ δι' ἐνὸς τούτων τοσοῦτον πλῆθος τῆς οἰκουμένης ἐλκύσαι ἴσχυσεν ἢ διὰ τῶν πλειόνων ἢ διὰ πάντων. Ἀλλὰ μὴν οὔτε δι' ἐνὸς οὔτε διὰ τῶν πλειόνων οὔτε μὴν διὰ πάντων· ἀφαιρεῖται γὰρ πάντας πάντων τοὺς εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύοντας.<sup>95</sup>

This is a summary of one of Eusebius' arguments against the possibility that Jesus deceived His disciples, depriving them of all divine and earthly goods, including life itself. If this were so, Eusebius argues, they would have been insane to create a conspiracy to disseminate the set of lies which completely ruined them all over the world:

...μή ποτε ἡδέος [7] ἀπολαῦσαι τινος μήτε τῶν φιλάτων [1] ὄνασθαι, μήτε χρημάτων τυχεῖν [5], μήτε τινὸς ἀγαθοῦ τὸ παράπαν ἐλπίδα κτήσασθαι... ...Πάσας ὕβρεις {6 *e contrario*} καὶ τιμωρίας ὑπομενετέον, πάντα τε τρόπον ἀναδεκτέον θανάτου {3 *e contrario*}... Ἄρά σοι πιθανὰ ταῦτα...; Καὶ πείσειε τις

<sup>94</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* III,6,26–30 (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, pp.136,23–137,18).

<sup>95</sup> Ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, pp.197,20–198,2.

ἂν ἑαυτόν, ὡς... ἀνθρωπεῖα φύσις [2] τὸ φιλόζων [4] οἰκεῖον κεκτημένη δύναται ἂν ποθ' ὑπὲρ τοῦ μηδενὸς αὐθαίρετον ὑπομεῖναι τελευτήν {3 *e contrario*}...;<sup>96</sup>

Eusebius also emphasizes that the moral superiority of Christ consists in averting his followers from the pursuit of lust (“ἡδονή” [7]), money (“χρῆμα” or “κέρδος” [5]) and vainglory (“δόξα” [6]; cf. “δοξοκοπῶν... καὶ φαντασιοκοπῶν”, “δοξομανής”, “φαντασιοκόπος” and “ἀλαζών”), by imitating Himself.<sup>97</sup> To Eusebius, the fact that these three passions (which traditionally constitute the cardinal vices of the *pars concupiscibilis* of the human soul) are characteristic of the “γόητες” and/or “πλάνοι” shows that Christ was in no way one of them.

In *versio B*, Christonymos appended a paragraph to the 3<sup>rd</sup> argument (see Appendix II, p.240), which develops his claim that he argues *more geometrico*. One, he remarks, should not argue *ad libitum*, to wit, merely to justify some pre-established, arbitrary belief (“δόξα” [1] or “τὸ δοκοῦν”), but start from a recognition of one's own ignorance and try to judge (“κρίνειν” [2]) about the truth (“ἀληθές” [3]), i.e. how things (“πράγματα”) really are, by drawing conclusions “from what all people believe in common” (“ἐκ τῶν κοινῇ [4] καὶ πᾶσι δοκούντων [1] τὰς ἀποδείξεις ἔχοντα”; cf. *supra*, p.162). This is an allusion to Aristotle's celebrated definition of “dialectical syllogism”: “Διαλεκτικὸς... συλλογισμὸς ὁ ἐξ ἐνδόξων συλλογιζόμενος...” “Ἐνδοξα δὲ τὰ δοκούντα πᾶσιν ἢ τοῖς πλείστοις ἢ τοῖς σοφοῖς, καὶ τούτοις ἢ τοῖς πᾶσιν ἢ τοῖς πλείστοις ἢ τοῖς μάλιστα γνωρίμοις καὶ ἐνδόξοις.”<sup>98</sup> This rule, Christonymos remarks, is not respected by “some” (presumably his adversaries), who prefer to privilege their preconceptions.

<sup>96</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* III,5,57–60 (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, p.121,5–28). Cf. John Chrysostom, *In “Epistulam I ad Corinthios” VII,7:* (the Apostles) “...ἐκάλουν... ἀπὸ πλεονεξίας ἐπὶ ἀκτημοσύνην, ἀπὸ φιλοζωίας ἐπὶ θανάτους, ἀπὸ ἀδείας ἐπὶ κινδύνους” (PG 61: 64). See also Origen, *Exhortatio ad martyrium* 40, in *Origenes. Werke mit deutscher Übersetzung*. Band 22. *Eingeleitet und übersetzt von M.B. von Stritzky*, edited by Alfons Füst and Christoph Marksches (Berlin / New York / Freiburg / Basel / Wien: W. de Gruyter/Herder, 2010), pp.92–94).

<sup>97</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* III,6,1–6 (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, pp.131,27–133,10).

<sup>98</sup> Aristotle, *Topics* I,1, 100a29–b33. Christonymos' “κοινῇ καὶ πᾶσι” is a rhetorical hendiadys, which also occurs in Plethon (see *infra*, pp.175–176).



This is a flaw that Scholarios accuses Plethon of. Referring to Plethon's emphasis on the need for pursuing truth impartially, i.e. regardless of one's socially implanted or personally beloved beliefs,<sup>99</sup> Scholarios approves of this method but points out that it was Plethon himself who broke the law of impartiality, being irrationally fond of the pagan beliefs he had been taught before entering the age of reason.<sup>100</sup> This, Scholarios argues, resulted in imperfect knowledge of and neglect for Christianity. This is how Scholarios puts it briefly in his *Epistle to the Princess Theodora*, in all probability written in 1453/54:<sup>101</sup>

Εἰ γάρ τι καὶ τῆς περὶ σοφίας δεινότητος προσεγένετο αὐτῷ [sc. Plethon], ἄχρηστον αὐτῷ πρὸς τὴν τῆς ἀληθείας [3] εὕρεσιν γέγονεν, δουλεῦον μᾶλλον τῇ πονηρᾷ προλήψει αὐτοῦ, ὃ φησιν αὐτὸς περὶ τῶν προκατειλημμένων ταῖς πατρίοις τοῦ γένους δόξαις [1].

(If he did reach some degree of wisdom, it proved useless for his inquiry into truth, because it was put in the service of his evil prejudice – which is exactly what he himself says about the prejudiced followers of the traditional beliefs of their nation.)<sup>102</sup>

This is how Scholarios restates this charge several years later (1457/58),<sup>103</sup> in his *Epistle to the Exarch Joseph*:

Οὐ γὰρ τὸν χριστιανικὸν ἐξετάσας καὶ μαθὼν πρῶτον λόγον, εἴτα τὰς τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων μετεληλυθὼς δόξας [1], ἦν ἐκ τοῦ λόγου συμφωνοτέραν εὗρες ταῖς τῶν ἀρχῶν ἀληθεστέραις ἢ κοινοτέραις [4], ταύτη προσέδραμες, ἀλλ' ὁ τῶν τῆς πατρίου δόξης [1] ἐχομένων —καὶ μετὰ λόγου— διαβάλλων κατηγορεῖς ἡμῶν προκατειληφθαί γε φάσκων, τοῦτο σὺ πρὸς τὴν ὀθνεῖαν

<sup>99</sup> Plethon, *Laws* I, 1; 2 (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, pp.26,13–15; 36,8–15).

<sup>100</sup> Scholarios alludes to his own report (in the same writing as well as in his *Περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ καὶ κατὰ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς πολυθεΐας*) that Plethon's intellectual formation in his teens was carried out by an apostate Jew named Elissaios (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, pp.152,37–153,10; 162,8–12; cf. Niketas Siniosoglou, "Sect and Utopia in Shifting Empires: Plethon, Elissaios, Bedreddin", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 36:1 (2012), pp.38–55).

<sup>101</sup> On the date, see Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios*, pp.187–188; 485. On some different datings, see *infra*, p.228.

<sup>102</sup> Scholarios, *Ἐπιστολὴ τῇ βασιλείᾳ περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.152,23–25).

<sup>103</sup> On the date, see Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios*, pp.188–189; 486.

ἐπαθες δόξαν [1], πρὶν ἔξιν λαβεῖν ἐκ τέχνης καὶ φύσεως τοῦ κρίνειν [2] ἔχειν περὶ τῶν τοιούτων. ... Ὅθεν τῇ μὲν περὶ τὴν ζήτησιν τῆς ἀληθείας [3] σπουδῇ δικαίως πάνυ συνηγορεῖς, τὸν δὲ τρόπον αὐτῆς... οὐκ ἠξιώθης εὐρεῖν.

(What happened is not that you first learned and examined Christian doctrine, subsequently studied the beliefs of other groups of people and finally adhered to that set of beliefs about which you allegedly figured out, by means of reason, that it is the most congruent with the true and commonly accepted principles. Rather, it miserably happened to you (in regard to paganism), before receiving from study and nature the skill and ability to judge on such high matters, what you are maliciously accusing us [Christians] of, who are fond of the beliefs of our nation (yet in a rational way), claiming that we are prejudiced... Thus, you are quite right in arguing that one must diligently inquire into truth, but you proved unable to find the way to it.)

The verbal similarities between Christonymos and Scholarios ("δόξα" or "τὸ δοκοῦν"; "ἀληθές" / "ἀλήθεια"; "κοινῇ" / "κοινοτέραις"; "κρίνειν" / "κρίναι" or "ἐξετάζειν") are obvious. Both Christonymos and Scholarios impute the same fundamental flaw to their adversary/-ies: prejudice. Scholarios, and Christonymos in his footsteps, follow Plethon's wording closely. This is the background to Scholarios' description of the method properly conceived of and formulated but wrongly used by Plethon. In the opening chapter of his *Laws*, Plethon discusses "Περὶ διαφορᾶς τῶν περὶ τῶν μεγίστων <έν> ἀνθρώποις δοξῶν"<sup>104</sup> (cf. Scholarios' "τὰς τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων... δόξας"). The only way out of the confusion caused by the variety of opinions among men is "μὴ εἰκὴ ἂν τὰ προστυχόντα αἰρεῖσθαι, ἀλλὰ προεξηλεκτότατα ἂν πρότερον ἰκανῶς..., οὕτω τὴν αἴρεσιν ποιεῖσθαι" (cf. Scholarios' "ἐξετάσας... πρῶτον"). Put otherwise, one is supposed to follow this procedure: "...Ἐπισκεψάμενος ἕκαστα δι' ἀκριβείας καὶ κρίνας, οἵτινες τούτων καθάπαξ τῶν λόγων οἱ βέλτιστοι ἀνέυροι τε ἀληθῆ"<sup>105</sup> (cf. Scholarios' "τὸν... λόγον"; "κρίνειν"; "τὴν ζήτησιν τῆς ἀληθείας"; "τὴν τῆς ἀληθείας εὕρεσιν"). This can be carried out on the basis of commonly implanted and accepted notions: "Χρώμενοι... ἀρχαῖς ταῖς κοινῇ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις... διδομέναις [an δεδομέναις?] ἐννοίαις... ταῖς τῶν

<sup>104</sup> Ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.16.

<sup>105</sup> Ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, pp.22,1–2; 26,13–16. Cf. *Laws* I,3: "...τὰ προστυχόντα εἰκὴ ἂν καὶ ἀβασανίστως παραδέχεσθαι..." (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.40,17–18).

πλείστων καὶ βελτιόνων...”<sup>106</sup> (cf. Scholarios’ “ταῖς τῶν ἀρχῶν ἀληθεστέραις ἢ κοινοτέραις” as well as Christonymos’ “ἐκ τῶν κοινῇ καὶ πᾶσι δοκοῦντων”, which it resembles more).

Charitonimos, based on Scholarios once again, was to come back to the logical consistency of Christianity in his last argument (see *infra*, p.197). It should be noted that Scholarios’ prompt agreement with Plethon’s emphasis on the need for rationally investigating truth by means of carefully constructed syllogisms on the basis of axioms can be explained by the fact that Plethon, in so stating, merely reproduces the theological methodology of Thomas Aquinas — both directly, i.e. on the basis of Aquinas’ *Summa theologiae*, and indirectly, i.e. on the basis of his mentor Demetrios Cydonos’ reproduction of this methodology, which Plethon copies word for word, leaving aside only his mentor’s religious identity, which made him accept as “premises” or “principles” for his theological syllogisms the truths allegedly revealed by God in the Holy Scripture.<sup>107</sup>

**4<sup>th</sup> Argument.** Christ has been the only legislator to succeed where all others have failed, namely, in eradicating the masses’ beliefs and rituals and replacing them with His own. In contrast, no one has proved able to eradicate His own legislation from some place where it was implanted. This testifies to the exercise of some supra-human power on His part:

Ὁ μὲν Χριστὸς [1] τὰς πάντων γενῶν [2], ἔτι δὲ καὶ [3] τὰς τῶν Ἑλλήνων [4] πάντων πατροπαπποπαράδοτους [5] ἐξ αἰῶνος ἀναριθμήτου [6] δόξας [7] τε καὶ θρησκείας [8] προρρίζους ἀνασπάσαι [9] ἡδυνήθη [10] καὶ τῇ λήθῃ παρέδωκε. Τὴν δὲ Χριστοῦ νομοθεσίαν [11] πάσης ἀξίας καὶ τάξεως ἀνθρώποι [12] ἐξαλείψαι σπουδάσαντες [13] καὶ πολλὰ βιασθέντες (ἐν οἷς βασιλεῖς [14] τε πολλοὶ καὶ πάνυ πολλοὶ καὶ οὗτοι οὐχ οἱ τυχόντες, ἔτι δὲ ῥητόρων [15] τε καὶ φιλοσόφων [16] οὐκ ἀδοκίμων, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάνυ γενναίων τε καὶ μεγαλοπρεπῶν, πρὸς δὲ καὶ γοήτων πλήθος οὐκ εὐαριθμήτον), ὅμως μειῶσαι οὐδαμῇ οὐδαμῶς ὅλως ἰσχύκασιν [17], ἀλλ’ ὅσῳ [18] μᾶλλον οὗτοι μειῶσαι ἠγωνίζοντο, τοσούτῳ [19] μᾶλλον καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον ἢ κατὰ Χριστὸν πίστις [20]

<sup>106</sup> Ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.42,12–15.

<sup>107</sup> See a discussion of the genealogy of the relevant passages from Aquinas, Cydonos and Plethon in John A. Demetracopoulos, *Ἀπὸ τὴν ἱστορία τοῦ βυζαντινοῦ θαμισμοῦ: Πλήθων καὶ Ὡμάς Ἀκινάτης* (with four Appendices; ‘Greek Byzantium and the Latin West: Philosophy – Studies’, 2; Athens 2004), pp.96–115; id., “Georgios Gemistos – Plethon’s Dependence on Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa contra Gentiles* and *Summa Theologiae*”, *Archiv für mittelalterliche Philosophie und Kultur* 12 (2006), pp.276–341, at 324–330.

ἐπηύξητο [21]. Εἰ οὖν ἐξ ἀνθρωπίνης δυνάμεως [22] ἡ τοῦ Χριστοῦ νομοθεσία [11] τὸ κράτος εἶχε, μία πάντως τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων τούτων μεγίστων τάξεων [12] ἀφανίσει βεβαίως ἂν αὐτὴν ἴσχυσεν [17].<sup>108</sup>

This contrast was construed as a clear sign of Jesus’ divinity by Origen:

...Μεῖζω τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως [22 *e contrario*] ἐτόλμησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς {1} καὶ τολμήσας ἦνυσε. Πάντων γὰρ ἀρχῆθεν ἀντιπραττόντων {13} τῷ σπαρῆναι τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν ὅλην οἰκουμένην, τῶν τε κατὰ καιροὺς βασιλέων [14] καὶ τῶν ὑπ’ αὐτοῖς ἀρχιστρατήγων καὶ ἡγεμόνων πάντων τε ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν τῶν ἡντινοῦν ἐξουσίαν {12} ἐγκεχειρισμένων, ἔτι δὲ καὶ τῶν κατὰ πόλεις ἀρχόντων καὶ στρατιωτικῶν καὶ δήμων, ἐνίκησε μὴ πεφυκῶς κωλύεσθαι ὡς Λόγος Θεοῦ.<sup>109</sup>

...Ἐπιδίδωσιν ἑαυτὸν διδασκαλία καὶνῶν δογμάτων, ἐπεισάγων τῷ γένει τῶν ἀνθρώπων λόγον τὰ τε Ἰουδαίων ἔθη καταλύοντα... καὶ τοὺς Ἑλλήνων [4] νόμους μάλιστα περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ {8} καθαιροῦντα.<sup>110</sup>

This argument was amplified by Eusebius in a passage I have already quoted in part (*supra*, p.166):

Βασιλέων [14] δὲ δόγμασιν [7] καὶ παλαιῶν νομοθετῶν [11], φιλοσόφων [15] τε καὶ ποιητῶν καὶ θεολόγων ἐξ ἐναντίας θέσθαι νόμους [11] τοὺς κατ’ εἰδωλολατρίας {8}, καὶ τούτους κρατῦναι, ἀμάχους τε καὶ ἀηττήτους εἰς μακρὸν ἐπιδείξει αἰῶνα, τίς πώποτε γοήτων διανενοῖται; Ὁ δὲ Σωτὴρ {1}... ἐνὶ... ῥήματι φήσας... ἔργον ἐπῆγε τῷ λόγῳ, αὐτίκα τε ἐμαθητεύετο... πᾶν γένος [2] Ἑλλήνων [3] ὁμοῦ καὶ {3} βαρβάρων καὶ νόμοι πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσι

<sup>108</sup> For brevity’ sake, but also for the sake of facilitating a comparison with the sources, this quotation comes from the draft version of the argument.

<sup>109</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* I,27,1–9 (ed. Borret, *Origène. Contre Celse*, I, p.148). Origen seems to reproduce this passage from Clement of Alexandria’s *Stromata* (VI,18,167,4–5): “Τὴν δὲ ἡμετέραν διδασκαλίαν (in contrast to the philosophical doctrines) ἔκτοτε σὺν τῇ πρώτῃ καταγγελίᾳ κωλύουσιν ὁμοῦ βασιλεῖς καὶ τύραννοι καὶ οἱ κατὰ μέρος ἀρχόντες καὶ ἡγεμόνες μετὰ τῶν μισθοφόρων ἀπάντων, πρὸς δὲ καὶ τῶν ἀπείρων ἀνθρώπων, καταστρατεύμενοι τε ἡμῶν ὅση δύναμις ἐκκόπτειν πειρώμενοι, ἢ δὲ καὶ μᾶλλον ἀνθεῖ· οὐ γὰρ ὡς ἀνθρωπίνη ἀποθνήσκει διδασκαλία οὐδ’ ὡς ἀσθενὴς μαραίνεται δωρεὰ (οὐδεμία γὰρ ἀσθενὴς δωρεὰ Θεοῦ [cf. I Cor. 1: 24; Joh. 5:17]), μένει δὲ ἀκώλυτος” (*Clément d’Alexandrie. Les Stromates. Stromate VI. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes*, edited by Patrick Descourtieux (‘Sources chrétiennes’, 446; Paris: du Cerf, 1999), p.396).

<sup>110</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* I,29,18–22 (ed. Borret, *Origène. Contre Celse*, I, p.154).

κατεσπείροντο ἐναντίοι τῇ τῶν παλαιῶν δεισιδαιμονίᾳ {8}, νόμοι δαιμόνων πολέμιοι καὶ πάσης ἐχθροὶ πολυθέου πλάνης {8}, νόμοι Σκυθῶν καὶ Περσῶν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων βαρβάρων {2} σωφρονισταί... νόμοι [11] τῶν ἐξ αἰῶνος [6] παρ' αὐτοῖς Ἑλλήσιν [3] ἐθῶν ἀνατρεπτικοί.

...Πείσομεν τῶν... πατρίων [5] θεῶν {8} ἀφίστασθαι...; ...Ἀντινομοθετεῖν {11}... τοῖς πάντων ἐθνῶν [2] περὶ τῶν οἰκείων θεῶν {8} ἐξ αἰῶνος [6] κειμένοις νόμοις [11]...

Τίς... τοῖς ιδιώταις καὶ εὐτελέσιν ἐκείνοις ἐπέσθη ποτ' ἂν λέγουσιν χρῆναι δεῖν τῶν... πατρῶν [5] θεῶν {8} καταφρονῆσαι καὶ μωρίαν... τῶν ἐξ αἰῶνος [6] καταγνώναι πάντων...;<sup>111</sup>

This contrast also occurs in Scholarios' *De unica via ad salutem hominis*, put in a way similar to Christonymos':

...τὸν τοῦ Χριστοῦ νόμον [11], ὃ μέγιστον σημεῖον τοῦ θεῖου αὐτὸν ἀντικρυς εἶναι, ὅτι διωκόμενος {13} ἀνηλεῶς ἐξ ἀπάσης τῆς γῆς ὑπὸ τῆς οἰκουμένης αὐτοκρατόρων {14} πλεῖν ἢ τριακοσίοις ἐφεξῆς ἔτεσιν, ὅμως ἴσχυσεν ἐν πάσῃ βεβαιωθῆναι τῇ γῇ... Καὶ ὅσῳ [18] θηριωδέστερον ὑπὸ τῶν βασιλέων [14] τότε καὶ τῶν πανταχοῦ ἐπάρχων αὐτῶν τὰ τῶν πιστευόντων ἐκτείνοντο σώματα, τοσοῦτ' [19] καθ' ἡμέραν ἐπλατύνετο {21}... ἡ πίστις τοῦ Ἰησοῦ [20].<sup>112</sup>

As one can infer from the fact that arguments 8–10 are undeniably based on Scholarios (see *infra*, pp.194–199), it is quite probable that Argument 4 is the first in the chain of arguments of the *Capita decem* to be based on Scholarios.

Christonymos embellished his reproduction of this Origenic argument by enriching it through its adaptation by (Ps.-?) John Chrysostom in the *Πρὸς Ἑλλήνας ἀπόδειξις*, ὅτι Θεός ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός, par. 1 and 12:

...Οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνθρώπου ψιλοῦ τοσαύτην... περιελθεῖν οἰκουμένην... καὶ ἐπὶ τοιοῦτοις καλεῖν πράγμασιν οὕτω, καὶ ταῦτα ὑπὸ ἀτόπου συνηθείας προκατελιμμένους ἀνθρώπους... Καὶ ὅμως ἴσχυσε... τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος ἐλευθερώσαι... ..δὲ ἔνδεκα ἀνθρώπων τὴν ἀρχὴν, ἀσήμων, εὐτελῶν, ἀμαθῶν, ἰδιωτῶν, πενήτων, γυμνῶν, ἀόπλων, ἀνυποδότην, μονοχιτῶνων... ..Πεῖσαι

<sup>111</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* III,6,31–32; 7,11; 7,20 (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, pp.137,32–138,11; 142,12–16; 143,32–35).

<sup>112</sup> Scholarios, *De unica via ad salutem hominis* 11 (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, III, pp.443,37–444,8).

ἡδυνήθη [10] τοσαῦτα φύλα ἀνθρώπων {2}... νόμους πατρώους [5] ἀνασπάσαι [8] καὶ παλαιὰ {6} ἔθη καὶ τοσοῦτ' ῥιζωθέντα χρόνῳ πρόρριζα ἀνελεῖν...<sup>113</sup>

Ἄ γὰρ ἀπὸ πολλῶν ἐτῶν [6] παρὰ πατέρων καὶ πάππων καὶ ἐπιπάππων [5] καὶ τῶν ἀνωτέρω προγόνων {5} καὶ φιλοσόφων [16] καὶ ῥητόρων [15] ἦσαν παρελθόντες, ταῦτα ἐπείθοντο ἀποπτύειν, καίπερ ἦν δυσκολώτατον καὶ ἐτέραν δέχεσθαι συνήθειαν καινὴν ἐπείσελθοῦσαν καὶ –τὸ δὴ χαλεπώτερον– πολὺ τὸ ἐπίπονον ἔχουσιν.<sup>114</sup>

...Τυράννων κατ' αὐτῆς ὀπλιζομένων καὶ στρατιωτῶν ὅπλα κινούντων... καὶ ῥητόρων [15] καὶ σοφιστῶν {16} καὶ ἀρχόντων {12}... ἀνισταμένων, πυρὸς σφοδρότερον ὁ Λόγος... ἔσπειρε τοῦ κηρύγματος τὸν λόγον.<sup>115</sup>

In this context, (Ps.-?) Chrysostom produces a list of emperors who tried –in vain– to abolish Christianity:

Ἀρίθμησον γοῦν πόσοι τύραννοι... παρετάξαντο πρὸς αὐτήν [sc. the Church], πόσοι διωγμοὺς ἐκίνησαν χαλεπωτάτους... Ἑλληνες ἦσαν βασιλεῖς [14]

<sup>113</sup> I quote the passage as it stands in the PG 48: 814, because it is much closer to the version of the text used by Christonymos. McKendrick's (*op. cit.*, pp.40,1–41,4) critical edition differs significantly.

<sup>114</sup> (Ps.-?) John Chrysostom, *Quod Christus sit Deus* 12 (ed. McKendrick, *op. cit.*, p.109,8–14; cf. PG 48: 830). The phrase “πατέρων καὶ πάππων καὶ ἐπιπάππων καὶ τῶν ἀνωτέρω προγόνων” in this passage accounts for Christonymos' rare “πατροπαπποπαράδοτους” in *versio A*, which he removed in *versio B*, presumably for stylistic reasons.

<sup>115</sup> Ed. McKendrick, *op. cit.*, p.114,11–17; cf. PG 48: 830–831. (Ps.-?) John seems to rely on Eusebius' *Demonstratio Evangelica* III,6,32: “...νόμοι πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσι κατεσπείροντο ἐναντίοι τῇ τῶν παλαιῶν δεισιδαιμονίᾳ...” (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, p.138,7–9). John reproduces one of Origen's-Eusebius' arguments against seeing Jesus as a charlatan: “Ἀλλὰ μάγος καὶ γόης ἦν; Ἀλλὰ πολλοὶ μάγοι καὶ γόητες καὶ πλάνοι γεγέννηται, καὶ πάντες σεσίγηται... Τὰ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καθ' ἐκάστην αὐξεται τὴν ἡμέραν, καὶ μάλα εἰκότως· οὐ γὰρ γοητεία ἐγένετο τὰ γινόμενα, ἀλλὰ θεῖα δυνάμει, διὰ τοῦτο οὐδὲ καταλύεται” (John Chrysostom, *De sancta Droside martyre* 2; PG 50: 686). On the *Demonstratio Evangelica* as the main source of (Ps.-?) Chrysostom's *Quod Christus sit Deus*, see Morlet, “La source principale”, pp.266–283. Given that Christonymos' utilization of these two writings was so meticulous that he drew from them several phrases that function complementarily with one other, it is quite probable that Christonymos had realised that (Ps.-?) John was based on Eusebius. This holds true for the literary fact of Eusebius' dependence on Origen's *Contra Celsum* (on this dependence, see Sébastien Morlet, *La “Démonstration évangélique” d'Eusèbe de Césarée. Étude sur l'apologétique chrétienne à l'époque de Constantin* (Paris: L'Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2009); cf. Andrew James Carriker, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea* ('Supplements to Vigiliæ Christianae', 67; Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2003), p.308).

Αὐγουστος καὶ Τιβέριος, Γάιος, Νέρων, Οὐεσπασιανός, Τίτος, καὶ οἱ μετ' ἐκείνους ἅπαντες ἕως τῶν τοῦ μακαρίου Κωνσταντίνου χρόνων τοῦ βασιλέως. Καὶ πάντες οὗτοι {12} οἱ μὲν ἔλαττον, οἱ δὲ σφοδρότερον ἐπολέμουν {13} τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν... Ἄλλ' ὅμως πᾶσαι αὗται αἱ ἐπιβουλαὶ καὶ ἔφοδοι... παρήλθον... Πῶς οὖν τοσοῦτον καὶ τηλικούτον πρᾶγμα μετὰ τοσοῦτων κωλυμάτων πέρας ἔσχεν οὕτω λαμπρὸν..., εἰ μὴ θεία τις... δύναμις {22 *e contrario*} ἦν τοῦ ταῦτα... τελέσαντος;<sup>116</sup>

Ἄπερ [Jesus] ὥκοδόμησεν, οὐδεὶς καθεῖλε, καὶ ἄπερ καθεῖλεν, οὐδεὶς ὥκοδόμησεν... Ὤκοδόμησε τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν, καὶ οὐδεὶς αὐτὴν καθελεῖν δύναται ἄν... Καίτοι καὶ ταύτην καθελεῖν ἐπεχείρησαν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἴσχυσαν [17].<sup>117</sup>

Christonymos, for brevity's sake, refers to the enemies of Christ by writing simply “πολλοὶ καὶ πάνυ πολλοί”, which looks like the audience's inner response to (Ps.-?) Chrysostom's rhetorical exhortation “Ἀρίθμησον γοῦν πόσοι τύραννοι... παρετάξαντο πρὸς αὐτήν...”.

In *versio B*, Christonymos adds the following description of the adversities experienced by the followers of Jesus cruelly (but ineffectively) caused by their persecutors:

...πάντα λίθον... κινήσαντες..., *χρημάτων* [1a] πλῆθος πῇ μὲν ἀφαιροῦντες [1b], πῇ δὲ προτείνοντες πολλαπλάσια, τιμάς, δόξας, προεδρίας, ζωῆς ἀφαιροῦντες [2], σφάττοντες [3], τέμνοντες, καίοντες [4], πᾶν εἶδος [5] καὶ πᾶσαν μηχανὴν κέρδους καὶ δέους καὶ *κολαστηρίων* [6] ἀμυθήτων ὅσων εἶδη [7] καὶ τρόπους ἐπινοήσαντες [8].<sup>118</sup>

This is a paraphrase of the continuation of the passage from (Ps.-?) John Chrysostom's *Quod Christus sit Deus* cited above (p.179):

<sup>116</sup> (Ps.-?) John Chrysostom, *Quod Christus sit Deus* 15 (ed. McKendrick, pp.119,9–121,11; cf. PG 48: 833).

<sup>117</sup> *Op. cit.* 16 (ed. McKendrick, p.126,15–20; cf. PG 48: 835). This idea occurs quite often in the *corpus chrysostomicum*; see, e.g., *De Chananaea* (dub.) 1: “Οὐ πάυεται ἡ Ἐκκλησία πολεμουμένη καὶ νικῶσα... Ὅσον ἄλλοι ἐπιβουλεύουσιν, τοσοῦτον αὕτη αὖξεται” (PG 52: 449); *Homilia de capto Eutropio* (dub.) 1: “Πόσοι ἐπολέμησαν τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν, καὶ οἱ πολεμήσαντες ἀπώλοντο; ...Πολεμουμένη νικᾷ...” (PG 52: 397); Ps.-John Chrysostom, *In Pentecosten* 1: “Πόσοι τύραννοι ἐφιλονείκησαν ἀφανίσαι τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἴσχυσαν;” (PG 52: 807) (cf. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.198,11–15, app. font.). Cf. id., *In Juventinum et Maximum martyras* 1 (PG 50: 573); *In sanctum Eustathium Antiochenum* 3 (PG 50: 603).

<sup>118</sup> Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, pp.206,21–207,6.

Καὶ τῶν δὴ πιστευσάντων τῶν μὲν δεσποτήριον οἰκούντων, τῶν δὲ εἰς τὴν ὑπερορίαν μεθισταμένων, τῶν δὲ τὰ *χρήματα ἀφαιρουμένων* [1], τῶν δὲ *ἀναιρουμένων* [2] καὶ *κατακοπτομένων* [3], τῶν δὲ *πυρὶ παραδιδομένων* [4], τῶν δὲ *καταποντιζομένων* καὶ *πᾶν εἶδος* [5] *τιμωρίας* [6] ὑπομενόντων, ἀτιμουμένων, ἐλαυνομένων..., ἔτεροι πλείους προσήεσαν... *Κατακοπόμενοι* [3], δεσμούμενοι, διωκόμενοι, φυγαδεύόμενοι, *δημευόμενοι* [1], *μαστιγούμενοι*, *σφαττόμενοι* [3], *καίόμενοι* [4], *καταποντιζόμενοι*...<sup>119</sup>

The sorts of menaces and tortures which Christonymos, for brevity's sake, omits are implied in his phrase “...ἀμυθήτων ὅσων εἶδη καὶ τρόπους...”<sup>120</sup>

This phrase was also in all probability derived from Scholarios. As a detailed comparison shows, Christonymos seems to have used Scholarios' *Panegyric Oration on Saint Demetrios*, which was written after 1453 or even after 1456<sup>121</sup> as a complementary literary source. In this fragmentarily preserved writing, Scholarios makes a long theological *excursus* on the meritorious character of martyrdom. His description of the various tortures underwent by the martyrs exhibits some striking and exclusive verbal similarities with Christonymos:

...τὰ μὲν τῶν *βασάνων* [6] *εἶδη* [7] καὶ τῶν *κολάσεων* [6] ἄλλοις ἄλλα... Ταῦτα τε καὶ ὅσα παραπλήσια τούτοις τὰ *κολαστήρια* [6] ἄλλοις ἄλλα... Τοῦτο τοῖς *κολάζουσιν* ἐξ ὠμότητος ἔδοξεν, *εἶδη* [7] πολλὰ *κολαστηρίων* [6] *ἐπινοῆσαι* [8]... ...Πρὸς πᾶν [5a] τε *κολαστηρίων* [6] *εἶδος* [5b] ἦσαν *ἡτρεπισμένοι*... ...Ἄλλα ἄλλοις ὁ αἰὶ χρόνος *ἐπενόει* [8] τὰ *κολαστήρια* [6].<sup>122</sup>

<sup>119</sup> (Ps.-?) John Chrysostom, *Quod Christus sit Deus* 13–14 (ed. McKendrick, pp.114,18–115,6; 118,12–14; cf. PG 48: 831–832).

<sup>120</sup> Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.207,4.

<sup>121</sup> *Ἐνναδίον τοῦ Σχολαρίου ἅπαντα τὰ εὐρισκόμενα. Œuvres complètes de Gennade Scholarios*, tome I, edited by Martin Jugie, Louis Petit and Xenophon A. Sideridès (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1930), p.xlvii; *Ἐνναδίον τοῦ Σχολαρίου ἅπαντα τὰ εὐρισκόμενα. Œuvres complètes de Gennade Scholarios*, tome VIII, edited by Martin Jugie, Louis Petit and Xenophon A. Sideridès (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1936), p.18\*. I would assume Jugie thought that, since this oration was supposed to have been delivered in Thessaloniki, Scholarios presumably did not deliver it during his patriarchate in Constantinople.

<sup>122</sup> Scholarios, *Panegyric Oration on Saint Demetrios* 1–3 (Petit et al. (eds.), *Ἐνναδίον*, I, pp.237,25–32; 240,3–5; 240,29–30; 242,23–24). This is not the place for detecting the sources of Scholarios' defence of the divinity of Jesus Christ and the divine origins of Christianity. Nevertheless, even a mere glance demonstrates that he had used the same Greek Patristic sources as Christonymos. This makes it probable that Christonymos was led to this Patristic literature through Scholarios' writings.



**5<sup>th</sup> Argument.** Christ superseded even the most skillful and powerful legislators (including philosophers) as far as the task of establishing the ideal state on earth is concerned. Whereas none of them managed to turn his political vision into reality even on the smallest scale, Christ established His legislation over practically all the habitable world:

Οἱ μὲν τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐπὶ σοφίᾳ μέγιστοί [1] τε καὶ περιώννυμοι [2] πολλὰ παθόντες καὶ πολλὰ βιασθέντες ἡγωνίσαντο, ὥστε νομοθέται [3] καὶ γοῦν [4] τινῶν ἀνθρώπων γενέσθαι, εἰ καὶ μὴ πάντων, οἷον Πυθαγόρας, Σωκράτης, Πλάτων, Ἀριστοτέλης [1]... Ἄλλ' ὅμως οὐδεὶς [5] τούτων ἴσχυεν οὐ μόνον ἔθνων, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἔθνους ἑνὸς [6] ἢ γοῦν [4] νήσου ἢ πόλεως [7], ἀλλ' οὐδὲ οἰκίας μιᾶς... νομοθέτης [3] ἀναφανῆναι, καίτοι πολλὰ καμώντες. Ἄλλ' ὁ Χριστὸς οὐκ οἰκίας μιᾶς ἢ πόλεως ἢ νήσου ἢ ἔθνους ἑνὸς [6] ἢ ἔθνων ἥδη εὐαριθμήτων, ἀλλ' ἀναριθμήτων καὶ ἔθνων καὶ γενῶν νομοθέτης [3] ἡδυνήθη γενέσθαι, καίτοι καὶ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν γνῶσιν τε καὶ φύσιν πράγματα νομοθετῶν τε καὶ παραδιδούς. Ἄλλ' ὅμως ἐδέχθη παρὰ τοσούτων τε καὶ τοιούτων ἔθνων καὶ γενῶν καὶ τετίμηται οὐχ ὡς νομοθέτης ἀπλῶς, ὅπερ αὐτοὶ οὐδ' αὐτὸ τοῦτο κατορθῶσαι [8] ἡδυνήθησαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ Θεός, οὗ μείζον οὐδέν.<sup>123</sup>

This is a paraphrase of Eusebius' reformulation of an argument in the same direction that Christonymos had already made use of in Ch. 1 (see *supra*, pp.166–167):

Μηδεὶς [5] μὲν τῶν πώποτε ἐν ἀνθρώποις γενομένων διαφανῶν {2}, μὴ βασιλεὺς μὴ νομοθέτης [3] μὴ φιλόσοφος {1}... τοιοῦτόν τι διανοηθεὶς ἱστορεῖται, ἀλλ' οὐδ' εἰς φαντασίαν ἐλθὼν τοῦ παραπλησίου... Ἀγαπητὸν γὰρ ἐκάστω ἦν, εἰ καὶ ἐπὶ μόνῃς τῆς οἰκείας γῆς τὸ οἰκεῖον ἐπάγγελμα συνεστήσατο καὶ τοὺς καλῶς ἔχειν φανέντας νόμους [3] καὶ γοῦν [4] ἐφ' ἑνὸς τοῦ οἰκείου ἔθνους [6] κρατῦναι οἷός τε ἦν· ὁ δὲ μηδὲν θνητὸν καὶ ἀνθρώπινον διανοηθεὶς ὅρα εἰ μὴ ὡς ἀληθῶς Θεοῦ... προήκατο φωνήν, αὐτολεξεῖ φήσας τοῖς εὐτελεστάτοις ἐκείνῳ αὐτοῦ μαθηταῖς· ὁρευθέντες μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη' (Mt. 28:19).<sup>124</sup>

This Eusebean argument seems to be an amplification of Origen's point that "this is the new thing that has happened since the time when Jesus suffered, I mean the history of the city and of all the nation, and the sudden birth of the race of Christians..." ("Καινὸν οὖν γέγονεν, ἐξ οὗ πέπονθε χρόνου ὁ Ἰησοῦς,

<sup>123</sup> *Versio A* (ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.199,10–23).

<sup>124</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* III,7,9 (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, pp.141,27–142,5).

κάκεινο, λέγω δὲ τὸ κατὰ τὴν πόλιν καὶ τὸ κατὰ τὸ ἔθνος καὶ τὸ κατὰ τὴν ἀθρόαν γένεσιν ἔθνους χριστιανῶν..."),<sup>125</sup> which made Jesus Christ a universal lawgiver. In the same Book, Eusebius writes: "...ὁ τῷ δι' ἐναντίας ἡμῖν λόγῳ παριστάμενος λεγέτω, τίς τῶν πώποτε γοήτων καὶ [4] εἰς νοῦν ἐβάλλετο νέου ἔθνους [6] ἐπὶ οἰκείῳ ὀνόματι σύστασιν ποιήσασθαι. Τὸ δὲ μὴ μόνον ἐννοῆσαι τοῦτο, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατορθῶσαι [8] τὸ βουλευθέν, πῶς οὐ πᾶσαν ἀνθρώπου καλύπτοι ἂν φύσιν;".<sup>126</sup>

In *versio B*, Christonymos clarifies the sense in which Jesus succeeded in being revered as 'God' as follows: "Καὶ Θεὸς οὐ καθ' Ἑρακλέα τε καὶ Διόνυσον καὶ τοιούτους ἄλλους, ἀλλὰ δὴ μείζονι πολλῷ καὶ κρείττονι καὶ εὐγενεστέρῳ σεβάσματι καὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ κορυφαίου πάντων καὶ ὑπάτου, ὡς ἂν αὐτοὶ φαῖεν, Διός".<sup>127</sup> This sends us again back to Origen, who justifies the Christians' rejection of the allegedly divine character of certain deified humans (Dioscuri, Hercules, Asclepius and Dionysus) by comparing their allegedly supernatural achievements as well as their doubtful morality with the true miracles as well as with the impeccable life of Jesus: "ὁ... Κέλσος Διοσκούρους καὶ Ἑρακλέα καὶ Ἀσκληπιὸν καὶ Διόνυσον ὀνομάζει, τοὺς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων πεπιστευμένους παρ' Ἑλλήσι γεγενῆναι θεούς".<sup>128</sup>

Christonymos' reference to Zeus can be fully accounted for in the same context; indeed, Origen, immediately after discussing pseudo-divine mythical figures such as those just mentioned, addresses Celsus' objection to the Christians' scorn of the worshippers of Zeus.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* VIII,43,1–4 (ed. Borret, *Origène. Contre Celse*, IV, p.266); Origen, *Contra Celsum*. Translated with an introduction and notes by Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p.483.

<sup>126</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* III,6,31 (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, p.137,27–31). Eusebius' dependence on Origen is obvious (see, e.g.: "διανοηθεὶς" / "εἰς νοῦν ἐβάλλετο"; "εἰς φαντασίαν ἐλθὼν" / "ἐννοῆσαι").

<sup>127</sup> Ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.208,18–21.

<sup>128</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* III,22–24 (*Origène. Contre Celse. Tome II: livres III et IV. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes*, edited by Marcel Borret ('Sources chrétiennes', 136; Paris: du Cerf, 1968), pp.50–60); III,42,16–31 (ed. Borret, *Origène. Contre Celse*, II, p.100). Cf. Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea*, p.62.

<sup>129</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* III,43 (ed. Borret, *Origène. Contre Celse*, II, pp.100–102).

In *versio B*, Christonymos made the following addition:

Καίτοι τί φημι, ὅπου γε μὴ ὅτι μόνον αὐτὸς ὁ Χριστὸς (οὗτος γὰρ τοσῶδε πάντων ὑπερναβέβηκε τούτων, ὅσον<sup>130</sup> οὐδ' εἰπεῖν ἐνι λόγῳ), ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ τούτου γε ὑποφῆται καὶ ὁπαδοὶ καὶ στρατιῶται καὶ μάρτυρες πάντα λόγον καὶ ἀριθμὸν ὑπερβαίνοντες [1], ἐξ ὅτου περ τὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ διδασκαλεῖον ἡνέωκτο [2], λαμπρότερα τῇ ἀξίᾳ καὶ θειοτέρᾳ τῇ παρὰ τοσοῦτων αἰδοῖ τετίμηνται· ὥστε καὶ κρείττων πάντων αὐτὸς ὁ Χριστός.<sup>131</sup>

Christonymos argues that it is not only Jesus Himself who surpassed in glory all the ancient divine figures, but also His innumerable and admirable followers and martyrs, venerated by so many people. This, Christonymos implies, produces the following climax of honoured figures: Jesus at the summit, His saints and, last and not least, the ancient Greek semi-gods or heroes; this climax shows the divinity of Christ.

What is truly important in this rather trivial rhetorical argument is that it is in all probability derived directly from Scholarios' historical-apologetical narration of the emergence and spread of Christianity in his *Epistle to Plethon* (1450<sup>132</sup>):

Οἱ... τῆς ἱερᾶς ἡμῶν πίστεως ἡγεμόνες... τὴν ἀληθινὴν σοφίαν... εὖρον..., καὶ εὐρημένην ἐτίμησαν οὕτω..., ὥσθ' ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς καὶ τῶν αὐτῆς νόμων θνήσκειν... Οὐ καθ' ἓνα αὐτοὶ γε οὕτως ἐφιλοσόφουν, ἀλλὰ καθ' ὅσους παγχάλεπον ἐστὶν ἀριθμεῖν {1}. Πόλεις γὰρ ὅλαι καὶ ὅλα ἔθνη τὴν ὑψηλοτάτην αἵρεσιν ἡσπάζοντο... Καὶ οἶμαι... τῶν ἐκ τοῦ παντὸς τοῦ χρόνου ἀνθρώπων... μὴ φιλοσοφῆσαι τοσοῦτους..., ὅσους ἢ ἐν πόλει μιᾷ τῶν ἀπανταχοῦ ἀρχῶν εἰς ἓν ἡμέρα μιᾷ φιλοσοφῆσαντας εἶδεν... ἢ ἐν τῶν τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀσκητηρίων ἐνὶ τῷ πανταχοῦ μιᾷ γενεᾷ χρόνος καὶ ὑφ' ἐνὶ που, εἰ τύχοι, καθηγεμόνι πεφιλοσοφηκότας γνησίως, τῇ τῶν μακαρίων ἐν οὐρανοῖς προσήνεγκε πολιτεία. Τὸ δὲ πλήθος {1} ἅπαν τῶν ὑπὸ 'τῆς ἀληθείας' [sc. by Jesus Christ; see Joh. 14:6] κατασχεθέντων, ἐξ ὅτου [2] δι' ἑαυτῆς ἐβουλήθη τοὺς ἀνθρώπους 'ἐπιστρέψαι πρὸς' [Luc. 1:16; 17:4] ἑαυτήν, τίς ἂν οὐκ ἐπὶ νοῦν ἐκπλαγείῃ λαβὼν; Τοσοῦτον ἀπέχει τῇ κατὰ Χριστὸν φιλοσοφίᾳ ἢ τῶν τινος ἀνθρώπων

<sup>130</sup> Or ὅσῳ; see *infra*, p.236.

<sup>131</sup> Ed. Kalatzis, *art. cit.*, pp.208,24–209,2. Cf. *infra*, Appendix II, p.236.

<sup>132</sup> Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, IV, pp.V–VI; XXVI–XXVII; 118; Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios*, pp.179–180; 484.

παραβληθῆναι καὶ πάντων ὁμοῦ τῶ... πλήθει {1} τῶν βελτιουμένων... Διὸ δὴ καὶ τοῦ κατὰ Χριστὸν ἀνεωγμένου διδασκαλείου,<sup>133</sup> ἐπεὶ ἔδει ποτὲ τοῦτ' ἀνοίγνυσθαι [2], τὰ ἱερὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐνεφυτεύετο δόγματα.<sup>134</sup>

The verbal similarities between Scholarios and Christonymos are too close and highly concentrated, to be coincidental. Scholarios' account of the triumph of Christianity after the long dark age of ancient paganism is, however, the prelude to his attack on those who "revive the rotten absurdities of the Hellenes". In this attack,<sup>135</sup> Scholarios' description of the revival of paganism in his own day is directly based on Plethon's *ipsissima verba* in the Preface to the *Laws*: "νῦν... αὐθις θεοποιεῖν καὶ τὴν ἀλόγιστον ἐκείνην θεοποιίαν ἀναζωπυρεῖν ἀπεσβεσμένην πειρᾶσθαι, καὶ 'θεῶν' τινων 'ἀναγνωρισμοὺς' ἐκ 'φιλοσοφίας' ὑπὲρ τὴν 'ποιητῶν' 'διάστροφον' γνώμην καὶ 'ἀγιστείας' εὐσταλεῖς, ὥς αὐτοὶ φασί, καὶ νόμους ἡθῶν καὶ διαίτης ὑφ' ἡγεμόνι Ζωροάστρη καὶ Πλάτωνι' καὶ τοῖς ἐκ τῆς 'Στοᾶς'".<sup>136</sup> Scholarios reproduced this sample of the contents of the *Laws* in his *Epistle to Manuel Raoul Oises*, which regards the celebrated Juvenalios case: "...γενεαλογίας 'θεῶν' καὶ 'ὀνομασίας' ἀχράντους ὑπὸ τῶν 'ποιητῶν' καὶ 'ἀγιστείας' εὐσταλεῖς, ὥς αὐτοὶ φασί, καὶ 'πολιτείας' καὶ πάντα δὴ τὰ κατασχησθέντα καὶ σβεσθέντα καλῶς εἰς τὸν βίον αὐθις εἰσάγειν πειρώμενοι".<sup>137</sup> It is improbable, I think, for one who, like Christonymos, reproduced the above historical account of Christianity by Scholarios to have missed the fact that this material formed part of some anti-pagan polemics or, being aware of that, to be fervently interested in that account without sharing the author's purpose.

After completing his point, Christonymos updates his Origen- and Eusebius-based argument for the divinity of Christ<sup>138</sup> by producing an *excursus* to

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Synesius, *Epistle IX 3* (*Synesii Cyrenensis epistolae*, edited by Antonio Garzya (Rome: Typis Officinae Polygraphicae, 1979), pp.29–30).

<sup>134</sup> Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, IV, pp.122,32–124,20.

<sup>135</sup> *Op. cit.*, IV, p.125,13–33.

<sup>136</sup> *Op. cit.*, IV, p.125,19–23. Cf. Plethon, *Laws*, Preface; ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, pp.2–4.

<sup>137</sup> *Op. cit.*, IV, p.479,20–23.

<sup>138</sup> Half a century earlier than Christonymos, Manuel II Palaiologos, in the 25<sup>th</sup> of the dialogues that constitute his *Διάλογος, ὃν ἐποίησατο μετὰ τινος Πέρσου τὴν ἀξίαν μοντερῖζην ἐν Ἀγκύρᾳ τῆς Γαλατίας*, had extensively used Book III of Eusebius' *Demonstratio Evangelica*; see, e.g.: "Ὁ Θεάνθρωπος Λόγος... πολλοῖς μὲν λόγοις ἀναντιρρήτοις, πολλοῖς δὲ ἔργοις

his own time. He addresses an objection one might raise on the basis of the great historical success of Muhammad.<sup>139</sup> As now becomes absolutely clear (cf. *supra*, p.158), this *excursus* does not turn the *Capita decem* into a case of anti-Muslim polemics, but is intended to show that the appearance of new religious errors after the definite historical victory of Christ over the deities of Antiquity should not be taken as a challenge to the reality of that victory but, instead, be explained in terms of (i) free will and (ii) the by definition imperfect condition of the created world,<sup>140</sup> and that Muhammad, like all the ancient competitors to the Christian religion, still falls short of Jesus Christ with regard to the same points.

This objection was raised and addressed in a similar way by Scholarios, whose relevant text was exploited by Christonymos. Scholarios, in the prolegomena (par. 1–5) to his *Ἀπορία· εἰ μία οὐσία Πατὴρ καὶ Υἱοῦ καὶ ἁγίου Πνεύματος, πῶς ἐνανθρωπήσαντος τοῦ Υἱοῦ οὐχὶ καὶ ὁ Πατὴρ καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα συνενανθρωπήσαν, ἢ πῶς τέλειος Θεὸς ὁ Χριστὸς μὴ κάκεινων συνενανθρωπήσαντων*, justifies the acceptability of the supernatural truths of Christianity by appealing to the supernatural character of its dissemination and its global acceptance: “Προσμαρτυροῦσι... αὐτὴν [sc. πίστιν] θεοσημεῖαι καὶ θαύματα, ἃ τῶν ψιλῶν ἀνθρώπων οὐδενὶ προσήκε ποιεῖν..., πρὸς δὲ τούτοις ἡ τῶν πραγμάτων αὐτῶν ἔκβασις καὶ τὸ πᾶσαν ἐπιμεμηθῆναι τὴν γῆν τὴν ἐκείνου διδασκαλίαν, ὡς Θεοῦ ψήφῳ μηδενὸς ἀντιλέγοντος”. As for the fact –Scholarios goes on– that some still embrace various erred beliefs, this is not God’s or faith’s fault, but the

ὑπερφυέσιν... ἐαυτὸν Θεὸν ἀπέδειξεν ὄντα...” (ed. Trapp, *Manuel II. Palaiologos*, p.286,1–3); “...ἡ δύναμις τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὰ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων ἐν αὐτοῖς (sc. Jesus’ disciples) ἐνεργούσα... ἀριδὴλως αὐτὸν Θεὸν ἀπέφαινε...” (p.286,11–13); “...οἱ τε παρ’ αὐτῶν (sc. Jesus’ disciples) λόγοι θείας ἦσαν χάριτος γέμοντες τὰ τε ἔργα συνεμαρτύρει τοῖς λόγοις ὑπὲρ ἀνθρωπίνην ἰσχύν...” (pp. 286,34–287,1); “...ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀπατεῶνα καὶ ψεύστην...” (p. 287,26); “...τὰ τε ἔργα τὰ παρὰ τῶν Ἀποστόλων... τὰ τε κηρυττόμενα πράγματα καὶ ὑπὲρ λόγον καὶ ὑπὲρ ἰσχὺν ἀνθρωπίνην ἦσαν...” (p. 288,22–24); “...τὸ τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις κατορθωθὲν οὐκ ἀνθρωπίνης δυνάμεως ἦν...” (p. 288,41–42); “...μαγικῇ τινι τέχνῃ αὐτοὺς πεποιθῆναι τὰ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων...” (p. 289,2–3); “...μαγαίαν τε καὶ γοητείαν τουτοῖσι (sc. Jesus’ disciples) περιάπτειν...” (p.289,18); “...οὐ φιλοζῶους, οὐ φιλοκτῆμονας, οὐ φιλοχρημάτους...” (p.289,14–15); “...τῇ τοῦ Σωτῆρος Χριστοῦ ῥοπῇ καὶ τῇ παρ’ ἐκείνου συνάρσει τὰ ὑπὲρ νοῦν καὶ δύναμιν ἀνθρωπίνην εἰργάζοντο...” (p.289,21–22). As Christonymos does not seem to have relied on Palaiologos’ utilization of Eusebius, there is no need to press the point further here.

<sup>139</sup> *Versio A* (ed. Kalatzis, *art. cit.*, pp.199,27–201,8); *Versio B* (*art. cit.*, pp.209,6–210,6).

<sup>140</sup> Christonymos also appeals to this imperfection by quoting Plato’s celebrated *Theaetetus* 176A, which would be quite absurd to do were he supposed to be addressing Muslims.

ineradicable result of the fact that man possesses free will: “...Εἰ καὶ τινὰς [1] ἐχρῆν ἐναπομεῖναι [2] τῷ ψεύδει [3], ἕως ἂν [4] τῇ τῶν ἀνθρώπων [5] φύσει [6] τὸ τῆς αὐτεξουσιότητος [7] ἀγαθὸν περισφύζηται”.<sup>141</sup> Christonymos poses the same question and offers the same resolution by using the same wording: “Ἐπειδήπερ αὐτεξούσιον [7] τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων [5] γένος [6] παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ δεδημιούργηται, εἰκότως ἤδη καὶ τινες [1] τῇ ἰδίᾳ αἰρέσει κατηκολούθησάν [3] τε καὶ προσέμειναν... [2]”.<sup>142</sup>

Christonymos goes on to say that this state of things will last until the end of history: “...καὶ κατακολουθήσουσι καὶ προσμενοῦσι [2] δέ [8], μέχρις ἂν [4] ἐπὶ γῆς ἀνθρωπῶν [5] ὧσιν, ὡς καὶ τοῖς σοφοῖς πᾶσι ξυνδοκεῖ”.<sup>143</sup> According to Riccoldo da Monte Croce, the third and last phase of the Devil’s war against Christian truth, which began in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, primarily through the vehicle of Muhammad,<sup>144</sup> will last till the final Judgment. This is the relevant passage in Demetrios Cydonēs’ translation:<sup>145</sup>

<sup>141</sup> Scholarios, *Ἀπορία· εἰ μία οὐσία Πατὴρ καὶ Υἱοῦ καὶ ἁγίου Πνεύματος, πῶς ἐνανθρωπήσαντος τοῦ Υἱοῦ οὐχὶ καὶ ὁ Πατὴρ καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα συνενανθρωπήσαν, ἢ πῶς τέλειος Θεὸς ὁ Χριστὸς μὴ κάκεινων συνενανθρωπήσαντων* 2 (Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, III, p.345,29–37). Scholarios’ use of the phrase “human nature” reminds us of Thucydides’ celebrated remark that “many grievous calamities... happen and always will happen while human nature is the same, but which are severer or milder, and different in their manifestations, according as the variations in circumstances present themselves in each case” / “Καὶ ἐπέπεσε πολλὰ καὶ χαλεπὰ... γιγνόμενα μὲν καὶ αἰεὶ ἐσόμενα, ἕως ἂν ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις ἀνθρώπων ᾖ, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἡσυχαιτέρα καὶ τοῖς εἶδεσι διηλλαγμένα, ὡς ἂν ἕκασται αἱ μεταβολαὶ τῶν ξυντυχῶν ἐφιστῶνται” (Thucydides, *Historiae* III,82,2; *Thucydides. With an English Translation*, trans. by Charles Forster Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1930; 1988<sup>17</sup>), p.143).

<sup>142</sup> *Versio B* (Kalatzis, *art. cit.*, p.209,19–21). The date of this *Ἀπορία* is unknown; M. Jugie, in his introduction to its edition (tome III, p. XXIV) assumes that this was a writing from the youth of Scholarios, whereas in his chronological table of Scholarios’ writings he places the set of Scholarios’ “Questions théologiques” in the period 1457–70 (Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, VIII, p.18\*). From the historical point of view, I am of the opinion that there is no reason to take these eleven writings as a set. As for the *Ἀπορία* under discussion, the fact that it was used in a writing produced at the latest in 1460 (see *infra*, p.232) suggests that it was written earlier than that year.

<sup>143</sup> *Versio B* (Kalatzis, *art. cit.*, p.209,21–23).

<sup>144</sup> The first phase had been the Jews’ and pagan’s persecutions of Christians up to Constantine I’s time, whereas the second was the attack on the Church by Arius, Sabellius, Macedonius and the remaining heretics, which came to an end at Pope Gregory I’s time.

<sup>145</sup> The translation was probably made between 1354 and 1360 (see Trapp, *Manuel II. Palaiologos*, p.35\*; Franz Tinnefeld, *Demetrios Kydonēs. Briefe. Übersetzt und erläutert. Erster Teil, erster Halbband (Einleitung und 47 Briefe)* (Bibliothek der griechischen Literatur, 12; Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1981), p.71).

Αὕτη δὲ [8] ἡ κατὰ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας φθορὰ “ἕως [4] γήρως καὶ πρεσβείου” (Ps. 70:18) διαμενεῖ [2], ὥστε μηδαμόθεν ὑπάρχειν ἐλπίδα πλὴν θείας βοηθείας καὶ τῆς ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐνστάσεως. ... Ἐν ταύτῃ τοίνυν τῇ τρίτῃ καταστάσει... ἐπ’ἀνέστη τῇ ἀληθείᾳ {3 *e contrario*} καὶ τῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἀνθρωπὸς τις διάβολος... ὀνόματι Μαχούμετ... etc.<sup>146</sup>

The fact that Christonymos is discussing Muhammad's religion as an instance of persistence (“...διαμενεῖ...”) of error after the full revelation of truth by Jesus Christ shows that his addition to Scholarios' words is a reproduction of Riccoldo's lines. His only change regards the allusive use of the Psalmic “ἕως γήρως καὶ πρεσβείου”. Riccoldo is playing with the traditional terminology of the ages of man as an individual (from birth to death) and as a species on earth, the last one (out of seven) being γῆρας ('senecta'). Christonymos put Riccoldo's meaning literally: “as long as humans exist on earth” (i.e., till the second coming of Jesus Christ).<sup>147</sup>

Scholarios treats the problem of the perennial persistence of error in his *Question on the Present Rarity of Miracles* (written in 1458/59<sup>148</sup>). In this text, he addresses the issue as to why it turned out that, whereas in the former days of the Church both infidels were led to faith and believers were confirmed in their faith by means of an abundance of miracles, at present miracles do not occur at all.<sup>149</sup> Scholarios regards this lack of miracles as part of the *décadence* of faith during the last days of humanity on earth before the final judgment.

<sup>146</sup> Riccoldo da Monte Croce, *Contra legem Sarracenorum*, Preface (PG 154: 1040A15–B13). Riccoldo adopts and adapts Thomas Aquinas' tripartition (“Diabolus... ad hoc totum suum conatum apposuit et apponit, ut ea quae sunt Christi, dissolvat. Quod quidem primo per tyrannos facere tentavit, Christi martyres corporaliter occideret; sed postmodum per haereticos, per quos spiritualiter plurimos interfecit. ... Et in hoc tempore aliqui esse dicuntur qui solvere Christum tentant...”) in the *Contra errores Graecorum* II, prooemium (see Jean-Marie Méridoux, O.P., “L'ouvrage d'un frère prêcheur florentin en Orient à la fin du XIIIe siècle. Le ‘Contra legem Sarracenorum’ de Riccoldo da Monte Croce”, *Fede e controversia nel '300 e '500* (‘Memorie Domenicane. Nuova Serie’, 17; Pistoia: Centro Riviste della Provincia Romana, 1986), pp.1–144, at 61, app. font. ad loc.).

<sup>147</sup> This idea is also connected with the Christian concept of Muhammad as a forerunner of the Antichrist (see *supra*, p.156, note 40).

<sup>148</sup> See *infra*, p.189, note 153.

<sup>149</sup> This is a traditional theological topic; see, e.g., Geoffrey William Hugo Lampe, “Miracles and Early Christian Apologetic”, in *Miracles: Cambridge Studies in their Philosophy and History*, edited by Charles Francis Digby Moule (London: A.R. Mowbray, 1965), pp.205–218, at 215.

To demonstrate this, he makes a history of the revelation of God from the time of Moses. When treating of the culmination of the divine revelation, i.e. the advent of Jesus Christ and the dissemination of his religion all over the world, Scholarios states that Jesus performed a number of miracles “θεία δυνάμει”, “κρείττων ὢν ἢ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον καὶ θεῖαν δύναμιν ἔχων”.<sup>150</sup> He nevertheless remarks that His supernatural power was not supposed to impose necessity on humans' souls: “Ὁ... ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου σωτηρίας ἐνανθρωπήσας Θεὸς... οὐκ ἂν ἐμελλε τὸ κάλλιστον τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως [sc. the free will] ἀναιρεῖν, πρὸς τάληθες ἢ τάγαθον αὐτοὺς βιάζομενος. ... Ἦν ἀνάγκη θέλοντας σῶζεσθαι...”.<sup>151</sup> Christonymos' wording does not exhibit any traces of dependence on these Scholarian lines; yet, it is from this Scholarian text that he borrowed his second explanation of the non-universality of the acceptance of Jesus' message to the world. Christonymos argues that,

εἰ... ὑπεναντίον τι τῷ ἀγαθῷ εἶναι ἀνάγκη καὶ διὰ τοῦτο μὴ μόνον γλυκὺ, ἀλλὰ καὶ πικρὸν τῷ κόσμῳ περιπολεῖ, καὶ ὑγεία καὶ νόσος, καὶ νὺξ καὶ ἡμέρα, θερμόν τε ἤδη καὶ ψυχρὸν καὶ λευκὸν καὶ μέλαν δέ, εἰκὸς ἦν {1}, ὅπερ {2} ἐπὶ τῇ τοῦ παντὸς δημιουργίᾳ {3}, τοῦτο καὶ {4} ἐπὶ τῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ νομοθεσίᾳ {5} γενέσθαι {6}.<sup>152</sup>

Scholarios, on his part, argues that “ὅτι τῇ τῶν πραγμάτων φύσει {3} τοῦτο {4} συμβαῖνόν ἐστιν {1; 6}, οὐδεὶς ἀγνοεῖ, καὶ ὅπως οὖν εἰδὼς τὰ ἔργα τῆς φύσεως {3}, ἢ μὴ καθάπαξ ἄλογος ὢν {1}”.<sup>153</sup> This is how Scholarios explains elsewhere –in his *Sermon on the Feast of Orthodoxy*– the fact that the message of Christ was resisted by some men: “Ἦν γὰρ ἀνάγκη {1}, καθάπερ {2} ἐπὶ τῶν

<sup>150</sup> Scholarios, *Question on the Present Rarity of Miracles* 3 (Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, III, pp.372,4; 372,23–24).

<sup>151</sup> Id., *op. cit.* 4 (Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, III, p.374,3–18).

<sup>152</sup> *Versio B* (ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.209,14–18).

<sup>153</sup> Scholarios, *Question on the Present Rarity of Miracles* 10 (Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, III, p.382,11–13). Blanchet (*Georges-Gennadios*, p.107) estimates that the *Question* must be one of the later writings by Scholarios, probably contemporary with his *Ἀπολογία περὶ τῆς σωπῆς* (1464). The fact that it was written “in the monastery of Prodromos” (Petit et al. (eds.), *op. cit.*, p.368,32–33) places the beginning of 1458, when Scholarios moved there at the latest (see Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios*, p.210), as the *terminus post quem*. Furthermore, the fact that the *Question on the Present Rarity of Miracles* was used in a work produced at the latest in 1460 (see *infra*, p.232) suggests that it was not written later than that year.



ἄλλων {3}, οὕτω [4a] δὴ κἀνταῦθα [4b] {5} συμβαίνειν {6}”.<sup>154</sup> Since this sermon dates from 1451,<sup>155</sup> i.e. well before the production of the *Capita decem* (see *infra*, pp.224–232), Christonymos could have studied and used it – and it seems that he did so, borrowing some crucial material from it and changing, up to an extent, Scholarios’ wording by means of his own knowledge of synonyms and stylistic preferences.

Christonymos dresses this point with quoting the celebrated Platonic *Theaetetus* 176A5–8: “Ἄλλ’ οὐτ’ ἀπολέσθαι τὰ κακὰ δυνατόν, ὧ Θεόδωρε (ὑπεναντίον γάρ τι τῷ ἀγαθῷ ἀεὶ [Christonymos: αἰεὶ] εἶναι ἀνάγκη) οὐτ’ ἐν θεοῖς αὐτὰ ἰδρῦσθαι, τὴν δὲ θνητὴν φύσιν καὶ τόνδε τὸν τόπον περιπολεῖ ἐξ ἀνάγκης”.<sup>156</sup> This passage, which is the preamble to the even more celebrated Platonic “ὁμοίωσις θεῷ”, was quoted and commented on several times in ancient Greek (and Byzantine) literature. It is probable that Christonymos thought about quoting it after hitting upon it in one of the fundamental sources of the *Capita decem*, i.e. Origen’s *Contra Celsum*.<sup>157</sup>

**6<sup>th</sup> argument.** The seven Ecumenical Councils, whose exceptionally virtuous participants clarified Christian truth (including what Christ is, of course) in an admirable way, constitute a religious *unicum*, which shows objectively the superiority of Christian teachings.<sup>158</sup> This argument must have been inspired by Scholarios’ listing of the ecumenical councils in the excellent things of the

<sup>154</sup> Scholarios, *Εἰς τὴν ἑορτὴν τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας, ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ Κυριακῇ τῶν νηστειῶν* 2 (Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, I, p.104,5–6).

<sup>155</sup> Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, I, p. XLV; Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, VIII, p.17\*.

<sup>156</sup> *Versio B* (ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.209,9–13).

<sup>157</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* IV, p.62,7–10 (ed. Borret, *Origène. Contre Celse*, II, p.340). As for its interpretation as meaning that, in the sensible world, there are some objective limits even to God’s power, cf. Ps.-Alexander of Aphrodisias’ *quaestio* “That, if the world is corruptible by nature, it is impossible for it to be corruptible because of the will of God” in the *Quaestiones et solutiones (Alexandri Aphrodisiensis praeter commentaria scripta minora*, edited by Ivo Bruns (‘Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca’, suppl. II.2; Berlin: G. Reimer, 1892), p.32,14–19).

<sup>158</sup> “Ἡ τῶν τοσούτων καὶ τοιούτων προσώπων παγκόσμιος τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ νομοθεσίας κρίσις τε καὶ ἐκλογή, ἑπτάκις ἤδη γεγонуῖα, ἀρετῇ πάσῃ καὶ παντοῖα καὶ φρονήσει καὶ σοφίᾳ διαλαμπόντων καὶ ἀπαθείᾳ πάσῃ καὶ ἀδείᾳ καὶ ἐξουσίᾳ τὸ ἀληθὲς βασιανισάντων τε καὶ ἐκλεξάντων, ὅπερ ἐν τῶν ἄλλων γενῶν οὐδενὶ ἐξ αἰῶνος γεγέννηται. Τὸ οὖν παρὰ τοσούτων τε καὶ τοιούτων καὶ τοσαυτάκις Λυδίας δικὴν βασιανισθὲν καὶ διὰ ταῦτα καὶ προκριθὲν πῶς οὐκ εἰκότως τὰ πρωτεῖα τῶν πρεσβείων ἀπειληφὸς ἂν ἔσοιτο παρὰ πᾶσι κριταῖς;” (Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.210,10–18). Cf. Wegelinus, *op. cit.*, p.280, 1<sup>st</sup> note.

glorious time of the Church in the *Question on the Present Rarity of Miracles*: “Τί δὲ δεῖ περὶ τῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῶν λέγειν κανόνων, καὶ τούτων ἐν πολλαῖς μὲν συνόδοις ἰδίαις, οἰκουμενικαῖς δὲ ἑπτά, ὑπὸ δὲ πλείονων πατριαρχῶν χωρὶς εὐρημένων τε καὶ συγγεγραμμένων;... Ὡς τῆς λαμπροτάτης τῶν ἀνθρώπων τότε ζωῆς!”.<sup>159</sup> In Scholarios’ writing, this exaltation of the ecumenical councils follows his (idealised) account of the wonderful regulation of life in accordance with the “Christian law” in every “nation, city, and village, even the smallest one”<sup>160</sup> (cf. Christonymos’ 5<sup>th</sup> argument, *supra*, p.182). Scholarios, in his *Sermon on the Feast of Orthodoxy*, had also offered a list of the seven Ecumenical Councils along with the basic information on each of them, attributing their existence to divine providence, which used Constantine the Great as an instrument for this purpose.<sup>161</sup> Christonymos’ argument does not, however, fully coincide with Scholarios’; Scholarios merely provided him with the spark.

**7<sup>th</sup> argument.** The historical fact that the sixteen prophets of the Old Testament predicted, several centuries earlier and with admirable accuracy, the advent of Christ as well as the episodes of His life down to fine details is unique; hence, it can only be explained in terms of His being a fully divine being:

Ἐπὶ παντὸς πράγματος [1] τριῶν προσώπων ἀξιολύστον μαρτυρούντων [2] πιστεύειν δεῖ... ὡς καὶ παντὶ νόμῳ [3] δοκεῖ. *Εἰ* [4] οὖν τοῦθ’ οὕτως ἔχει, πόσῳ μᾶλλον ἐπὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ πιστευτέον, ἐκκαίδεκα μὲν μαρτύρων μαρτυρούντων [2], καὶ οὐ δύο ἢ τριῶν [5], καὶ τούτων οὐ τῶν τυχόντων, ἀλλ’ ἤδη καὶ προφητῶν (καὶ πρὸ τοσούτων οἱ πλείους χιλιάδων τῶν χρόνων), καὶ οὕτω λεπτομερέστατα τε καὶ ἀκριβέστατα, ὡς πάντων πάντα καὶ καθ’ ἕκαστον μέχρι καὶ τοῦ λεπτοτάτου καὶ οὐ λόγος σχεδὸν οὐδεὶς διαρρήδην ἀνακηρυττόντων... εἴτα καὶ τῶν πραγμάτων οὕτω συμφωνούντων τε καὶ βεβαιούντων τὰς τούτων προρρήσεις, ὡς μὴδ’ ὄντιναοῦν μὴδ’ ὅπωςτιοῦν ἀμφιβάλλειν [6]... περὶ τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ πάντων, ὅσα τε δὴ θεῖα δηλαδὴ καὶ ὅσα ἀνθρώπινα· ἅπερ ἂν καὶ αὐτὰ ἐξεθέμην ἐκάστου ἀρμοζόντως τὰ ῥήματα, εἰ μὴ ἐνεδεδεμένῃ... τῇ τοῦ καιροῦ ἐπείγῳλῃ τε καὶ βραχύτητι...<sup>162</sup>

<sup>159</sup> Scholarios, *On the Present Rarity of Miracles* 9 (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, III, p.380,26–35).

<sup>160</sup> Id., *op. cit.* 8 (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, III, p.380,6–25).

<sup>161</sup> Scholarios, *Εἰς τὴν ἑορτὴν τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας, ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ Κυριακῇ τῶν νηστειῶν* 5–12 (Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, I, pp.107,28–118,11).

<sup>162</sup> *Versio B* (ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, pp.210,19–211,3).

It cannot be taken as a mere coincidence that Christonymos' major premise, i.e. that two or three witnesses to the same thing must be taken as reliable, occurs in Book III of Eusebius' *Demonstratio Evangelica*:

Εἰ [4] γὰρ ἐπὶ πάντων [1a] ἀμφιγνοουμένων πραγμάτων {1b} ἔν τε τοῖς κατὰ νόμους [3] δικαστηρίοις καὶ ἐν ταῖς κοιναῖς ἀμφισβητήσεσιν {6} τῶν μαρτύρων [2] συμφωνία κυροῖ τὸ ἀμφιγνοούμενον {6} ('ἐπὶ στόματος' δ' οὖν 'δύο καὶ τριῶν [5] μαρτύρων [2] συνίσταται πᾶν ῥήμα' [Deut. 19:15; cf. Mt. 18:16; Joh. 8:17; II Cor. 13:1; I Tim. 5:19])...<sup>163</sup>

Christonymos' direct source for this is not the Bible, where this juridic rule is formulated, but its reproduction by Eusebius. In *versio A*, Christonymos remarks in passing that this premise not only stands logically in its own right but was also sanctioned by the authority of the "divine and pious rules"<sup>164</sup>, having presumably in mind Eusebius' Scriptural quotation. At the same time, of course, he also assigns universal acceptance to it ("τοῦθ' οὕτως ἔχει παρὰ πᾶσι νομοθέταις κριταῖς").<sup>165</sup> This universality clearly features in Eusebius' lines ("ἐπὶ πάντων... ἔν τε τοῖς κατὰ νόμους δικαστηρίοις"). In *versio B*, Christonymos preserved only the universality enjoyed by the rule ("...ὡς καὶ παντὶ νόμῳ δοκεῖ"), which apparently fit in with his method (see *supra*, pp.162–163) better.

Eusebius' target in referring to this rule was nevertheless different; from this rule, in combination with the numerous witnesses to the miraculous events related to Jesus' life, he draws the following conclusion: "Surely the truth must be established in their case, there being twelve Apostles and seventy disciples, and a large number apart from them, who all showed an extraordinary agreement, and gave witness to the deeds of Jesus".<sup>166</sup> Christonymos, on his own part, combines the above major premise with another minor premise: that numerous authors predicted the events of Jesus' life, which –he implies– cannot have taken place by chance. Eusebius himself devoted the first two chapters of Book

III of the *Demonstratio Evangelica*, i.e. the chapters before the chapters so far exploited by Charitonymos, to the Old Testament prophecies. Chapters 1 and 2 of Eusebius' Book are comparatively lengthy. Also lengthy are many relevant parts of several Christian writings, such as –to confine myself to a text from the Patristic literature– (Ps.-?) John Chrysostom's *Quod Christus sit Deus*.<sup>167</sup> This explains why Christonymos concluded his own chapter by stating that he had no opportunity to provide detailed evidence on the full verification and admirable accuracy of the prophecies.

**8<sup>th</sup> argument.** Christ's moral, political and theological legislation includes all the good elements of the doctrines of the earthly sages and legislators, each of whom had taught only partial truths. This unique place of Christ among legislators reveals His divinity:

Πᾶσι τοῖς ἐξ αἰῶνος σοφοῖς [1], εἰς ὅσα δὴ εἰρήκασιν ἐπαίνου τε δηλαδὴ καὶ τιμῆς ἄξια [2], σύμφωνον [3] πᾶς τις τὸν τοῦ Χριστοῦ νόμον [4] εὐρήσει σκοπῶν ἀκριβῶς κατὰ τε ἠθικὴν κατὰ τε πολιτικὴν ἀρετὴν [5a/b] τε καὶ σοφίαν κατὰ τε θεολογικὴν [6] νομοθεσίαν τε καὶ παράδοσιν. Ὡσθ' ὅσα πάντες πάντων σοφῶν [1] περιέχουσι [7] νόμοι τε καὶ λόγοι φιλιὰ τε καὶ σωτήρια καὶ δὴ καὶ αὐξητικά τοῦ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένους [2], πάνθ' ὁ τοῦ Χριστοῦ νόμος [4] περιέχει [7] μετὰ πολλῆς τῆς ὑπεροχῆς τε καὶ εὐγενείας [8].

This means that "Jesus' law" is divine in origin — since, as is implied, no human being, being one of a kind, would be presumably able to recapitulate all the others' wisdom.<sup>168</sup>

Christonymos' direct source is Scholarios' *De unica via ad salutem hominis* (which dates from 1455 / January 1456<sup>169</sup>): "Ὁ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ νόμος [4]... ὡς... τῷ φυσικῷ νόμῳ {1} συνάδων {3} καὶ τῷ διὰ Μωσέως πρὸ αὐτοῦ δεδομένῳ, θεὸς ἐστὶν ὁμολογουμένως, τοιούτων ὄντων ἐκείνων".<sup>170</sup> This is an idea clearly stated in Riccoldo da Monte Croce's *Contra legem Saracenorum* in Demetrios Cydones' translation: "Συνάδει {3} δὲ [sc. τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον {4}] ἐν ταῖς ἀποφάσεσιν οὐ μόνον ταῖς ἄλλαις ἱεραῖς Γραφαῖς..., ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς φιλοσόφοις

<sup>163</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* III,5,68 (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, p.123,8–11).

<sup>164</sup> *Versio A* (ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.201,16–17). Cf. *infra*, Appendix II, p.244.

<sup>165</sup> *Versio A* (ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.201,17–18).

<sup>166</sup> "...πῶς οὐκ ἂν ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ 'ἐπὶ' τῶνδε 'συσταίη', δώδεκα μὲν ὄντων ἀποστόλων, ἑβδομήκοντα δὲ μαθητῶν, μυρίου τε πλήθους τούτων ἐκτός, πάντων θαυμαστὴν συμφωνίαν ἐπιδειγμένων καὶ μαρτυρησάντων γε τοῖς ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πεπραγμένοις..." (Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* III,5,68, ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, p.123,11–15; trans. by Ferrar, *The Proof of the Gospel*, p.135).

<sup>167</sup> (Ps.-?) John Chrysostom, *Quod Christus sit Deus* 2–11 (ed. McKendrick, pp.42,19–104,15 = PG 48: 815–829).

<sup>168</sup> *Versio B* (ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.211,5–14).

<sup>169</sup> Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, VIII, p.18\*; Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios*, p.486.

<sup>170</sup> Scholarios, *De unica via ad salutem hominis* 11 (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, III, p.443,27–31).

[1] τοῖς περὶ ἀρετῶν [5a] καὶ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἀνθρώπων τέλους ἀποδεικτικῶς ἢ λογικῶς πραγματευσαμένοις.<sup>171</sup> Scholarios, in the aforementioned writing, develops this idea as follows:

Ὁ ἀληθὴς χριστιανισμὸς καὶ τῶν δοκούντων σοφωτέρων [1] ἐν Ἑλλήσι τὰ... σεμνὰ {2} περιέχει [7] βελτίονι τρόπῳ {8}.

["Theological laws"]: ...Οἱ ἀπὸ Πυθαγόρου, λόγῳ τὴν μοναρχίαν τιμώντες ἔργῳ κατέλυνον... Ἄλλ' ἐν χριστιανοῖς ὁ εἰς Θεὸς [6] ἀδόλως τε καὶ εἰλικρινῶς καὶ σοφῶς ἅμα πιστεύεται καὶ κηρύττεται... Τὸ δὲ τῆς Τριάδος δόγμα... καὶ παρ' αὐτῶν τῶν Ἑλλήνων πολλὴν ἔχει συνηγορίαν, καὶ αὐτῶν τριάδα τινὰ ὑποτιθεμένων πρώτην ἐν τῇ θεῖᾳ [6] φύσει, εἰ καὶ... χεῖρονι τρόπῳ... {8 e contrario}.

["Moral virtues"]: Πλάτων μὲν τελειότητα λέγει τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου βίου τὴν ἀρετὴν [5a], Ἀριστοτέλης δὲ τὴν θεωρίαν τῆς ἀληθείας, ὁ δὲ ἡμέτερος Ἰησοῦς "ζωὴν αἰώνιον" εἶναι λέγει καὶ ἔσσεσθαι τὴν ἄμεσον "γνώσιν" (Joh. 6:40; 17:3) τῆς ἀληθείας, κὰν τῷδε τῷ βίῳ τελειότητα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ εὐδαιμονίαν τίθῃσι τὴν "αἰνιγματώδη" (I Cor. 13:12) γνώσιν τῆς ἀληθείας ἅμα ταῖς κατ' ἀρετὴν [5a] ἐνεργείαις, δι' ὧν ἀμφοτέρων... ἱκανοὶ γινόμεθα μετὰ τὴν τῶν σωμάτων ἀπαλλαγὴν αὐτίκα τυγχάνειν τοῦ τέλους. ... Ἐπὶ..., Ἀριστοτέλης μὲν δυσχερὲς φησὶν εἶναι τὸ κατ' ἀρετὴν [5a] ἐνεργεῖν, ὥσπερ τὸ τυγχάνειν τοῦ κύκλου κατὰ τὸ κέντρον...,<sup>172</sup> ὁ δὲ ἡμέτερος Ἰησοῦς πολὺ ἐναργέστερον καὶ σοφώτερον ἀξιοῖ "στενὴν" εἶναι καὶ "τεθλιμμένην" "τὴν" φέρουσιν ἐπ' ἀρετὴν [5a] εἴτε "ὁδόν" εἴτε "πύλιν" (Mt. 7:13–14)...

["Political morality"] Καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης μὲν τὴν ἐν ταῖς πολιτικαῖς ἀρεταῖς [5b] δυσχέριαν μόνην συνείδε, περὶ δὲ τῶν ἀρετῶν [5a] αἱ καθάιρουσι καὶ ἀνάγουσι τὸν ἀνθρώπινον νοῦν πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν ἢ ἃς ὁ ἄνθρωπος καὶ διὴ καθαρθεὶς ἐνεργεῖ καὶ θεοειδὴς γενόμενος, Πλάτων τε καὶ αὐτὸς Ἀριστοτέλης μάλιστα σχεδὸν οὐδὲν εἶπον.<sup>173</sup>

As is apparent, Christonymos' 8<sup>th</sup> argument is only an abridgment of the above Scholarian passage; Christonymos names only the spheres with regard

to which Christianity integrates and completes all the sane philosophical ideas (virtue ethics, politics, and theology); for brevity's sake, he omitted Scholarios' examples.

Scholarios is once more only developing an argument from Riccoldo da Monte Croce's *Contra legem Sarracenorum*:

Ἐπέθεντο γὰρ οἱ φιλόσοφοι αὐτὴν τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην εὐδαιμονίαν ἐν τῷ νοερῷ μέρει τῆς ψυχῆς εἶναι, καὶ τὸν νοῦν ἄκραν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ δύναμιν ὄντα, τοῦ ἄκρου εἶναι νοητοῦ, καὶ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν ἀρετῆς ἄθλον εἶναι, καὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν ἐπὶ τὰ μεγάλα εἶναι καὶ δυσχερῆ, καὶ ἄλλα τοιαῦτα, εἰ καὶ μὴ τελείως νοεῖν τὰ τοιαῦτα ἠδύναντο. Ὁ δὲ Χριστὸς αὐτὰ ταῦτα ἐν τῷ Εὐαγγελίῳ δείκνυσιν λέγων "στενὴν" εἶναι τὴν ἀπάγουσαν εἰς τὴν ζωὴν "ὁδόν" καὶ "ὀλίγους" (Mt. 7:13–14) εἶναι τοὺς δι' αὐτῆς ἐρχομένους... Ἐν τούτῳ δὲ τῇ τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους ἀποφάσει συμβαίνει, ὅς φησι δυσχερὲς εἶναι κατ' ἀρετὴν ἐνεργεῖν, ὥσπερ ἐν κύκλῳ τοῦ κέντρου τυγχάνειν, ὅπερ ὀλίγοι ποιοῦσιν. Ἐτι δὲ ὁ Χριστὸς καὶ τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εὐδαιμονίαν ἐν τῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ θεωρίᾳ τίθῃσι, λέγων· "αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ αἰώνιος ζωὴ, ἵνα γινώσκωσί σε τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν Θεόν" (Joh. 17:3).<sup>174</sup>

Christonymos used only Scholarios' elaboration of that passage.

**9<sup>th</sup> argument.** The persons who accepted Christianity during its dissemination in the early Christian era were immensely superior in quality to the pre-Christians who were guided by the various doctrines of the heathen sages:

Ὁ τοῦ Χριστοῦ νόμος [1] ὑπὸ τοσούτων καὶ τοιούτων προσώπων δέδεκται [2] καὶ τετίμηται [3] φρονήσει καὶ ἀρετῇ καὶ σοφίᾳ [4] διαλαμπόντων, ὡς καὶ πάντες οἱ πρὸ αὐτῶν ἐν ἅπασιν γένεσιν, Ἑλλήσι καὶ βαρβάροις, γεγονότες σοφοὶ [4], εἰ περιόντες ἐώρων αὐτοὺς, μεγάλης ἀν' ἀξιώσειαν τιμῆς, καὶ τοσοῦτον, ὡς οὐχὶ σοφοὺς σοφοῖς παραβάλλειν [5] καὶ ἐναρέτους ἐναρέτοις, ἐνὶ ἑνᾷ [6] δηλαδὴ, ἀλλὰ ἐνὶ [6] δέκα τις παραβάλλων τὴν νικῶσαν ὁ τοῦ Χριστοῦ νόμος [1] ἀποίσεται, καὶ ποσότητι καὶ ποιότητι.<sup>175</sup>

This is a rhetorically exaggerated reformulation of the following passages from Scholarios' *De unica via ad salutem hominis*:

<sup>171</sup> Riccoldo da Monte Croce (translation by Demetrios Cydones), *Ἀνασκευὴ τῆς παρὰ τοῦ καταράτου Μαχουμὲθ τοῖς Σαρρακηνοῖς τεθείσης νομοθεσίας* 16 (PG 154: 1144B12–1145C1).

<sup>172</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* II,5, 1106b29–35.

<sup>173</sup> Scholarios, *De unica via ad salutem hominis* 19 (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, III, pp.450,19–451,17).

<sup>174</sup> Riccoldo da Monte Croce, *Contra legem Sarracenorum* (in Demetrios Cydones' translation) 5 (PG 154: 1061D6–1064A15).

<sup>175</sup> *Versio B* (ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.211,15–21).

Οἱ τῶν Ἑλλήνων τότε σοφώτεροι [4], ἐν τῷ καιρῷ δηλονότι τῆς θείας ἐπιδημίας καὶ τοῦ περὶ αὐτῆς κηρύγματος τῶν ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἐξειλεγμένων τοῦ Ἰησοῦ μαθητῶν..., τὸ ἔνθεον καὶ ὑψηλὸν τῆς νομοθεσίας τοῦ Ἰησοῦ [1] κατελιφότες, ἀφιλονείκως τῷ σωτηρίῳ προσετέθησαν νόμφ.<sup>176</sup>

Οἱ τῶν Ἑλλήνων σοφώτεροι [4] ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τοῦ Ἀποστολικοῦ, μᾶλλον δὲ τοῦ οὐρανίου κηρύγματος, αὐτοὶ πρῶτοι τὴν πλάνην κατανενοηκότες τῆς συντρόφου αὐτοῖς δόξης ἐν τῷ φωτὶ τῆς χριστιανικῆς ἀληθείας χριστιανοὶ γεγόνασι.<sup>177</sup>

Likewise, in the abridged version of this text, Scholarios writes:

Ἐδέξαντο [2] ταύτην τὴν πίστιν νέαν οὖσαν καὶ παράδοξον οἱ ἄνθρωποι πανταχοῦ μετὰ σπουδῆς καὶ μετὰ κινδύνων πολλῶν, καὶ οὐ μόνον ἰδιῶται, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ φρόνιμοι καὶ οἱ σοφοί [4].<sup>178</sup>

Scholarios' passage seems to be a paraphrase of a relevant passage from Thomas Aquinas' *Summa contra Gentiles* in Demetrios Cydones' translation.<sup>179</sup>

Christonymos seems to have enriched the vocabulary of his exposition of the superiority of the Christian converts in Antiquity by means of a similar account by Scholarios in a passage from his *Epistle to Plethon* which has been partially quoted above (pp.184–185):

Οἱ... τῆς ἱερᾶς ἡμῶν πίστεως ἡγεμόνες... τὴν ἀληθινὴν σοφίαν... ἐτίμησαν [3] οὕτω..., ὥσθ' ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς καὶ τῶν αὐτῆς νόμων [1] θνήσκειν... Οὐ καθ' ἓνα [6] αὐτοὶ γε οὕτως ἐφιλοσόφουν, ἀλλὰ καθ' ὅσους παγχάλεπον ἐστὶν ἀριθμεῖν... Οἶμαι... τῶν ἐκ τοῦ παντός τοῦ χρόνου ἀνθρώπων... μὴ φιλοσοφῆσαι

<sup>176</sup> Scholarios, *De unica via ad salutem hominis* 10 (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, III, p.443,14–21).

<sup>177</sup> Id., *op. cit.* 20 (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, III, p.452,6–12). The same idea occurs in Scholarios' account of the spread of the Christian faith in Antiquity in the *Question on the Present Rarity of Miracles* 2: "...τοῦ σωτηρίου κηρύγματος εἰς πᾶσαν ἐνεργουμένην τὴν γῆν οἱ παρ' Ἑλλήσι σοφώτεροι πρὸ τῶν χυδαίων καὶ πολλῶν πεπιστευκάσι" (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, III, p.371,10–12).

<sup>178</sup> Scholarios, abridged version of the *De unica via ad salutem hominis (Confessio fidei)* 12 (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, III, p.457,19–21 = ll. 157–159, eds. Apostolopoulos / Apostolopoulos, *Ἐπίσημα κείμενα*, p.44).

<sup>179</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* I,6,3: "...ἀναριθμητον πλῆθος οὐκ ἀμαθῶν μόνον ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλ' ἤδη καὶ τῶν σοφωτάτων πρὸς τὴν τῶν χριστιανῶν πίστιν μετέπτη" (Demetrios Cydones' translation; see cod. *Marc. gr. II,2 (Coll. 1012)*, fol. 122r, col. a, ll. 20–21).

τοσοῦτους..., ὅσους ἢ ἐν πόλει μιᾷ τῶν ἀπανταχοῦ ἀρχῶν εἷς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ μιᾷ φιλοσοφῆσαντας εἶδεν... ἢ ἐν τῶν τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀσκητηρίων ἐνὶ τῷ πανταχοῦ μιᾶς γενεᾶς χρόνος καὶ ὕψ' ἐνὶ [6] που, εἰ τύχοι, καθηγεμόνι πεφιλοσοφηκότες γνησίως, τῇ τῶν μακαρίων ἐν οὐρανοῖς προσήνεγκε πολιτείᾳ. ... Τοσοῦτον ἀπέχει τῇ κατὰ Χριστὸν φιλοσοφίᾳ ἢ τῶν τινος ἀνθρώπων παραβληθῆναι [5] καὶ πάντων ὁμοῦ τῷ... πλήθει τῶν βελτιουμένων.

**10<sup>th</sup> argument.** There is no part of the content of the Christian religion which cannot be rationally defended against any objection and satisfactorily justified:

Πᾶν ζήτημα καὶ πᾶσαν ἀμφιβολίαν καὶ ἀτοπίαν δοκοῦσαν ἐπεσθαι τῇ τῶν χριστιανῶν θεοδιδάκτῳ ταύτῃ καὶ θεοδότῳ *θηρσκειᾷ* [1] *δυνάμεθα* [2]... ἱκανῶς *λύσαι* [3] τε καὶ *θεραπεῦσαι λόγους* τε καὶ ἀποδείξεισι *πιθαναῖς* [4] τε καὶ ἀναντιρρήτοις ἀραρότως τε καὶ ἀναμφιλέκτως.<sup>180</sup>

According to J. Wegelinus' neglected but correct suggestion (see *supra*, p.148), this is extremely close to this statement from Scholarios' *recensio brevis* of the *Περὶ τῆς μόνης ὁδοῦ πρὸς τὴν σωτηρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων*: "Ὅσα λέγουσί τινες κατὰ τῆς πίστεως {1} ταύτης, *δυνάμεθα* [2] *λύειν* [3] εὐκόλως καὶ *εὐλόγως* [4]".<sup>181</sup> This is the 6<sup>th</sup> out of a set of seven arguments attached by Scholarios to the summary of this celebrated writing he addressed to the Muslims. *Nota bene*, this setting does not turn Charitonymos' point into an anti-Muslim argument; as Scholarios himself says,<sup>182</sup> this set is supposed to show "that the Christian faith is true" ("τὴν ἀλήθειαν τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν") in an independent way.<sup>183</sup>

<sup>180</sup> *Versio B* (ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.211,25–29).

<sup>181</sup> Scholarios, abridged version of the *De unica via ad salutem hominis (Confessio fidei)* 12 (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, III, p.457,31–32 = ll. 169–170, eds. Apostolopoulos / Apostolopoulos, *Ἐπίσημα κείμενα*, p.44).

<sup>182</sup> Scholarios, abridged version of the *De unica via ad salutem hominis (Confessio fidei)* 12 (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου τοῦ Σχολαρίου*, III, p.457,7–8 = ll. 145–146, eds. Apostolopoulos / Apostolopoulos, *Ἐπίσημα κείμενα*, p.44).

<sup>183</sup> It is possible that Wegelinus had noticed another similarity, i.e. the one between Charitonymos' ch. 4 and Scholarios' Point 7: "Τῇ πίστει ἐπολέμησαν διὰ πολλῶν τιμωριῶν καὶ φόνων οἱ βασιλεῖς τότε καὶ οἱ ἑπαρχοὶ αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ οἰκουμένη τῇ χρόνους, πολὺ θεοὶ ὄντες καὶ εἰδωλολάτραι, καὶ οὐδὲν ἴσχυσαν, ἀλλ' ἐνίκησεν ἡ πίστις καὶ διαμένει μέχρι τοῦ νῦν... Καὶ εἰ μὴ ἡ πίστις αὕτη ἐκ θελήματος τοῦ Θεοῦ, διελύθη ἂν τότε εὐκόλως" (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, III, pp.457,33–458,1). Scholarios seems to echo Origen's *Contra Celsum* I,27,3–9 quoted above (p.177).



This point is Thomistic in origin. As Thomas Aquinas puts it in ch. 2 (“Qualiter sit disputandum contra infideles”) of the *De rationibus fidei*<sup>184</sup> as well as in ch. 9 (“De ordine et modo procedendi in hoc opere”) of Book I of his apologetic masterpiece *Summa contra Gentiles* (both available in Greek from the mid-14<sup>th</sup> cent.), no “necessary arguments” can be produced either for or against those Christian truths that belong to the *credibilia*. This means that the Christian apologist’s task is to refute the arguments of the infidels that intend to show that the Christian faith is *contra rationem*. This point also occurs a few lines later in the chapter from the aforementioned anti-Islam writing by Riccolando da Monte Croce. In Demetrios Cydones’ translation, these lines read: “... οὐδὲν οὐδαμῶς φησιν [sc. τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον], ὃ ἂν τις ἀποδεικτικῶς ἐνσταίῃ. ... Οὐδεμία δὲ ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ διδασκαλία ἢ νόμος οὕτως εὐλογος ὧν καὶ τέλειος, ὥσπερ ὁ Εὐαγγελικός”.<sup>185</sup>

Christonymos, concluding *versio A*, remarks that his ten arguments are just “a few out of the many” he could produce.<sup>186</sup> Scholarios, in his Sermon *Περὶ τοῦ μυστηριώδους σώματος τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, expounds, within a single paragraph, eighteen “absolutely clear demonstrations of the divinity of Christ”, adding that, in fact, there are infinite such demonstrations, all of them being all-powerful (“... τὰς ἐναργεστάτας περὶ τῆς Χριστοῦ θεότητος ἀποδείξεις, ἀπείρους οὕσας τῷ πλήθει καὶ τῇ δυνάμει μεγίστας...”).<sup>187</sup> A similar list of nine demonstrations occurs in Eusebius of Caesarea’s so-called *Contra*

*Hieroclem*.<sup>188</sup> There is no evidence, however, that Christonymos made any use of these two lists, although it is quite possible that he had read them and that his typically rhetorical conclusion (“One can, of course, say much more on this...”) is an echo of them.

## 2. A 15<sup>th</sup>-Century Byzantine discussion of the origins of Christianity: Scholarios vs. Plethon

What could possibly account for this revival of the ancient Christian defence of the divinity of Jesus Christ in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century? I would like to argue that the answer is Plethon’s description of the founder/-s and leaders of Christianity as “sophists” and “cheaters” and Scholarios’ reaction to this subversive insult, which had no precedence in the Byzantium.

### 2.1. Jesus and his followers in Plethon’s *Laws*

Plethon, in Book I, Chapter 2 of his *Laws*, discusses “Περὶ ἡγεμόνων τῶν βελτίστων λόγων” (“On the Guides to the Best Doctrines”). He classifies these leaders –relatively in a climax from the worst to the best– into four groups: “ποιηταί, σοφισταί, νομοθέται, φιλόσοφοι”.<sup>189</sup> This is an adaptation of a well-known Stoic classification, which goes back at least to Panaetius. Out of the

<sup>184</sup> “In disputationibus contra infideles de articulis fidei, non ad hoc conari debes, ut fidem rationibus necessariis probes. Hoc enim sublimitati fidei derogaret, cujus veritas non solum humanas mentes, sed etiam angelorum excedit, a nobis autem creduntur quasi ab ipso Deo revelata. Quia tamen quod a summa veritate procedit, falsum esse non potest, nec aliquid necessaria ratione impugnari valet quod falsum non est; sicut fides nostra necessariis rationibus probari non potest, quia humanam mentem excedit, ita improbari necessaria ratione non potest propter sui veritatem. Ad hoc igitur debet tendere Christiani disputatoris intentio in articulis fidei, non ut fidem probet, sed ut fidem defendat: unde et beatus Petrus non dicit: ‘parati semper ad probationem’, sed ‘ad satisfactionem’ (I Petr. 3:15), ut scilicet rationabiliter ostendatur non esse falsum quod fides Catholica confitetur”.

<sup>185</sup> Riccolando da Monte Croce (translation by Demetrios Cydones), Ἀνασκευὴ τῆς παρὰ τοῦ καταράτου Μαχουμέθ τοῖς Σαρρακηνοῖς τεθείσης νομοθεσίας 16 (PG 154: 1144D13–1145A1).

<sup>186</sup> Ed. Kalatzi, p.202,27.

<sup>187</sup> Scholarios, *Περὶ τοῦ μυστηριώδους σώματος τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* 12 (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, I, pp.133,20–134,10). This writing dates from ca. 1437/40–1448/49 (see Martin Jugie, “Georges Scholarios et Saint Thomas d’Aquin”, in: *Mélanges Mandonnet*, vol. I (Paris: Vrin, 1930), pp.423–440, at 432).

<sup>188</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Contra Hieroclem* 4 (*Flavii Philostrati opera*, vol. 1, edited by Carl Ludwig Kayser (Leipzig: Teubner, 1870; repr. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1964), pp.371,32–372,28 = ed. Édouard des Places, *Eusèbe de Césarée. Contre Hierocles*, pp.104–106). For a summary of these arguments, see Gallagher, *Divine Man*, p.168. — As has been remarked by Eric Junod (“Polémique chrétienne contre Apollonius de Tyane. À propos d’un ouvrage d’Eusèbe de Césarée sur la *Vie d’Apollonius de Tyane par Philostrate*... et de la nécessité de respecter les titres originaux des livres”, *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* 120 (1988), pp.475–482), as the original title of this writing shows, Eusebius’ target was not Hierocles, but Apollonius of Tyana. According to S. Morlet’s plausible suggestion (*La “Démonstration évangélique”*, pp.241; 280–281), these arguments formed the basis for the defence of the divinity of Christ in the *Demonstratio Evangelica*. The authenticity of the *Contra Hieroclem* has been challenged, however (Thomas Hägg, “Hierocles the Lover of Truth and Eusebius the Sophist”, *Symbolae Osloenses* 67 (1992), pp.138–150, at 145–150).

<sup>189</sup> Plethon, *Laws* I,2 (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.28,1–2).

relevant Greek<sup>190</sup> sources,<sup>191</sup> this passage from Plutarch's *Amatorius* resembles Plethon's wording the most:

...Καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντων, ὅσα μὴ δι' αἰσθήσεως ἡμῖν εἰς ἔννοιαν ἤκει, τὰ μὲν μύθῳ, τὰ δὲ νόμῳ, τὰ δὲ λόγῳ πίστιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἔσχηκε· τῆς δ' οὖν περὶ θεῶν δόξης καὶ παντάπασιν ἡγεμόνες καὶ διδάσκαλοι γεγόνασιν ἡμῖν οἳ τε *ποιηταὶ* καὶ οἱ *νομοθέται* καὶ τρίτον οἱ *φιλόσοφοι*.<sup>192</sup>

Plethon adds to this list the class of “sophists”. Sophists are the counter-part of poets. Both classes exhibit an exceeding passion for glory combined with an absolute indifference for reaching, teaching or somehow respecting truth, each of them doing so in its own way. As regards method, poets instil wrong ideas into the souls of people by using pleasant words and the beauty of rhythm, whereas “sophists” (who presumably pretend to be philosophers) use prose arguments, which transgress the rules of syllogisms in a way invisible to most of their interlocutors (“Σοφιστῶν δ' εἰσὶ μὲν οἳ καὶ παραλογισμοῖς δὴ τισιν ἀντὶ λογισμῶν ὀρθῶς περαινομένων κεχρημένοι, τῶν προστυχόντων ἐξαπατῶσι τοὺς ἀμαθεστέρους”).<sup>193</sup>

As regards content, poets depict gods with indecently human colours, whereas sophists irrationally lift some humans (both themselves and others) to the heavens by depicting them as beings possessing divine knowledge and power:

Σοφισταὶ... ἐπὶ τε γοητεῖαν τὰ πολλὰ τετραμμένοι καὶ δόξαν μὲν αὐτοῖς ἐκ παντὸς τρόπου μηχανώμενοι, καὶ ταύτην εἰσὶν οἳ καὶ μείζω ἢ κατ' ἀνθρώπους μετιόντες, ἀληθείας δ' οὐ μόνον οὐδὲν φροντίζοντες, ἀλλὰ καὶ συχνὰ περὶ τὴν ἀφάνισιν αὐτῆς τεχνάζοντες... Τὰ... ἀνθρώπινα [sc. πράγματα] αἶροντες εἰς τὸ θεϊότερον ἢ κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον μέτρον..., τὰ μέγιστα τοῖς σφίσι προσέχουσι λυμαίνονται.<sup>194</sup>

<sup>190</sup> There is no evidence that Plethon knew Latin (see Demetracopoulos, *Ἀπὸ τὴν ἱστορία*, p.29).

<sup>191</sup> See Jean Pepin, “La ‘théologie tripartite’ de Varron. Essai de reconstitution et recherche des sources”, *Revue des études augustinienes* 2 (1956), pp.265–296 (at 278–285); Godo Lieberg, “Die ‘Theologia tripartita’ in Forschung und Bezeugung”, *Die Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* I.4, edited by Hildegard Temporini (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1973), pp.63–115.

<sup>192</sup> Plutarch of Chaeronea, *Amatorius* 763B11–C3.

<sup>193</sup> Plethon, *Laws* I,2 (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, pp.34,25–36,1).

<sup>194</sup> Id., *ibid.* (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.28,6–16).

“Sophists” despise reason as a means for reaching truth.<sup>195</sup> Instead of rationally justifying their claims, they proclaim that they share in the divine knowledge:

Σοφιστῶν ὅποσοι δὴ κακοῦργοι... λόγον μὲν οὐδένα..., ὅτου τι ὄφελος περὶ τούτων ὧν δὴ ἐκάστοτε λέγουσι, φαίνονται ἀποδιδόντες, *μαντεία* [1] δὲ ἐκ θεῶν [2] δὴθεν *σφίσι* [3] *φοιτώσῃ* [4] περὶ τῶν λεγομένων εἰδέναι... *προσποιοῦνται* [5].<sup>196</sup>

Plethon seems here to be attempting to refute Eusebius' distinction between divine and evil inspiration (a contrast exemplified by Eusebius in Moses and the ancient Greek oracles), which intended to show the reliability of the former:

Τοσοῦτόν τι ἦν τὸ διάφορον τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ *θείου* [2] Πνεύματος κατόχων καὶ τῶν ὑπὸ δαιμονικῆς ἐνεργείας *μαντεύεσθαι* [1] *προσποιοιμένων* [5]... Πνεῦμα *θεῖον* [2] *ψυχαῖς* {3} *ἐπιφοιτᾶν* [4] *κεκαθαρμέναις*... καὶ πρὸς *ὑποδοχὴν* {4} *τοῦ θείου* [2] *παρεσκευασμέναις*...<sup>197</sup>

Plethon, using once again Eusebius' *ipsissima verba*, provocatively extends the realm of application of the evil-inspired revelations to the allegedly divine revelation so as to have any “pretended” revelation completely vanish into thin air, regardless of how its alleged bearers present themselves to the *vulgus profanum*. In fact, Plethon implies, every ‘revelation’ is “evil”, in the sense that it is false.<sup>198</sup>

<sup>195</sup> Id., *op. cit.* I,1: “...ὕπὸ γοήτων δὴ τινων σοφιστῶν ἀναπεπεισμένοι” (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.18,12–15).

<sup>196</sup> Id., *op. cit.* I,2 (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.34,13–17).

<sup>197</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* V, prooemium, 26; 29 (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, pp.207,36–38; 208,16–17); cf. 10 (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, p.204,3–5). Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum* II,50,32–37: “Τὰ μὲν τῶν ἀντιχρίστων καὶ τῶν *προσποιοιμένων* δυνάμεις ὡς μαθητῶν Ἰησοῦ σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα λέγεται εἶναι ψεῦδος..., τὰ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ καρπὸν ἔσχεν οὐκ ἀπάτην, ἀλλὰ σωτηρίαν ψυχῶν” (ed. Borret, *Origène. Contre Celse*, I, p.400).

<sup>198</sup> Scholarios, in his *Κατὰ τῶν Πλήθωνος ἀποριῶν ἐπ' Ἀριστοτέλει*, focused on Plethon's rationalist rejection of divine revelation: “(Plethon)... τοὺς ἐνθουσιασμοὺς καὶ τὰς ἀποκαλύψεις διαβάλλειν καὶ ‘πλάνην’ ἀποκαλεῖν λέγεται, τὴν δ' ἀλήθειαν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου λόγου εὐρίσκεσθαι μόνου διὰ φιλοσοφίας ἐν τινι ἐτέρῳ αὐτοῦ συγγράμματι (sc. the *Laws*) ἀποδεικνύει” (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.16,32–35). In connection with this remark, Scholarios announced a work in defence of the possibility and necessity of divine revelation, the description of which allows for surmising that it would be primarily based on the respective ideas of Thomas Aquinas (“Περὶ... τῆς θεοῦ ἐπιπνοίας, ὅτι τε ἔστιν ὡς

At this point, Plethon describes an extreme case of “sophists”, i.e. “the most deceitful amongst them”, who pretend to perform miracles by means of some divine power in order to impress the most ignorant men and rule over them. Having succeeded once, such a group of sophists perpetuates its domination by means of some other “sophists”, who write down these supposed miracles, thus making numerous generations of people believe in them, a state of things which causes great harm to the lives of all the people affected by this state of things:

Οἱ γε μὴν *γοητικώτατοι* [1] αὐτῶν, *ἔργων* [2] δὴ τινὰς *τερατείας* {3} προσποιούμενοι καὶ δόξαντες μὲν μεγάλα ἄττα *θεία* δὴ *τινὶ δυνάμει* [4] *διαπράττεσθαι* [5], *τῇ δ' ἀληθείᾳ* [6] οὐδέν τι αὐτῶν τούτων ὧν τε προσποιούνται καὶ ἢ προσποιούνται<sup>199</sup> *διαπραττόμενοι* [5], τούτοις τε καταπλήξαντες πρότερον *τῶν ἀνθρώπων τοὺς ἀνοητοτάτους* {7} τὰ γε<sup>200</sup> τοιαῦτα οὐ πάνυ τοι δυναμένους φωρᾶν, καὶ ἔπειτα ὑπὸ τῶν ταῦτα *ἐπὶ τὸ μείζον* [8] *λεγόντων τε καὶ συγγραφόντων* {9} συχνῶν καὶ ἄλλων *ἐξαπατωμένων* [10], τῶν δὲ καὶ τῶν τοιούτων *λόγων* {9} ἔθει ἐκ νέων κρατουμένων, τὰ μέγιστα ταῖς πολιτείαις λυμαίνονται, περὶ πολλῶν καὶ ἀτόπων *τῷ γε*<sup>201</sup> *βίῳ ἡμῶν* [11] μέγα τι διαφερόντων πείθοντες.<sup>202</sup>

ἀληθῶς, καὶ παρὰ τίσιν ἐστίν, καὶ ὅτι ἄνευ ταύτης οὐχ οἶόν τε ἦν τὴν περὶ τῶν θείων ἀλήθειαν τὸν ἀνθρώπινον νοῦν κατελιφέναι καὶ ὀπωσοῦν... ὕστερον, ἂν ὁ Θεὸς θέλῃ, χωρὶς περὶ τούτων πραγματευσόμεθα”; *op. cit.*, p.17,14–20), in all probability as part of his project of refutation of Plethon’s *Laws* (on the announcement and cancellation of this project, see John A. Demetracopoulos, “Georgios Gennadios II – Scholarios’ *Florilegium Thomisticum*: His Early Abridgment of Various Chapters and *Quæstiones* of Thomas Aquinas’ *Summae* and His anti-Plethonism”, *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 69:1 (2002), pp.117–171, at 163–168; id., “Georgios Gennadios II – Scholarios’ *Florilegium Thomisticum* II (*De Fato*) and its anti-Plethonic Tenor”, *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 74:2 (2007), pp.301–376, at 335–343).

<sup>199</sup> On this emphatical recurrence of “προσποιεῖσθαι”, see Eusebius’ passage quoted on p.201.

<sup>200</sup> Ex editionis τε conjeci.

<sup>201</sup> Ex editionis τε conjeci.

<sup>202</sup> Plethon, *Laws* I,2 (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.36,2–12). Plethon stresses the power of tradition or early-shaped mental habits in the direction of preserving the sophists’ errors through history: “...οἱ ὑπὸ τῶν σοφιστῶν δὴ ἐξηπατημένοι, οἷς τοι (ex οὗτοι conjeci) αἰεὶ διὰ τοὺς πρότερον πεπεισμένους καὶ οἱ μετὰ ταῦτα ἐπιγιγνόμενοι συμπίθονται” (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.36,19–21). The following passage from Dio Chrysostom’s *Oratio* XI 1–3 might have been Plethon’s direct source: “Διδάσκειν μὲν ἀνθρώπους ἅπαντας χαλεπὸν ἐστίν, ἐξαπατᾶν δὲ ῥάδιον. Καὶ μανθάνουσι μὲν μόγις, ἐάν τι καὶ μάθωσι, παρ’ ὀλίγων τῶν εἰδόντων, ἐξαπατῶνται δὲ τάχιστα ὑπὸ πολλῶν τῶν οὐκ εἰδόντων... Χαλεποῦ δὲ... ὄντος τοῦ διδάσκειν, τῷ παντὶ

There is at least one case where Plethon applies the term “sophists” to the holders of a Christian error (in particular, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body and the Final Judgment),<sup>203</sup> whereas it is quite plausible to argue that, behind his description of the “sophists” who avert people from using their

χαλεπώτερον τὸ μεταδιδάσκειν, ἄλλως τε ὅταν πολὺν τινες χρόνον ᾧσι τὰ ψευδῆ ἀκηκοότες καὶ οὐ μόνον αὐτοὶ ἐξηπατημένοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ πάπποι καὶ σχεδὸν πάντες οἱ πρότερον” (*Dionis Prusaensis quem vocant Chrysostomum quae exstant omnia*, tome I, edited by Hans Friedrich August von Arnim (Berlin: Apud Weidmannos, 1893<sup>2</sup> (repr. 1962), p.115). Dio subscribes here to the Platonic doctrine that wisdom is a privilege of the select, which is also fully shared by Plethon; see, e.g., *Laws* I,2: “...τῶν πολλῶν τε καὶ οὐδὲν εἰδόντων...” (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.30,3). Plethon explicitly connects the ignorance of the masses with their being easily trapped by the “poets” and “sophists”, who present themselves as proper “lawgivers” or even “philosophers” (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.30,3–5). On Plethon’s elitist view of human access to truth, see Demetracopoulos, *Ἀπὸ τὴν ἱστορίᾳ*, pp.114–118; id., “Georgios Gemistos – Plethon’s Dependence”, p.330.

<sup>203</sup> Plethon, *Laws* III,43: “...τῶν σοφιστῶν ἔνιοι, οἷς καὶ ἀνθρώπων ἀμύπολλοι ἔσποντο... Ὑπὸ τῶν σοφιστῶν τούτων...” (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, pp.256,26–260,22; cf. John Monfasani, “Platonic Paganism in the Fifteenth Century”, in *Reconsidering the Renaissance. Papers from the Twenty-Sixth Annual Conference*, edited by Mario A. di Cesare (New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992), pp.45–61, at 52; Brigitte Tarnbrun, *Pléthon: le retour de Platon* (Paris: Vrin, 2006), p.81). That Plethon is here opposing the Christian view of the resurrection of the dead is also indicated by the fact that his description of the view he opposes was directly borrowed from Gregory Palamas’ cosmological part of the *Capita* CL, 1–2, where Palamas refutes the Hellenic doctrine of the eternity of the heavens and the entire world. Plethon: “Τὸν γὰρ τοι οὐρανὸν χρόνῳ [1] ἡργμένον [2] ποιοῦσι καὶ ἅμα τοῖς πράγμασι τοῖς ἀνθρωπείοις {3} συμμετασκευασθήσεσθαι [4] ἀξιοῦσιν”; Palamas: “Ἦρχθαι [2] τὸν κόσμον... Ὡς τὸν τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τοῦ χρόνου [1] γένεσιν, ἣν ἰστόρησεν ὁ Μωυσῆς... Οὐκ ἤρχθαι [2] μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τέλος ἔξειν τὸν κόσμον... Οὐχὶ πρὸς τὸ μὴ ὂν ὁ κόσμος οὗτος ἅπας χωρήσει παντάπασιν, ἀλλ’, ὡς τὰ ἡμέτερα σώματα {3}, μετασκευασθήσεται [4] πρὸς τὸ θεϊότερον λυθεῖς τε καὶ μεταστοιχειωθείς, ὡς ἀνάλογος ἡμῖν {3} εἴη” (John A. Demetracopoulos, “Τρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ Κεφάλαια ἐκατὸν πενήκοντα, 1–14: ‘Περὶ κόσμου’. Κείμενο, μετάφραση καὶ ἐρμηνευτικά σχόλια”, *Βυζαντικά* 20 (2000), pp.293–348, at 297). Palamas, in turn, had paraphrased a passage from Gregory of Nyssa’s *De mortuis* (see Demetracopoulos, *art. cit.*, p.318 ad 2,9–11). Incidentally, as I show elsewhere (“*Anti-Macrobios Christianus* or the Construction of Christian Science: Gregory Palamas’ *Capita* CL 1–14 (‘De mundo’) as a Refutation of the Cosmology of Macrobius’ *Commentary on the ‘Dream of Scipio’*”, forthcoming), Palamas’ defence of Christian cosmology, including the *creatio de novo*, is a word for word refutation of pagan cosmology (and the related metaphysics) as expounded in Macrobius’ *Commentary on the ‘Dream of Scipio’*, which Palamas read in Maximos Planoudes’ translation. – Plethon stresses again the fatal role of blindly and massively following others (instead of one’s using one’s own mind). On Plethon’s view of reasoning as the only antidote to error, see John A. Demetracopoulos, “Τὰ προβλήματα τῆς μεθόδου (modus sciendi) καὶ τῆς γνωσιμότητος τῶν ὄντων στὴν *Νόμων συγγραφὴν* τοῦ Γεωργίου Γεμιστοῦ-Πλήθωνος: ἱστορικὴ καὶ κριτικὴ προσέγγιση”, *Νέα Κοινωνιολογία* 15:3 (2002), pp.41–55 (at 42–43).

reason to reach truth,<sup>204</sup> lie the Christian fideists, who praised the *sacrificium intellectus* and allied with philosophical Scepticism as a tool of subversion of philosophy *tout-court*.<sup>205</sup> This demonstrates with certainty that, to him, Christian intellectuals fall under the class of “sophists”. For Plethon, anyone who argues against his own “philosophical” (i.e. true) views is a “sophist” and deserves to be punished by death by fire.<sup>206</sup>

Let us now focus on Plethon's description of the extreme “sophists”, i.e. of the “sophists” who, trying to deceive people at the highest degree (“γοητικώτατοι”), use not only speech but also impressive deeds. Plethon's wording was not innocent; he was merely rephrasing the titles of Chs. 4–6 of Book III of Eusebius' *Demonstratio Evangelica* in such a way so as to render his own lines a denial of what Eusebius claimed:

Κεφ. δ'. Ὅτι [Jesus Christ] μὴ κατὰ γοητείαν [1], ἐνθέω δὲ ἀρετῇ καὶ δυνάμει [4] τὰ παράδοξα {3} διεπράξατο [5].

Κεφ. ε'. Περὶ τῶν θειοτέρων [4] ἔργων [2] αὐτοῦ.

Κεφ. ζ' Ὅτι μὴ πλασάμενοι οἱ αὐτοῦ μαθηταί, τῇ δὲ ἀληθείᾳ [6] ἐμαρτύρουν {9} τὰς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ πραχθείσας [5] παραδοξοποιούς {3} ἱστορίας {9}.<sup>207</sup>

This shows clearly that Plethon regarded Jesus' preaching and public activity as a case of extreme “sophistry”, whose unfortunate historical success was secured by certain other “sophists”, who created the Christian tradition (“...by those who report these fancies with exaggeration and write them down, many others are constantly deceived”). Presumably, these “sophists” are the authors of the books of the New Testament and their exegetes.

<sup>204</sup> Plethon, *Laws* I,1 (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.18,12–15) (cf. *supra*, p.201).

<sup>205</sup> See John A. Demetracopoulos, “Christian Scepticism: The Reception of Xenophanes's B34 in Heathen and Christian Antiquity and its Sequel in Byzantine Thought”, in *Essays in Renaissance Thought and Letters. A Festschrift for John Monfasani*, edited by Alison K. Frazier and Patrick Nold (Leiden: Brill, 2015), *passim*.

<sup>206</sup> “...σοφιστῶν, ἦν τις παρὰ τὰς ἡμετέρας ταύτας δόξας σοφίζόμενος ἀλῶ, ζῶν... κεκαύσεται” (Plethon, *Laws* III,31; ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.126,11–12). Plethon goes on to say that such “sophists” are supposed to be buried in a separate cemetery section, exclusively destined for the sacrilegious people. – I have just quoted all of Plethon's references to “sophists” in the *Laws*.

<sup>207</sup> See *supra*, p.162. Cf. Eusebius' “θεία καὶ ἀπορρήτω δυνάμει [4]” and “θειοτέρα καὶ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον δυνάμει [4]” (*supra*, p.164).

Plethon's targeted attack on Eusebius' picture of Jesus Christ comes as no surprise. As B. Tambrun has convincingly shown,<sup>208</sup> the meaning of Plethon's discussion of the “Guides to the Best Doctrines” in Book I, Ch. 2 of the *Laws* has to do with his intention to go back to that dark time of the history of humanity which was marked by the triumph of Christianity. He wanted to refute, as a new Courete, the Christian concept of man and his history on earth as having been established by such leading figures as Eusebius of Caesarea and pave the way for a new age shined by the eternal truth, which was so long suppressed by Christians. It is therefore no surprise that Plethon focused on Book III of the *Demonstratio Evangelica*; for, according to Eusebius himself,<sup>209</sup> “the main part of the *Demonstratio Evangelica* begins with the third Book”, where “he responds to two types of pagan opponents: those who refuse to believe the marvelous things that the Apostles told of Jesus, and those who accept the truth of such stories, but relate to Jesus as if he were a wizard or seducer”.<sup>210</sup> As is apparent, Plethon combined these types: he believed that no human being (including Jesus) can exceed its natural limits and perpetrate supra-human deeds (type A), and that Jesus pretended (presumably deceiving both himself and his addressees) to perpetrate such things and deceived others (type B).

Plethon, to describe the “γοητικώτατοι” of the “sophists”, parodied a passage from another celebrated writing by Eusebius, to wit, the *Praeparatio Evangelica*. Eusebius, in ch. 2 (“Τίς ὁ τρόπος τῆς δαιμονικῆς ἐνεργείας” / “What is the demons' way of acting”) of Book V, which is one of the numerous places where he castigates “γοητεία” in the sense of deceitful cunning, gives a semi-historical account of polytheism. Polytheism, to Eusebius, is a development of the very ancient practice of ancestor-worship, which had led to deifying dead men:

Οἶδε γοῦν [sc. δαίμονες] περίγειοί τινες ὄντες καὶ καταχθόνιοι... τάφοις νεκρῶν καὶ μνήμασι... ἐμφιλοχωροῦντες..., ἐπεὶ κατέμαθον τὸ ἀνθρώπειον γένος κάτω που περὶ νεκρῶν ἀνδρῶν θεοποιίαν ἰλυσπώμενον..., ἐγγύθεν ἔφεδροι καὶ συνεργοὶ τῆς πλάνης παρήσαν, τοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων κακοῖς ἐπεντρυφῶντες καὶ τοὺς ἡλιθίους {7} τὰς ψυχὰς εὐχερῶς ἀπατῶντες [10] κινήσεσι τισι τῶν ξοάνων... καὶ ταῖς διὰ χρησμῶν φαντασίαις θεραπειαῖς τε σωματῶν... Δι' ὧν ἐπὶ μᾶλλον κατὰ κρημνῶν ἔφερον τοὺς δεισιδαίμονας, ὡς

<sup>208</sup> Tambrun, *Pléthon: le retour*, pp.66–85.

<sup>209</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* III, Preface (ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, p.94,8–9).

<sup>210</sup> Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea*, p.88; cf. pp.176–208.



αὐτοὺς εἶναι νομίζειν... τινὰς ἀληθῶς θεοὺς... Οὕτω δὴ τα λοιπὸν οἱ περίγειοι δαίμονες... ὃ τε ἐπὶ πᾶσιν αὐτὸς τῆς κακίας ἐξάρχων θεῶν οἱ μέγιστοι παρὰ τοῖς πᾶσιν ἐνομίζοντο ἢ τε τῶν πάλαι νεκρῶν μνήμη τῆς μείζονος ἡξιοῦτο θεραπείας. Ὡν... τὰς... ψυχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐνθέους καὶ ἀσωμάτους δυνάμεις οἱ φαῦλοι δαίμονες καθυπεκρίνοντο διὰ πολλῆς τῆς *τερατοποιίας* [3], καὶ αὐτῶν ἤδη τῶν θεραπευόντων καὶ ἱερωμένων αὐτοῖς ἐπὶ τὸ μείζον [8] αἰεὶ τὸν ἐκ τῆς φαντασίας τύφον ἐπαγόντων καὶ δὴ καὶ *γοητικαῖς* [1] *κακοτεχνίαις* τὰ πολλὰ συσκευαζόντων, τῆς καὶ *τούτων διδασκαλίας* {9} αὐτῶν πάλιν τῶν φαύλων δαιμόνων τοῖς θεραπεύουσι προκαταρξάντων· οἶδε γοῦν καὶ τῆς ἀρχεκάκου *γοητείας* [1] *παντὶ τῷ τῶν ἀνθρώπων βίῳ* [11] κατέστησαν αἴτιοι.

(The “demons who dwell about the earth and underground, and haunt the heavy and cloudy atmosphere over the earth... love to dwell in graves and monuments of the dead..., having observed” ancestor-worship, “were ready at hand as supporters and helpers of this delusion... They easily deceived silly souls by certain movements of the carved images, which had been consecrated by them of old in honour of the departed, and by the illusions produced by oracles, and by the cures of bodies... Hereby they the more drove the superstitious headlong into supposing sometimes that they were heavenly powers and certain real gods and at other times that they were the souls of the deified heroes. From this cause the belief in the polytheistic error began now to be regarded by the multitude as something greater and more venerable, as their thought passed from what was visible to the invisible nature of those who were hidden in the statues, and so confirmed the delusion more strongly. Thus then at length the terrestrial daemons... and the leader of them all in malice, were regarded among all men as the greatest of gods... by abundance of fictitious miracles; until at length their consecrated ministers themselves used continually to exaggerate the folly of the illusion, and prepare most of their contrivances by evil arts of jugglery, while the evil demons again took the lead themselves in teaching these tricks to their ministers. These demons at all events were the authors of the imposture which was the beginning of the mischief to all human life”.)<sup>211</sup>

<sup>211</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio Evangelica* V,2 (Eusebius Werke. Achter Band. Die *Praeparatio Evangelica*. Erster Teil. Einleitung, die Bücher I bis X. 2., bearbeitete Auflage, edited by Karl Mras and Édouard des Places (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1982), pp.222,21–224,7 = ed. Édouard des Places, *Eusèbe de Césarée. La Préparation évangélique. Livres IV–V, 1–17. Introduction, traduction et annotation par Odile Zink* (“Sources chrétiennes”, 262; Paris: du Cerf, 1979), pp.248–252); translated by Edwin Hamilton Gifford (*Eusebii Pamphili Evangelicae*

Plethon applies this account of the maliciousness of the demons that, under the guidance of the arch-demon, coined idolatry to the imposture of Christianity. In the place of demons, he puts the arch-impostor Jesus Christ and His disciples, whereas in the place of the pagan priests, who gave additional power (Eusebius and Plethon: “...ἐπὶ τὸ μείζον...”.) to the fraud, he placed the official propagators of Christianity, who have infected the common life (“ταῖς πολιτείαις λυμαινόνται”). One can hardly think of anything more smartly sacrilegious than such an anti-Christian re-elaboration of Eusebius’ lines.

Now, as has been seen in Part I (pp.165–199), Christonymos, in chapters 1-5 of his *Capita decem*, restores Origen’s, Eusebius’ and (Ps.-?) John Chrysostom’s arguments for the divinity of Jesus and refutation of the accusation of being a “charlatan”. This means that Christonymos’ writing can be seen as an intentional reversal of Plethon’s rejection of these Christian arguments. To Christonymos (see *supra*, p.164), Jesus used “ἄλλη τι δυνάμει” or “ἑτέρα τι δυνάμει... καὶ θεία” (cf. Plethon’s “θεία δὴ τι δυνάμει”), because He was “ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων” or, otherwise put, “πάντων ὑπερναβέβηκε” (cf. Plethon’s description of the “sophists” as “τὰ... ἀνθρώπινα [sc. πράγματα] αἶροντες εἰς τὸ θεϊότερον ἢ κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον μέτρον”).

## 2.2. Scholarios on Plethon’s view of Jesus Christ

Even if one, confused by the perplexing historical setting of Plethon’s paganism, is reluctant to share the traditional anti-Christian interpretation of Plethon’s discussion of the “sophists” and their “γοητεία” in the *Laws*,<sup>212</sup> the fact that this is how Scholarios read the *Laws* and that he condemned the writing

*Praeparationis libri XV. Ad codices manuscriptos denuo collatos recensuit, anglice nunc primum reddidit, notis et indicibus instruxit E. H. Gifford. Tomus III. Pars prior* (Oxonii: E Typographeo Academico, 1903), p.129).

<sup>212</sup> See Monfasani’s fine historical explanation of the emergence and duration of ‘Pletho expurgatus’ from the time of Ficino on (“George Gemistos Pletho and the West”, pp.25–33). In parallel with this image of Pletho, Scholarios’ and his disciple Matthaios Camariotes’ pagan depiction of Pletho nevertheless found its way into scholarship. Herman Samuel Reimarus’ *editio princeps* of the latter’s *Orationes duo in Plethonem, de fato* (Lugduni Batavorum: C. Wishoff, 1721) might be seen as an implicit recognition of Pletho’s paganism by the editor (see Monfasani, *art. cit.*, pp.32–33). It was Leo Allatius’ informative reproduction of Trapezuntios’ and Scholarios’ views of Pletho, however (on the basis of his study of some of Scholarios’ then unedited writings) which provided the prime matter for a series of certain 17<sup>th</sup>-, 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century authors to classify Pletho as a pagan. Although Allatius himself believed that Pletho’s intention was

as anti-Christian suffices to account for the literary fact that Christonymos set up to defend the divinity of Jesus Christ against certain pagan arguments dating back more than a millennium.

Scholarios was the first to remark that, in the above mentioned passage from the *Laws* (p.202), Plethon refers to Jesus Christ, his Apostles, the authors of the New Testament and the early Byzantine rulers, as those who perverted the course of history from the eternal truth of Hellenic paganism to the error of Judaeo-Christianity:

Ἀμέτρως... ἀσεβέστερα, ἅπερ εἰς τοὺς τῇ χριστιανικῇ διδασκαλίᾳ ἐπομένους βλασφημεῖ ἀναιδῶς, “σοφιστάς” ὀνομάζων καὶ “γόητας” καὶ τὰ χριστιανικά πάντα ψεύδη τε καὶ “σοφίσματα”...<sup>213</sup>

...“Σοφιστάς” τοὺς τῆς ἀληθείας καθηγεμόνας καλῶν...<sup>214</sup>

simply to describe Plato's philosophy, not to subscribe to it or combat Christianity (Leo Allatius, *De Georgiis eorumque scriptis diatriba* (Paris 1651), in *Bibliotheca Graeca*, Vol. XII, edited by Johann Albert Fabricius and Gottlieb Christoph Harles (Hamburg: C. Liebezeit, 1809), pp.1–136, at 97–99 = PG 160: 773–779, at 787–790), a number of his readers formed, on the basis of the evidence he provided, the opposite view. For instance, Jean Boivin accepted Scholarios' description of Plethon's ideological identity as correct (“Querelle des philosophes du quizième siècle. Dissertation historique”, *Mémoires de littérature tirés des Registres de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, tome second (Paris 1717), pp.775–791, at 776–777 and 785–789; Boivin stresses the fact that Bessarion, strangely but tellingly enough, in his reply to George Trapezuntios' attack on Plethon, did not address the point of Plethon's paganism at all; cf. Monfasani, “Platonic Paganism”, p.56; id., “George Gemistos Pletho and the West”, p.33). This estimation was reproduced in the entry “Gémiste (George)” of the *Biographie universelle, ancienne et moderne*, tome dix-septième (Paris 1816), pp.56–58). Joannes Conradus Hacke (*Disputatio, qua Bessarionis aetas, vita, merita, scripta exponuntur* (Harlemi: apud Heredes F. Bohn, 1840), pp.61–63) also accepts the pagan character of Plethon's thought, although he regards it as an excusable bizarre reaction of a very old man who saw everything collapsing around him and had no other way out than seeking refuge in the “nugae et somnia Alexandrinorum” or “Alexandrinae philosophiae mysteria” (sc. to the philosophico-religious syncretism of Late Antiquity, which, according to Hacke –who clearly follows here Johann Jacob Brucker's negative evaluation of the Mid- and Neo-Platonists–, stood for the *décadence* phase of ancient Greek philosophy).

<sup>213</sup> Scholarios, *Επιστολή τῇ βασιλίᾳ περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.154,26–28). This letter was written in 1453/54 (see Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios*, pp.187–188; 485).

<sup>214</sup> Scholarios, *Περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ καὶ κατὰ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς πολυθεΐας* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.163,3–4). On the date of this text (a letter to the exarch Joseph) see *supra*, p.174, note 103.

...Ὅπου... τινὸς τῶν ἡμετέρων ἔθῶν ἢ νόμων ἀντιπράττοντος αἰσθοῖτο τοῖς αὐτοῦ, ὡς ‘σοφιστῶν’ καὶ ‘γοήτων’ κατηγορεῖ καὶ ἀφρόνων τῶν τε θεμένων [sc. Jesus and His Apostles] τῶν τε προσεχόντων αὐτοῖς [sc. the obedient Christian folk].<sup>215</sup>

Scholarios connected directly Plethon's paganism with the rejection of Jesus as the self-revelation of God in a rather neglected writing of his. In a *Homily on Good Friday* he delivered during his career as a lay preacher in the palace, i.e. after ca. 1440 and before 1447,<sup>216</sup> he developed the religious meaning of the day. The Old Testament prophecies, he argues, along with some God-inspired heathen prophecies (by Sibylla and Hermes Trismegistos<sup>217</sup>), as well as the unprecedented miracles and the verified prophecies of Jesus Himself, prove the truth of Christianity:

...ἡ τῆς ἡμετέρας πρὸς αὐτὸν [sc. our Lord] πίστεως ἀλήθεια κατοπεύεται καὶ τὸ τυφλοὺς ὡς ἀληθῶς γεγονέναι καὶ ἀνοήτους, οἱ πρὸς τὸν φυσικὸν ἀποβλέποντες λόγον καθάπαξ τῷ φωτὶ τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ παρουσίας οὐ κατελάμφθησαν, καὶ πολλῶ χείρους ἐκείνων εἶναι τοὺς νῦν τοῖς σαπροῖς καὶ ληρώδεσι τῶν Ἑλλήνων μύθοις ἀντὶ τῆς ἱερᾶς διδασκαλίας προσέχοντας, καὶ τοσοῦτω χείρους, ὅσῳ καὶ μετὰ πολλῶ λαμπροτέρας ἀποδείξεις τῆς ἀληθείας τὴν αὐτὴν ἐκείνοις πάσχουσιν ἄνοιαν.<sup>218</sup>

(...[These facts] make it clearly evident that our faith to Him is true and that those who lean exclusively on natural reason and were not shined on by the

<sup>215</sup> Scholarios, *Περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ καὶ κατὰ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς πολυθεΐας* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.171,23–25).

<sup>216</sup> See Franz Tinnefeld, “Georgios Gennadios Scholarios”, in *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition. II: XIIIe–XIXe s.*, edited by Carmello Giuseppe Conticello and Vassa Conticello (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), pp.477–549, at 507 (ca. 1440–1447). Cf. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, VIII, p.17\* (before 1449).

<sup>217</sup> Scholarios' source must have been Ps.-Justin's *Cohortatio ad Graecos* p.38,1–2 (Ps.-Justinus. *Cohortatio ad Graecos. De monarchia. Oratio ad Graecos*, edited by Miroslav Marcovich (‘Patristische Texte und Studien’, 32; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1990), pp.77,4–78,27) and/or chs. 18–21 of Eusebius' *Constantini imperatoris oratio ad coetum sanctorum* (Eusebius Werke. Band 1. *Über das Leben Constantins. Constantins Rede an die heilige Versammlung. Tricennatsrede an Constantin*, edited by Ivar A. Heikel (‘Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller’, 7; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1902), pp.179,4–187,27).

<sup>218</sup> Scholarios, *Ὁμιλία ῥηθεῖσα τῇ ἀγίᾳ καὶ μεγάλῃ Παρασκευῇ ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ* 13 (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, I, pp.146,38–147,6).

light of the presence of Christ have been truly blind and ignorant; further, that those who adhere in our days to the rotten and absurd myths of the Hellenes rather than to the sacred doctrine are much worse than those – so much as they suffer from the same ignorance as they did but after the appearance of much brighter demonstrations of the truth.)

This is an explicit and literal reference to the existence of some contemporary “Hellenes”. Who were they? Scholarios’ description of the Hellenic beliefs in this writing formed the basis of a similar passage from his description of Plethon’s beliefs in his *Epistle to Plethon* himself:

Ἄλλ’ εἴ τινας νῦν τὰ σαπρὰ Ἑλλήνων ἀνανεοῖεν ληρήματα, τούτους φασὶν ἐν ἀσυγγνώστῳ καλινδεῖσθαι τῷ ψεύδει.<sup>219</sup> Μετὰ γὰρ τὴν λαμπρὰν τῆς μοναρχίας ἀπόδειξιν, ἦν... ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ συμφυῆς καὶ οὐσιώδης Ἰσχυρὸς, μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γεγεννημένος (Joh. 1:14; Bar. 3:38), ἀναμφισβητήτως καὶ καθαρῶς πιστεύειν ἐδίδαξε, ποῦ νῦν ὅσιον αὐτῷ θεοποιεῖν καὶ τὴν ἀλόγιστον ἐκείνην θεοποιίαν ἀναζωπυρεῖν ἀπεσβεσμένην πειρᾶσθαι...;<sup>220</sup>

<sup>219</sup> Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum* VI,4,13–14: “ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν ἡ καρδιά” (Rom. 1:21) ἐν σκότῳ καὶ ἀγνοίᾳ καλινδεῖται τῇ περὶ τοῦ θεραπεύειν τὸ θεῖον” (Origène. *Contre Celse. Tome III: livres V et VI. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes*, edited by Marcel Borret (‘Sources chrétiennes’, 147; Paris: du Cerf, 1969), p.186). It is possible that Scholarios is alluding to a passage from Plethon’s *Ἐπινομίς*, sc. the last chapter from his *Laws*. There (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.256,23–25), Plethon, just before launching an attack on the Christians’ “sophistic” doctrine of the resurrection of the body, says that it is only the traditional “Hellenic” view of the human nature that can form the basis of happiness; the more one moves away from it, the more one gets into the dark and misery: “...ἐν σκότει δεινῷ, τῇ περὶ τῶν μεγίστων ἀμαθίᾳ” (Plato, *Laws* 688C7–D1; cf. ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.258,14–17, which is a reproduction of Plato’s *Laws* 888D), καλινδουμένους”. Scholarios, too, plays with the simile of the sharp contrast of light to darkness.

<sup>220</sup> Scholarios, *Πρὸς Πλήθωνα ἐπὶ τῇ πρὸς τὸ ὑπὲρ Λατίνων βιβλίον αὐτοῦ ἀπαντήσῃ, ἢ κατὰ Ἑλλήνων* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.125,13–19). There follows a summary of the preface to Plethon’s *Laws* which was quoted above (p.185). Scholarios re-elaborates the passage from the *Homily on Good Friday* in the *Περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ καὶ κατὰ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς πολυθείας* (a letter to the exarch Joseph), too: “Ἄλλ’ οἱ μὲν σοφοὶ σου καθηγεμόνες ἔξουσιν τινα καὶ καταφυγὴν· οὐτῷ γὰρ τοῦ θεοῦ φωτὸς τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην τότε καταλάμψαντος φύσιν πειρώμενοι τῆς ἀληθείας... διήμαρτον... Σὺ δὲ τί παθὼν, ἄνθρωπε, τὴν ἀληθῆ θεολογίαν πάτριον ἔχων ἐπὶ τὴν ἀσύστατον μᾶλλον ὥρμησας φλυαρίαν...; Τί σαπρὸς καὶ φυγάσι καὶ πολλαχόθεν ἐληλεγμένους καὶ μηδεμίαν ἰσχὺν ἔτ’ ἔχουσιν ἐν ταῖς ἀνθρωπίναις ψυχαῖς προσέθου δόγμασιν...; Τίς ἀπολογία σοι... προσδοκήσαντι μόνῃ τὴν τοσοῦτοις ἔτεσι τεθνηκυῖαν πολυθεῖαν ἀναστήσειν αὐτῆς...;” (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, pp.170,2–5 and 170,16–29).

(If, however, some revive today the rotten absurdities of the Hellenes, they wallow, so to speak, in an unforgivable lie. For, after the illustrious demonstration of the uniqueness of God, which the connatural to God and essential Word, who versed with men, taught us beyond any doubt and clearly to believe, how could it be now pious to create gods again and try to rekindle that old extinct mob of fake gods...?)

As is apparent, the passage from the *Epistle to Plethon* (with the subtitle: “Against the Hellenes”), which dates from 1449/50,<sup>221</sup> is a development of the passage from the *Homily on Good Friday*. This means that the deniers of the first coming of Jesus as the self-revelation of God hinted in the *Homily* were Plethon and his followers.<sup>222</sup> As we have seen (pp.184–185), Christonymos had read and used Scholarios’ *Epistle to Plethon* for the revised version of Ch. 5. Thus, he was well aware of Scholarios’ view that Plethon’s image of Jesus Christ was the epitome of impiety. Scholarios also re-elaborated the above passage from his *Homily on Good Friday* in his *Epistle to Princess Theodora* (most probably written in 1453/54):

Τῶν πρὸ τῆς θείας οἰκονομίας γενομένων νομοθετῶν τῆς πολυθείας καὶ τοῦ χοιρώδους βίου καὶ τῶν μετὰ τὴν θείαν οἰκονομίαν τολμησάντων νόμοις

<sup>221</sup> See *supra*, p.184, note 132.

<sup>222</sup> If so, then it is plausible to assume that Scholarios wrote this sermon after 1443/44, i.e. after his setting out to overtly attack Plethon’s paganism, which he did for the first time in the opening and the concluding part of his *Κατὰ τῶν Πλήθωνος ἀποριῶν ἐπ’ Ἀριστοτέλει* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, pp.114,17–115,20) and in his dedicatory *Epistle to Mark Eugenikos* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, pp.116,26–118,20). — Incidentally, Scholarios’ information that Plethon had become an apostate already from his youth (*Ἐπιστολὴ τῇ βασιλίᾳ περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ*; eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, pp.152,20–21; 152,26–34; 154,11: “τοῦτ’ ἀκριβῶς ἤδειμεν ἐκ πολλῶν τῶν γνωρισάντων καλῶς ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ νεότητι”) must have been derived mainly from his mentor Mark Eugenikos, who, born ca. 1392, had accomplished his advanced studies (including “philosophy”) under Plethon in Constantinople (see François Masai, “Pletho and Plutarch”, *Scriptorium* 8 (1954), pp.123–127, at 125, note 6; id., *Pléthon*, p.59; Woodhouse, *op. cit.*, p.29; Tambrun, *Pléthon*, pp.37–39; cf. Nicholas Conostas, “Mark Eugenikos”, in *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition. II*, pp.411–475, at 413), before the latter, expelled from Constantinople by the pious Emperor Manuel II and the Church (see Scholarios, *Ἐπιστολὴ τῇ βασιλίᾳ περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ*; eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.153,11–12), fled for Mistra “within the first decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and nearer to the end than the beginning of that decade” (Woodhouse, *op. cit.*, p.30). This is probably what Scholarios alludes to in saying in his *Epistle to Mark Eugenikos* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.117,19–20): “οἶσθα τὸν ἄνδρα πλέον ἐμοῦ” (“You [sc. Mark] know this person [sc. Plethon] more [or “longer” or both] than I do”).

συστήσασθαι ἀπ' ἐναντίας τοῦ ἀληθοῦς νόμου καὶ μόνου πρὸς τὴν ὁδὸν τῆς ζωῆς ὁδηγοῦ, οἷον χρὴ εἶναι τὸν ἀπ' οὐρανῶν ἐλθόντα προνοία τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ δημιουργοῦ ἡμῶν ἀρίστη καὶ τελεωτάτη, πάντων οὖν ἐκείνων ἀφρονέστερος οὗτος γέγονε σοφιστής.<sup>223</sup>

His description of Christianity as the “μόνος πρὸς τὴν ὁδὸν τῆς ζωῆς ὁδηγός” is a clear allusion to his own recently produced anti-Islam work *Περὶ τῆς μόνης ὁδοῦ πρὸς τὴν σωτηρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων* (see *supra*, p.148), whereas those who believe, after Jesus Christ, in a different law as God-sent are apparently the Muslims. Thus, in this revised version of his repudiation of Plethon, Scholarios insults him with more vehemence by describing his “legislation” as worse even than the “legislation” of Muhammad.

### 3. Other hints by Christonymos at the identity of his addressees

There are five places in the *Capita decem* where the identity of the author's addressees is possibly, probably or certainly, revealed.

(i) In ch. 2 of *versio A* (cf. *supra*, p.167), Christonymos argues that, if his addressees hold that Jesus Christ enjoyed such *grand succès* throughout history by using some sort of “γοητεία” which pre-existed Him, then this “γοητεία” would have been used even before Christ by an infinite number of persons, since “the universe, according to them, is eternal” (“αἰδίου τοῦδε τοῦ παντός κατ' αὐτοὺς ὄντος”).<sup>224</sup> This is unambiguously a pagan doctrine, which was combated by some mid- and late Byzantine authors such as Nicholas of Methone, Nicephoros Blemmydes, Gregory Palamas and Theophanes of Nicaea<sup>225</sup> and was restored in Plethon's *Laws*, whose Book II, Chapter 27 (one of the

<sup>223</sup> Scholarios, *Ἐπιστολὴ τῇ βασιλείᾳ περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.152,6–12). On the date, see *infra*, p.228.

<sup>224</sup> Ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.205,5–10.

<sup>225</sup> See *Examina solemnia Gymnasii Francofurtensis. Inest Nicolai Methonensis Anecdotti Pars I*, edited by Johann Theodor Voemel (Francofurti: Typis Henr. Ludov. Broenneri, 1825), pp.3–10; John A. Demetracopoulos, “Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ Κεφάλαια ἑκατὸν πενήκοντα, 1–14”, pp.297; 312–315; Θεοφάνους Νικαίας Ἀπόδειξις ὅτι ἐδύνατο ἐξ αἰδίου γεγενῆσθαι τὰ ὄντα καὶ ἀνατροπὴ ταύτης. *Editio princeps. Εἰσαγωγή, κείμενο, μετάφραση, εὔρετήρια*, edited by Ioannis D. Polemis (‘Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi: Philosophi Byzantini’, 10; Athens: The Academy of Athens, Paris: Librairie J. Vrin, Bruxelles: éditions Ousia, 2000).

chapters destroyed by Scholarios) discussed “Περὶ τῆς τοῦ παντός αἰδιότητος” (“On the Eternity of the Universe”).<sup>226</sup>

Hermonymos also states in ch. 4 of *versio A*,<sup>227</sup> that the “Hellenes” regarded their traditional doctrines as practically existing from all eternity (“τὰς τῶν Ἑλλήνων πάντων πάσας πατρίους δόξας... ἐξ αἰῶνος ἀπείρου σχεδὸν καὶ κατ' αὐτοὺς τοὺς Ἕλληνας... καταγομένας”). This is exactly what Plethon says: “Ταῦτα τὰ δόγματα (namely the doctrines of his *Laws*) ... συναΐδια τῷ παντὶ οὐρανῷ ... ἐν ἀνθρώποις”.<sup>228</sup>

(ii) In ch. 4 of *versio A*,<sup>229</sup> Hermonymos argues that, whereas Christ was strong enough to eradicate these most ancient “Hellenic” doctrines, the enemies of Christianity are still trying to abolish it, but in vain. Christonymos refers to Christianity as “ἡ τοῦ Χριστοῦ νομοθεσία”, and adds that “even at present some people do their best against it” “by speaking and writing” (“λέγοντες, γράφοντες”).<sup>230</sup> Who can these people have been? Who can be counted as writing against Christ's legislation in Christonymos' time? As has been seen (p.209), Scholarios, around 1454/56,<sup>231</sup> wrote that Plethon, in his *Laws*, described both the founders of Christianity and their followers as “σοφισταὶ καὶ γόητες” and argued in length against “τὰ ἡμέτερα ἦθη ἢ νόμοι” and the “χριστιανικὸς νόμος”.<sup>232</sup> Scholarios adds that he had long ago been aware of the fact that Plethon was a pagan and was composing a sacrilegious book where he laid down an anti-Christian legislation.<sup>233</sup> The fact that Christonymos does not include ‘action’ in the forms of his contemporary anti-Christian polemics shows that his words should not be taken as a reference to a certain state or military force but only to some ideological enemies—an image that does not

<sup>226</sup> Plethon, *Laws* II,27 (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.82). Cf. *Laws* I,2 (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, pp.30,23–32,3).

<sup>227</sup> Ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, pp.206,14–207,1. Cf. *supra*, pp.176–177.

<sup>228</sup> Plethon, *Laws* III,43 (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.252).

<sup>229</sup> Ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, pp.206,14–207,1.

<sup>230</sup> Ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, pp.206,22–207,1.

<sup>231</sup> On the date, see *infra*, p.228.

<sup>232</sup> Scholarios, *Περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ καὶ κατὰ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς πολυθείας* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.171,23–27).

<sup>233</sup> Id., *op.cit.* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, pp.155,30–156,1).



fit with the anti-Christian polemics by the ancient Roman emperors but with Plethon's anti-Christian polemics, which did not use force, nor even 'missionary' activity.<sup>234</sup>

Additionally, Scholarios, in his letter on the "impious Juvenalios" case, reports that Juvenalios' mentors (i.e. Plethon and his circle) set out to defend their paganism rather than overtly attack Christianity: "...ἐκεῖνοι [sc. οἱ διδάξαντες] τὸν ἑλληνισμὸν ἐκδικοῦσι καὶ λόγοις καὶ συγγραφαῖς... ἡ λέγειν ἢ συγγράφειν..."<sup>235</sup> This is fully identical with Christonymos' wording, and this is not a mere coincidence. For, in ch. 3, where Origen's and (Ps.-?) John Chrysostom's argument from the historical paradox of the universal domination of Christianity is reproduced and the phrase "λέγοντες, γράφοντες" occurs, Christonymos adds parenthetically that the enemies of faith "even today do their best" to abolish Christianity ("καὶ ἄχρι καὶ νῦν δὲ κινοῦντες

<sup>234</sup> It is telling, in this respect, that there is no evidence for any direct connection of the ex-monk pagan zealot Juvenalios (first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> cent.), who was sentenced for his apostasy to a typically Byzantine brutal death (see Scholarios' *Epistle to Raoul Manuel Oises*, eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, pp.476,1–489,16; cf. Igor P. Medvedev, "Ἡ ὑπόθεση τοῦ ἀποστάτη Ἰουβενάλιου ἀπὸ τὴν ἀποψὲ τοῦ δικαίου", *Βυζαντινὰ μελέται* 3 (1991), pp.152–173; Niketas Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp.134–136) to Plethon himself or his circle (see J. Monfasani, "Platonic Paganism", pp.45–61, at 59; cf. Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon*, pp.35; 225). Although Scholarios does connect Juvenalios' anti-Christian activity with the intellectual circle of Plethon (see Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios*, pp.182–183), he does not link Plethon with Juvenalios' activity; we cannot consider Juvenalios as carrying out a mission. For Plethon, philosophical truth (as opposed to the errant obscurantist religious monotheism inaugurated by Moses and elaborated by Jesus Christ and Muhammad) cannot be served by explicitly spelling out one's ideas and trying to proselytise as many people as possible (which was the approach the mainstream of the French Enlightenment suggested and used for the social reformation which would follow the collapse of the corrupted *ancien régime*); instead, for Plethon, truth was to 'fatally' (i.e. inexorably) shine again over the world, soon after his own death. I fully share J. Monfasani's view that "Plethon wrote the *Treatise on the Laws* not to make converts amongst his contemporaries, but to provide a written model for the future world Hellenic state. His life's task was not to create a brotherhood of pagans [...], but to prepare the intellectual foundations of the coming new world order" (Monfasani, "Platonic Paganism", p.61). In all probability, Plethon believed that he authored this book as a reincarnation of the soul of Zoroaster and Plato (see Demetracopoulos, "Christian Scepticism", par. 5.2).

<sup>235</sup> Scholarios, *Τῷ φρονιμωτάτῳ καὶ εὐσεβεῖ ἄρχοντι κυρῷ Μανουὴλ Ῥαοὺλ τῷ Οἰσῇ* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.479,21). Cf. Scholarios' *Epistle to Mark Eugenikos*: "...αὐτὸν [sc. Gemistos]... διδάσκειν... συγγράφειν νομοθεσίαν τινὰ καινότεραν, ἐν ᾗ τὰ ἡμέτερα διασύρεται" (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.117,10–12).

[sc. πάντα λίθον]"<sup>236</sup> It is obvious that here Christonymos alludes to Plethon. Even Scholarios' "συγγραφαί" is an allusion to the title of Plethon's *Laws*, i.e. *Νόμων συγγραφή*, since it is immediately followed by the above quoted (p.185) succinct reproduction of the preface to the *Laws* ("...γενεαλογίας θεῶν" etc.), which summarises the contents of the abominable writing.<sup>237</sup>

(iii) In ch. 5 of *versio B* (cf. *supra*, p.183), Hermonymos argues that Jesus Christ is worshipped as "God" in a sense much higher than the pagan adoration of Zeus, who is called by "Hellenes" "κορυφαῖος πάντων καὶ ὑπάτος".<sup>238</sup> "Ὑπάτος" is one of the epithets for Zeus in one of Plethon's hymns ("ὑπάτος Ζεὺς"<sup>239</sup>), along with "ἐξαιρετός", "ὑψιστός τε καὶ ἐξαιρετός", "ἐξοχος", "ἐξοχος ὅσσω ἀπείρω", and "ἐξοχα ἐσθλός".<sup>240</sup> It is also ascribed to Zeus in a passage from Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Cratylus*,<sup>241</sup> which, as has been recently

<sup>236</sup> Ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.206,22.

<sup>237</sup> An explicit yet rather neglected reference by Scholarios to Plethon and his followers as "Hellenes" occurs in the "Ἐλεγχος τῆς ἰουδαϊκῆς νῦν πλάνης ἐκ τῆς Γραφῆς καὶ τῶν πραγμάτων καὶ τῆς πρὸς τὴν χριστιανικὴν ἀλήθειαν παραθέσεως, ἐν σχήματι διαλόγου" (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, III, p.287,3–5), which dates from 1464/66 (see Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios*, p.487). In this writing, Scholarios expounds once again the argument for the divinity of Jesus Christ from the historical success of Christianity. It is not reasonable, he says, to assume that an "ἄνθρωπος ψιλός" achieved such an "ἔργον", which could be accomplished only "ὑπερφῶς"; therefore, Jesus was "Θεοῦ παῖς" or "Υἱὸς Θεοῦ" (*ibid.*, pp.297,24–300,34). Scholarios seems merely to re-elaborate the relevant parts of his anti-Islam pieces. No verbal similarities between this anti-Jewish writing by Scholarios and the *Capita decem* are discernible – expectedly so, since, as will be seen (p.232), the *Capita decem* was finished in 1460, i.e. before the "Ἐλεγχος τῆς ἰουδαϊκῆς νῦν πλάνης".

<sup>238</sup> Ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.208,18–21.

<sup>239</sup> Plethon, *Laws* (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.222,5).

<sup>240</sup> Plethon, *Laws* III,34 (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, pp.152,25–26; 182,8; 202,6; 204,20; 214,18; 218,2). See also Plethon's *Contra Scholarii pro Aristotele objectiones* XII,4; XVII,4; XXX,11 (*Georgii Gemisti Plethonis Contra Scholarii pro Aristotele objectiones*, edited by Enrico V. Maltese (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1988), pp.12,30–31; 16,3–4; 41,19–21); *Μαγικά λόγια τῶν ἀπὸ Ζωροάστρου μάγων* - *Ἐξηγήσεις εἰς τὰ αὐτὰ λόγια* 14 (*Μαγικά λόγια τῶν ἀπὸ Ζωροάστρου μάγων*. Γεωργίου Γεμιστοῦ-Πλήθωνος Ἐξηγήσεις εἰς τὰ αὐτὰ λόγια. *Oracles chaldaïques. Recension de Georges Gémiste Pléthon. Édition critique avec introduction, traduction et commentaire. La recension arabe des "Μαγικά λόγια" par M. Tardieu*, edited by Brigitte Tambrun-Kraker ('Corpus philosophorum Medii Aevi – Philosophi Byzantini', 7; Athens: The Academy of Athens; Paris, Librairie J. Vrin; Bruxelles, éditions Ousia, 1995), p.18,14–18).

<sup>241</sup> Proclus, *In Platonis "Cratylum" commentaria* 99 (ed. G. Pasquali, *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Cratylum commentaria* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1908), p.49,17).

shown,<sup>242</sup> is a major source of Plethon's view of Zeus and the relation of the remaining gods to him. Proclus explicitly derives this epithet from Homer ("... ὑπάτε κρείοντων..."<sup>243</sup>), whose view of the primacy of Zeus he traces back to Orpheus. As for "κορυφαῖος", one can find it among the adjectives ascribed to Zeus in Aelius Aristides' *Hymn to Zeus*,<sup>244</sup> which is a major source of Plethon's own hymn to Zeus.<sup>245</sup> This is something more than what Christonymos found in Origen's discussion of Celsus' view of Zeus in the *Contra Celsum* (see *supra*, pp.183–184); for, Celsus simply accuses Christians of ignoring the allegorical interpretation of the tale-story that Zeus was buried in Crete, without implying (at least as far as Celsus' text allows us to surmise) that despising Zeus is equal to despising the utmost deity. On the contrary, Plethon was quite serious about stressing the primacy of Zeus – so serious that, as has been recently shown,<sup>246</sup> Plethon, when copying certain Platonic writings, cleansed them from passages that implied that some deities pre-existed Zeus. Hence, behind Christonymos' "they" in "τοῦ κορυφαίου πάντων καὶ ὑπάτου, ὡς ἂν αὐτοὶ φαῖεν, Διός", one can legitimately see the "Hellenes", since Christonymos'

<sup>242</sup> Vojtěch Hladký, "B. Tambrun-Krasker on George Gemistos Plethon", *Byzantinoslavica* 67 (2009), pp.372–380, at 378; id., *Plato's Second Coming. An Outline of the Philosophy of George Gemistos Plethon* (Rethymno / Praha / Pisa 2005–2010), pp.89–97.

<sup>243</sup> *Ilias* VIII,31; *Odyssey* I,45; 81; XXIV,473. Cf. "Ζεὺς... θεῶν ὑπάτος καὶ ἄριστος" (*Ilias* XIX,258; XXIII,43; *Odyssey* XIX,303; XX,230); "Ζῆν' ὑπάτον" (*Ilias* V,756; VIII,22; XVII,339).

<sup>244</sup> *Aristides*, vol. I, edited by Wilhelm Dindorf (Leipzig: Libraria Weidmannia, 1829; repr. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1964), p.11,13. Plethon does not call Zeus "κορυφαῖος", a predication that he reserves for Poseidon (ed. Alexandre, p.160,22–24). Nevertheless, this distinction between the ultimate cause of all beings (which, in some sense, stands out of the beings) and the first ring in the chain of beings (which is part of the chain) must have been too sophisticated for Christonymos' mind. Cf. the recent *Forschungsbericht* and discussion in: Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism*, 243–246; Brigitte Tambrun, "L'être, l'un et la pensée politique de Pléthon", in *Proceedings of the International Congress on Plethon and his Time (Mystras, 26–29 June 2002)*, edited by Linos G. Benakis and Chrestos P. Baloglou (Athens / Mystras, 2003), pp.67–82, at 67–69 and 77–79.

<sup>245</sup> See Tambrun, *Pléthon: le retour*, pp.187–195. Plethon explicitly refers to this *Hymn* by Aristides in his *Contra Scholarii pro Aristotele objectiones* (XXI,1–2; ed. Maltese, *Georgii Gemisti*, p.18,2–11).

<sup>246</sup> Fabio Pagani, "Filosofia e teologia in Giorgio Gemisto Pletone: la testimonianza dei codici platonici", *Rinascimento* 49 (2008), pp.3–45, at 31, 34–35 and 40; id., "Damnata verba: censure di Pletone in alcuni codici platonici", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 102/1 (2009), pp.167–202, at 176–190; cf. id., "Un nuovo testimone della recensio pletonica al testo di Platone: il Marc. Gr. 188 (K)", *Res Publica Litterarum* 29 (2006), pp.5–20. Cf. Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism*, p.282.

"αὐτοί" substitutes Origen's "παρ' Ἑλλήσι" from the passage from the *Contra Celsum* paraphrased by Christonymos. Since Christonymos clearly attacks, however, certain of his contemporaries, these "αὐτοί", who place Zeus as the highest god, cannot help being Plethon and his followers. Scholarios, in 1456, also did not fail to mention Zeus as the "father" of beings in Plethon's polytheism.<sup>247</sup>

(iv) As has been seen (pp.167–168), in ch. 2,<sup>248</sup> Christonymos discusses the possibility that Jesus' historical success was due to some suprahuman "smartness"/"φρόνησις". Such power, he explains, can be of three sorts: (i) demonic, (ii) angelic and (iii) divine. Case (i) is discarded on the basis that no evil being is attested to have ever had such a success. Incidentally, the fact that this case is not discarded as inappropriately attributing this historical success to an evil being implies that the "smartness"/"φρόνησις" discussed here does not mean just 'cleverness' but 'cunningness' or 'craftiness'—which is put explicitly in the discussion of the next case. Case (ii) is rejected on the grounds that such smartness entails deceitfulness, which, if used by a superior kind of beings ("κρείττονα γένη") in general, would by definition deteriorate it: "Ψευσθῆναι γὰρ ἄγγελον τῶν ἀδυνάτων ἢ τινα δύναμιν ὅλως τῶν κρείττονων γενῶν".<sup>249</sup> This classification of the suprahuman beings is not Christian; for, to Christianity, there is only one type of "superior" (to humans) created entities, i.e. the various orders of angels.<sup>250</sup> By contrast, this classification occurs (also including heroes, whom Christonymos leaves aside, presumably because he regarded them as humans) in most Platonists of Late Antiquity, including Porphyry, Jamblichus, Julian, Proclus and Damascius.<sup>251</sup> For instance, Jamblichus speaks

<sup>247</sup> Scholarios, *Περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ καὶ κατὰ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς πολυθεΐας* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.169,28–31). Cf. his *Epistle to Manuel Raoul Oises* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.479,39–40).

<sup>248</sup> Ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, pp.196,5–15 (*versio A*); 204,1–12 (*versio B*).

<sup>249</sup> See *supra*, p.167.

<sup>250</sup> The usual suspect, Ps.-Dionysius Areopagite, does not use the phrase at all. The differences between the orders, including the fact that the ninth of them is called 'angels' in the strict sense of the term, is obviously irrelevant here.

<sup>251</sup> Porphyry, *Epistula ad Anebonem* I, 1b3; 4b2 (*Porfirio. Lettera ad Anebo*, edited by Angelo Raffaele Sodano (Napoli: L'Arte tipografica, 1958), pp.3; 7); Jamblichus, *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum* I, 3; 4; 8; 10; 21; II, 5; 10; III, 25; IV, 13 (*Jamblique. Les mystères d'Égypte. Texte établi et traduit*, edited by Édouard des Places (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1996), pp.7,15–16 = 42; 10,13–14 = 43; 12,1 = 44; 26,6 = 53; 33,13 and 33,17 = 57 and 58; 37,1–2; 64,15 = 76;

of three ranks, i.e. “θεὸς καὶ ἄγγελος καὶ δαίμων”.<sup>252</sup> Plethon himself, in his *Commentary on the “Chaldean Oracles”*, uses the comparative “κρείττων” in his description of the hierarchy of the souls; for instance, he speaks of the magi of Zoroaster as considering the souls of the stars as “ψυχὰς... τῶν δαιμονίων [sc. ψυχῶν] κρείττους οὐσας”, which, in turn, are “γενναϊότεραι” (“of better race”; a synonym for “κρείττων”) than the souls of humans.<sup>253</sup> So, one can conclude that Christonymos assumes the existence of some “superior” or “more powerful kinds of beings” only by concession in the context of his discussion

79,16–17 = 85; 90,9–10 and 93,18 = 92 and 94; 160,3 = 134; 198,11 = 157); Julian, *Eiς τὸν βασιλέα Ἡλίου* 24 (*L'empereur Julien. Œuvres complètes. Tome II – 2e partie. Discours de Julien empereur: Les Césars – Sur l'Hélios Roi – Le Misopogon. Texte établi et traduit*, edited by Christian Lacombrade (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1964), p.120); Proclus, *Theologica Platonica* I,25; II,12; IV,5; V,6; V,9 (*Proclus. Théologie platonicienne. Texte établi et traduit. Tome I*, edited by Henri-Dominique Saffrey and Leendert Gerrit Westerink (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968), p.109,15; *Proclus. Théologie platonicienne. Texte établi et traduit. Tome II* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1974), p.72,14; *Proclus. Théologie Platonicienne. Livre IV. Texte établi et traduit* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1981), p.19,8; *Proclus. Théologie platonicienne. Texte établi et traduit. Tome V* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1987), pp.26,15; 31,21); *In Platonis “Alcibiadem I”* (*Proclus. Sur le Premier Alcibiade de Platon. Texte établi et traduit. Tome II*, edited by Alain-Philippe Segonds (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1986), pp.242; 247); *In Platonis “Parmenidem” IV; VI* (*Procli philosophi Platonici opera inedita. Pars III*, edited by Victor Cousin (Paris, 1864; repr. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1961), pp.941,22; 1055,18 = *Procli in Platonis Parmenidem commentaria*. Vol. III, edited by Carlos G. Steel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 23,4–5); *In Platonis “Timaeum” commentaria I; V* (*Procli Diadochi In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, vol. I, edited by Ernst Diehl (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903), p.45,10; *Procli Diadochi In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, vol. III, edited by Ernst Diehl (Lipsiae: Teubner, 1906; repr. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1965), pp.175,3; 273,1); *In primum Euclidis “Elementorum” librum commentarii* (*Procli Diadochi in primum Euclidis Elementorum librum commentarii*, edited by Gottfried Friedlein (Leipzig: Teubner, 1873), p.168,18); Damascius, *In Platonis “Parmenidem”*, Ruelle 6,14 (*Damascius. Commentaire du Parménide de Platon. Tome I. Texte établi par L.G. Westerink; introduit, traduit et annoté par J. Combès, avec la collaboration de Ph.-A. Segonds* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1997), p.3,23]; 15,8 [18,18]; 51,23 [81,15]; 112,2; 221,16; 229,28; 256,23; 263,24). Cf. John F. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), p.54.

<sup>252</sup> Cf., e.g., Christopher A. Plaisance, “Of Cosmocrator and Cosmic Gods: The Place of the ‘Archons’ in *De Mysteriis*”, in *Daimonic Imagination: Uncanny Intelligence*, edited by Angela Voss and William Rowlandson (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp.64–85, at 64–65; 79–80.

<sup>253</sup> Plethon, *Commentary on the “Chaldean Oracles”* 14 (ed. Tambrun-Krasker, *Μαγικά λόγια*, p.11,11–15). Cf. *Laws* I,5 (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.52,3–19); III,34 (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.154,24–25). Likewise, Plethon calls Poseidon “κράτιστον τῶν ἑαυτοῦ [sc. Zeus’] ἐγγόνων” and Zeus himself “ὅτι μάλιστα κράτιστον” (*Laws* I,5, ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, pp.46,14; 50,20; cf. 56,21–22; III,15, ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, pp.92,18–19; 98,7–8; III,34, ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, pp.134,9–10; 154,16–17; 156,21–22; 164,24,–166,1; 174,6–8).

with his pagan adversaries. True, as already seen (p.167), the origins of his reference to the “angels” as possible sources of the supernatural powers of Jesus is Celsus’ idea, as reported by Origen, that this was so, and it is not easy to figure out if Celsus’ “angels” are akin to the Neoplatonic “angels”. So, the fact that Christonymos, adapting the Christian polemics he relied on, included these “angels” to the easily recognizable Neoplatonic class of “κρείττονα γένη” suggests that he was addressing certain adherent/s to some sort of Neoplatonic hierarchy of beings. Now, this hierarchy could well be Plethon’s; for, in Plethon’s hierarchy, all entities that lie above man are impeccable;<sup>254</sup> man is the only being whose nature includes the possibility of erring (“τὸ ἁμαρτητόν”).<sup>255</sup>

(v) In his 5<sup>th</sup> argument (see *supra*, p.182), Christonymos’ list of the institutions (“οἰκία”, “πόλις”, “νῆσος”, “ἔθνος” and “γένος”) intended or not intended and realised or not realised by the various leaders, including Jesus, through history amounts to the sum of the relevant lists by Origen (“πόλις” and “ἔθνος”) and Eusebius (“οἰκία γῆ” or “οἰκεῖον ἔθνος” and “νέον ἔθνος”) – except for νῆσος (island), which was added by him. This might be seen as an allusion to Plato’s (frustrated) attempt to apply his political ideas in Sicily, which Plethon narrates at length in his *Excerpta e Diodoro et Plutarcho*,<sup>256</sup> or an allusion to Plethon’s own plan to secure the Peloponnese from the Ottomans and, presumably, make it the place for the renovation of Hellenism.<sup>257</sup>

<sup>254</sup> “ὁρθῶς... ἀεὶ χωροῦση... οἷα δὲ καὶ ἀεὶ τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ κρείττοσι ἔπεσθαι ἱκανοῦ καὶ δι’ ἐκείνους ἀεὶ τε καὶ περὶ πάντα ἀναμαρτήτου διαγιγνομένου” (*Laws* I,5, ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.52,16–19; see also III,34, ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, pp.138,10–14; 176,7–11).

<sup>255</sup> Plethon, *Laws* III,31; III,34 (ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, pp.120,15–16; 122,4–5; 122,19–20; 176,11–14; 220,15–16; 236,5).

<sup>256</sup> Plethon, *Excerpta e Diodoro et Plutarcho* 16,4–23,36 *passim* (*Georgii Gemisti Plethonis opuscula de historia Graeca*, edited by Enrico V. Maltese (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1989), pp.10,13–41,3).

<sup>257</sup> On Plethon on Peloponnese, see, e.g., N. Patrick Peritore, “The Political Thought of Gemistos Plethon: A Renaissance Byzantine Reformer”, *Polity* 10/2 (1977), pp.168–191; Woodhouse, *op. cit.*, pp.107–108.

#### 4. Christonymos' view of Aristotle

For Christonymos, "Aristotle is rather superior to Plato"; he is the "παγκόσμιος {1} διδάσκαλος [2]" ("universal preceptor") or "παγκόσμιος [1] καθηγεμών" ("universal professor and leader") of philosophy.<sup>258</sup> This is not far from the way in which Scholarios describes Aristotle in his refutation of Plethon's celebrated *On the Points of Aristotle's Contentious Disagreement with Plato*; to Scholarios,<sup>259</sup> the philosophy of Aristotle, who has been "ἀνθρώπων πάντων σοφώτατος" ("the wisest of all men"), is the best of the "κοσμικά αγαθά" ("the good we possess in this life"), and this is something agreed upon by practically "ἅπαντες ἄνθρωποι" ("all men"). Scholarios, in his *Praise of Aristotle's Monotheism*, by which he had prefaced, in all probability earlier (maybe much earlier) than ca. 1450, his paraphrase of Aristotle's natural works,<sup>260</sup> also calls Aristotle's philosophy "ὑπὸ πάσης γλώττης ἐν κόσμῳ {1} καὶ γένους παντὸς {1} πολλῇ σπουδῇ γνωρισθεῖσα καὶ θαυμασθεῖσα" ("keenly made known all over the world in all languages by all nations and admired") and eulogises Aristotle as "μόνος καὶ πρῶτος καὶ τελευταῖος τῆς φιλοσοφίας εὑρετῆς καὶ συγγραφεὺς καὶ διδάσκαλος [2] τῷ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένει" ("the only and prime and last inventor and author and preceptor of philosophy for the sake of humankind").<sup>261</sup> Granted that Plethon was a staunch anti-Aristotelian and that Hermonymos had praised Plethon's anti-Aristotelianism in his account of Plethon's encounter with the Aristotelian Westerners in Florence,<sup>262</sup>

<sup>258</sup> Ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.195,10–11 (*versio A*); p.203,10–12 (*versio B*). Let it be noted that, in Book III of Eusebius' *Demonstratio Evangelica*, which was extensively utilized by Christonymos, it is not Aristotle, but Plato who is praised as the only ancient philosopher who reached a monotheistic conception of God, which is a fundamental Christian tenet (III,6,24; ed. Heikel, *op. cit.*, pp.135,33–136,5). Christonymos could not share –any longer– this view; for, his main adversary was a Platonist, whereas his main contemporary source, i.e. Scholarios, was an Aristotelian.

<sup>259</sup> Scholarios, *Κατὰ τῶν Πλήθωνος ἀποριῶν ἐπ' Ἀριστοτέλει* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, pp.2,9–13; 8,6–7).

<sup>260</sup> See John A. Demetracopoulos, "George Gennadios II – Scholarios' Abridgment of Theodore Metochites' *Paraphrasis* of the *Parva Naturalia* and its Place in his *Œuvre*", in: *Cross-cultural Dialogues: The "Parva Naturalia" in Greek, Arabic and Latin Aristotelianism* (Gothenburg, June 6–8, 2014), edited by Börje Bydén (forthcoming).

<sup>261</sup> Eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, VIII, pp.506–507.

<sup>262</sup> PG 160: 808A4–7. I cannot see how these lines imply any criticism of Plethon's anti-Aristotelianism on Christonymos' part, as suggested by Kalatzi (*Hermonymos*, p.35); quite

Hermonymos' declaration in the *Capita decem* that Aristotle is superior to Plato objectively placed him outside of Plethon's trend and presented him as sharing Scholarios' Aristotelian sympathies.<sup>263</sup>

There is more here, however. Whereas Scholarios states that all people agree upon Aristotle's superiority, Christonymos remarks that people are divided into Platonists and Aristotelians ("κατὰ τινὰς μὲν Πλάτων, κατὰ τινὰς δὲ Ἀριστοτέλης" or "κατὰ μὲν τινὰς Πλάτων, κατ' ἐνίου δὲ Ἀριστοτέλης").<sup>264</sup> This remark –which, after all, is true– can be seen as a tribute to his previous predilection for Plethon's Platonism (see *infra*, pp.226–227). Furthermore, out of the various eulogies of Aristotle in Greek, his wording is very close to a concrete phrase from Scholarios' introduction to the *Κατὰ τῶν Πλήθωνος ἀποριῶν ἐπ' Ἀριστοτέλει*, which he addressed to the future emperor Constantine Palaiologos: "...Ἀριστοτέλη..., ἀνθρώπων πάντων σοφώτατον

the contrary, I would be prepared to share the oldest extant comment on these lines by an anonymous reader of them (on the margin of a relevant manuscript; see Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.378) that Christonymos shares Plethon's anti-Aristotelianism. Of course, one cannot exclude the possibility that Christonymos' reference to the success of Plethon's anti-Aristotelian eulogy of Plato in Florence was intended to praise Plethon's wisdom in virtue of his being able to disprove views traditionally ("...πρίν...") held as true. Still, we can plausibly assume that it would be too much on Christonymos' part to expect from his readers to place such an asterisk at this point of his speech; presumably, he was in a position to understand that most of them would assume that an eulogist of Plethon could only share such a fundamental philosophical feature of him as his anti-Aristotelianism. — Incidentally, Plethon's refutation of Aristotle was allusively praised by the monk Gregory in his own *Laudatio funebris Plethonis* (PG 160: 818A14–B2). This is not the place to show point-for-point that F. Schultze's (*Georgios Gemistos Plethon und seine reformatorischen Bestrebungen* (Jena 1874; repr. Leipzig 1975), pp.51–54) and Woodhouse's (*George Gemistos*, pp.7–13; see at 11–13) interpretations of this *Laudatio* and comparison with Christonymos' funeral oration, based, as they are, in the arbitrary assumption that Gregory, as a disciple of Plethon, was initiated to paganism, must be substantially revised (see Monfasani's criticism in "Platonic Paganism", pp.58–59).

<sup>263</sup> Incidentally, Wegelinus' *ad locum* explanation of Christonymos' predilection for Aristotle is completely unhistorical: "Magnus uterque fuit philosophus, Plato et Aristoteles. Illi tamen hic prefertur, quod verius et subtilius et ad captum discentium accomodatius de plerisque in philosophia scripserit. Quapropter etiam Aristotelis philosophia passim in toto pene orbe terrarum, ubi philosophiae ratio habetur, prae philosophia Platonis regnum obtinuit" (Wegelinus, S. *Cyrrilli*, p.260,14–22).

<sup>264</sup> Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.195,9–10 (*versio A*); p.203,10–11 (*versio B*). Even in his disdainful presentation of Aristotle's philosophy in his *Hymnody*, he accepts that Aristotle does have "some" ("ἐνιοί") fervent followers (for the passage, see *infra*, p.226).



γεγονότα” (Christonymos: “...Ἀριστοτέλης, παγκόσμιος ἄτε καὶ αὐτὸς διδάσκαλος γεγονώς”).

Now, if we think it plausible that Christonymos was based on the above Scholarian lines, we should not neglect the fact that these lines form part of Scholarios' earliest reference (1443/44)<sup>265</sup> to Plethon's paganism. Scholarios tries to discredit in front of Constantine Palaiologos Plethon as an interpreter of Plato and Aristotle. Suddenly, however, he remarks: Plethon “hoped that everybody would accept his innovative ideas regarding the high issues (for, many rumours have been disseminated on that, as you know), after he had gained some additional prestige from being as daring as to refute a thinker no inferior than Aristotle himself, in spite of the fact that Aristotle has been the wisest of all men.”<sup>266</sup> Scholarios regards Plethon's attack on Aristotle (in the treatise *On the Points of Aristotle's Contentious Disagreement with Plato*; 1438/39) as the first stage of Plethon's plan to dislodge Christianity; by showing himself to be superior to the man who has traditionally been regarded as the peak of human wisdom, Plethon would pave the way for presenting himself as the wisest of all men and hence easily obtain followers for his paganism.

That this is what Scholarios means here is attested by Scholarios himself. In his *Epistle to the Exarch Joseph*, he states that the only motive for his refutation of Plethon's *On the Points of Aristotle's Contentious Disagreement with Plato* was Plethon's anti-Christianism (in the sense that Plethon was aware of the importance of Aristotle's philosophy for the defence of Christianity<sup>267</sup>) and that this is declared in the writing itself twice, i.e. “in the beginning and the ending of the book” (“ἐν ἀρχῇ καὶ τελευτῇ τοῦ βιβλίου”).<sup>268</sup> As regards the ending, Scholarios

mentions there Plethon's paganism explicitly.<sup>269</sup> As regards the beginning, the passage just quoted is the only candidate.<sup>270</sup>

Scholarios' connection of Plethon's anti-Aristotelian pamphlet with his plan to disseminate paganism also seems to be related to George Trapezuntios' celebrated report that Plethon, when in Florence, predicted that “unam eandemque religionem uno animo, una mente, una praedicatione universum orbem paucis post annis esse suscepturum”, which would not be Christianity or Islam, but a pagan one – to wit, “Platonis theologia”.<sup>271</sup> In light of this report, what Scholarios seems to say (presumably informed about that prediction during his own stay at Florence along with Plethon) in the prologue of his refutation of Plethon's pamphlet is that Plethon, since he addressed intellectuals and men of letters in Florence who, as was usual all over Europe, voted for the superiority of Aristotle to any other philosopher, could make out of his vigorous attack on Aristotle a prestigious image of himself – so prestigious as to present himself as a unique case. His own physical presence on earth, he predicted, was a turning point in the history of humankind, namely the *terminus ante quem* falsehood and misery had dominated for centuries and *post quem* truth was to shine again and lead to the formation of a world state which would enable humankind to fulfill its divine destiny along the lines of his own *Laws*.

To conclude, Christonymos' two-line declaration of the superiority of Aristotle over Plato was based on a Scholarian passage where Plethon is described as neo-pagan (“κεκαινοτόμηκεν”<sup>272</sup>) and his neopaganism is presented as linked with his anti-Aristotelianism. Things could not be clearer for Christonymos

<sup>265</sup> See Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p. IV.

<sup>266</sup> Scholarios, *Κατὰ τῶν Πλήθωνος ἀποριῶν ἐπ' Ἀριστοτέλει* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.8,4–7): “Ἄ δὲ καὶ περὶ τῶν μειζόνων κεκαινοτόμηκεν (ἔρρῃ γάρ, ὡς οἶσθα, καὶ περὶ τοῦτου λόγου πολὺς), ἤλπισεν αὐτῷ πεισθῆσθαι πάντας, ἀξιώματός τι προσειληφότες ἐκ τοῦ τολμήσαι καὶ Ἀριστοτέλη αὐτὸν ἐλέγξει, καίτοι ἀνθρώπων πάντων σοφώτατον γεγονότα”. On the meaning of “περὶ τῶν μειζόνων” (“about the most important issues”, i.e. regarding one's views of God and religion), see what Scholarios says in the epilogue of his book: “...ἢ ὑπόθεσις πολλῶ τῆς γε προκειμένης [sc. the debate on the interpretation and assessment of Aristotle's philosophy] δοκεῖ εἶναι ἱερωτέρα... Ἐν τοῖς καιριωτάτοις καὶ ὧν ἄνευ τῆς μελλούσης εὐδαιμονίας τυχεῖν ἀδύνατον...” (op. cit., pp.115,6–7; 115,16–17).

<sup>267</sup> See Demetracopoulos, “Georgios Gennadios II – Scholarios' *Florilegium Thomisticum*”, p.163.

<sup>268</sup> Scholarios, *Περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ καὶ κατὰ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς πολυθεΐας* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.156,10–12).

<sup>269</sup> Scholarios, *Κατὰ τῶν Πλήθωνος ἀποριῶν ἐπ' Ἀριστοτέλει* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, pp.114,17–116,10).

<sup>270</sup> Scholarios' allusive reference to the *Laws* in a subsequent part of his writing (see *supra*, p.201, note 198) can hardly be seen as laying in its “beginning”.

<sup>271</sup> See Émile Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique. Tome troisième* (Paris 1903), pp.287–289; George Trapezuntios, *Adversus Theodorum Gazam* 37,2 (Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist und Staatsman. Funde und Forschungen. III. Band. Aus Bessarions Gelehrtenkreis. Abhandlungen, Reden, Briefe von Bessarion, Theodoros Gazes, Michael Apostolios, Andronikos Kallistos, Georgios Trapezuntios, Niccolò Perotti, Niccolò Capranica, edited by Ludwig Mohler (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1942; repr. Aalen: Scientia-Verlag; Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1967), p.340,15–27). Trapezuntios adds that some men who had reached Italy from the Peloponnese reported that Plethon had repeated this prediction three years before he died.

<sup>272</sup> On Plethon's philosophy as a “revival of Hellenism” (“...ἀναγεοῖεν...”), see, e.g., Scholarios' *Epistle to Plethon* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.125,13–14).

as to what taking sides with Aristotle would mean and for us as far as the implicit meaning of Christonymos' silent reproduction of Scholarios' praise of Aristotle is concerned.

Lastly, Christonymos' predilection for Aristotle in the *Capita decem* is implicitly testified by the fact that, re-elaborating (in ch. 5) the indicative list of ancient Greek philosophers with frustrated political ambitions, which he had confected in *versio A* ("οἷον Πυθαγόρας, Σωκράτης, Πλάτων, Ἀριστοτέλης")<sup>273</sup> in order to show them all inferior to Jesus Christ as a "legislator", he omitted the name of Aristotle.<sup>274</sup>

#### IV. The historical context:

##### Christonymos between Plethon's circle and the autodafé of his *Laws* and the date of the *Capita decem*

Christonymos, in his *Hymnody to George Gemistos*, expresses with bitterness "his regret over his exclusion from Plethon's inner circle".<sup>275</sup> The fact that he was a spirit prepared to defend the divinity of Christ and exhibit the traditional Christian apologetic zeal for this task, as his *Capita decem* clearly shows, might account for this exclusion. On the other hand, his very affiliation with Plethon, his scandalously fervent praise of Plethon's personage and his explicit regret over his repulsion by Plethon rendered him objectively a potential suspect of paganism. Christonymos, to exalt Plethon, uses certain bold images and comparisons one would normally not expect to hear from the mouth of a conscientious Christian; for instance, he says that the misfortune that Plethon's death represents for Greeks is equal to the misfortunes of those punished in hell.<sup>276</sup> Exaggeration was of course a conventional (to wit, imperative) feature of the literary genres of monody and hymnody; yet, it seems that Christonymos (out

of naiveté, of course, rather than any real pagan sympathies) went even further than that. He lamented Plethon's death as a loss for humanity,<sup>277</sup> and justified this lamentation in terms of Plethon's omniscience<sup>278</sup> and wisdom, which surpassed human limits ("τὸ τῆς ὄντως σοφίας ἄπειρον πέλαγος"; "ἡ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων τῶν λόγων ἰσχὺς καὶ λαμπρότης")<sup>279</sup> and placed him at the level of the divine ("τῷ γὰρ ὄντι θείας οὗτος ἐπὶ γῆς ἔλαχε μοίρας τῷ πάντα εἰδέναι").<sup>280</sup> If all this would still seem to the benevolent Christian audience tolerable in terms of its being an expression of rhetorical exaggeration, one could not, I think, help being alarmed by Christonymos' claim that Plethon was the most important figure ever to have appeared on earth from the constitution of humankind: "Τῶν γοῦν κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην φανέντων, ἐξ ὅτου γεγόνασιν ἄνθρωποι, ὁ θαυμάσιος οὗτος προΐστατο".<sup>281</sup> Religious piety, adds Christonymos, held pride of place among the high intellectual and moral qualities that made Plethon the most outstanding figure throughout history.<sup>282</sup>

Christonymos insists on the uniqueness of Plethon on earth in the following terms. One can presumably be proud of (and, accordingly, sad about the privation of) three things: wealth ("πλοῦτος"), power ("ἰσχὺς" or "ῥώμη") and wisdom ("σοφία"). Wealth can easily be both lost and misused; so, it is not important per se. The main defective element of power (apart from its also being shared by irrational animals) is its limitedness, which is also a serious defect in wealth; for, it is always possible that one's riches and power be superseded by the wealth and power of someone else or the wealth and power of a number of persons or a city or a nation as a whole or all of mankind. In contrast, one can be wiser not only than one or few or many but also than all men on earth, which was the case with Plethon (whose death can thus reasonably be seen

<sup>273</sup> Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.199,13.

<sup>274</sup> Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.208,7; cf. *infra*, Appendix B, p.242.

<sup>275</sup> PG 160: 811C–812B; cf. Kalatzi, *Hermonymos*, p.34; Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon*, p.8.

<sup>276</sup> "Τοῖς ἐν Ἅιδου κολαζομένοις ἀνεκτότερον οὐδὲν τι πεπόνθαμεν" (PG 160: 811B2–3). This might be taken as a literary use the pagan Hades; but such a reading would release Christonymos from one charge only to feed another.

<sup>277</sup> "Φεῦ τῆς κοινῆς ὀρφανίας, ἥ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον κατεῖληφε γένος!" (PG 160: 807B2–3).

See also: "Νῦν δ', οἶμαι, καὶ τῶν ἀναισθητῶν ἡ φύσις συμπάσχει... τὴν κοινὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων κακοδαιμονίαν ἀποκλαιομένην" (PG 160: 809B15–C3).

<sup>278</sup> "[Plethon] τοὺς ἀπάντων λόγους ἠπίστατο" (PG 160: 807C11).

<sup>279</sup> PG 160: 807B9–11.

<sup>280</sup> PG 160: 807C3–4. Plethon is implicitly described as possessing prophetic powers (see Monfasani, "Platonic Paganism", p.60).

<sup>281</sup> PG 160: 808A9–11.

<sup>282</sup> PG 160: 809A8–9 ("...θεοσέβειαν δ' [ἐκέκτητο subauditur] ὡς οὐδεὶς").

as the greatest possible loss).<sup>283</sup> Putting somebody at the summit of a list of qualified and unqualified persons<sup>284</sup> is ambiguous; it possibly implies that the best of all is not of the same kind as those who figure below him. Indeed, this is an implicit premise of the first five of Christonymos' arguments in the *Capita decem*; Jesus Christ is a human shown to be divine in terms of His achieving things on earth that no other human has ever achieved. Although one could draw from that the conclusion that Jesus Christ was the best of humans but still a human, Christonymos concludes that these achievements are "suprahuman" ("ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων"), to wit, divine.<sup>285</sup> This kind of praise of Plethon might consequently call for explanations, if its author were meant to be a good Christian.

By the same token, Christonymos' exaltation of Plethon seemed to be in compliance with what Scholarios had said in his *Κατὰ τῶν Πλήθωνος ἀποριῶν ἐπ' Ἀριστοτέλει* about Plethon's (alleged) plan to present himself as the wisest man by showing himself superior to the man that most people regarded as the wisest of all, i.e. Aristotle. Indeed, if we are to take what Christonymos says at face value, Plethon must have been much wiser than the 'wisest' man, as he showed (precisely in the writing refuted by Scholarios) that Aristotle's "divine" philosophy was merely a "play" (see *supra*, p.221, note 262): "Ὅς [sc. Plethon] παιδιάν τέ τινα τὴν Ἀριστοτέλους φιλοσοφίαν ἀπήλεγξε, τὴν πρὶν ὑπ' ἐνίων ὡς θεῖαν τινὰ ὑμνουμένην". This looks like a direct verbatim opposition to Scholarios, who, around a decade earlier, in his refutation of Plethon's *On the Points of Aristotle's Contentious Disagreement with Plato*, had written that "ἅπαντες ἀνθρώποι" "θεῖόν τι τὸ κατ' Ἀριστοτέλην ἡγνῆται χρῆμα".<sup>286</sup>

<sup>283</sup> PG 160: 810B3–D3.

<sup>284</sup> Plethon is also described as an exceptional man in terms of his extremely healthy condition. When one reads in the opening sentence of Christonymos' *Hymnody* that Plethon's death was "αἰφνης οὕτω πως καὶ παρ' ἐλπίδας συμβάν" ("something that happened, so to speak, suddenly and unexpectedly"), one might be surprised, granted that, when Plethon died, he was over ninety. Yet, as Christonymos explains later (PG 160: 809C12–D5), Plethon, from a certain time on, began conducting a special sort of life ("τοιαύτη διαίτα"), which resulted in his exhibiting no symptoms of any disease at all and granted him unusual longevity.

<sup>285</sup> *Versio A*, Ch. 1, p.195,20; Ch. 2, pp.196,6; 197,8; 197,10; 197,18; Ch. 3, p.198,5; Ch. 4, p.199,5–7; Ch. 5, p.199,24–25; *versio B*, Ch. 1, p.203,20; Ch. 2, pp.204,2; 205,1; 205,3; 205,12–13; Ch. 3, p.205,23–24; Ch. 4, pp.206,13 ("ὑπὲρ πάσαν ἀνθρωπίνην δύναμιν τε καὶ βούλησιν"); 207,28–29 ("ὑπὲρ ἀνθρωπίνην πάσαν ἄξιαν τε καὶ τάξιν καὶ φύσιν"); Ch. 5, p.209,3–4.

<sup>286</sup> Scholarios, *Κατὰ τῶν Πλήθωνος ἀποριῶν ἐπ' Ἀριστοτέλει* (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.2,10–11). See also: "...τὴν ἐκείνου [sc. Aristotle's] θεϊότητα..."; "...εἰρῶν τινὶ καὶ τάξει κρείττονι σχεδὸν ἢ κατ' ἀνθρώπου φύσιν" (*op. cit.*, pp.2,22; 5,10–11).

Christonymos produced his *Hymnody* soon (if not immediately) after Plethon's death, namely in 1452 or 1454.<sup>287</sup> Although this text does not exhibit any indication that its author had ever thought seriously about the possibility that Plethon was a pagan, Plethon's physical disappearance from the intellectual stage along with the fall of Constantinople, which deprived the discussions on the union of the Churches from any political interest and national import, made room objectively for Scholarios to focus on and speak (and act) publicly about Plethon's paganism more than he had done from 1443/44 on (see *supra*, pp.222–223). Thus, in 1451–52, Scholarios congratulated the judge of Mistras for cruelly executing the alleged follower of Plethon's paganism Juvenalios.<sup>288</sup> Either as early as 1452/53<sup>289</sup> or 1453/54<sup>290</sup> or, in all probability, 1454/56<sup>291</sup> or 1455<sup>292</sup> (or, even later on, in 1460<sup>293</sup>), he wrote his *Epistle to*

<sup>287</sup> On the latter date, see John Monfasani, *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of his Rhetoric and Logic* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), pp.163–171; id., "Pletho's Date of Death and the Burning of his Laws", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 98:2 (2005), pp.459–463 (at 459–461; 462). Rightly or not, this dating has not yet replaced the traditional 1452 date in scholarship; see, e.g., Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios*, p.178, note 44.

<sup>288</sup> "Le nom du philosophe n'est jamais cité dans la lettre de Scholarios, mais il est clair que c'est bien lui qui est considéré comme l'inspirateur de l'hérésie de Juvenal, et que c'est lui aussi qui est visé par l'exigence de retour à l'ordre exprimée par Scholarios" (Blanchet, *op. cit.*, p.183). Incidentally, let it be noted that Scholarios' theological justification for putting apostates to death in his letter to the judge of Mistras occurs in his recently edited *Αποκρίσεις to the Ζητήματα καὶ ἐρωτήσεις τοῦ εὐσεβεστάτου δεσπότην Σερβίας κύρ Γεωργίου πρὸς τὸν πατριάρχην κύρ Γεννάδιον τὸν Σχολάριον Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*: "Ὁ ἐπίσκοπος πνευματικῶς κολάζει μόνον, οὐ σωματικῶς... Ἀποκλεισμὸν μόνον καὶ φυλακὴν δύναται ποιεῖν εἰς ὠφέλειαν τοῦ πταίσαντος, ἔως μεταμέλειαν ὑπόσχηται. Εἰ δὲ τὸ ἀμάρτημα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐστὶν ἀναισχυντία διὰ τῆς πίστεως κατὰ τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, αὐτονοήτως παραδίδωσιν αὐτὸν τῇ κοσμικῇ ἀρχῇ, καὶ ἐκείνη κολάζει κατὰ τοὺς νόμους" (ed. Machi Paizi-Apostolopoulou, "Appealing to the Authority of a Learned Patriarch: New Evidence on Gennadios Scholarios' Responses to the Questions of George Branković", *The Historical Review / La Revue Historique* 9 (2012), pp.95–116, at 109–111). This is a very brief exposition of Aquinas' justification of the punishment of the apostates and heretics, which is fully shared by Scholarios in his letter to the judge of Mistras (see Demetracopoulos, *Ἀπὸ τὴν ἱστορίαν*, p.135; id., "Georgios Gemistos – Plethon's Dependence", pp.332–336).

<sup>289</sup> See Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, VIII, p.18\*.

<sup>290</sup> Blanchet, *George-Gennadios*, pp.187–188; 485.

<sup>291</sup> Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.151.

<sup>292</sup> Woodhouse, *op. cit.*, p.357.

<sup>293</sup> Monfasani, "Pletho's Date", pp.462–463.

Princess (sc. Theodora) on the Book of Gemistos,<sup>294</sup> where he explains his conviction that the late Plethon was a deplorable apostate and that it is a Christian prince's duty to take care that such pestiferous beliefs be not disseminated among the Christian body. In the spring of 1455,<sup>295</sup> Scholarios' disciple, Matthaios Camariotes (ca. 1410/20–1490), bitterly attacks Plethon's paganism in his *In Plethonem de fato* (Λόγοι δύο πρὸς Πλήθωνα περὶ εἰμαρμένης).<sup>296</sup> Scholarios himself, after 1456, produced the clearly anti-Plethonic writing *On Our One and Triune God and Creator of All Beings, and against the Atheists or Automatists, and against Polytheists*;<sup>297</sup> likewise, in 1457/58<sup>298</sup> or in 1460,<sup>299</sup> he wrote, in the same spirit, an epistle to the exarch Joseph *On the Book of Gemistos, and against the Hellenic Polytheism*.<sup>300</sup> Apart from literary and advisory activity,<sup>301</sup> Scholarios, in 1454/55 (as a patriarch)<sup>302</sup> or in 1460 (as a mere

<sup>294</sup> Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, IV, pp.151,25–155,13.

<sup>295</sup> Charles Astruc, “La fin inédite du *Contra Plethonem* de Matthieu Camariotès”, *Scriptorium* 9 (1955), pp.246–262 (at 259–262). See also Demetrios K. Chatzemihael, *Ματθαῖος Καμαριώτης. Συμβολή στη μελέτη τοῦ βίου, τοῦ ἔργου καὶ τῆς ἐποχῆς του* (Thessaloniki: Stamoulis, 2005), pp.70; 100–101; 277; 292.

<sup>296</sup> *Ματθαίου τοῦ Καμαριώτου λόγοι δύο πρὸς Πλήθωνα περὶ εἰμαρμένης. Matthaiei Camariotae orationes II in Plethonem de fato*, edited by Hermann Samuel Reimar (Lugduni Batavorum: apud C. Wishoff, 1721).

<sup>297</sup> Scholarios, *Περὶ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἐν Τριάδι Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ πάντων τῶν ὄντων δημιουργοῦ, καὶ κατὰ ἀθέων ἤτοι αὐτοματιστῶν καὶ κατὰ πολυθέων* (Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, IV, pp.172,21–189,20).

<sup>298</sup> Blanchet, *George-Gennadios*, pp.189; 486.

<sup>299</sup> Monfasani, “Pletho's Date”, pp.462–463.

<sup>300</sup> Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, IV, pp.155,14–172,20.

<sup>301</sup> One can add here George Trapezuntios' attack on Plethon as a neopagan “venenosa vipera” in the penultimate chapter (III,20: “De Gemisto; et quod, nisi obstes iniciis parvis, magnae plerunque calamitates insequuntur; quae res ipsius Machumeti patet exemplo”) of the *Comparationes philosophorum Aristotelis et Platonis* (Venetiis 1523; repr. New York 1955; Frankfurt a.M.: Minerva, 1965, a2; Viii–Xii = pp.9; 324–333), which was written in 1458 (on the date, see John Monfasani, *Collectanea Trapezuntiana. Texts, Documents and Bibliographies of George of Trebizond* (New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1984), p.601). Still, nothing suggests that Christonymos could read Latin. However, granted that Trapezuntios' tone as well as his anti-Platonic, anti-Plethonic and pro-Aristotelian arguments (including his interpretation of Aristotle's philosophy) are throughout very close to Scholarios', who, as shown here, was a major source of Christonymos' anti-Plethonic *Capita decem*, it is not improbable that Christonymos had got some idea of Trapezuntios' plan to attack Plethon shortly before the composition of his own *Capita decem*.

<sup>302</sup> See Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios*, pp.177–192.

monk),<sup>303</sup> burnt Plethon's *Laws* on account of their having been written by an apostate who rejected Christianity *en bloc*.

This long-lasting anti-Plethonic fever must have alarmed Christonymos, who presumably felt the need to make it clear that, in spite of his ardent desire to enter Plethon's circle, as he himself reported in his fervent funeral praise of Plethon, he remained immune from Plethon's abhorrent paganism and that this praise was not meant to advertise paganism. It was not much earlier that another keen admirer of Plethon and his Platonism, Michael Apostolis (ca. 1422–ca. 1480), sent an *Address* to Emperor (1449–1453) Constantine XI Palaiologos (1404–53), whose title reads: “...ὁμολογία τῆς αὐτοῦ πίστεως ὑποπτευομένης” (“...confession of his own faith, which was challenged”),<sup>304</sup> in order to denounce the rumours that wanted him (on the basis of certain lines in some letters of his<sup>305</sup>) to believe in Zeus, Poseidon and Heracles and declared that he believed in Jesus and His Apostles.<sup>306</sup> Apostolis, in 1451/52,<sup>307</sup> i.e. shortly before Plethon's death, like Christonymos (see *supra*, p.225, note 282: “θεοσεβειαν...”) in the very year of Plethon's death, had called Plethon “θεοσεβής”.<sup>308</sup> Thus, an excellent way for Christonymos to declare his genuine religious faith *urbi et orbi* would be to write and publish a defence of the divinity of the very founder of Christianity, with anti-pagan hints based mainly (or exclusively) on Scholarios' presentation of Plethon's *Laws* (or even on the *Laws* themselves).

Unlike Scholarios and Camariotes, Apostolis and Christonymos did not attack Plethon by name. This is quite understandable indeed; such an attack would seem to contradict their expressed admiration for Plethon. So, they

<sup>303</sup> See Monfasani, “Pletho's Date”, pp.462–463.

<sup>304</sup> Ed. Lambros, *Παλαιολόγεια*, vol. 4, pp.83–87.

<sup>305</sup> Ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, pp.372–375. Cf. François Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1956), p.313 (to be read along with Monfasani's *caveat* in “Platonic Paganism”, p.57).

<sup>306</sup> “...ὃν ἡμᾶς ὁ κοινὸς δεσπότης ἐδίδαξεν Ἰησοῦς καὶ ὁ τῶν Ἀποστόλων θεῖος χορὸς...; ...Διὶ με πιστεύειν, Κρητῶν ἡγεμόνι..., καὶ Ποσειδῶνι καὶ Ἡρακλεῖ...” (ed. Lambros, *op. cit.*, pp.85,9–11; 86,22–23).

<sup>307</sup> See Woodhouse, *op. cit.*, p.224.

<sup>308</sup> Ed. Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p.373,11.



both thought that a simple denouncement of paganism and a defence of Christianity were sufficient for each of them to take sides unambiguously.

In addition, the best way for Christonymos to serve his intention to have his Christian convictions officially declared was presumably to dedicate his writing to a member of some royal family. Demetrios Palaiologos (1407–1470) and his wife Theodora would have been a fine choice for that, since “the despoina Theodora was the driving figure in the events that culminated in Plethon’s master work, the *Laws*, being burnt”.<sup>309</sup> Yet, from 1458/59, Demetrios, who was a Turcophile, and his Venetophile brother Thomas, with whom Christonymos was connected (see *supra*, p.145, note 2), clashed with one other again. Thus, it was presumably for this reason that Christonymos decided to dedicate his defence of the divinity of Jesus Christ to the late Constantine XI Palaiologos’ brother, Thomas Palaiologos. Indeed, according to M.P. Kalatzi’s plausible interpretation of Christonymos’ concluding address to “Παλαιολόγων φιλολογώτατος τε καὶ φιλοκαλέστατος (sic), ἀλλὰ δὴ καὶ ἀνδρῶν ἀξιαγαστότατος καὶ μεγαλοπρεπέστατος”,<sup>310</sup> the *Capita decem* “was presented to Thomas Palaiologos [1409–1465], who was about to leave for Rome at that time”. Since “Thomas left for Italy at the end of 1460”,<sup>311</sup> this date is the *terminus ante quem* for the completion of the *Capita decem*. Additionally, in late 1462, Christonymos wrote a funeral oration upon the death of Thomas’ wife Katerina (1410–1462),<sup>312</sup> which indicates that he was closely associated with this family and that he continued to be associated with it even during Thomas’ self-exile in Italy, presumably valuing Thomas’ efforts to convince certain Western military powers to release Peloponnese from the Ottomans.

The fact that Christonymos, in *versio B*, refers to Thomas Palaiologos as “most magnificent” and wishes him longevity<sup>313</sup> on the eve of the prince’s forced departure to Italy (the prince was never to come back home, as we know) suggests that he wished to express his loyalty to Thomas. This means that,

<sup>309</sup> See Monfasani, “George Gemistus Pletho and the West”, p.32.

<sup>310</sup> *Versio B*, p.212,1–3.

<sup>311</sup> *Versio B*, p.212,8: “νῦν τε ἐς Ῥώμην ἀπιών...”. Cf. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, pp.37–38; ead., *Hermonymos*, pp.28–29. Christonymos’ phrase suggests that Thomas’ final destination was Rome.

<sup>312</sup> See *supra*, p.145, note 2.

<sup>313</sup> Ed. Kalatzi, *art. cit.*, p.212,3–4.

although, given the ideological perspective of Christonymos’ writing, it would be more fitting for him to dedicate his anti-Plethonic writing to the royal anti-Plethonist friends of Scholarios, Demetrios and Theodora, this would be quite inconvenient for him. Additionally, the fact that this type of address as well as the reference to Thomas’ would-be escape to Italy (from Pylos to Corfu and then to Ancona, Rome –7 March 1461– and Venice) does not occur in *versio A* implies that Christonymos began writing his *Capita decem* before Thomas’ decision to leave Peloponnese, i.e. probably prior to 29 May 1460, when the determining factor for Thomas’ escape, i.e. Mehmed II’s easy occupation of Mistras, which was by then ruled by Demetrios Palaiologos, took place.

Of course, the motive of self-expurgation from possible suspicions of flirting with Plethon’s paganism does not exclude –in fact, it most probably entails– that Christonymos was sincerely fond of defending the truth of his own religion against what Plethon posthumously proved to have really believed and argued that Christonymos’ apologetic writing went hand in hand with Scholarios’ project to suppress Plethon’s neo-paganism. In fact, it is Scholarios himself who informs us that he intended to produce a written refutation of Plethon’s *Laws*,<sup>314</sup> and it is highly likely that he had prepared to do so with regard to the entire *Laws* as well as to its Book II, chapter 6 (“On Fate”) primarily on the basis of Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa contra Gentiles* and *Summa theologiae*.<sup>315</sup> To judge from what Scholarios focuses on in his list of the errors in Plethon’s clandestine writing in his letter to Princess Theodora,<sup>316</sup> Plethon’s views of the nature of Jesus Christ and the baseness of His and His disciples’ character would have been one of the fundamental issues Scholarios would have liked to address. Christonymos’ choice to write “pro divinitate Christi” was right to the point.

Furthermore, as has been seen (pp.184–189; 200–204), Christonymos’ 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> arguments were directly based on Scholarios’ *Περὶ τῆς μόνης ὁδοῦ πρὸς τὴν σωτηρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων* and the *recensio brevis* of this writing, which, as has been seen (p.200, note 168), were produced in 1455 / January

<sup>314</sup> See Demetracopoulos, “Georgios Gennadios II – Scholarios’ *Florilegium Thomisticum*”, pp.152–167.

<sup>315</sup> See Demetracopoulos, *art. cit.*, pp.152–168; id., “Georgios Gennadios II – Scholarios’ *Florilegium Thomisticum II*”, pp.335–343.

<sup>316</sup> Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, IV, pp.151,25–155,13.

1456. This provides us with a safe *terminus post quem* for the production of the *Capita decem*. Granted that most of the similarities of the *Capita decem* with Scholarios hold both for version A and B, this dating holds for the draft as well. Moreover, from the fact that Christonymos, in ch. 3, in all probability made use of Scholarios' *Περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ καὶ κατὰ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς πολυθεΐας*, which was written in 1457/58 (see *supra*, p.174, note 103), and that, in chs. 5 and 6, he certainly made use of Scholarios' *Question on the Present Rarity of Miracles*, which was not written before early 1458,<sup>317</sup> we can infer that the *Capita decem* was written in 1458/60.

Christonymos' extensive and meticulous use of several points of Scholarios' defence of the divine origins and divinely fostered spread of Christianity also links *de facto* the *Capita decem* with the Plethon case as established by Scholarios. These similarities, along with Scholarios' outburst of anti-Plethonism from 1450 to 1460 and Christonymos' earlier innocent admiration for Plethon, render it possible that Christonymos produced the *Capita decem* at Scholarios' exhortation or suggestion.<sup>318</sup> Christonymos proved to have had access to and utilized many writings by Scholarios in a relatively short time; this implies that he belonged, in some sense, to Scholarios' circle. These writings provided him both with the material he wanted to describe and the arsenal he needed to refute the ideas of his adversary. Further, as Scholarios reports,<sup>319</sup> Plethon's *Laws* circulated, fully or in part, in numerous hands. From the detailed investigation into the sources of the *Capita decem* in Part III of this study, one can

infer that it is probable that Christonymos was among them, as he quoted from or alluded to some phrases from the early chapters of the *Laws*.<sup>320</sup>

Which intellectual means would a mid-15<sup>th</sup>-century Byzantine Christian scholar use to defend his faith and, foremost, the divinity of Jesus Christ against Plethon's revival of paganism? Since Plethon's *Laws* was meant to undo the fatal victory of the Christian error more than a millennium ago and restore the *prisca theologia* in view of the new age to come, any Christian who would undertake the task to re-assure that victory would expectedly exploit the counter-arguments by those very ancient Christian intellectuals, who defended their faith in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries of the Christian era against the ancient enemies of the very founder of their religion. This is, as I have tried to demonstrate, exactly what Christonymos did in his *Capita decem*; in particular, he utilized: (i) three such texts, which form an actual sequel (in the sense that the earlier served as a source for the later), i.e. Origen's *Contra Celsum* (245/248 AD),<sup>321</sup> Book III of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Demonstratio Evangelica* (after 312 or 313 and before ca. 324 AD),<sup>322</sup> and (Ps.-?) John Chrysostom's *Quod Christus sit Deus* (probably 381/383 AD),<sup>323</sup> and (ii) various writings by George Scholarios – Gennadios II (dating from the mid-40s to the late 50s), which were based on the same set of ancient Christian authors,<sup>324</sup> and he produced his own *Capita decem*.

<sup>320</sup> I mean the phrase “τῶν κοινῇ καὶ πᾶσι δοκούντων”, which had been used by Plethon in the same context and by means of the same (nowhere else detected) hendiadys: “ἀρχαῖς ταῖς κοινῇ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις” (see *supra*, p.175). One needs, I think, more to make sure that Christonymos depends here on Plethon.

<sup>321</sup> See Chadwick, *Origen*, pp.xiv-xv. Let me add that, as has been shown (Tambrun, *Pléthon: le retour*, pp.80–82), two fundamental elements of Celsus' critique of Christianity, i.e. (i) his idea that “there is a true doctrine, of the greatest antiquity, held by the most ancient and pious races and the wisest of men”, which “has been perverted or misunderstood first by the Jews, and then by the Christians, who are only an offshoot from an already corrupt stem, Judaism” (Chadwick, *Origen*, p.xxi), and (ii) the *sacrificium intellectus*, form part of Plethon's critique of Christianity, as well. It was consequently possible for Christonymos, who studied and used Origen in order to confect his refutation of Plethon's denigration of Jesus, to have noticed Plethon's dependence on Celsus.

<sup>322</sup> Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea*, p.74; Morlet, *La “Démonstration évangélique”*, pp.80–94 (Morlet argues that the *terminus ante quem* can be placed as late as 333 AD).

<sup>323</sup> See the discussion by Margaret A. Schatkin, *Saint John Chrysostom: Apologist* (‘Fathers of the Church’, 73; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1985), pp.181–184; Morlet, “La source principale”, pp.261–262.

<sup>324</sup> It is in this setting, I suppose, that one must place Scholarios' autograph copy of the *Contra Celsum* (cod. Vat. gr. 1742), which bears some emendations of the text as well as four marginal

<sup>317</sup> See *supra*, p.189, note 153.

<sup>318</sup> I cannot help mentioning in this context the fact that George Hermonymos of Sparta produced three copies of the abridged version of Scholarios' *De unica via ad salutem hominis*, translated it into Latin and produced a forgery with a very similar title under Scholarios' name (see Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, III, pp.xxxii–xxxiii; xxxvii–xxxviii; Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios*, pp.41–43). All this makes me wonder: (i) what was Hermonymos of Sparta's relationship with Scholarios? (ii) Was there any relationship between Christonymos and Hermonymos of Sparta (for instance, were they —as suggested by Woodhouse, *op. cit.*, p.36— brothers?) or any connection of this possible relationship to Christonymos' access to and use of Scholarios' anti-Islam pieces?

<sup>319</sup> Scholarios, *Κατὰ τῶν Πλήθωνος ἀποριῶν ἐπ' Ἀριστοτέλει* (Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.114,28); *Epistle to Mark of Ephesos* (Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, IV, pp.114,26–27; 118,3–4); *Epistle to the Exarch Joseph* (Petit et al. (eds.), *Γενναδίου*, IV, p.155,31–33).

## Appendix I

Suggested corrections to the modern edition of the two versions of Christonymos' *Capita decem*

The editor of Christonymos' *Capita decem* (see *supra*, p.151, note 25) does not include in her introduction any detailed discussion of the relation of the manuscripts which have preserved the text. In fact, this, although desirable, was not absolutely necessary, since the two autograph manuscripts contain *versio A* and *versio B* (see *supra*, p.151), whereas the remaining two ones date from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century and are copies of the draft. The following suggestions are based on a study of *Mon. gr. 490*, which preserves the author's autograph draft, and *Laur. Plut. 10.25*, which preserves the author's autograph final version.

*Versio A*

1) Ch. 2, p.196,7: there is no reason to adopt J. Wegelinus<sup>325</sup> reluctant suggestion to correct the rare but morphologically correct “δαμονώδης” (*Mon. gr. 490*, fol. 232<sup>v</sup>5; cf. app. crit. ad loc.) to “δαμονιώδης”. Additionally, the final version of the writing reads “δαμονώδης” (see *infra*, p.235, *versio B*, N° 3).

2) Ch. 2, p.196,13: there is no reason to adopt J. Wegelinus<sup>326</sup> conjectural correction of “ἀδυνάτων” (*Mon. gr. 490*, fol. 232<sup>v</sup>11) to “οὐκ ἀδυνάτων”, which, in fact, instead of repairing anything, ruins the meaning of the period and the argument as a whole. Besides, such an “οὐκ” does not occur in the final version of the writing.<sup>327</sup>

comments, in the second of which Origen is praised for contributing a lot to the dissemination of Christian faith (“τῇ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πίστει”) (eds. Petit et al., *Γενναδίου*, VIII, p.503,22–23; first edition by Giovanni Mercati, “Appunti scolariani”, *Bessarione* 36 (1920), pp.109–143 (reprinted in: Giovanni Mercati, *Opere minori*, vol. IV (Città del Vaticano, 1937), pp.72–106), at 133; see also *Origenes. Contra Celsum libri VIII*, edited by Miroslav Marcovich, ‘Vigiliae Christianae Supplement’, 54 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p.X (on Scholarios’ corrections on *Contra Celsum* pace Mercati, *Bessarione* 24 (1920), pp.125–133 and 26, 1922, p. 140).

<sup>325</sup> S. Cyrilli, p.165,18.

<sup>326</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp.168,6; 262 *ad loc.*

<sup>327</sup> In an offprint of Kalatzis’s article, kindly sent to me by the author herself, this “οὐκ” was erased.

3) Ch. 5, p.199,20: “πραγμάτων”<sup>328</sup> must be corrected to “πράγματα” (*Mon. gr. 490*, fol. 233<sup>v</sup>20; cf. *versio B*, 208,13–14).

4) Ch. 5, p.199,22: it is not clear from the apparatus criticus where “ὅτι”<sup>329</sup> derives from; in fact, Christonymos (*Mon. gr. 490*, fol. 233<sup>v</sup>11) does not write “ὅπερ”, as stated in the apparatus criticus, but “ἄπερ” (sc. that “ὁ Χριστὸς ἡδυνήθη..., ἐδέχθη...” and “τετίμηται...”); Christonymos changed “ἄπερ” to “ὅπερ” in the final version of his writing (p.208,16; *Laur. Plut. 10.25*, fol. 59<sup>r</sup>5).

5) Ch. 5, p.200,3: “ἄει”<sup>330</sup> must be changed to Christonymos’ clear supralinear insertion “αἰεὶ” (*Mon. gr. 490*, fol. 234<sup>r</sup>4; cf. app. crit. ad loc.).

*Versio B*

1) Title, p.203,2: “ἀποδεικνύντα” must be restored to the grammatically acceptable “ἀποδεικνύοντα” (*Laur. Plut. 10.25*, fol. 55<sup>r</sup>2; cf. app. crit., ad loc.).

2) Ch. 2, p.203,29: δὲ must be corrected to δὴ (*Laur. Plut. 10.25*, fol. 55<sup>v</sup>9 s.l.), which, besides, fits into the context.

3) Ch. 2, p.204,2: there is no reason to correct the clear reading “δαμονώδης” (*Laur. Plut. 10.25*, fol. 55<sup>v</sup>13; cf. app. crit. ad loc.) to “δαμονιώδης”.

4) Ch. 3, p.205,20: there is no reason to ignore the clear reading “ἀφαιρεῖται” (*Laur. Plut. 10.25*, fol. 56<sup>v</sup>22; cf. app. crit. ad loc.) and keep the “ἀφαιρεῖ” of *versio A* (p.198,1).

5) I would be inclined to correct the clear reading (*Laur. Plut. 10.25*, fol. 57<sup>r</sup>8) “ἐχόντων” to “ἔχοντα”. It is quite understandable that such a *lapsus* was made in a period which counts four participles in genitive (“δοκούντων... εἰωθότων... οἰομένων... ἐπομένων”). This is how I translate the relevant sentence after the correction: “These things are demonstrated as if by geometrical necessity, since the relevant demonstrations are drawn from premises commonly shared by all”.

<sup>328</sup> Cf. Wegelinus, *op. cit.*, p.175,11.

<sup>329</sup> *Op. cit.*, p.75,15.

<sup>330</sup> Cf. *op. cit.*, p.177,4.

6) Ch. 5, p.208,26: ὅσων (*Laur. Plut.* 10.25, fol. 59<sup>v</sup>17) must be corrected to “ὅσον” or “ὅσῳ” as an *apodosis* of “τοσῶδε” (p.208,25). Furthermore, “οὐδ’ εἰπεῖν ἐνὶ λόγῳ”, which makes no sense, must be corrected to the clear manuscript reading “οὐδ’ εἰπεῖν ἐνὶ λόγῳ” (*Laur. Plut.* 10.25, fol. 59<sup>v</sup>18).

7) Ch. 5, p.209,2: “τετίμηται” must presumably be emended to “τετίμηνται” (subject on p.208,26–27: “οἱ τούτου γε ὑποφῆται καὶ ὁπαδοὶ καὶ στρατιῶται καὶ μάρτυρες”).

8) Ch. 5, p.209,32: the awkward “ὁ καὶ αὐτὸ πάντων ἀρκεῖ” must be restored to “ὁ καὶ αὐτὸ <ἀντὶ> πάντων ἀρκεῖ” or, even better, “ὁ καὶ ἀντὶ πάντων ἀρκεῖ” (cf. *versio A*, ch. 5, p.200,17: “ὅπερ ἡμῖν καὶ ἀντὶ πάντων ἀρκεῖ”).

9) Ch. 4, p.206,9: “πάσας πατρίους δόξας τε” must be supplemented by καὶ θρησκείας (cf. *versio A*, ch. 4, p.198,10).

10) Ch. 5, p.210,1: “τῷ αὐτῷ πειθομένων” must be corrected to “τῶν αὐτῶ πειθομένων” (*Laur. Plut.* 10.25, fol. 60<sup>v</sup>9, where letters ν and α overlap; cf. *versio A*, p.201,2).

11) Ch. 5, p.210,9: “μιαρόν” (which, in all probability, is a typo) must be corrected to “μικρόν”.

12) Ch. 6, p.210,13: “ἀπειθεία” must be corrected to “ἀπαθεία” (*Laur. Plut.* 10.25, fol. 60<sup>v</sup>21; cf. *versio A*, ch. 6, p.201,13: “...καὶ ἀπαθεία πάσῃ...”; *Mon. gr.* 490, fol. 234<sup>v</sup>25). Christonymos’ unclear α/ει in the penultimate must be judged on the basis of the only possible reasonable meaning of the phrase, which no doubt calls for reading “ἀπαθεία” (or “ἀπαθία”, which is much rarer).

13) Ch. 8, p.211,12: “τοσοῦτον” must –from the syntactical point of view– be followed by ὥς (cf. *versio A*, ch. 8, p.202,12: “...τοσοῦτον, ὥς...”).

14) Ch. 9, p.211,21: “προβάλλων” must be a *lapsus calami* to be restored to “παραβάλλων”.

15) Ch. 10, p.211,26: the grammatically incorrect “θεοδιδάκτη” must be restored to the clear manuscript as well as grammatically correct reading “θεο-διδάκτω” (*Laur. Plut.* 10.25, fol. 61<sup>v</sup>22).

16) Dedicatory epilogue, p.212,7: the conjectural correction “ἀκτησία”, which means ‘monastic’ or ‘Christian poverty’ and is out of context, must presumably be replaced by “οὐ κτήσεται” (*Laur. Plut.* 10.25, fol. 61<sup>v</sup>8), which is actually what Christonymos writes (not ἀκτησεῖ, as stated in the app. crit.); although the

two letters touch one other, Christonymos’ οὐ must not necessarily be taken as written by ligature, in which case it would probably be not permissible to read it as οὐ;<sup>331</sup> indeed, Christonymos does not always write οὐ by ligature (see, e.g., *cod. cit.*, fol. 61<sup>v</sup>1; *Mon. gr.* 490, fol. 234<sup>v</sup>8; 9). Christonymos, by means of his oxymoron (“τῇ τούτων [sc. τῶν λόγων καὶ τῶν καλῶν] κτήσεται τε καὶ οὐ κτήσεται ...καλλυνόμενος γε καὶ λαμπρυνόμενος” / “ornating and glorifying yourself by means of the acquisition and non-acquisition of the *belles lettres*”), presumably suggests that one can never claim that one has exhausted the vast realm of the *belles lettres* and that humble awareness of this truth has an added value for one’s intellectual quality.

## Appendix II

### A list of additions and modifications of *Versio A* in the final *versio B* of Christonymos’ *Capita decem*

#### Title:

- 1) Ὅκτω εἰσι ταῦτα κεφάλαια σὺν ἄλλοις δυσὶν / Δέκα ταῦτα ἐστὶ κεφάλαια
- 2) ἀποδεικνύντα / ἀποδεικνύοντα πιθανοῖς τε καὶ ἀναντιρρήτοις λόγοις καὶ ἀποδείξεσιν
- 3) Θεὸς / Θεὸς ἀληθής

#### Ch. 1:

- 1) ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἀξιωματῶν / ἀξιωματῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις
- 2) βασιλείας, στρατηγίας, φιλοσοφίας, νομοθεσίας / στρατηγίας, βασιλείας, νομοθεσίας, φιλοσοφίας
- 3) τῶν μὲν βασιλέων ἀπάντων ἐνδοξότερος γέγονεν ὁ Αὐγουστος Καῖσαρ, παγκόσμιος ἅτε βασιλεὺς καὶ μονάρχης γεγονώς, τῶν δὲ στρατηγῶν Ἀλέξανδρος, τῶν δὲ φιλοσόφων κατὰ τινες μὲν Πλάτων, κατὰ τινες δὲ Ἀριστοτέλης (ὁμῶς δ’ οὖν ἔστω Ἀριστοτέλης, παγκόσμιος ἅτε καὶ αὐτὸς

<sup>331</sup> Cf. Kalatzi, *Hermonymos*, p.117.



διδάσκαλος γεγονώς), τῶν δέ γε νομοθετῶν ἀπάντων ἐνδοξότερος Μωυσῆς, παγκόσμιος ἄτε καὶ αὐτὸς νομοθέτης γεγονώς καὶ ἄχρι καὶ τήμερον ὦν. / τῶν μὲν στρατηγῶν ἀπάντων ἐνδοξότερος γέγονεν ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος, τῶν δὲ βασιλέων ὁ Αὔγουστος Καῖσαρ, τῶν δέ γε νομοθετῶν ἀπάντων ἐνδοξότερος Μωυσῆς, παγκόσμιος ἄτε καὶ αὐτὸς νομοθέτης γεγονώς καὶ ἄχρι καὶ τήμερον δὲ ὦν, τῶν δὲ φιλοσόφων ἀπάντων ἐνδοξότερος κατὰ μὲν τινὰς Πλάτων, κατ' ἐνίους δὲ Ἀριστοτέλης — ὅμως δ' οὖν ἔστω Ἀριστοτέλης, παγκόσμιος ἄτε διὰ καὶ αὐτὸς καθηγεμὼν φιλοσοφίας γεγονώς.

5) ἐδοξάσθη / ἐδοξάσθη καὶ σέβεται

6) διὰ τοσούτων τῶν χρόνων / διὰ τοσούτων ἤδη τῶν χρόνων.

### Ch. 2:

1) καὶ γοητεία δὲ κατ' ἐνίους / κατ' ἐνίους δὲ γοητεία

2) ἡ γοητεία / ἡ λοιπὸν γοητεία.

3) φρονήσει μὲν οὐκ ἴσχυσεν ἀνθρωπίνη / φρονήσει μὲν ἄκρα οὐκ ἴσχυσε, λέγω δὴ ἀνθρωπίνη

4) ἀντίχριστοι / ἀντίφρονες

5) φρόνησις / ἰσχύσασα φρόνησις

6) θεία / θεία ἐστίν.

7) ὑπὲρ ἀριθμὸν δὲ / ὑπὲρ ἀριθμὸν σχεδὸν τούτῳ τῷ λόγῳ.

8) Ἀλλὰ μὴν τοῦτ' ἀδύνατον. / Τοῦτο δὲ ἀδύνατον.

9) οὐδ' ἀγγελικῇ / οὐδ' ἀγγελικῇ δυνάμει ὁ Χριστὸς ἴσχυσε.

10) ἂν εἴη / ἂν εἴεν.

11) τούτων / τούτων τῶν κρειττόνων.

12) Ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ τοῦτο ἀδύνατον. / Τοῦτο δὲ ἀδύνατον· λείπεται δὴ λοιπὸν θεία.

13) δυνάμει / δυνάμει τινὶ ἄκρα.

14) πενέστερος / πενέστερος καὶ ἀμαθέστερος.

15) ἀσθενέστερος ὦν / ἀσθενέστερος ὦν, καὶ τοσοῦτον, ὥς καὶ θανάτῳ ἐπονείδιστῳ, σταυρῷ δηλαδὴ, κατακριθῆναι.

16) εὐαριθμήτους προσλαβὼν, πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἀγενεστάτους τε καὶ ἀμαθεστάτους, τοσοῦτον ἴσχυσε / εὐαριθμήτους δώδεκα προσλαβὼν μαθητάς, πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἀνθρωπίνως ἀγενεστέτους καὶ ἀμαθεστέτους καὶ μωροτέτους καὶ αὐτοὺς ὄντας, τοσοῦτον ὅμως ἴσχυσε.

17) γοητεία κατ' ἐνίους / γοητεία κατ' αὐτούς.

18) μηδαμὴ μηδαμῶς / οὐδαμὴ οὐδαμῶς.

19) ...ἴν' ἀπὸ τοῦ τελευταίου πρῶτον ἄρξωμαι, πῶς οὖν... ἂν ἰσχύσειεν; / (ἄρξομαι γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ τρίτου τε καὶ ἐσχάτου), πῶς ἂν... ἰσχύσειεν;

20) Εἰ οὖν προῦπήρχε τοῦ Χριστοῦ, μύριοι καὶ ὑπὲρ ἀριθμὸν / Εἰ οὖν προῦπήρχε τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ διὰ τῆς τοιαύτης γοητείας τοσοῦτον ὁ Χριστὸς ἴσχυσεν, μύριοι, μᾶλλον δὲ ὑπὲρ ἀριθμὸν

21) σοφοί / σοφοί, αἰδίου τοῦδε τοῦ παντός κατ' αὐτοὺς ὄντος.

22) ἤδη γέγονεν / ἐξ αἰῶνος γέγονεν ὅμοιος τῷ Χριστῷ.

23) αὐτὸν / τοσοῦτον

### Ch. 3:

1) μέρος / πλῆθος

2) ἀφαιρεῖ / ἀφαιρεῖται

3) ἐτέρα τινὶ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρωπινὴ δυνάμει / ἐτέρα τινὶ δυνάμει, δηλαδὴ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρωπινὴν.

4) Εἰ δὲ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρωπινὴν, / Εἰ δὲ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρωπινὴν ἢ τοιαύτη δυνάμις ἦν,

5) ἤδη καὶ Θεός, καὶ ἄλλως ἀδύνατον. Γεωμετρικαῖς οὕτω γὰρ ἀνάγκαις τὰ τοιαῦτα δεικνύμενα δείκνυται. / ἤδη καὶ Θεός (μακρολογεῖν γὰρ οὐ δεῖ), καὶ ἄλλως ἀδύνατον. Γεωμετρικαῖς γάρ, ἴν' οὕτως εἴπω, ἀνάγκαις τὰ τοιαῦτα δεικνύμενα δείκνυται, ἐκ τῶν κοινῇ καὶ πᾶσι δοκούντων τὰς ἀποδείξεις ἐχόντων, καὶ οὐχ ὥς ἐνίοι τῶν τῇ αὐτῶν δόξῃ τὰ πράγματα κρίνουν εἰσθότων, τὸ

δοκοῦν αὐτοῖς αὐτὸ τοῦτ' εὐθὺς καὶ ἀληθὲς εἶναι οἰομένων,<sup>332</sup> τῇ φυσικῇ μόνῃ γνῶσει –ἢ μᾶλλον εἰπεῖν ἀγνοίᾳ– τῶν τοιούτων ἅτε ἐπομένων, ἀγνοοῦντες, ὡς ἔοικεν, ὡς ἡ φυσικὴ μόνῃ γνῶσις καθ' ἑαυτὴν τῆς ἐπικτήτου χωρὶς ἀγνοεῖ δῆπου, ὅμως διάκειται ὡς δῆθεν μὴ ἀγνοοῦσα, ἀλλ' ὡς πάντα εἰδυῖα· ὥσπερ εἴ τις νοσῶν, ὅμως οὐδ' αὐτὸ τοῦτο εἰδείη ἄν, ὅτι νοσεῖ, ὑπ' ἀγνοίας· οὐ χεῖρον τί ἂν γένοιτο;

#### Ch. 4:

- 1) γενῶν / ἔθνων
- 2) πατροπαπποπαραδότους ἐξ αἰῶνος ἀναριθμήτου δόξας τε καὶ θρησκείας προρρίζους ἀνασπάσαι ἡδυνήθη / πάσας πατρίους δόξας τε καὶ θρησκείας ἐξ αἰῶνος ἀπείρου καὶ κατ' αὐτοὺς Ἑλληνας καίτοι καταγομένους –εἰ δὲ μὴ ἐξ ἀπείρου, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἀμνημονεύτων σχεδὸν τῶν χρόνων οὔσας τε καὶ κρατούσας– προρρίζους ἀνασπάσαι παντευκόλως ὅμως αὐτὰς ἡδυνήθη ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν ἀνθρωπίνην δύναμιν τε καὶ βούλησιν, καίτοι τούτου γε ὄντος
- 3) Χριστοῦ / τοῦ Χριστοῦ
- 4) βιασθέντες / (καὶ τί γὰρ οὐ ποιήσαντες;)
- 5) βασιλεῖς τε πολλοὶ καὶ πάνυ πολλοὶ / βασιλεῖς τε πολλοὶ καὶ διὰ πολλοῦ γε τοῦ χρόνου.
- 6) οὐχ οἱ τυχόντες / οὐδ' οἱ τυχόντες
- 7) ῥητόρων τε καὶ φιλοσόφων οὐκ ἀδοκίμων, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάνυ γενναίων τε καὶ μεγαλοπρεπῶν / ῥητόρων τε καὶ φιλοσόφων, καὶ τούτων οὐκ ἀδοκίμων ἢ ἀφανῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάνυ γενναίων τε καὶ μεγαλοπρεπῶν φύλα
- 8) γοήτων πλῆθος οὐκ εὐαρίθμητον / γοήτων πλῆθος οὐκ εὐαρίθμητον (ἐπεὶ καὶ οὗτοι παρ' ἐνίοις ἐν λόγῳ).
- 9) Between ἰσχύκασιν and ἀλλ' (p.198,16), the following lines were inserted: καίτοι πάντα λίθον κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν κινήσαντες (καὶ ἄχρι καὶ νῦν δὲ κινοῦντες), λέγοντες, γράφοντες, χρημάτων πλῆθος πῇ μὲν ἀφαιροῦντες, πῇ δὲ προτείνοντες πολλαπλάσια, τιμάς, δόξας, προεδρίας, ζωῆς ἀφαιροῦντες,

<sup>332</sup> Cf. Demosthenes, *Olynthiaca* III 19: "Μέγα τοῖς τοιούτοις ὑπάρχει λόγος ἢ παρ' ἐκάστου βούλησις, διόπερ ῥᾶστον πάντων ἐστὶν ἑαυτὸν τινα ἐξαπατῆσαι· ὁ γὰρ βούλεται, τοῦθ' ἕκαστος καὶ οἶεται, τὰ δὲ πράγματα πολλάκις οὐχ οὕτω πέφυκε."

σφάττοντες, τέμνοντες, καίοντες, πᾶν εἶδος καὶ πᾶσαν μηχανὴν κέρδους καὶ δέους καὶ κολαστηρίων ἀμυθήτων ὅσων εἶδη καὶ τρόπους ἐπινοήσαντες, ἔτι δὲ γυναικάς τε καὶ τὰ φίλτατα πρὸς οἶκτον ἐπιφερόμενοι, οὐ πάντως οἰκτιστον οὐδὲν (καὶ τί γὰρ οὐ ποιοῦντες;).

10) After ἐπηξήτο (p.198,18), the following lines were inserted: τε καὶ ἐκρατύνετο, καὶ μετὰ πολλῆς ὀσης τῆς ὑπερβολῆς, πάντα τῶν ἀνθρώπων παρορώντων τε καὶ καταφρονούντων τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν ἔνεκα πίστεώς τε καὶ ἀγάπης, καὶ –τό γε δὴ θαυμαστότερον– τῶν ἔναγχος διωκτῶν τε καὶ κολαστῶν καὶ ὠμοτάτων δημίων αἵφνης ὁμολογητῶν ἀναδεικνυμένων τε καὶ δὴ καὶ μαρτύρων, ἀποθνήσκειν ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ μᾶλλον προαιρουμένων ἢ ζῆν τε καὶ ὑπερευδαιμονεῖν μετὰ τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ διωκτῶν καὶ τὰς μὲν πατρίους δόξας τε καὶ παραδόσεις ἀρνούμενων τε καὶ παραιτουμένων, τὴν δὲ νέαν τε καὶ πρόσφατον τοῦ Χριστοῦ νομοθεσίαν αἰρουμένων, ὅλη ψυχὴ ταύτης ἀπρίξ ἐχόμενοι, καίτοι ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν φύσιν καὶ λόγον σχεδὸν οὔσης.

11) ἐξ ἀνθρωπίνης δυνάμεως ἡ τοῦ Χριστοῦ νομοθεσία τὸ κράτος εἶχε / ἐξ ἀνθρωπίνης ὁποιασοῦντινος δυνάμεως τε καὶ μηχανῆς ἡ τοιαύτη τοῦ Χριστοῦ νομοθεσία τὸ κράτος εἰλήφει.

12) τάξεων / τάξεων τε καὶ ἐπινοήσεων καὶ ἐπιχειρήσεων

13) βεβαίως / πάντως.

14) After ἰσχύσειεν, the following lines were inserted: Εἰ δὲ μὴ μία, ἀλλὰ πολλαί· εἰ δὲ μὴ πολλαί, ἀλλὰ κἂν γοῦν πᾶσαι συλλήβδην τάχ' ἂν ἰσχύσειαν.

15) ἀφανίσαι / ἀφανίσαι ἢ γοῦν μειῶσαι.

16) πρόδηλον / πρόδηλον τοῖς μὴ ἐθελοκακεῖν βουλομένοις.

17) Εἰ δὲ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων, ἤδη καὶ Θεοῦ νόμον εἰκότως ἂν αὐτὴν πᾶς τις εἶναι λέγοι βεβαιότατά γε καὶ ἀναμφιλογώτατα, καὶ ἄλλως ἀδύνατον παρὰ πᾶσι κριταῖς. / Εἰ δὲ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρωπίνην, ἤδη καὶ θεία. Εἰ δὲ θεία, ἤδη καὶ Θεοῦ ἂν εἰκότως ὁ Χριστὸς βεβαιότατά γε καὶ ἀναμφιλογώτατα καὶ εἴη καὶ δοκοῖη καὶ λέγοιτο καὶ τιμῶτο παρὰ πᾶσι κριταῖς, καὶ ἄλλως ἀδύνατον.

## Ch. 5:

- 1) μέγιστοι / μέγιστοι καὶ ἐξοχώτατοι
- 2) ἢ γούνη νήσου
- 3) οἶον Πυθαγόρας, Σωκράτης, Πλάτων, Ἀριστοτέλης
- 4) καίτοι πολλὰ καμώντες. / καίτοι πολλὰ καμώντες πάντες.
- 5) Ἄλλ' ὁ Χριστὸς / Ὁ δὲ Χριστὸς
- 6) οὐκ οἰκίας μᾶς ἢ πόλεως ἢ νήσου ἢ ἔθνους ἐνὸς ἢ ἔθνων ἢ δὲ εὐαριθμητῶν,
- 7) ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν γνῶσιν τε καὶ φύσιν πράγματα / ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν φύσιν τε καὶ γνῶσιν καὶ ἀκοήν πράγματα καὶ δόγματα
- 8) ἐδέχθη παρὰ τοσούτων τε καὶ τοιούτων καὶ ἔθνων καὶ γενῶν καὶ τετίμηται οὐχ ὡς νομοθέτης ἀπλῶς, ἄπερ αὐτοὶ οὐδ' αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἠδυνήθησαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ Θεός, οὐ μείζον οὐδέν. Ὡστε καὶ κρείττων αὐτῶν. Εἰ δὲ κρείττων, καὶ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον. Τούτων γὰρ ἀνθρωπίνως μείζων οὐδεὶς. Εἰ δὲ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον, ἤδη καὶ Θεός, καὶ ἄλλως ἀδύνατον. / ἐδέχθη παρὰ τοσούτων καὶ τοιούτων καὶ γενῶν καὶ ἔθνων καὶ –τό γε δὴ μείζον– οὐχ ὡς νομοθέτης μόνον ἀπλῶς, ὅπερ οἱ ἐξοχώτατοι τῶν Ἑλλήνων οὐδ' αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἠδυνήθησαν, καίτοι πολλὰ βουληθέντες, ἀλλὰ καὶ Θεός, οὐ μείζον οὐδέν. Καὶ Θεὸς οὐ καθ' Ἡρακλέα τε καὶ Διόνυσον καὶ τοιούτους ἄλλους, ἀλλὰ δὴ μείζονι πολλῶ καὶ κρείττονι καὶ εὐγενεστέρω σεβάσματι καὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ κορυφαίου πάντων καὶ ὑπάτου, ὡς ἂν αὐτοὶ φαῖεν, Διός. Καὶ τοσοῦτον ἐλλιπεστέρω καὶ οὕτω χρῶμαι τῷ παραδείγματι καὶ εὐτελεστέρω πολλῶ, ὅσον –ἴν' οὕτω φῶ– ἥλιος μὲν ἀστέρων, ἀστὴρ δὲ λαμπάδος, λαμπὰς δὲ πυγολαμπίδος ὑπερφέρουσι τῇ αἴγλῃ. Καίτοι τί φημι, ὅπου γε μὴ ὅτι μόνον αὐτὸς ὁ Χριστὸς (οὗτος γὰρ τοσῶδε πάντων ὑπεραναβέβηκε τούτων, ὅσον [οἱ ὅσῳ] οὐδ' εἰπεῖν ἐνὶ λόγῳ), ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ τούτου γε ὑποφῆται καὶ ὁπαδοὶ καὶ στρατιῶται καὶ μάρτυρες πάντα λόγον καὶ ἀριθμὸν ὑπερβαίνοντες, ἐξ ὅτου περ τὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ διδασκαλεῖον ἠνέωκτο, λαμπροτέρᾳ τῇ ἀξίᾳ καὶ θειοτέρᾳ τῇ παρὰ τοσούτων αἰδοὶ τετίμηται. ὥστε καὶ κρείττων πάντων αὐτὸς ὁ Χριστὸς. Εἰ δὲ κρείττων, καὶ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον. Εἰ δὲ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον, ἤδη καὶ Θεός, καὶ ἄλλως φάναι ἀδύνατον.
- 9) πρὸς τόδε / πρὸς ταῦτα
- 10) ἡμεῖς / ἐγώ

11) ἐν τῷ Κρατύλῳ ἢ περὶ ὀνομάτων ὀρθότητος διαλόγῳ / ἐν τινὶ τῶν αὐτοῦ διαλόγων

12) αἰεὶ / αἰεὶ

13) μὴ μόνον γλυκύ, ἀλλὰ καὶ πικρὸν παρὰ Θεοῦ τῇ φύσει δεδημιούργηται, καὶ μὴ μόνον λευκόν, ἀλλ' ἤδη καὶ μέλαν, ἀναγκαῖον, ὅπερ ἐπὶ τῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ δημιουργίᾳ, τοῦτο καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ νομοθεσίᾳ περισφύζεσθαι. / μὴ μόνον γλυκύ, ἀλλὰ καὶ πικρὸν τῷ κόσμῳ περιπολεῖ, καὶ ὑγεία καὶ νόσος, καὶ νύξ καὶ ἡμέρα, θερμὸν τε ἤδη καὶ ψυχρὸν καὶ λευκὸν καὶ μέλαν δέ, εἰκὸς ἦν, ὅπερ ἐπὶ τῇ τοῦ παντὸς δημιουργίᾳ, τοῦτο καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ νομοθεσίᾳ γενέσθαι.

14) Δεύτερον, / Δεύτερον δέ,

15) παρὰ Θεοῦ εἰκότως δεδημιούργηται / παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ δεδημιούργηται

16) After κατηκολούθησαν, the following lines were added: τε καὶ προσέμειναν καὶ κατακολούθησους καὶ προσμενοῦσι δέ, μέχρις ἂν ἐπὶ γῆς ἄνθρωποι ὦσιν, ὡς καὶ τοῖς σοφοῖς πᾶσι ξυνδοκεῖ.

17) After ὁδόν, the following lines were added: καὶ τὸν μακρὸν καὶ ἀνάντη καὶ τραχύν Ἡσιόδου ἐπ' ἀρετὴν φέροντα δρόμον.

18) ὅπερ ἡμῖν καὶ ἀντὶ πάντων ἀρκεῖ / τελευταῖον καὶ μέγιστον, ὃ καὶ αὐτὸ ἀντὶ πάντων ἀρκεῖ (Argument N° 5 in Ch. 5 in *versio A* was put as 7<sup>th</sup> and last in *versio B*, presumably because, as the author himself says, he considers it the strongest of all.)

19) ὁ δὲ Χριστὸς Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Θεὸς παρὰ πάντων καὶ στέργεται καὶ ἀνακηρύττεται τῶν αὐτῷ πειθομένων τε καὶ ἐπομένων. Ὅσῳ οὖν Θεοῦ τε καὶ προφήτου ἢ νομοθέτου ἐστὶ τὸ μεταξύ, τοσοῦτῳ Μωαμέτου τε καὶ Χριστοῦ ἐστὶ τὸ διάφορον· ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἄνθρωπος, ὁ δὲ Θεός. / ὁ δὲ Χριστὸς Υἱὸς τε Θεοῦ καὶ Θεὸς παρὰ πάντων καὶ λέγεται καὶ σέβεται τῶν αὐτῷ πειθομένων τε καὶ ἐπομένων. Ὅσῳ δὴ οὖν Θεὸς ἀνθρώπου καὶ προφήτου καὶ νομοθέτου διενήνοχε, τοσοῦτῳ Χριστὸς Μωαμέτου μείζων ἐστὶ καὶ μετὰ τοσαύτης τῆς ὑπεροχῆς. Διὸ δὴ καὶ ὑπὲρ μὲν Χριστοῦ πάνυ πολλοί, μᾶλλον δ' ὑπὲρ ἀριθμὸν ἀσμενέστατα μαρτυρικῶ τῷ τέλει ἐχρήσαντο, ὑπὲρ δὲ Μωαμέτου οὐδεὶς.

20) τῷ μὲν Χριστῷ πολλοὶ ἐναντιωθέντες / τῷ μὲν Χριστῷ πάνυ πολλοὶ ἐναντιωθέντες, καὶ οὗτοι οὐχ οἱ τυχόντες

21) οὐδεὶς ἤδη τὸ τυχὸν / οὐδεὶς οὐδὲ τὸ τυχὸν

22) Καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ἐκ πολλῶν ὀλίγα τοσαῦτα. Ἄνιμεν δ' ἐπὶ τὰ μικρῷ πρόσθεν ἡμῖν προτεθέντα. / Καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον λελέχθω μοι τε καὶ ἀποδεδείχθω, ἐκ πολλῶν γοῦν ὀλίγα. Ἄνιμι δ' ἐντεῦθεν ἐπὶ τὰ προὔργου μικρῷ πρόσθεν προτεθέντα καὶ διὰ ταῦτα μικρὸν ἐαθέντα.

#### Ch. 6:

1) Ἔκτον / Ἔκτον τοιγαροῦν

2) ἡ τῶν τοσοῦτων τε καὶ τοιούτων προσώπων παγκόσμιος κρίσις τε καὶ ἐκλογὴ / ἡ τῶν τοσοῦτων καὶ τοιούτων προσώπων τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ νομοθεσίας κρίσις τε καὶ ἐκλογὴ

3) after ἀρετῇ πάσῃ καὶ παντοίᾳ, the phrase καὶ φρονήσει was added.

4) after ἀπαθείᾳ πάσῃ, the phrase καὶ ἀδείᾳ καὶ ἐξουσίᾳ was added.

5) ἐκλεξάντων / βασανισάντων τε καὶ ἐκλεξάντων

6) At the end of the chapter, the following period was added: Τὸ οὖν παρὰ τοσοῦτων τε καὶ τοιούτων καὶ τοσαυτάκις Λυδίας δίκην βασανισθὲν καὶ διὰ ταῦτα δὴ προκριθὲν πῶς οὐκ εἰκότως τὰ πρωτεῖα τῶν πρεσβείων ἀπειληφὸς ἂν ἔσοιτο παρὰ πᾶσι κριταῖς;

#### Ch. 7:

1) πιστεύειν δεῖ, ὥς καὶ οἱ θεῖοι καὶ φιλευσεβεῖς νόμοι λέγοντες ἀξιοῦσιν / πιστεύειν δεῖ, ἔν γε τοῖς πλείστοις, ὥς καὶ παντὶ νόμῳ δοκεῖ.

2) Εἰ οὖν τοῦθ' οὕτως ἔχει παρὰ πᾶσι νομοθέταις κριταῖς,

3) πιστευτέον, ἐκκαίδεκα / πιστεύειν ἡμᾶς δίκαιον, οὐχὶ δύο ἢ τριῶν, ἀλλ' ἐκκαίδεκα

4) πρὸ τοσοῦτων χιλιάδων τῶν χρόνων, ἀλλ' οὐ μετὰ τὰ πράγματα, καὶ οὕτω λεπτομερῶς τε καὶ ἀκριβῶς, ὥς πάντας πάντα διαρρήδην ἀνακηρύττειν μέχρι καὶ τοῦ λεπτοτάτου, εἴτα καὶ τῶν πραγμάτων οὕτω συμφωνούντων τοῖς τούτων προρρήμασι, ὥς μηδ' ὅπωςτιοῦν ἀμφιβάλλειν τοῖς καὶ μικρὸν γοῦν νοῦν ἔχουσι

περὶ τῶν κατὰ Χριστὸν πάντων, ὅσα τε δηλαδὴ θεῖα καὶ ὅσα ἀνθρώπινα. / πρὸ τοσοῦτων οἱ πλείους χιλιάδων τῶν χρόνων, καὶ οὕτω λεπτομερέστατά τε καὶ ἀκριβέστατα, ὥς πάντων πάντα καὶ καθ' ἕκαστον μέχρι καὶ τοῦ λεπτοτάτου καὶ οὐ λόγος σχεδὸν οὐδεὶς διαρρήδην ἀνακηρυττόντων, Στεντόρειον οἶον βοώντων, εἴτα καὶ τῶν πραγμάτων οὕτω συμφωνούντων τε καὶ βεβαιούντων τὰς τούτων προρρήσεις, ὥς μηδ' ὄντιναοῦν μηδ' ὅπωςτιοῦν ἀμφιβάλλειν τῶν καὶ μικρὸν γοῦν νοῦν ἔχόντων περὶ τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ πάντων, ὅσα τε δὴ θεῖα δηλαδὴ καὶ ὅσα ἀνθρώπινα. ἅπερ ἂν καὶ αὐτὰ ἐξεθέμην ἐκάστου ἀρμοζόντως τὰ ῥήματα, εἰ μὴ ἐνεδεδέμην τό γε νῦν ἔχον τῇ τοῦ καιροῦ ἐπείγῳ τῇ τε καὶ βραχύτητι καὶ τῷ τῶν κεφαλαίων αὐτοσχεδίῳ, φίλη, φιλότατη μοι καὶ τιμία κεφαλὴ.

#### Ch. 8:

1) ἀπ' αἰῶνος / ἐξ αἰῶνος

2) εἰς ὅσα δηλαδὴ εἰρήκασιν ἐπαίνου ἄξια / εἰς ὅσα δὴ εἰρήκασιν ἐπαίνου τε δηλαδὴ καὶ τιμῆς ἄξια

3) κατὰ τε ἠθικὴν κατὰ τε πολιτικὴν κατὰ τε θεολογικὴν νομοθεσίαν / σκοπῶν ἀκριβῶς κατὰ τε ἠθικὴν κατὰ τε πολιτικὴν ἀρετὴν τε καὶ σοφίαν κατὰ τε θεολογικὴν νομοθεσίαν

4) ὅσα πάντες πάντων σοφῶν καὶ νομοθετῶν περιέχουσι λόγοι τε καὶ νόμοι συστατικά τε καὶ αὐξητικά / ὅσα πάντες πάντων σοφῶν περιέχουσι νόμοι τε καὶ λόγοι φίλια τε καὶ σωτήρια καὶ δὴ καὶ αὐξητικά

5) περιουσίας / ὑπεροχῆς τε καὶ εὐγενείας

6) –καθὼς δὴ καὶ κέκριται– / παρὰ πάντων

#### Ch. 9:

1) δέδεκται τε

2) σοφία τε καὶ ἀρετῇ / φρονήσει καὶ ἀρετῇ καὶ σοφία

3) ὥς καὶ πάντας τοὺς πρὸ αὐτῶν ἐν Ἑλληνισι σοφοὺς μετὰ πολλοῦ τοῦ περιόντος ὑπεραίρειν / ὥς καὶ πάντες οἱ πρὸ αὐτῶν ἐν ἅπασιν γένεσιν, Ἑλληνισι καὶ βαρβάρους, γεγονότες σοφοί, εἰ περιόντες ἐώρων αὐτοὺς, μεγάλης ἂν ἀξιώσειαν τιμῆς

4) παραβάλλων / παραβάλλων τις



- 5) after ἐναρέτοις, the phrase ἐνὶ ἓνα δηλαδή was added.
- 6) γέννη προσώποις / ἐνὶ δέκα
- 7) At the end of the chapter, the phrase καὶ ποσότητι καὶ ποιότητι was added.

**Ch. 10:**

- 1) στενοχωροῦντος τοῦ χάρτου καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐπὶ πλεόν μηκύναι μὴ συγχωροῦντος / στενοχωροῦντος με τοῦ καιροῦ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο μηκύνειν ἐπὶ πλεόν μὴ συγχωροῦντος
- 2) καὶ ἀπορίαν καὶ ἀτοπίαν δὲ
- 3) τῇ τῶν χριστιανῶν ταύτῃ θεοπαραδότῳ θρησκείᾳ / τῇ τῶν χριστιανῶν θεοδιδάκτῳ ταύτῃ καὶ θεοδότῳ θρησκείᾳ
- 4) After δυνάμεθα, the parenthetical sentence εἰρήσθω δὲ ξὺν Θεῷ was added.
- 5) λόγοις / λόγοις τε καὶ ἀποδείξεσι πιθαναῖς

**Dedicatory epilogue:**

Τούτων οὖν πάντων περὶ ἐκ πολλῶν ὀλίγα τό γε νῦν ἔχον ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον λελέχθω τε καὶ δὴ καὶ ἀποδεδείχθω, ἀνδρῶν ἄριστέ μοι καὶ φιλολογώτατε. / Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ἤχθω μοί τε καὶ λελέχθω, Παλαιολόγων φιλολογώτατέ μοι καὶ φιλοκαλέστατε [sic; gradus positivus φιλοκαλῆς numquam reperitur], ἀλλὰ δὴ καὶ ἀνδρῶν ἀξιαγαστότατε καὶ μεγαλοπρεπέστατε. Σὺ δὲ αὐτὸς διαβίῳ ἐς μακροὺς τοὺς ἡλίους ξὺν ἀλυπία πάσῃ καὶ εὐδαιμονίᾳ, ἀρετῇ πάσῃ καὶ παντοίᾳ καὶ τῇ περὶ τοὺς λόγους καὶ τὰ καλὰ ἐρεῦνη τε καὶ σπουδῇ ὅσαι ὦραι καθ' ἐκάστην, μᾶλλον καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον ἐπιδιδούς καὶ τῇ τούτων κτήσει τε καὶ οὐ κτήσει ἐπὶ πλεόν καλλυνόμενός γε καὶ λαμπρυνόμενος. Καὶ ἡμῶν δ' αὐτῶν νῦν τε ἐς Ῥώμην ἀπιὼν καὶ ἐς αἰὶ δὲ μέμνοιο, εἰ καὶ μηδὲν ἡμῖν μνήμης ἄξιον, ὅσον γε ἐμὲ εἰδέναι.

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# Plethon and the Latin Renaissance

## How to Make a New Philosophy From an Old Platonism: Plethon and Cusanus on *Phaedrus*

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**Abstract:** The article aims to demonstrate some elements of the reception of Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus* in the extant works by Plethon. Special attention is given to his understanding of the first principle as a supreme and dominant dynamic point (as, in Plato's *Phaedrus*, identified with Zeus), from which the universe originated and in which all things participate thanks to Beauty. These methods of Plethon's reading of Plato have many intriguing parallels to the interpretation of *Phaedrus* in the marginalia made by Nicholas of Cusa and preserved in manuscript 177 from the Hospitalbibliothek in Bernkastel-Kues, which contains *Phaedrus* and some of Plato's other dialogues in the Latin translation by Leonardo Bruni.

**Keywords:** Plethon; Nicholas of Cusa; Leonardo Bruni; Bernkastel-Kues; Plato; *Phaedrus*; Renaissance Platonism; First principle; Soul.

At first glance, it seems that a comparison of the philosophical views of two eminent thinkers of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Nicholas of Cusa and Plethon, could not promise many interesting perspectives from both a historical and a systematic point of view. Indeed, what could be in common between the cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek-Byzantine philosopher, who was accused of promoting paganism and even in the practice of pagan rituals? However, both thinkers play a crucial role in the philosophical reception of Plato in the culture of the European Renaissance, and this fact alone allows me to consider them in one and the same area of research study. At the same time, I am absolutely aware of the fact that this special area of research does not cover every aspect of the philosophies of these two thinkers, and does not cover even the most important topics of their thinking.



Later in this article, I would like to discuss the approaches of Nicholas of Cusa and Plethon to several themes and subjects of Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus*. I chose this dialogue not only for its typical Platonic content, but also because Plethon would sometimes use passages and paraphrases from the text of Plato as common places in his various writings, even without reference to their source, perhaps because of their good recognition among his readers. Nicholas of Cusa expressed his attitude towards *Phaedrus* in his still unpublished marginalia to this text, made by his own hand and preserved in his library in Bernkastel-Kues<sup>1</sup>. Comparing their approaches to Plato's text, I will try to demonstrate some parallels and differences between Plethon and Cusanus that could shed some light on the peculiarities of their understanding and their reception of Platonism, or at least their interpretation of the philosophy of Plato as it is expressed in *Phaedrus*.

It is well known that during his diplomatic voyage from Constantinople to Italy, Nicholas of Cusa was accompanied by a Byzantine delegation made up of many Greek intellectuals: John Bessarion, Metropolitan of Nicaea, Mark Eugenikos, Metropolitan of Ephesus, George Scholarios, George Amiroutzes<sup>2</sup>, and – last but not least – George Gemistos Plethon<sup>3</sup>. In reality, we do not know whether Plethon and Cusanus were on board the same ship, and if they were, what kind of possible encounters occurred between them. Strictly speaking, Nicholas of Cusa was not a great philosopher at that time; he was not at all known as a philosopher in the years 1437–1439, and his famous philosophical treatise *De docta ignorantia* would not be written until about a year later (1440).

Since there is a lack of any documentation regarding the matter of their contacts at that time, it would clearly be a mistake or at least a groundless speculation to search for possible influences that one of these thinkers may have had on another. We really have no choice but to recognize the simple fact that the

preserved documents illustrating the lives of these two thinkers and their own texts do not provide us with any explicit or clear information about their interests in each other's philosophies. And if we pursue this in our study, I am not sure if we would be able to obtain much more than hypothetical speculations.

From the other point of view, the diplomatic voyage from Constantinople to Italy was very important in the life of Cusanus; it is from exactly that point that his philosophy rapidly began its development, and this development was deeply influenced by Platonism. He himself speaks about his "turn" at the end of his treatise *De docta ignorantia*, where he describes his crucial experience on board during his voyage from Greece:

"...in mari me ex Graecia redeunte, credo superno dono a patre luminum a quo omne datum optimum, ad hoc ductus sum, ut incomprehensibilia incomprehensibiliter amplecterer in docta ignorantia per transcendens veritatum incorruptibile humaniter scibile." <sup>4</sup>

This experience was surely simultaneously of both a mystical and philosophical nature. After that, Cusanus and Plethon would certainly have plenty of time to meet each other during the Council of Ferrara-Florence, where they participated in the sessions and prepared documents for discussions, especially the discussions on the principles of the Christian faith. The only fact that we know for certain is that Cusanus' interest in Plato and in Plato's works<sup>5</sup> clearly began in the years of preparation for and conduct of the Council of Ferrara-Florence, in which Nicholas of Cusa was personally deeply involved for many years. This means that we cannot exclude that the Byzantine thinker who accompanied Cusanus on the trip from Constantinople to Italy and who met him many times after that may have had an influence on him, even if we cannot say any

<sup>1</sup> Bernkastel-Kues, St. Nikolaus-Hospital, ms. 177, ff. 101r–111v.

<sup>2</sup> John Monfasani, *George Amiroutzes: The Philosopher and His Tractates*, *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales*, Bibliotheca 12 (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), p.5, n.1.

<sup>3</sup> Kurt Flasch, *Nikolaus von Kues. Geschichte einer Entwicklung. Vorlesungen zur Einführung in seine Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1998), p.225: "Er reiste gemeinsam, wahrscheinlich auf demselben Schiff, mit dem dreiundachtzigjährigen Georgios Gemistos Plethon, einem Laien, der den Kaiser als Berater begleitete; wegen widrigen Wetters dauerte die Fahrt ungewöhnlich lange, vom 24. November 1437 bis zum 8. Februar 1438."

<sup>4</sup> Nicolaus de Cusa, *De docta ignorantia*, n.263, in Nicolaus de Cusa, *Opera omnia*, ed. Heidelbergensis, vol. I (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1932), p.163, 7–11.

<sup>5</sup> Johannes Hirschberger, "Das Platon-Bild bei Nikolaus von Kues" in *Nicolò Cusano agli inizi del mondo moderno*, edited by Giovanni Santinello, *Atti del Congresso internazionale in occasione del V centenario della morte di Nicolò Cusano*, Bressanone, 6–10 settembre 1964 (Firenze: Sansoni, 1970), pp.113–115.

more about it<sup>6</sup>. But we can presume that it was not only “geographical proximity” that connected these two thinkers in the history<sup>7</sup>.

As the manuscript 177 from the Hospitalbibliothek in Bernkastel-Kues shows, Cusanus knew *Phaedrus* and some of Plato’s other dialogues in the Latin translation by Leonardo Bruni<sup>8</sup>. This translation was made in the first half of the year 1424<sup>9</sup>, long before Plethon’s visit to Italy. The manuscript from Bernkastel-Kues contains Bruni’s Latin version of *Phaedrus* with marginalia made by Nicholas of Cusa with his own hand. Compared to his marginalia and commentaries in the Latin translation of the Neoplatonic Greek philosopher Proclus, Cusanus’ marginalia in the Bernkastel-Kues manuscript, as Giovanni Santinello points out<sup>10</sup>, are not very extensive. On the other hand,

<sup>6</sup> More detailed about Cusanus and the Greeks see Kurt Flasch, *Nikolaus von Kues. Geschichte einer Entwicklung. Vorlesungen zur Einführung in seine Philosophie*, pp.225–232, Paul Oskar Kristeller, “A Latin Translation of Gemistos Plethon’s *De fato* by Johannes Sophiano dedicated Nicholas of Cusa” in *Nicolò Cusano agli inizi del mondo moderno*, pp.175–193; Francesco Fiorentino, *Il risorgimento filosofico nel Quattrocento* (Napoli: Tipografia della Regia università, 1885), pp.235–238; Freiherr von Wolfgang Löhneysen, *Mistra* (München: Prestel Verlag, 1977), pp.196–197; Christopher Montague Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon, The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p.132; Wilhelm Blum, *Georgios Gemistos Plethon, Politik, Philosophie und Rhetorik im späbyzantinischen Reich (1353–1452)*, Bibliothek der griechischen Literatur, Abteilung Byzantinistik 25 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1988), p.81, n.6; Jan Louis van Dieten, “Nikolaus von Kues, Markos Eugenikos und die Nicht-Koinzidenz von Gegensätzen” in *Studien zum 15. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Erich Meuthen zum 65. Geburtstag, I–II*, edited by Johannes Helmrath und Heribert Müller in Zusammenarbeit mit Helmut Wolff, Bd. I (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1994), pp.355–379; specially about Cusanus and Plethon: Flasch, *Nikolaus von Kues. Geschichte einer Entwicklung. Vorlesungen zur Einführung in seine Philosophie*, pp.226–228, n.52.

<sup>7</sup> James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols., Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 17 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), p.438: “Other persons, more speculatively, have been linked with Pletho merely on grounds of geographical proximity: Nicholas of Cusa (who travelled with him and the rest of the Greek delegation from Greece, but was very imperfectly acquainted with Greek)...”

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.97, 396–399.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.438: “Hence the *Phaedrus* must have been finished between 25 March 1424 and 21 June 1424.”

<sup>10</sup> Giovanni Santinello, “Glosse di mano del Cusano alla Repubblica di Platone” in *Rinascimento*. Rivista dell’Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, seconda serie, vol. 9 (Firenze: G.C. Sansoni editore, 1969), p.136: “In proprio su Platone – a differenza che su Proclo e su Dionigi – il Cusano ha annotato piuttosto poco”, n.2: “Anche su altri testi di Platone, da lui posseduti, le glosse del Cusano sono piuttosto poche: *Apologia*, *Critone*, *Menone*, *Fedone*, *Fedro*, *Assioco* (contenuti in cod. Cus. 177), *Leggi* (cod. Harl. 3261), *Timeo* (cod. Harl. 2652), *Parmenide* (cod. Volterra 6201).”

the manuscript that contains them is one of the most important sources from which one can study the forms and kind of Cusanus’ reception of Plato, and the unique manuscript makes it possible to understand the role that the reading of *Phaedrus* had in the development of Cusanus’ philosophy.

To illustrate the importance of this manuscript, I would like to give some examples of the ways in which Cusanus interprets Plato’s *Phaedrus*. As it is plainly impossible here to account for every interesting detail in Cusanus’ approach to this dialogue and to describe *in extenso* all similarities between Plethon’s and Cusanus’ interpretations of *Phaedrus*, I have selected a few passages which are at once absolutely typical for Cusanus’ approach to Plato and also offer comparisons with Plethon. I think that in the case of these passages, it is important to note that not all, but only very few—and not the most central—themes and subjects of this Platonic dialogue are of common interest to Plethon and Nicholas of Cusa. But this is why they are considered to be particularly interesting.

According to Plethon’s interpretation in *De differentiis*, Plato “makes the soul ungenerated in *Phaedrus*” (*Phaedrus*, 246a)<sup>11</sup> and identifies it with an eternal principle as such, according to which, and from which, all that is coming into being, necessarily exists. In this sense, I can agree with Niketas Siniosoglou, who thinks that in this passage “Plethon demythologizes the *Phaedrus* myth and distils its doctrinal core”<sup>12</sup>. In turn, Cusanus concentrates exactly on this “demythologized” point in his marginalia to *Phaedrus*. Commenting on the passage “*ex principio omnia oriantur oportet*” (*Phaedrus*, 246a) he points out that “*principium eternum esse ostendit*”, and that there is not any logical mediation between principle and its consequences (f. 108<sup>r</sup>). It is hardly a coincidence that both thinkers are turning their attention to the concept contained in the same passage from *Phaedrus*. Of course, this fact alone does not prove Plethon’s influence on Nicholas of Cusa. It does clearly show, however, that the philosophical reception of Platonism in the texts of both thinkers developed along parallel paths.

It is well known that according to Plethon, man participates in the intellectual contemplation of the Divine and through this contemplation he activates in himself the source of his immortality:

<sup>11</sup> Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon, The Last of the Hellenes*, p.193, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Niketas Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.172.

We would not say that gods have any task that is more important than the contemplation of beings (τῆς τῶν ὄντων θεωρίας), of which the summit is the intellection of Zeus (Διὸς ἔννοια). Clearly, man enjoys his communion in the contemplation of all other beings, while equally participating in the intellection of Zeus, until the furthest limit that gods themselves can reach. Hence, man is in need of an essence similar to that of gods, which will perform a similar task and which will be immortal too, since the essence of gods is immortal.<sup>13</sup>

In his comments to *Phaedrus*, 246a, Cusanus concentrates on the same idea: “*Notantur divina narratio est sola ex primam perfectionem, supremam totalitatem, humana vero assimilatus*” (f. 108<sup>r</sup>). There is no surprise that, in the texts of these two famous readers of *Phaedrus*, both identify the instance of the perfect divine principle with Zeus. Surely any other identification is philosophically impossible for the readers of *Phaedrus*. It is also clear for both thinkers that the human soul could only participate in the perfect divinity with the help of intellectual contemplation and as much assimilation of the Divine to its own nature as possible. But in spite of the high and intense level of activity of the contemplating human soul, it is still less active than the most perfect and eternal activity of God.

Based on this assertion, the divine principle is understood in a new way. The eternal divine principle is not something static, but something mobile and full of energy. It is maximally active, and this maximal activity makes it eternal. This means that its stability is stability in motion. This is exactly the argument on which Plato’s theory of the immortality of the soul is based. In *Phaedrus*, 245c–d, Plato argues that the soul is eternal because whatever is always in motion is immortal, and therefore indestructible and eternal. What moves itself is immortal, and the motion is therefore not only the essence and definition of the soul, but also a principle of immortal motion and being itself. Probably trying to explain this, Cusanus points out in his marginalia to this passage that “*animus immortalis [est] quia principium motus [est]*” (f. 107<sup>v</sup>). It is by no means clear that by giving this interpretation to Plato’s theory, he transforms it into a universal philosophical theory. Plethon expresses the same notion in his *Laws*. According to his suggestions, the first principle is the cause of all things, the absolute idea, the true being itself, or the supreme god, is

<sup>13</sup> Pléthon, *Traité des Lois III*, présentation de Rémi Brague (Paris: Vrin, 1982), p.246; Niketas Siniossoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*, p.170.

always active in its eternity<sup>14</sup>. It is not the logically contradicted activity of the Aristotelian unmoved Mover, or the absolute super-transcendent non-activity of the First Principle of the classical Neoplatonism in its scholastic reception at the Albertist school. The first principle, the supreme God, moves Himself eternally, and this point was a new idea in the new metaphysics, based on the direct interpretation of the Plato’s texts without any intermediate influence of Neoplatonic or Christian Neoplatonic interpretations.

It seems also that the core of the whole construction of the world is, for both thinkers, not only a hierarchy of beings, proportion, harmony, and symmetry, but also the vertical and dynamic orientation of the whole metaphysical system. The crucial point in the Platonic world of the eternal essentialities, that is, of the souls, which is described in *Phaedrus*, is its orientation on Zeus. I think that it is exactly what is meant in the remaining parts of Plethon’s *Laws*, where he describes the beauty of the cosmos. Though I fully agree with S. Mariev’s hypothesis of the very possible influence of the Platonic dialogue *Philebus* and Proclus on Plethon’s theory of the ontological ground of the beauty of the world<sup>15</sup>, I think that, as a whole, Plethon’s description of the world of beautiful things with its absolute preferences to the souls could be hardly understandable without allusions to *Phaedrus*. But it is more interesting to me that this clearly “pagan” Platonic point does not remain without comments in Cusanus’ marginalia in *Phaedrus*. Namely, commenting on the passage of Plato’s *Phaedrus*, 250d–e (Lat. transl. by Bruni: “*At enim pulchritudo sola hoc habet ut et manifeste cerni possit et desiderabilis sit*”), Cusanus remarks on the beauty: “*sola pulchritudo cerni possit*” (f. 111<sup>r</sup>). The divine world as Plato describes it is an esthetically perfect world of “blessed spectacles” which are to be contemplated by the soul (*beata spectacula*, f. 109<sup>r</sup>; *Phaedrus*, 246d–e). But this process of contemplative coexistence with the Divine is understood as a progress of the soul to the gods, with the help of *beata spectacula*. Nicholas of Cusa points out emphatically what this principle of the existence of the cosmos exactly is: “*notantur: progressio deorum est per beata spectacula*” (f. 109<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>14</sup> Pléthon, *Traité des Lois I*, p.52: “ἐξ ἐνεργουῦ ἀεὶ ὄντος τοῦ Διὸς”; Igor Pavlovič Medvedev, *Vizantijskij gumanizm XIV–XV vekov*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (St. Petersburg: Aletheia, 1997), p.80, 141, 200, n. 53.

<sup>15</sup> Sergei Mariev, “Der Begriff des Schönen in der Philosophie Plethons”, *Byzantion*, 81 (2011), pp.267–287; Sergei Mariev, “Proklos and Plethon on Beauty” in *Aesthetics and Theurgy in Byzantium*, edited by Sergei Mariev and Wiebke-Marie Stock, *Byzantinisches Archiv* 25 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), pp.57–74.

I think that, from this perspective of philosophical understanding of the eternity of the beauty as a principle which is transcendent and at the same time immanent to this world, we could better understand and correctly interpret the role and function of the passage from *Phaedrus*, 246e–247a, where a hierarchical order of the eternal soul-chariots is described. They all follow Zeus, who represents a divine principle in accordance to which all things exist. In this model of thinking, Zeus is necessarily the highest and supreme God. In the text of dialogue *Phaedrus*, it could surely be understood as a philosophical metaphor, and, as we all know, modern interpreters of Plato often tend to qualify this extravagant picture as pure belletristic fiction. But the nature of a philosophical metaphor is usually not simply fictive, and it is not at all fictive in the writings of Plato. If we take this into account, we could better understand and more correctly interpret the supposed “paganism” (or “crypto-paganism”<sup>16</sup>) of Plethon when he says that Zeus really exists and is the supreme God. We could speculate if this notion has philosophical significance in Plethon’s thought only, or if it also has something to do with his religious beliefs, but it would be absurd to say that Cusanus, by stressing the supreme role of Zeus in his marginalia to *Phaedrus*<sup>17</sup>, converts to paganism, or becomes a crypto-pagan under the influence of Plato’s text, even for a very short time. Surely, it would be completely problematic to suppose something like that for a Catholic priest, pope’s legate and a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church.

Philosophically speaking, Zeus is the goal and supreme point of intellectual contemplation. In this function he is the cause of the hierarchic order of intelligences; that is, enlightened souls whose existence, according to Plato’s *Phaedrus*, consists of pure intellectual contemplation and cognition of the supreme forms of being, to which they ascend through the intellectual activity of the rational souls. As far as we can judge, these ideas, taken by themselves, do not explicitly indicate a supposed conflict between paganism and Christianity in Late Byzantine culture. Even if this conflict had a place as a kind of historical reality, the content of the Plethon’s texts and the controversy

surrounding them are not limited to only this conflict. Moreover, in the polemical literature, it looks more like a figure of speech, a strong argument in which the debates originally have philosophical nature and background. In fact, the debates about the legacy of Plethon were centered on the question about the possibility of the autonomy of philosophy in the Christian culture (or rather, of Plato’s philosophy as a model of philosophy *par excellence*). Thus, the question here is rather about the autonomy of the Platonic and Neoplatonic heritage in a culture where Orthodox Christianity was not only a dominant religion, but also the most important order-giving structure that constituted the norms and values of everyday life, culture, law, social sphere and politics.

This does not mean that any suspicion about paganism<sup>18</sup> or polytheism<sup>19</sup> must be absolutely excluded from the frames of interpretation of Plethon’s thought. But we should make clear the difference between Plethon’s presumed religious or quasi-religious beliefs and his philosophical interpretation of Plato, in which philosophical metaphors for the divine nature play an important role. The first, religious, side of the interpretation of Plato’s works would be absolutely unacceptable for the people of Church like Nicholas of Cusa<sup>20</sup>. On the other hand, the philosophical perspective of Platonism was surely very attractive for the Christian humanists<sup>21</sup>, and Cusanus (as his unpublished marginalia to *Phaedrus* show us) could be well – directly or indirectly – under

<sup>18</sup> Siniossoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*, p.14: “My contention is that Plethon was a pagan... I use the term ‘paganism’ heuristically to designate the intellectual and moral contents of a particular philosophical constellation that transcends the historical borders of late antiquity”; “redefinition of paganism as philosophical Hellenism”; “one might object that the people who the Orthodox establishment designated as ‘Hellenes’, that is to say ‘pagan’, were not *really* pagan”.

<sup>19</sup> Igor Pavlovič Medvedev, *Vizantijskij gumanizm XIV–XV vekov*, p.81: “Plethon’s system is purest polytheism”; cf. *ibid.*, p.95: “The answer to the question about the religious program of Plethon cannot be univocal.”

<sup>20</sup> Siniossoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*, p.13: “Against the scholarly consensus that sees in Plethon a forerunner of Renaissance Platonism, I argue that the radicalism of Plethonian Platonism is intrinsically incompatible with the conformism of Renaissance Platonists who sought to maintain the agreement between Platonism and Christianity along with that between Plato and Aristotle.”

<sup>21</sup> Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, p.6: “Hence with Cusanus, Bessarion and preeminently with Ficino there emerges for the first time since antiquity an avowed and self-conscious Christian Platonism, seeking the reform of Christian theology by returning it to its Platonic sources.”

<sup>16</sup> Monfasani, George Amiroutzes: *The Philosopher and His Tractates*, George Amiroutzes, p.5.

<sup>17</sup> Bernkastel-Kues, Sankt-Nikolaus Hospital, ms. 177, f. 109r: “*Jupiter magnus rex*” (comm. on *Phaedrus*, 246e; transl. by Bruni: “*Magnus igitur rex in celo Iupiter*”; original old Greek text: μέγας ἡγεμὼν ἐν οὐρανῷ Ζεύς); f. 109r: “*omnis deus agit proprium opus, Jovem sequens*” (comm. on *Phaedrus*, 247a; transl. by Bruni: “*Permulta ergo beataque spectacula progressusque intra celum existunt, quibus deorum genus felicius alitur agens unusquisque suum proprium opus*”); f. 111r: “*cum Jove notantur; alii cum aliis diis*” (comm. on *Phaedrus*, 250b).



its influence, even if his philosophical contacts with “the wise man from the East” could not be traced in detail and no clear evidence for such contacts could be found in the historical documents and philosophical texts. The only fact we undoubtedly know is that after all his contacts with “the Greeks,” Cusanus definitely remained a Catholic, and was perhaps even more convinced and had even more arguments in favor of his faith than before – despite John Wenck’s criticism of *De docta ignorantia* that had followed soon after. But far more important in this story is the fact that through his contacts with “the Greeks,” Cusanus as a philosopher was converted to Platonism, and this was a crucial point in his life from which his future philosophical conceptions developed. As far as we know, there is no doubt that the role of Plethon in this philosophical “conversion” could be seen as very significant, if not decisive and most important.

In sum: The impossibility to trace any clear dependence of Nicholas of Cusa from Plethon (whom he undoubtedly personally knew) does not mean that we could not find some interesting parallels between the two scholars in their interpretations of Plato. I think that it is no great surprise that most of these parallels could be found in the interpretations of the most “pagan” of the Plato’s dialogues; for example, the content in *Phaedrus* could hardly be entirely Christianized with the help of sophisticated hermeneutics. Cusanus’ unpublished marginalia in the *Phaedrus* manuscript show us that the main intention of Nicholas of Cusa in commenting on Plato’s dialogue was not to accommodate it to his Christian Catholic beliefs, but to find a way to extract from this text a new philosophy, the purpose of which was to be more abstract and more universal than every concrete religious formula used by the traditional dogmatics. Writing his marginalia for his own private purposes and not for public use, Nicholas of Cusa could feel free to make uninhibited philosophical speculations, and in exactly this way he came much closer to Plethon’s strategy of interpretation of Platonic texts. Though the parallels between Cusanus and Plethon did not overlap in the historical time in which these thinkers lived, I think that the most important fact is that, with their interpretations of Plato, they built a typologically common sphere, where a very complicated and manifold Renaissance reception of Plato took place.

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## From Byzantium to Italy: "Ancient Wisdom" in Plethon and Cusanus<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The article discusses possible influences or points of contact between G. Gemistos Plethon and Nicholas of Cusa. Although these two major 15<sup>th</sup> century Platonists almost certainly met and knew of each other, there is in fact little they had in common. However, a useful comparison can be made between their two particular conceptions of ancient wisdom, represented by Zoroaster and Orpheus or Hermes Trismegistus and the Sibyls, respectively. It seems that both authors drew on different traditions invoking the ancient sages, namely the Neoplatonic tradition and the early Christian one, which were subsequently systematized by Marsilio Ficino. At the same time, these different approaches also represent different conceptions of the development of human thought, as either static and omnipresent *philosophia perennis* or as *prisca theologia*, evolving and deepening in time.

**Keywords:** Gemistos Plethon; Nicholas of Cusa; Marsilio Ficino; Ancient wisdom; Renaissance philosophy

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In late November of 1437, a ship left Constantinople. She headed for Venice, which she was to reach in more than three months time.<sup>2</sup> A church legate who was aboard, Nicholas of Cusa could be more than satisfied. It was due to his diplomatic skills that a high-ranking deputation travelled to Italy to attend a council, which was to discuss a union of Western and Eastern churches. Among the Byzantine élite, in the company of high state and church officials and scholars, there was a man who shared Nicholas' interest in philosophy and more specifically Platonism.<sup>3</sup> His name was George Gemistos but he is also known under the surname he sometimes used – Plethon, meaning the second Plato. He was undisputedly the greatest expert in ancient philosophy in late Byzantium and a kind of polymath around whom an important circle of pupils gathered.

This all is well known as well as the role Plethon and Cusanus had in the history of Renaissance thought. For Nicholas, his diplomatic voyage to Constantinople was a turning point in his intellectual career. In 1440, two years after his return home from Constantinople, he finished his first and by far the most famous philosophical treatise *On Learned Ignorance (De docta ignorantia)*.<sup>4</sup> At the end of this work, he notoriously claims that during the journey

he experienced an intellectual vision. It allegedly led him to the formulation of the key principle of his philosophy, namely, the coincidence of opposites:<sup>5</sup>

...while I was at sea en route back from Greece, I was led [...] to embrace – in learned ignorance and through a transcending of the incorruptible truths which are humanly knowable – incomprehensible things incomprehensibly.<sup>6</sup>

It is tempting to imagine Nicholas being led to such a theoretical insight by a philosophical conversation with Gemistos. During the slow voyage to Venice, they definitely had enough time to talk and, indeed, they could not miss one another. Gemistos was by far the most important Byzantine Platonist of the day and his knowledge of ancient culture attracted even Italian humanists from the West. As for Cusanus, he was interested in Platonism as well as in ancient manuscripts and Greek. If his knowledge of the language was not good enough to engage in a conversation with Gemistos, he could easily turn to a number of interpreters and experts in both languages,<sup>7</sup> Greek and Latin, who were naturally present in the delegation prepared for a difficult diplomatic mission.

Unfortunately, leaving aside Nicholas' long-term warm friendship with Bessarion, the most important pupil of Gemistos, it is difficult to find a tangible connection between both thinkers. We know that some 30 years later Cusanus got

<sup>2</sup> More precisely, the journey took place between 27<sup>th</sup> November 1437 and 8<sup>th</sup> February 1438. On Cusanus' diplomatic mission in Constantinople and further activities in the period in question see *Acta Cusana: Quellen zur Lebensgeschichte des Nikolaus von Kues*, edited by Erich Meuthen and Hermann Hallauer (Hamburg: Meiner, 1983), vol. 1,2: 1437 Mai 17–1450 Dezember 31, nos. 323–334; Erich Meuthen, *Nicholas of Cusa: A Sketch for a Biography*, trans. by David Crowner and Gerald Christianson (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), pp.54–58; H. Lawrence Bond, "Nicholas of Cusa from Constantinople to 'Learned ignorance': The Historical Matrix for the Formation of the *De docta ignorantia*" in *Nicholas of Cusa on Christ and the Church: Essays in Memory of Chandler McCuskey Brooks for the American Cusanus Society*, edited by Gerald Christianson and Thomas M. Izbicki (Leiden, New York and Köln: Brill, 1996), pp.135–163. On Plethon's life and activities see Christopher Montague Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986). On the preparation of the council and the journey of the Byzantine delegation to Italy see *ibid.*, pp.119–135.

<sup>3</sup> Before the given period, out of the (Neo-)Platonic tradition, Cusanus was influenced most notably by (Pseudo-)Dionysius the Areopagite and Meister Eckhart.

<sup>4</sup> Already before, in 1434, Cusanus published his first great work *The Catholic Concordance (De concordantia catholica)* but it was dedicated to the church problems discussed at the Council of Basel, not to speculative thinking.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. H. Lawrence Bond, "Nicholas of Cusa from Constantinople to 'Learned ignorance'". The suggestion of M. O'Rourke according to which we have to do here not with a real experience of Cusanus but just with a literary topos seems unconvincing since such an episode fits well into both Nicholas' activities and development of his work, Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, "Cusanus at Sea: The Topicality of Illuminative Discourse", *Journal of Religion*, 71 (1991), pp.180–201.

<sup>6</sup> ...quousque in mari me ex Graecia redeunte, [...] ad hoc ductus sum, ut incomprehensibilia incomprehensibiliter amplecterer in docta ignorantia, per transcendens veritatum incorruptibilem humaniter scibilium. Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia* III, *Epistula auctoris*, 263.4–9. The text just quoted is in fact a personal note addressed to Cusanus' friend, cardinal Cesarini.

<sup>7</sup> On Cusanus' – obviously passable – knowledge of Greek see John Monfasani, "Nicholas of Cusa, the Byzantines, and the Greek Language" in *Nicolaus Cusanus zwischen Deutschland und Italien: Beiträge eines deutsch-italienisch Symposiums in der Villa Vigogna vom 28.3.–1.4.2001*, edited by Martin Thurner (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002), pp.215–252, reprinted in *idem, Greeks and Latins in Renaissance Italy: Studies on Humanism and Philosophy in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century* (Aldershot: Ashgate, Variorum, 2004), no. VIII; Erich Meuthen, *Nicholas of Cusa*, pp.53–54.

a translation of Plethon's *On Fate* (in fact chapter II,6 from the *Laws*) but we are not sure how much he was really interested in this text and generally in its author. The translation was made between 1458–1464 by Ioannes Sophianos, a Greek settled in Italy. It is not clear whether he translated the text upon Cusanus' request and there are no notes by the latter in the manuscript. As the dedication to the Cardinal shows, Sophianos rather thought – perhaps due to Bessarion's advice – that Cusanus might be interested in the treatise. It is noteworthy that Zeus and the gods in plural (*theoi*) in Plethon's original polytheist text disappeared in the translation – Sophianos leaves out Zeus and changes the gods from plural to singular. It might have been so because Gemistos was already famous as a Platonizing polytheist and it was thus better to avoid these topics. In general, we do not have much of an idea about how much Cusanus knew about Plethon whom Sophianos calls "a philosopher of our age" (*philosophus nostri seculi*).<sup>8</sup>

It is plausible to claim that he had to know about Gemistos and he was probably also aware of his activities in Italy during the council of Ferrara-Florence in 1438–1439 as well as about the burning of Plethon's *Laws* some twenty years later. At the same time, however, there are reasons why Cusanus might well have been critical towards Plethon, namely, because of his notorious fatalism and perhaps also because of his emphasizing of the differences between Plato and Aristotle, instead of mutual agreement of their philosophy. Thus, for instance, Ficino who draws upon Plethon evokes his name only scarcely, because he is critical towards him, the question of fate being one of the issues. We can assume a similar attitude towards Plethon in the case of Cusanus who accepts the idea of fate as the "explication" and realization of ideal entities in time in our sensible world. However, we do not find in him a similar emphasis on the fatal determination of everything that is going to happen.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Paul Oskar Kristeller, "A Latin Translation of Gemistos Plethon's *De fato* by Johannes Sophianos Dedicated to Nicholas of Cusa", in *idem, Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, 4 vols (Roma: Storia e Letteratura, 1993), vol. 3, pp.21–38, reprinted from *Nicolò Cusano agli inizi del mondo moderno: Atti del Congresso Internazionale in occasione del V centenario della Morte di Nicolò Cusano: Bressanone, 6–10 settembre 1964* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1970), pp.175–193; John Monfasani, "Cardinal Bessarion's Greek and Latin Sources in the Plato-Aristotle Controversy of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and Nicholas of Cusa's Relation to the Controversy" in *Knotenpunkt Byzanz: Wissenformen und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen*, edited by Andreas Speer and Philipp Steinkrüger (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2012), pp.469–480 (477–478).

<sup>9</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia* II,7 129; 9 141–143; 10 151. Cf. John Monfasani, "Marsilio Ficino and the Plato-Aristotle Controversy" in *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, edited by Michael J.B. Allen and Valery Rees (Leiden: Brill, 2002),

In general, there seem to be fewer similarities than divergences between the two respective versions of Platonism they both proposed. It is true that Plethon and Cusanus jointly abandon the complex hierarchic picture of reality of the late Neoplatonists, developed after Plotinus into the form of "the great chain of being", even though they both in many ways rely on Proclus and, in the case of Cusanus, also on Dionysius Areopagite. They both also emphasize the central position of man in the universe, although in a very different and probably independent way. However, this, together with a simpler version of Platonism, seems to have more to do with the general intellectual climate of the *quattrocento* than with their mutual interaction. Cusanus' key doctrine of the coincidence of opposites has no equivalent in Plethon. In contrast, the latter's treatment of ancient polytheism, original in Neoplatonism, that is, the identification of ancient Greek gods with Platonic Forms is alien to Cusanus, however, tolerant he might be towards different religions. These include the polytheists who, according to him, venerate one divinity behind its multiple manifestations in many gods.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, while Cusanus' cosmology with its assertion of the (potential) infinity of the cosmos is revolutionary, the one of Plethon is much more traditional, even though he argues against the Aristotelian worldview. Finally, although traces of the Platonic tradition of negative theology are also present in Plethon, Platonism acquires a much more important role in Cusanus.<sup>11</sup> In fact it is difficult to find a particular

pp.179–202, reprinted in *idem, Greeks and Latins in Renaissance Italy*, no. IX; *idem*, "Cardinal Bessarion's Greek and Latin Sources", pp.478–479.

<sup>10</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *De pace fidei* VI 17, cf. also *De docta ignorantia* I,25 83–85.

<sup>11</sup> For an overview of Plethon's and Cusanus' philosophy, including their sources see Vojtěch Hladký, *The Philosophy of Gemistos Plethon: Platonism in Late Byzantium, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); Pauline Moffitt Watts, *Nicolaus Cusanus: A Fifteenth-Century Vision of Man* (Leiden: Brill, 1982); Jasper Hopkins, *A Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980); Kurt Flasch, *Nikolaus von Kues, Geschichte einer Entwicklung: Vorlesungen zur Einführung in seine Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1998); *idem, Nicolaus Cusanus* (München: Beck, 2001). On Cusanus' sources see also his manuscript notes to Proclus and Dionysius: *Cusanus-Texte*, vol. 3: *Marginalien*, vol. 1: *Nicolaus Cusanus und Ps. Dionysius im Lichte der Zitate und Randbemerkungen des Cusanus*, edited by Ludwig Baur (Heidelberg: Winter, 1941); vol. 2: *Proclus Latinus: Die Exzerpte und Randnoten des Nikolaus von Kues zu den lateinischen Übersetzung der Proclus-Schriften*, vol. 2:1: *Theologia Platonis: Elementatio theologica*, edited by Hans Gerhard Senger (Heidelberg: Winter, 1986); vol. 2:2: *Expositio in Parmenidem Platonis*, edited by Karl Bormann (Heidelberg: Winter, 1986). On the problem of negative theology in Plethon see Vojtěch Hladký, "B. Tambrun-Krasker on George Gemistos Plethon", *Byzantinoslavica* 67 (2009), pp.372–380 (377–379); on the development of Platonism after Plotinus see Radek Chlup, *Proclus: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).



philosophical idea by which Plethon could have influenced Cusanus – e.g. during their joint journey to Italy.

However, the work of both thinkers may provide a basis for a comparison regarding a motif, which is, so to say, mythological. It is well known that Plethon influenced the general culture of the Renaissance but also of later times by his claim that the most ancient representative of the true wisdom is Persian Zoroaster. This sage supposedly lived 5,000 years before the Trojan War, usually situated by the Greeks to the time around 1200 BCE. This gives a number quite incredible not only for antiquity, but also for the Middle Ages. For instance, according to the Byzantines the world was created on 1<sup>st</sup> September 5509 BCE. At the same time, Plethon identified the *Chaldaean Oracles*, which already captivated the Neoplatonists as the utterances of the "Magi of Zoroaster". In fact, these dark oracular sayings originated in "the Middle Platonic underworld" some time during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. It is not entirely clear what made Plethon associate the *Chaldaean Oracles* with Zoroaster. The safest conclusion seems to be that in his search for the most ancient sage he combined several motifs which circulated in ancient religious and philosophical literature. However, in the European tradition his identification launched the "Faszination Zarathustra"<sup>12</sup> which lasted until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the modern scholarly study of Zoroastrianism refuted his claim.

Plethon's influence was so far-reaching, exactly because he connected Zoroaster, or more precisely "his Magi" with a particular text, namely, the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Moreover, he produced an edition of the Oracles and wrote a detailed and comprehensive commentary upon them (which is based on a previous edition and commentary by Michael Psellos). In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, this work by Plethon was owned by John Argyropoulos, a Byzantine philosopher and teacher living in Italy, or by Francesco Filelfo, a leading Italian humanist and expert in Greek. Both of them were also convinced of the foremost role Zoroaster had in the history of thought, obviously due to Plethon.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Michael Stausberg, *Faszination Zarathustra: Zoroaster und die Europäische Religionsgeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit*, 2 vols (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> On the copies owned by the both scholars see *Oracles Chaldaïques: Recension de Georges Gémiste Pléthon: La recension arabe des Μαγικά λόγια*, introduction, edited, translated and commented by Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker, edition of Arabic text by Michel Tardieu (Αθήναι, Paris and Bruxelles: Ἀκαδημία Ἀθηνῶν, Vrin and Ousia, 1995), xxxiv (Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale di San Marco, cod. gr. XI, 9, originally owned by John Argyropoulos), xxxviii–ix (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS. 80, 24, originally owned by Francesco Filelfo). On the influence on their own thought Arthur Field, "John Argyropoulos and the 'Secret

However, by far the most notable thinker of the period who was influenced by Plethon's treatise was Marsilio Ficino. The leader of the Florentine Academy was fascinated by the wisdom of ancient sages since his philosophical beginnings. From the late 1450s, he was attempting to reconstruct this wisdom based on ancient sources available to him and he considered it as complementary to Jewish and Christian traditions. In his first arrangement the "ancient", that means, pagan theology proceeds through the following authors: Hermes Trismegistus, Orpheus, Aglaophamus, Pythagoras, Philolaus and Plato who completes the series. However, in the late 1460s Ficino became acquainted with Plethon's commentary and – obviously under its influence – added Zoroaster to the beginning of the series, while leaving out Philolaus. His considerations seem to be chronological, as he gives the sequence of the sages in time, but also geographical. Divine providence ensured that each continent known at the period had its own ancient wisdom, which is written down in the respective text. Thus, Asia has Zoroaster, who is the oldest of all the known sages and whose teaching is contained in the *Chaldaean* – or after Plethon's intervention – *Magian Oracles*. However, these were in fact composed only in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. In Africa, Hermes Trismegistus was the alleged author of Hermetic writings (*Corpus Hermeticum*) and was considered a (younger) contemporary of Moses who received the most important part of ancient wisdom, that is, the divine revelation contained in the Old Testament. As it is well known, Hermetic writings in fact originated roughly at the same time as the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Finally, Europe has an even younger religious initiator, poet Orpheus whose verses were quoted very often by the Neoplatonists were probably written also much later.<sup>14</sup> Plethon, too, mentions him, but once only.

Teachings' of Plato", in *Supplementum Festivum: Studies in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, edited by James Hankins, John Monfasani and Frederick Purnell, Jr. (Binghamton, N.Y.: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1987), pp.299–326 (315–316); on Filelfo see James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols (Leiden, New York, København and Köln: Brill, 1990), p.93, 515 (l.20–24), pp.521–522 (l.250–271).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.460–464, cf. also Michael J.B. Allen, *Synoptic Art: Marsilio Ficino on the History of Platonic Interpretation* (Firenze: Olschki, 1998), pp.1–49; Sebastiano Gentile, "La formazione e la biblioteca di Marsilio Ficino", *Cahiers Accademia*, 7 (2007), pp.19–31. The copy of Plethon's commentary upon the *Chaldaean Oracles* owned by Ficino was unfortunately lost, cf. *Oracles Chaldaïques*, edited by Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker, lxvii (Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, cod. gr. 76). On ancient wisdom in Renaissance see *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum: Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries*, edited by Paul Oskar Kristeller et al., 9- vols (Washington, DC, 1960–), vol. 1, pp.137–156, vol. 2, pp.423–424, vol. 3, pp.425–426 (*Hermetica*); vol. 1, pp.157–164, vol. 7, pp.325–329 (*Chaldaean Oracles*).

Orpheus does not seem to be his favourite sage because of his generally low opinion of poets.<sup>15</sup> If we further add Sibyls, we have the complete collection of the main sources of pre-Christian wisdom as conceived by the Renaissance. Here, too, we have a written text, namely, the *Sibylline Oracles* composed also in late antiquity. They are naturally meant to evoke famous Roman documents – the *Sibylline Books* kept on the Capitol.<sup>16</sup>

Now let us turn our attention to Cusanus. In his case, too, we encounter some echoes of ancient wisdom represented by the sages just mentioned. The most important is definitely Hermes Trismegistus<sup>17</sup> who appears in his work always in crucial places. Hermes is thus mentioned, together with Sibyls, already in Nicholas' first text preserved to us, namely, the sermon delivered at Christmas 1430 (1428?) entitled "In the beginning was the Word" (*In principio erat verbum*):

Supreme Truth revealed to some extent this inexplicable begottenness [i.e. of the Son from the Father in the Trinity] – [revealed it] if not with full light, nevertheless with a small ray [of light] to those situated in the darkness of heathenism. Many examples [hereof] are adduced in writing by Firmianus Lactantius in his *On False Wisdom*.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, he reports apropos of Hermes Trismegistus: "In the book that is entitled *Logos Teleios*, i.e., *Perfect Word*, [Hermes] used the following

words: 'kyrios kai tôn pantôn poiêtês, hon theon kalei nenomikamen,' etc. That is: 'The Lord and Creator of all, whom we are seen to name God, made a second God,' etc." And there follows [the passage]: "Because [the Creator] made Him as First and Uniquely One, the [One that was made] seemed good to the Creator and seemed to comprise completely all goods. The Creator was pleased, and He exceedingly loved, as His own Offspring, [Him whom He had made]."<sup>19</sup>

Likewise, [Lactantius writes]: "Sibyl Erythraea, at the beginning of her song, proclaims the Son of God as Leader and Ruler over all things, when she says: 'pantotrophon ktistên,' etc.: i.e., [she proclaims Him] 'Sustainer and Founder of all things, who imparted to all things His sweet Spirit and who made His Spirit the Director-God of all things.' And another Sibyl [said]: 'He must be known; know to be your God Him who is the Son of God.'"<sup>20</sup>

Hermes speaks of this Son as ineffable. But the reason for this [ineffable] Cause is the will-for-the-good, which has exalted Him whose name cannot be uttered by the mouth of men. And subsequently Hermes says to his own son: "There is, O Son, a secret word of wisdom that comes from the sole Lord of all things, from God who foreknows all things, of whom to speak is beyond man's capability," etc.<sup>21</sup>

Zeno calls Him Logos or Word, the Disposer over nature and the Maker of all things. [...] For Trismegistus, who somehow has investigated almost all truth, has often described the power and majesty of the Word.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, another Sibyl [says]: "...doing all things by the Word,"<sup>23</sup> etc.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Plethon, *Ad Gemistum*, I 458.25, cf. Hladký, *The Philosophy of Gemistos Plethon*, p.173.

<sup>16</sup> Another important representative of ancient wisdom that could be adduced is Horapollo, cf. *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum*, vol. 6, pp.15–29.

<sup>17</sup> The most important studies on Cusanus' Hermetism was published by Pasquale Arfé, "The Annotations of Nicolaus Cusanus and Giovanni Andrea Bussi on the Asclepius", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*, 62 (1999), pp.29–59; *idem*, "Ermete Trismegisto e Nicola Cusano", in *Hermetism from Late Antiquity to Humanism – La tradizione ermetica dal mondo tardo-antico all'umanesimo. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi, Napoli, 20–24 novembre 2001*, edited by Paolo Lucentini, Ilaria Parri and Vittoria Perrone Compagni (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp.223–260; Pasquale Arfé also published Cusanus' marginal notes to *Asclepius: Cusanus-Texte*, vol. 3: *Marginalien*, vol. 5: *Apuleius. Hermes Trismegistus*, edited by Pasquale Arfé (Heidelberg: Winter, 2004). In this paper we leave aside the medieval pseudo-Hermetic treatise *Liber XXIV philosophorum*, which Cusanus carefully studied, but never connects it with Hermes Trismegistus, cf. *ibid.*, 27.

<sup>18</sup> This is the title of book III of Lactantius' *Divine Institute*; book IV from which Cusanus quotes bears in fact the title *On True Wisdom and Religion*.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones*, IV,6,4, *Asclepius*, 8 304.20–305.2, 6–9.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones*, IV,6,5 = *Oracula Sibyllina* (edited by Johannes Geffcken), fr. 1.5–6; 8.329.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones*, IV,7,3 = *Corpus Hermeticum*, fr. 11a–b.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones*, IV,9,2–3 = *Corpus Hermeticum*, fr. 12b.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones*, IV,15,9 = *Oracula Sibyllina*, VIII.272.

<sup>24</sup> *Generationem hanc inenarrabilem summa veritas, si non plena luce, aliquali tamen radiolo in paganitatis tenebris constitutis aliquantulum aperuit, ut apud Firmianum Lactantium in De falsa sapientia plurima exempla conscribuntur. Refert quidem Hermetem Trismegistum: "In eo libro,*

Quoting several texts, Cusanus thus argues that both Hermes and Sibyls had a kind of intuitive knowledge of the existence of "the second God" or "the son of God", that is Christ.<sup>25</sup> This means that the ancient sages were able to understand, although dimly, the relations within the Trinity. It is obvious that Cusanus here draws heavily upon Lactantius and the text quoted is in fact a kind of anthology from his *Divine Institutes* (*Divinae institutiones*). As it is well known, Ficino translated the *Corpus Hermeticum* from Greek to Latin only in 1463, that is, just a year before the death of Cusanus. Until then Lactantius, together with Augustine and a Hermetic treatise in Latin, the *Asclepius*, were the main sources upon which the early Renaissance drew its knowledge about ancient Hermetism.<sup>26</sup> As for Sibyls, they are also mentioned in other writings by Cusanus<sup>27</sup> but in general, they do not get an important role there.

Nicholas' enthusiasm for Hermes is in stark contrast with his other sermon "The Magi journeyed..." (*Ibant Magi*) which – if the dating of the editors is

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qui Logos gelios, id est sermo perfectus, dicitur, his usus est verbis: kyros ke ton panton politis on theon kalei etc., id est: dominus et omnium factor, quem deum nominare videmur, secundum fecit deum" etc. Et sequitur: "Quia hunc fecit primum, solum et unum, bonus ei visus est et plenissimus omnium bonorum. Gavisus est et nimis dilexit velut partum suum". Similiter: "Sibylla Erithraea in carminis sui principio filium dei ducem et imperatorem omnium praedicat dicens: panto propton ktistin etc., id est omnium nutritorem conditoremque, qui dulcem spiritum omnibus deposuit et ducem deum omnium fecit" etc. "Et alia Sibylla: hunc oportet cognosci; ipsum tuum scito deum, qui est filius dei". "Hunc filium ineffabilem Hermes dicit. Causa autem huius causae voluntas boni, quae deum provexit, cuius nomen non potest ore hominum fari. Et postea ad filium suum Hermes loquitur: Est enim, o fili, secretus quidam sermo sapientiae de solo domino omnium, praesciente omnia deo, quem dicere supra hominem est" etc. "Zenon 'logos' sive 'verbum' naturae dispositorem atque opificem universitatis appellat. [...] Nam Trismegistus, qui veritatem paene universam, nescio quo modo, investigavit, virtutem maiestatemque verbi saepe descripsit". "Et alia Sibylla: Omnia verbo agens" etc. Nicholas of Cusa, *Sermones*, I 11.1–42, translated by Jasper Hopkins (modified) in Nicholas of Cusa's *Early Sermons: 1430–1441* (Loveland, CO: Banning Press, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *Sermones*, I 11.1–42, cf. also Cusanus' *Nota in Asclepium*, 17\*.

<sup>26</sup> Lactantius probably influenced also the famous decoration of the floor of Siena's *duomo*, where Hermes Trismegistus is accompanied by ten Sibyls. It was created in 1480s when Ficino's translation already existed. See Brian P. Copenhaver, "The Sienese Mercury and Ficino's Hermetic Demons" in *Humanity and Divinity in Renaissance and Reformation: Essays in Honor of Charles Trinkaus*, edited by John W. O'Malley, Thomas M. Izbicki and Gerald Christianson (Leiden, New York and Köln: Brill, 1993), pp.148–182.

<sup>27</sup> Thus in Nicholas of Cusa, *Sermones*, II 5.26–30. Sibyls are also introduced by Cusanus, again together with a reference to Lactantius; in *Sermones*, XXI 19.6 he speaks of them in connection with pagans expecting the Messiah; in *Idiota de staticis experimentis*, 190.4, *Sermones*, CCLXII 5.10, and CCXC 3.5 the Sibylline books are mentioned.

right – was delivered just a few days later on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January in 1431, that is, on the Epiphany:

And we must be aware of how it is that from the beginning a perverse generation from the church-of-evil-doers always runs together with the elect and with the church-of-the-predestined. Hence, books of divination and of enchantments are found carved on stone before the Flood – they were invented by Hermes. These books came into the hands of Cham and his son Chanaan; they came to Zoroaster and to Aristotle and to Hermippus, and later to Democritus and Plato, although *Sefer Raziel* says otherwise. And in these books are handed down manifold ways of using divination, incantations, etc., which is prohibited for a Christian.<sup>28</sup>

The main thrust of the sermon is thus the idea that the ancient sages, and most notably the Magi, were to some extent capable of grasping the truth, which was later fulfilled by Christianity. However, in contrast to the previous sermon, Hermes is not here one of the sages who has an insight into divine mysteries, but a magician whose art is to be repudiated by every good Christian. The ancient and biblical authorities quoted here by Cusanus together with Hermes should be, it seems, divided into two groups. The source of Cusanus' comment on Zoroaster, Aristotle, Hermippus, Democritus and Plato is most probably Pliny the Elder since in his *Natural History*, they all appear together and in connection with magic, whose inventor – as is usual in antiquity – is said to be the "magus" Zoroaster.<sup>29</sup> Thus he gets at the first place in the series of thinkers as the most ancient sage. It is interesting for us that this is the only place in his whole work where Nicholas mentions Zoroaster. It is more difficult to find reasons or sources why he talks about Cham and his son Chanaan in a connection with Hermes. In the *Bible* Cham's land is sometimes considered to be Egypt, where Hermes Trismegistus is also traditionally located.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Et sciendum, quo modo a principio generatio prava ecclesiae malignantium semper cucurrit cum electis et ecclesia praedestinatorum. Unde inveniuntur libri de divinatione et praestigiis ante diluvium in lapidibus insculpti, per Hermetem inventi, qui venerunt ad Cham et eius filium Chanaan, Zoroastrem et ad Aristotelem, Zuippum, post ad Democritum et Platonem, licet Zepher Razahel aliter dicat. Et in his traditur multiplex modus divinandi, incantandi etc., qui christiano sunt prohibiti.* Nicholas of Cusa, *Sermones*, II 26.30–41, translated by Jasper Hopkins (modified), *op. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, XXX,3.

<sup>30</sup> *1 Chron.* 4:40; *Pss.* 78:51; 105:23, 27; 106:22.

However, in the case of Hermes he seems to rely on some later, probably medieval tradition in which Hermes is thought to be a magician rather than an ancient sage.<sup>31</sup> But Cusanus' harsh criticism of Hermes was not to last. Some fifteen years later, in 1455, he seems much more open-minded. In a sermon, he mentions the notorious passage from Hermetic *Asclepius* in which the animation of the statues by the souls of daemons and angels is described. He obviously thinks that its author just gives an account of the practice, which he himself does not agree with. It was not Hermes, but as is said in the *Asclepius*, "our ancestors [who] once erred gravely on the theory (*ratio*) of gods."<sup>32</sup>

One of the reasons why Cusanus changed his opinion on Hermes must have been his improved knowledge of this Hermetic treatise. Between 1430/1 when the first sermons were written and 1440 when the *Learned Ignorance* was completed he acquired a copy of the *Asclepius*, which he extensively studied, as is attested by his numerous notes in the margins.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, this Hermetic text plays an important role in the *Learned Ignorance*, which further shows that its reading had a huge impact on Cusanus. A quotation from the *Asclepius* thus underlines his claim that God is completely unnameable. The same passage is adduced not only here<sup>34</sup> but four times more in Nicholas' other, later treatises.<sup>35</sup> A little further, the androgynous character of divinity asserted by the *Asclepius* is to support Nicholas' doctrine of the coincidence of opposites. Hermes thus becomes a witness of the claim that the pagan gods are plural in the sensible world, but united, or "complicated" on a higher level into one God. In the treatise *On the Beryl* (1458), another important quotation from the *Asclepius*

claims that according to Hermes Trismegistus "man is a second god". This alludes to Cusanus' famous doctrine of the active and creative character of human knowledge in the form of conjectures (*coniecturae*) that can be made infinitely more and more accurate. In a sense, man is thus a creator of the world, namely, the world of knowledge, similarly to God who is the creator of the real one.<sup>36</sup>

In general, Cusanus evokes the Hermetic *Asclepius* in a connection with ideas that are crucial in his thought – the ineffable God, the coincidence of opposites in him and the notion of man who is similar to God thanks to his creative knowledge.<sup>37</sup> It is therefore not surprising that at one point he even names Hermes Trismegistus together with his main inspirer, Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite.<sup>38</sup>

Why does Plethon nowhere speak about Hermes Trismegistus and Sibyls? And why, in contrast, are they mentioned by Cusanus who, in turn, almost entirely ignores Zoroaster and Orpheus? The answer to such seemingly simple questions is neither short, nor a straightforward one. According to the classical distinction by Charles B. Schmitt, in the Renaissance we should distinguish between *philosophia perennis*, "perennial philosophy", and *prisca theologia*, "ancient theology".<sup>39</sup> Even though they both share the conviction that "in the past the gods talked to men more directly" and even though their representatives are the same ancient sages evoked above, the perspective on the history of thought is remarkably different. The partisans of *philosophia perennis*

<sup>31</sup> Pasquale Arfé believes that Cusanus makes a reference to the books whose alleged author is "Abel iustus", cf. "Ermete Trismegisto e Nicola Cusano", 230, with n. 32; see also a mentioning of these books and *Sefer Raziel* in Cusanus' first sermon, *Sermones* I 4.16–25. On the tradition of medieval Hermetism see Paolo Lucentini, "Hermes Trismegistus II: Middle Ages" (s.v.) in *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, edited by Wouter J. Hanegraaff et al. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), pp.479–483.

<sup>32</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *Sermones*, CLXXXII A 11.11–14, CLXXXIX 11.3–8; *Asclepius*, 37 347.10–19, translated by Brian P. Copenhaver (modified), in *Hermetica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). The animation of statues is described also in the *Asclepius*, ch. 23–24, 37–38.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Pasquale Arfé, "Ermete Trismegisto e Nicola Cusano", p.230.

<sup>34</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia*, I, 24 75.1–5, *Asclepius*, 20 321.3–9. Cf. also Cusanus' *Nota in Asclepium* 44\*.

<sup>35</sup> *Idem*, *De beryllo*, 12 13.10–12, *De mente*, 3 69.6–8, *De dato patris luminum*, 2 102.9–13, *Sermones*, XXIII 29.1–5.

<sup>36</sup> *Idem*, *De beryllo*, 6 7.1–6), cf. *Asclepius*, 6 301.18–302.2 and further 8 304.20–306.7, 10 308.7–21. See also a looser quotation of the same *Asclepius* passage in *De conjecturis*, II, 14 143.8–9.

<sup>37</sup> Some less important and more technical passages from Cusanus' work are left aside: on the problem of matter see *De docta ignorantia*, II, 8 134.1–2, *Asclepius*, 14 313.20–314.4; on the problem of genus and species see *Sermones*, CCXLVI 8.5–7, see *Asclepius* 4 300.10–11.

<sup>38</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *Apologia doctae ignorantiae*, 7.4–9. Cf. *Asclepius*, 1 297.8–9, cf. Cusanus' *Nota in Asclepium* 1\*; Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, I, 8 121.14–15 / 597 C.

<sup>39</sup> Charles B. Schmitt, "Perennial Philosophy: From Agostino Steuco to Leibniz", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 27 (1966), pp.505–532, reprinted in *idem*, *Studies in Renaissance Philosophy and Science* (London: Ashgate, Variorum, 1981), no. I; *idem*, "Prisca theologia e philosophia perennis: due temi del Rinascimento italiano e la loro fortuna", in *Il pensiero italiano del Rinascimento e il tempo nostro: Atti del V Convegno internazionale del Centro di studi umanistici: Montepulciano, Palazzo Tarugi, 8–13 agosto 1968*, edited by Giovannangiola Tarugi (Firenze: Olschki, 1970), pp.211–236, reprinted in *idem*, *Studies in Renaissance Philosophy and Science*, no. II.



would claim that all the people and nations have the same chance to participate in the wisdom that exists eternally and does not change in principle. It is just so that someone manages to get closer to it due to his rational capability of attaining the truth. In contrast, the advocates of *prisca theologia* would presuppose a unified and continuous current of ancient wisdom, which develops and deepens in time. It might have been given to humankind in its entirety at the beginning, perhaps condensed in some kind of sacred writing, but people are not able to understand it fully and so time and subsequent revelations are needed to unravel its content. With this tradition a certain kind of “millenarianism” is also connected.<sup>40</sup>

We may demonstrate the difference between the two approaches on how they treat the Christian dogma of the Trinity. While the partisans of *philosophia perennis* would try to search for traces of Trinitarian thought already in pre-Christian thinkers, the advocates of *prisca theologia* would claim that only Christianity brought the proper understanding of Trinitarian mystery. It is so because Christian revelation radically deepened our knowledge of God. *Prisca theologia* thus presupposes a kind of exclusive line or lines, in which the thought deepens and develops in one direction. Different parallel lines may of course sometimes cross and enrich one another as in the case when pagan philosophy is thought to begin with Hermes Trismegistus while the Judeo-Christian revelation with his contemporary Moses. In this conception, Christian theology and philosophy are considered to be a result of a unique progressive development whose fulfilment they represent. In contrast, the partisans of *philosophia perennis* imagine the history of human thought as – so to say – a plane upon which ancient wisdom develops globally. It appears repeatedly in various places and without a necessary connection. Christianity is in this case conceived as the deepest expression of the wisdom, which is given to all people alike, just on different levels of perfection.

If we are to connect some names with both these currents, Gemistos Plethon is a clear partisan of *philosophia perennis*. Its most important Renaissance representative is, however, Agostino Steuco (1497/8–1548) with his eponymous treatise published in 1540. In contrast, the most influential advocate of *prisca theologia* is definitely Marsilio Ficino who in his later writings presupposes two parallel lines of ancient wisdom: the one begins with Zoroaster and Hermes Trismegistus, through Orpheus it reaches Plato and continues with

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p.213.

the tradition of Platonic philosophy; the other starts with Moses and is fulfilled by Jesus Christ and his followers.<sup>41</sup> As for Cusanus he – perhaps somehow surprisingly – belongs rather to the tradition of *philosophia perennis*.<sup>42</sup> He not only thinks that ancient sages like Hermes Trismegistus and Sibyls somehow anticipated the truth revealed by Christianity but he also believed that one is able to bring others to the true faith even the members of other religions, especially Islam. This is apparent most notably from his treatise *On the Peace of Faith* (*De pace fidei*, 1453). He thus puts the emphasis not so much on the continuity of the history of salvation, which is fulfilled by Christianity, but on the capability to attain the truth which is given to all people alike.<sup>43</sup>

To go back to our question, one may further point out that *prisca theologia* is most probably derived precisely from the Christian conception of the history of salvation as conceived by the Church Fathers, most notably Lactantius, Augustine and Eusebius of Caesarea. According to them, the key representatives of ancient wisdom are Hermes Trismegistus, the alleged contemporary of Moses, or sometimes Sibyls prophesying the coming of Christ. It is significant that in antiquity Hermetic writings and *Sibylline Oracles* did not exercise much influence outside Christian environments.<sup>44</sup> And these are exactly the sources Cusanus relies on, even though his conception of history is different from the Christian Fathers, as has just been said. Plethon's conception of *philosophia perennis*, too, seems to be derived from ancient thought, but from a very different cultural and religious background, namely, from the late Neoplatonists. Trying to cope with the ever-increasing pressure of the Christian society in which they had to live, they made an attempt to show the unity of Greek religious and philosophical traditions. In their ambitious project, an important

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Charles B. Schmitt, “Perennial Philosophy”, pp.507–511; *idem*, “*Prisca theologia e philosophia perennis*”, pp.216–219.

<sup>42</sup> This is also the conclusion of Charles B. Schmitt, “Perennial Philosophy”, p.514.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. the introductory study by Jasper Hopkins in Nicholas of Cusa's *De pace fidei and Cribatio Alkorani*, introduction and translated by Jasper Hopkins (Minneapolis 1994: Banning Press, second edition), pp.3–29.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Radek Chlup, *Corpus Hermeticum* (Praha: Herrmann & synové, 2007), pp.21–26; Herbert W. Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity*, edited by Brian C. McGing (London: Routledge, 1988). Sibyls appear most notably in the work of Lactantius.

role is given to the *Chaldaean Oracles* but also to Orphic poems.<sup>45</sup> Both parties, the Christians as well as the Neoplatonists, however, agree on the importance of Plato as the peak of ancient philosophy.<sup>46</sup>

To conclude, although there seems to be a negligible mutual influence between Plethon and Cusanus, a comparison of their approaches helps us to distinguish the two major sources of their conception of ancient wisdom, which also are shared by the subsequent Renaissance thought. As for Ficino, when he began to develop his much influential version of ancient wisdom, similarly to Cusanus, he first seems to rely on Latin Christian sources about ancient sages that were available in the West in the Middle Ages. Hermes Trismegistus assumes the most important role in them and in 1463; Ficino even translates the *Corpus Hermeticum* from Greek. However, he soon broadens his knowledge of ancient Platonism through the study of the Neoplatonists and due to Plethon, he gets acquainted with the *Chaldaean Oracles*.<sup>47</sup> In a few years only, namely, at the end of 1460s, Zoroaster takes the prominent position in his conception of *prisca theologia*.<sup>48</sup> In his work, he thus symbolically repeated the encounter of Plethon and Cusanus, each one belonging to a very different intellectual tradition, which took place during their journey from Byzantium to Italy.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Henri-Dominique Saffrey, "Accorder entre elles les traditions théologiques: une caractéristique du néoplatonisme athénien" in *On Proclus and his Influence in Medieval Philosophy*, edited by Egbert Peter Bos and Pieter Ane Meijer (Leiden, New York and Köln: Brill, 1992), pp.35–50, reprinted in *idem, Le Néoplatonisme après Plotin* (Paris: Vrin, 2000), pp.143–158; Luc Brisson, "Orphée, Pythagore et Platon: Le Mythe qui établit cette lignée" in *Metaphysik und Religion: Zur Signatur des spätantiken Denkens: Akten des Internationalen Kongresses vom 13.–17. März 2001 in Würzburg*, edited by Theo Kobusch and Michael Erler (München: Saur, 2002), pp.417–427.

<sup>46</sup> Both conceptions have their predecessors in Jewish, early Christian and Greek Hellenistic thought, see the study by Matyáš Havrda in Klement Alexandrijský, *Stromata*, vol. 5, introduction, translated and commented by Matyáš Havrda (Praha: Oikoymenh, 2009), pp.23–45; see further the remarks by Charles.B. Schmitt, "Perennial Philosophy", pp.508–509, and "Prisca Theologia e Philosophia perennis", pp.213–214.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Ilana Kluststein, *Marsilio Ficino et la théologie ancienne: Oracles chaldaïques, hymnes orphiques, hymnes de Proclus* (Firenze: Olschki, 1987).

<sup>48</sup> His synthesis of the various late ancient - pagan and Christian - conceptions of ancient wisdom was probably to some extent inspired by Iamblichus who exercised some influence on him, cf. Christopher S. Celenza, "Late Antiquity and Florentine Platonism: 'The Post-Plotinian' Ficino", in *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, edited by Michael J.B. Allen and Valery Rees (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp.71–97. Iamblichus is the only Neoplatonist who mentions Hermes Trismegistus and his books, he talks about him especially in his *On the Egyptian Mysteries*, I,1; VIII,4, 6, cf. Radek Chlup, *Corpus Hermeticum*, pp.26–29.

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## The Fate of Plethon's Criticism of Averroes<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The aim of the article is to take part in the discussion on Plethon's interest in Averroes, a topic that is important for our understanding of the intellectual interactions between and climate in the Latin West and the Byzantine East. The research is focused on two issues. The first part deals with possible sources of Plethon's knowledge of Averroes and other Arabs. As there is no evidence in Byzantium that any Arabic philosophical text was translated directly from Arabic into Greek, Plethon's knowledge of Averroes seems to be indirect, coming from various other sources (such as Greek translations of Thomas Aquinas, Jewish intellectual communities in Byzantium, or Italians). The second issue points out Plethon's refutation of Averroes and the role this refutation played among the Byzantine émigrés and Renaissance philosophers, especially Plethon's warnings of the danger of an exaggerated admiration of Aristotle's philosophy.

**Keywords:** Georgios Gemisthos Plethon; Averroes; Byzantine Jews; Thomas Aquinas; Byzantine émigrés; Marsilio Ficino; Bessarion; Immortality of the Soul

Georgios Gemisthos Plethon is undoubtedly an extraordinary person in the history of Byzantine philosophy. His life and works reflect the problems and difficulties of the political and social situation of Byzantium in the middle

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of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> If we do not take into account those Byzantine scholars working in Italy, there is no doubt that Plethon was the last distinct personality of the final decades of the Byzantine Empire.<sup>3</sup> Plethon's works cover a wide range of aspects of philosophy, out of which the most celebrated one is his revival of interest in the Plato-Aristotle controversy within Italian intellectual circles.<sup>4</sup> The struggle between Platonism and Aristotelianism represents an important part of the history of Byzantine philosophy in which Plethon's name is connected not only with the revival of Platonism but with all of Hellenic philosophy ranging from Stoicism to Neoplatonism. It is of importance to point out that this revival of Hellenic philosophy is not directly connected to a rejection of Aristotle's philosophy. The roots of Plethon's criticism of Aristotle consist of Plethon's philosophical vision of the restoration of the Hellenic heritage and the stability and prosperity of Byzantine society.<sup>5</sup> Such a vision meant a thorough re-evaluation of the intellectual climate, which also brought about criticism of those streams of scholastic teaching which had a preference for Aristotle – and his most important medieval commentator, Averroes – over Plato. Plethon's interest in Averroes would appear to be important for our understanding of the intellectual interactions and climate between the Latin West and the Byzantine East. Unfortunately, Plethon never mentions any important

<sup>2</sup> François Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra* (Paris: Les Belles lettres, 1956); Christopher Montague Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); Wilhem Blum, *Georgios Gemistos Plethon. Politik, Philosophie und Rhetorik im spätbyzantinischen Reich (1355–1452)* (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1988); Brigitte Tambrun, *Pléthon, le retour de Platon* (Paris: Vrin, 2006); Niketas Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Vojtěch Hladký, *Philosophy of George Gemistos Plethon: Platonism in Late Byzantium, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Deno John Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice. Studies in the Dissemination of Greek Learning from Byzantium to Western Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962).

<sup>4</sup> John Monfasani, "Marsilio Ficino and the Plato-Aristotle Controversy" in *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, edited by Michael J. B. Allen and Valery Rees (Boston: Brill, 2002), pp.196–199.

<sup>5</sup> See note.2. See also Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra*, pp.67–8; Θεόδωρος Στ. Νικολάου, *Αι περί πολιτείας και δικαίου ιδέαι του Γ. Πληθωνος Γεμιστού* (Θεσσαλονίκη, 1974). Peter Garnsey, "Gemistus Plethon and Platonic political philosophy" in *Transformations of Late Antiquity: essays for Peter Brown*, edited by Philip Rousseau and Emmanuel Papoutsakis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp.327–40.

treatise by Averroes,<sup>6</sup> and thus we can only guess what he knew about him and from whom. As the topic itself is too wide, this article only discusses two issues: the possible sources for Plethon's comments on Averroes and the role of Plethon's refutation of his thought in Renaissance philosophy.

### The paths of Averroes to Plethon

"Averroism" or "Latin Averroism" as one of the main philosophical movements in the 13<sup>th</sup> century was a rather suspicious position.<sup>7</sup> Although Averroes' contribution to the interpretation of the *corpus aristotelicum* was recognized and highly esteemed, he was seen as a controversial figure by Islamic, Hebrew and Christian theologians alike. Late medieval thinkers such as Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas or Roger Bacon reacted strongly against Averroes' comments on Aristotle, insisting on such an interpretation of Aristotle which would be acceptable to Christian theologians. Nevertheless, the writings of Averroes remained central to many different areas of philosophy and his commentaries were widely used as a key to understanding Aristotle's thought during the Middle Ages and Renaissance.<sup>8</sup> This dominance and fame of Averroes within philosophical circles could not have possibly missed the attention of Byzantine thinkers as well.

There is a question which preoccupies the mind of a historian of philosophy: to which extent was Averroes known in Byzantium? It is important to note that

<sup>6</sup> Marie-Hélène Congourdeau, "Cultural Exchanges between Jews and Christians in the Palaeologan Period" in *Jews in Byzantium. Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*, edited by Robert Bonfil, Oded Irshai, Guy Stroumsa and Rina Talgam (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2002), p.710.

<sup>7</sup> See the database of the bibliography on Averroes and Averroism <http://www.thomasinstitut.uni-koeln.de/averroes-database.html>

<sup>8</sup> The impact of Averroes was even recognized in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "Arabic philosophy and Averroism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, edited by James Hankins (Cambridge, UK/ New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.113–133; *Averroismus im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, edited by Friedrich Niewöhner and Loris Sturlese (Zürich: Spur, 1994); Eckhard Kessler, *Die Philosophie der Renaissance: das 15. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H. Beck, 2008), chapter IV.; Alexandre Koyré, *Scritti su Spinoza e l'averroismo*, translated by Andrea Cavazini (Milano: Ghibli, 2002); Steven Nadler, *Spinoza's Heresy: Immortality and the Jewish Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002); *Renaissance Averroism and its Aftermath: Arabic Philosophy in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Anna Akasoy and Guido Guiglionni (Springer Academic Publishers, 2012).

while Latin medieval thinkers were familiar with and influenced by Arabic commentators (Avicenna, Avempace, Averroes), the situation in Byzantium was quite different. This does not mean, however, that Byzantine intellectuals were completely untouched by the Arabic world. After the conquest of Constantinople in 1204, the Byzantines displaced from the capital were forced to make an acquaintance with the Latin and Muslim worlds.<sup>9</sup> It is well-known that the Byzantines were interested in Islamic knowledge in the fields of medicine, astronomy or mathematics.<sup>10</sup> However, Arabic philosophical treatises were not sufficiently known.<sup>11</sup> Even Plethon can serve as an example with his interest in Islam and its organization of society being sufficiently known,<sup>12</sup> although his knowledge of Arabic philosophy, on the other hand, remains a major unknown. There is no evidence in Byzantium that any philosophical text was translated directly from Arabic into Greek.<sup>13</sup> Where did Plethon learn

<sup>9</sup> Nikos Costas Constantinides, *Higher Education in Byzantium in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries: (1204 - Ca. 1310)* (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, 1982), p.159; Edmund Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan Renaissance* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2000), p.338; Joseph Mogenet, "L'influence de l'astronomie arabe à Byzance du IXe au XIVe siècle" in *Colloques d'histoire des sciences I (1972) and II (1973)* (Louvain: Éditions E. Nauwelaerts 1976), I vol., pp.45–55.

<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the relationship between Arabic and Byzantine writers see Maria Mavroudi, "Late Byzantium and Exchange with Arabic Writers" in *Byzantium, Faith and Power (1261–1557). Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, edited by Sarah T. Brooks (New Haven, CT: The Metropolitan Museum of Art Symposia, Yale University Press, 2007), pp.62–75; Maria Mavroudi, "Plethon as a Subversive and His Reception in the Islamic World" in *Power and Subversion in Byzantium. Papers from the Forty-third Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, 27–29 March 2010*, edited by Dimitar Angelov and Michael Saxby (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp.177–203.

<sup>11</sup> I would like to express my thanks to Maria Mavroudi and Dimitri Gutas for valuable comments on Arabic sources in Byzantium. See also Roger French, *Medicine before Science: The Business of Medicine from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.100.

<sup>12</sup> Franz Täschner, "Georgios Gemistos Plethon, ein Beitrag zur Frage der Übertragung von islamischem Geistesgut nach dem Abendlande", *Der Islam*, 18 (1929), pp.236–243; Milton V. Anastos, "Pletho and Islam", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 4 (1948), pp.270–305; Felix Klein-Franke, "Die Geschichte des frühen Islam in einer Schrift des Georgios Gemistos Pletho", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 65 (1972), pp.1–8; Anna Akasoy, "Plethons Nomoi. Ein Beitrag zum Polytheismus in spätbyzantinischer Zeit und seiner Rezeption in der islamischen Welt", *Revista Mirabilia*, 2 (2002), pp.224–235.

<sup>13</sup> Sten Ebbesen, "Greek-Latin Philosophical Interaction" in *Byzantine Philosophy and Its Ancient Sources*, edited by Katerina Ierodiakonou (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.26.

about Averroes' teachings? Since we have not found any Byzantine translations thus far, the only supposition left is that his knowledge of Averroes was *indirect*.

In the preface of *De Differentiis Platonis et Aristotelis*, Plethon regrets that his contemporaries seem to admire Aristotle more than Plato, while the ancient Greeks and Romans had wisely honored Plato above all other philosophers.<sup>14</sup> Plethon opposed the Latin view that it was Aristotle who taught a doctrine congruent with Christian theology. In Plethon's opinion, this shift towards Aristotle was primarily influenced by Averroes. Although Plethon did not call Averroes a "mad dog" (*canis rabidus*) like Petrarch,<sup>15</sup> he noted that "most westerners" were too much influenced by Averroes.<sup>16</sup> This means that the misunderstandings concerning Aristotle's teaching came about due to the fact that Latin philosophers had been misled by Averroes to believe that Aristotle's work contained the sum total of human wisdom.<sup>17</sup> From the fact that this Aristotelian commentator had advanced the doctrine of 'the mortality of the

<sup>14</sup> Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, p.71; François Masai, "Plethon, l'Averroïsme et le problème religieux" in *Colloques Internationaux de Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Sciences humaines, Le Neoplatonisme, Royaumont 3–13 Juin 1969*, edited by Pierre-Maxime Schuhl and Pierre Hadot (Paris: Ed. du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1971), pp.435–446; Charles Lohr, "Georgios Gemistos Pletho and Averroes: the Periodization of Latin Aristotelism" in *Sapientiam Amemus: Humanismus und Aristotelismus in der Renaissance: Festschrift für Eckhard Kessler zum 60. Geburtstag*, edited by Paul Richard Blum, Constance Blackwell und Charles Lohr (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1999), pp.39–48; Christos C. Evangelou, "Pletho's Critique of Aristotle and Averroes and the Revival of Platonism in the Renaissance", *Skepsis*, 8 (1997), pp.146–170.

<sup>15</sup> "In Byzantium itself a line of authors who considered Plato as their master can be traced with hardly a break from the time of Psellus up until the middle of the fourteenth century, when Petrarch heard that there were theologians in Byzantium who preferred Plato, 'the divine', to Aristotle. And not more than two generations later, Plethon tried, by going back to Plato and Proclus, to reinstate Platonism as a universal system." in Raymond Klibansky, *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition During the Middle Ages: Outlines of a Corpus platonicum medii aevi* (London: Warburg Institute, 1939), p.21. The characterization of the followers of Averroes' teaching as atheists is exaggerated by Petrarch. Francesco Petrarca, *Invectives*, edited and translated by David Marsh (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), p.69; Kenelm Foster, *Petrarch: Poet and Humanist* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1987), p.155; Nancy Bisaha, "Petrarch's Vision of the Muslim and Byzantine East", *Speculum*, 76:2 (2001), pp.284–314.

<sup>16</sup> *Patrologia Graeca*, 160, 1006B; Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, p.149.

<sup>17</sup> Lohr, "Georgios Gemistos Pletho and Averroes: the Periodization of Latin Aristotelism", p.39.

soul, which he incorrectly attributed to Aristotle, Plethon concluded that Averroes could not have been as great a philosopher and as good a commentator of Aristotle as his admirers believed.

The source which informs us of Plethon's knowledge of Averroes is Gennadios Scholarios.<sup>18</sup> In his letter to the Princess of the Peloponnese he mentions the Jew *Elissaios*, who was a follower of Averroes, and other Arabic and Persian commentators on Aristotle's works.<sup>19</sup> Gennadios listed Averroes along with Proclus and Zoroaster among the three sources of Plethon's heretism. Scholarios does not seem, however, to be a reliable source because Plethon openly rejected Averroism.<sup>20</sup> Despite the fact that Plethon, in his answer to Gennadios, explicitly mentioned that he knows Averroes and says he had learned about him from the *greatest Italian sages* and from the *Jews*, he emphasized that he does not agree with his teachings.<sup>21</sup> A question consequently arises: why did Scholarios name Averroes among the heretic sources? Did he mean the same Averroes we know?

In addition, who did Plethon mean when identifying the source of his knowledge as the *greatest Italian sages*? In the late Byzantium, Arabic opinions concerning metaphysics or psychology might have come to Byzantine

<sup>18</sup> George Scholarios Gennadios, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. IV, edited by Martin Jugie, Louis Petit and Xenophon A. Siderides (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1935), pp.152–162; Steven B. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium (1204–1453)* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1985), pp.135–137 and 162; George Karamanolis, "Plethon and Scholarios on Aristotle" in *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources*, edited by Katerina Ierodiakonou (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp.253–82; Marie-Hélène Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios Scholarios (vers 1400–vers 1472). Un intellectuel orthodoxe face à la disparition de l'empire byzantin* (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> George Scholarios Gennadios, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. IV, p.152; Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, p.117. On detailed discussion on Scholarios references to Plethon and Elissaios see Niketas Siniosoglou, "Sect and Utopia in shifting empires: Plethon, Elissaios, Bedreddin", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 36:1 (2012), pp.38–55.

<sup>20</sup> Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, pp.71–72.

<sup>21</sup> Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra*, p.55; Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, pp.23–5.

philosophical awareness *indirectly*,<sup>22</sup> through the translations of Thomas Aquinas' *Summa contra Gentiles* and *Summa Theologiae*.<sup>23</sup> Demetrios Cydones, who translated Aquinas' *Summa contra gentiles* and *Summa theologiae*, had been friendly with Plethon before Plethon left Constantinople for Mistra in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>24</sup> It is certain that Plethon had become familiar with Thomas Aquinas through Cydones' translations. Although Plethon knew Aquinas' *Summae*, I am not quite certain that Aquinas' arguments against Averroes are the source of Plethon's criticism. If Plethon was familiar with both Aquinas' *summas* or other works such as Prochoros Cydones' translation of Aquinas' *De spiritualibus creaturis*, where many references to Averroes occur,<sup>25</sup> why did he not use Aquinas' detailed refutation of Averroes which was based on the discussion concerning the interpretation of the human intellect?

The question which Aquinas dealt with was not so much the immortality of the human soul but rather the nature of human intellect which he saw as problematic and dangerous in Averroes' interpretation. As Plethon does not mention Avicenna or Avempace, with whom Aquinas argues in *Summa contra gentiles*, it indicates Plethon's indifference to the epistemological arguments stated in

<sup>22</sup> Σ.Παπαδοπουλος, *Ελληνικά μεταφράσεις θωμιστικών έργων: φιλοθωμισταί και αντιθωμισταί εν Βυζαντίω: συμβολή εις την ιστορίαν της Βυζαντινής Θεολογίας* (Εν Αθήναις: Διδακτορική Διατριβή, 1967); John Demetracopoulos, "Latin philosophical works translated into Greek" in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, edited by Robert Pasnau and Christina Van Dyke (Cambridge, UK/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.822–826.

<sup>23</sup> John Monfasani, *George Amiroutzes the Philosopher and His Tractates* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), pp.30–31. See the substantial research on Byzantine Aquinas by John A. Demetracopoulos. For instance John A. Demetracopoulos, *Plethon and Thomas Aquinas* (in Modern Greek) (Athens: Parousia, 2004); John A. Demetracopoulos, "Georgios Gemistos-Plethon's Dependence on Thomas Aquinas' Summa contra Gentiles and Summa Theologiae", *Archiv für mittelalterliche Philosophie und Kultur*, 12 (2006), pp.276–341. John Demetracopoulos is of the opinion that the monolingual Plethon knew of Averroes' philosophy through his mentor's (Demetrios Cydones) translations of Aquinas' *Summae*.

<sup>24</sup> There is no agreement among scholars whether or not Pletho was a student of Demetrios Cydones (John Monfasani, John Demetracopoulos).

<sup>25</sup> Michael Konstantinou-Rizos (Cand. Phil., University of London) is preparing the entire transcription and translation of Prochoros Cydones' translation of Aquinas' *De spiritualibus creaturis*.

the *Summae*.<sup>26</sup> Aquinas states in his *Summa contra Gentiles* that Averroes is a destroyer of peripatetic philosophy in the question of the nature of the intellect. While in the early works (*Commentum in II Sententiarum*) he did not discuss any consequences of such a teaching, in *Summa contra Gentiles* and *De unitate intellectus* he points out its moral impact.<sup>27</sup> What he has in mind is in particular the problem of the human will which would not exist in man but only in the separated intellect.<sup>28</sup> If the Averroistic position were to be accepted, then the human person would lose the ability to “control his own actions” (*dominus suarum actionum*).<sup>29</sup> It would lead to the destruction of moral philosophy and social-political life.<sup>30</sup> Similarly to Aquinas, additional medieval (Bonaventura, Albert the Great or Giles of Rome) and Renaissance (Marsilio Ficino) philosophers also criticize the Averroistic concept of the intellect as it would lead to fatal consequences for the immortality of the human soul.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Fernard van Steenberghen, *Thomas Aquinas and Radical Aristotelianism* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1980), p.29; Bernardo C. Bazán, “*Intellectum Speculativum*: Averroes, Thomas Aquinas, and Siger of Brabant on the Intelligible Object”, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 19 (1981), pp.425–446; Deborah L. Black, “Consciousness and Self-Knowledge in Aquinas’s Critique of Averroes’s Psychology”, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 31 (1993), pp.349–385; Antonio Petagine, *Aristotelismo difficile: l’intelletto umano nella prospettiva di Alberto Magno, Tommaso d’Aquino e Sigieri di Brabante* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2004).

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* II, cap. 60.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, cap.3; Edward P. Mahoney, “Aquinas’s Critique of Averroes’ Doctrine of the Unity of the Intellect” in *Thomas Aquinas and His Legacy*, edited by David M. Gallagher, *Studies in Philosophy and History of Philosophy* 28, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), p.97n: “Historians have rightly underscored the central importance of the *hic homo intelligit* argument in Thomas’s critique of Averroes. Van Steenberghen sees a “fundamental argument” against Averroes and the Averroistas the implications of “the undeniable affirmation of consciousness”, namely, *hic homo intelligit*. Thomas demonstrates by this “principal argument”, which is of the psychological order, that the explanations of Averroes and certain Averroists are insufficient to render an account of “this indisputable fact.”

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In II Sent.*, d.40 q.1 a.3 resp.; *In III Sent.*, d.18 q.1 a.5 resp.; *Summa contra Gentiles* II, cap.115.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* II, cap. 60.

<sup>31</sup> Bonaventura, *In II Sent.* d.18 a.2 q.1; Albertus Magnus, *De Unitate Intellectus Contra Averroem*, in Albertus Magnus, *Opera Omnia* 17, edited by Alfonsus Hufnagel (Aschendorff: Monasterium Wesffalorum, 1975), x-xiv, pp.1–30; Giles of Rome, *Errores Philosophorum*, edited by Josef Koch and translated by John O. Reidl (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1944), p.22; Robert J. Mullins, *The Treatise on the Unity of the Intellect against Averroes by St. Albert the Great* (PhD. thesis, Marquette University, 1948).

It is possible to claim, although it might be too daring, that the theory of one intellect leads to strict determinism in Arabic thinking which is connected to the rejection of individual free will.<sup>32</sup> Plethon instead advocated the, in the Byzantine philosophical environment, generally accepted thesis concerning the danger of Averroism (based on Aquinas’ criticism), which leads to a denial of the individuality and immortality of the human soul. To which extent, and even whether at all, the Byzantine authors noticed Aquinas’ moral aspect of the Averroistic interpretation of the intellect remains unclear.

We can get a certain picture about the relation of Byzantine authors to Averroes from two of Plethon’s enemies, the above-mentioned Gennadios Scholarios and Georgios Amiroutzes. Gennadios Scholarios was one of the few thinkers in his age who was familiar with the Greek exegetical tradition as well as the Latin philosophical tradition from Augustine and Boethius to the scholastics and, most particularly, to Thomas Aquinas.<sup>33</sup> Scholarios was indeed enthusiastic about scholastic philosophy and spent many years translating, summarizing, and commenting on Aquinas’ works.<sup>34</sup> He views Averroes as a commentator of Aristotle in a positive way: “Everybody, I suppose, knows that Averroes is the best of the commentators on Aristotle and that, besides being a commentator, he was the author of many works worthy of serious study. The Latins, utilizing these various sources of information, made many a discovery for themselves. They have in consequence added many improvements to Aristotle’s philosophy. By questions and reflections of a high order, by distinctions of great subtlety, they have surpassed the explanations of our first commentators.”<sup>34</sup> Scholarios praised Averroes for his deeper understanding of Aristotle, but at the same time saw him as the source of Plethon’s heresy. A second enemy of Plethon, Georgios Amiroutzes, a philosopher and an imperial official at the Empire of Trebizond, also learned of Averroes’ views through his

<sup>32</sup> Averroes did not view his theory as a perfect one and that – taking into consideration the fact that the Latin translations provide us with only a partial and incomplete picture of his thought – it is necessary to evaluate his thought with a great amount of circumspection.

<sup>33</sup> Christopher Livanos, *Greek Tradition and Latin Influence in the Work of George Scholarios: Alone Against All of Europe* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006); Marie-Hélène Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios Scholarios (vers 1400–vers 1472). Un intellectuel orthodoxe face à la disparition de l’empire byzantin*.

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Gill, “East and West in the Time of Bessarion. Theology and Religion”, *Rivista di Studi Byzantini e Neellenici*, 5 (1968), p.6n.



reading of Thomas Aquinas (in Greek translation).<sup>35</sup> In his *Tractates XI* and *XII* Amiroutzes deals with the unity of the human being and the accompanying assertion that the soul is the form of the body, which is clearly Aquinas' argument against Latin Averroists.<sup>36</sup> As Aquinas was well-known in the Byzantine environment, his criticism of Averroes is the most probable source through which the Byzantines gained an acquaintance with this Arabic thinker.<sup>37</sup>

Could Plethon have meant the Italian humanists when referring to the *greatest Italian sages*? Plethon knew that Averroism was fashionable in Italy at that time. Moreover, he met Ugo Benzi, who was a teacher of Averroes in Italy.<sup>38</sup> Plethon could have become acquainted with Benzi's attitude towards Averroes but to which extent Ugo Benzi could have taught Plethon about Averroes remains another mystery.

The second possible direction of Plethon's knowledge of Averroes comes from Jewish intellectual circles (Adrianople, Constantinople, Crete). The Jewish track seems to be an important source for understanding of Arabic thought in Byzantium, because Jews were capable of providing a channel through which Persian and Arabic philosophy could reach the Byzantine Greeks.<sup>39</sup> The enigmatic figure of Elissaios from Adrianople has often aroused the curiosity of researchers and scholars. Their discussion leads us to assume that Elissaios

<sup>35</sup> Recent research on George Amiroutzes reveals that he refuted the Themistian-Averroistic interpretation of Aristotle's psychology and based his argument on Book 7 of the *Metaphysics*. See Monfasani, *George Amiroutzes the Philosopher and His Tractates*, p.23.

<sup>36</sup> Amiroutzes follows the Byzantine Aquinas, but did not stress the ethical dimension of the Aquinas dispute with Averroes.

<sup>37</sup> Monfasani, *George Amiroutzes the Philosopher and His Tractates*, p.26.

<sup>38</sup> Ugo Benzi was a renowned physician, scholar and teacher of medicine at several universities in Italy. On the restoration of Benzi's study of Averroes see Dean Putnam Lockwood, *Ugo Benzi, Medieval Philosopher and Physician, 1376–1439* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951) p.25; Plinio Pioreschi, *Medieval Medicine* (Omaha: Horatius Press, 2003), pp.416–420; Brian Lawn, *The Rise and Decline of the Scholastic 'Quaestio Disputata': With Special Emphasis on Its Use in the Teaching of Medicine and Science* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), pp.77–80. On Plethon and Ugo Benzi see also John Monfasani, "George Gemistos Plethon and the West: Greek Emigres" in *Renaissance Encounters. Greek East and Latin West*, edited by Marina S. Brownlee and Dimitri Gondicas (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p.25.

<sup>39</sup> Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, p.25.

might have been a teacher of the early Plethon.<sup>40</sup> There are scholars who claim that Elissaios was a carrier of Iranian mysticism and became for Plethon what Ammonius Saccas had been for Plotinus<sup>41</sup> or that Elissaios presumably taught Gemistos some of the doctrines of Judaism.<sup>42</sup> However, no one has found any proof of Averroes being present in Elissaios' teachings. Elissaios, due to his support for mysticism, might have mediated the danger of averroistic rationalism to Plethon, however, we still lack any textual evidence for this claim. Although Elissaios is important as he mediated Zoroaster to Plethon, I believe it rather improbable that he was a key figure in developing Plethon's relationship to Averroes.

Let us now turn to the evidence of Averroes' manuscripts present among Jewish communities in the Late Byzantium as Arabic philosophy possibly penetrated into Byzantium through Jewish communities in Adrianople, Constantinople or Candia (Crete).<sup>43</sup> It is not possible, however, to provide a full account of this subject, because the research on the Jewish influence on the Byzantine intellectuals is still insufficiently explained.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, the study of Hebrew philosophical manuscripts copied in Byzantium provide us with

<sup>40</sup> Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra*, pp.55–59; Polymnia Athanassiadi, "Byzantine Commentators on the Chaldean Oracles: Psellos and Plethon" in *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources*, edited by Katerina Ierodiakonou (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp.248; Vasile-Adrian Carabă, "What is known about Elissaios (14<sup>th</sup> century), a teacher of Georgios Gemistos Plethon (\*ca.1355–†1452)?", *Études Byzantines et Post-Byzantines*, VI (2011), pp.171–185; Niketas Siniosoglou, "Sect and Utopia in Shifting Empires: Plethon, Elissaios, Bedreddin", pp.38–55.

<sup>41</sup> Michel Tardieu, "Pléthon lecteur des Oracles", *Métis*, 2 (1987), p.142; Luc Brisson, "Pléthon et les Oracles Chaldaïques" in *Philosophie et sciences à Byzance de 1204 à 1453*, edited by Michel Cacours and Marie-Hélène Congourdeau (Leuven/Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2006), pp.127–142.

<sup>42</sup> Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, p.65.

<sup>43</sup> On the physical background of Jewish communities (demography, occupations, etc.) see Nicholas D. Lange, Alexander Panayotov and Gethin Rees *Mapping the Jewish Communities of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, 2013): available at <http://www.byzantinejewry.net>; Congourdeau, "Cultural Exchanges between Jews and Christians in the Palaeologan Period", pp.709–721.

<sup>44</sup> Nicholas de Lange, "Hebrew Scholarship in Byzantium" in *Hebrew Scholarship and the Medieval World*, edited by Nicholas de Lange (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.23–37; Golda Akhiezer, "Byzantine Karaism in the Eleventh to Fifteenth Centuries" in *Jews in Byzantium. Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*, edited by Robert Bonfil, Oded Irshai, Guy Stroumsa and Rina Talgam (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2002), pp.723–760.

at least a small picture of the presence of Averroes and therefore supplies us with more evidence about Averroes than Elissaios.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, Plethon explicitly stated that he had learned about Averroes' doctrine of the human soul from the "Jews" (plural).<sup>46</sup>

The Byzantine Karaites received a rich intellectual heritage which they sought to harmonize with Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*, Ibn Ezra's commentaries and additional rationalistic Rabbanite works.<sup>47</sup> Elissaios would also presumably have introduced him to Moses Maimonides.<sup>48</sup> I believe that Plethon could have known something about Averroes from those Jewish intellectuals who studied Maimonides.

Between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, a small Jewish community in Candia produced a great number of scholars (Shemaryah ha-Icriti, Elias Del Medigo, Shabbetai Cohen Balbo, Elijah Capsali, Yoseph Shlomo Delmedigo) whose glory spread beyond Crete.<sup>49</sup> The above-mentioned Elias Del Medigo (born 1460) was a renowned Averroist and Aristotelian who left for Italy at around 1480. It has become clear that Del Medigo came to know at least some of the works of Averroes while he was still in Candia.<sup>50</sup> Mickey Engel, who works on Del Medigo's philosophical roots, has compared sections from Del Medigo's work with certain Hebrew manuscripts of Averroes in Jerusalem, and there is no doubt that Del Medigo was familiar with these works. Since it is unlikely

<sup>45</sup> de Lange, "Hebrew Scholarship in Byzantium", pp.12–13.

<sup>46</sup> Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, "Jewish philosophy on the eve of modernity" in *History of Jewish Philosophy*, edited by Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 1997), p.487: "Crete was an important center of Jewish philosophical activity during the late Middle Ages, especially after the persecution of 1391. With the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Byzantine scholars used Crete as a stop-off point on the way to Italy, making it a center for the study of philosophy."

<sup>47</sup> Daniel J. Lasker, *From Judah Hadassi to Elijah Bashyatchi: Studies in Late Medieval Karaite Philosophy* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008).

<sup>48</sup> Daniel J. Lasker, "Byzantine Karaite Thought" in *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to Its History and Literary Sources*, edited by Meira Polliack (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003), pp.505–528.

<sup>49</sup> Isaac Barzilai, *Yoseph Shlomo Delmedigo (Yashar of Candia). His Life, Works and Times*, (Leiden: Brill, 1974), pp.20–21.

<sup>50</sup> Dr. Mickey Engel from Cambridge University provided me with a great deal of useful information on Del Medigo's stay in Candia and on Hebrew philosophical manuscripts copied in Byzantium.

that Del Medigo encountered these Hebrew works for the first time in Padua, Engel assumes that Del Medigo came to know them earlier in Candia. Moreover, it is highly likely that Del Medigo also came to know some of the Latin translations of Averroes in Candia, since immediately upon his arrival to Italy he showed a great familiarity with Averroes' Latin works. Thus, it is most likely that he had teachers who were familiar with Averroes in Candia.

The intellectual debates within the Jewish community in Candia or Constantinople (after the fall of Constantinople) can also provide us with an impression of the presence of Averroes in Byzantium. It is a well-known fact that the teachings of Averroes and Avicenna, were part of the intellectual debates in the controversy between Michael ha-Cohen Balbo and Rabbi Moshe ha-Cohen Ashkenazi around 1466.<sup>51</sup> Aleida Paudice in her work on Elia Capsali (ca 1485–ca 1555) quotes manuscripts of Jews from Crete listed in the catalogs of libraries there which contain the works of Averroes.<sup>52</sup> The corpus of work of a renowned and leading personality from Constantinople and later from Adrianople, Mordechai ben Eliezer Comtino (Comatiano) (1402–1482)<sup>53</sup> includes copies of Averroes' commentaries of Aristotle and also Gersonides' commentaries of Averroes.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Aviezer Ravitzky, "The God of the philosophers and the God of the Kabbalists: a controversy in fifteenth century Crete" in *Studies in Jewish Manuscripts*, edited by Joseph Dan and Klaus Herrmann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), pp.139–170; Brian Ogren, *Renaissance and Rebirth. Reincarnation in Early Modern Italian Kabbalah* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp.41–101.

<sup>52</sup> Aleida Paudice, *Between Several Worlds: the Life and Writings of Elia Capsali: the Historical Works of a 16<sup>th</sup>-century Cretan Rabbi* (München: M-pess, 2010).

<sup>53</sup> Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium (1204–1453)*, pp.161–162; Jean-Christophe Attias, "Intellectual Leadership: Rabbinate-Karaite Relations in Constantinople as Seen through the Works and Activity of Mordekhai Komtino in the Fifteenth Century" in *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry: Community and Leadership*, edited by Aron Rodrigue (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Turkish Studies Series, 1992), pp.67–86; Congourdeau, "Cultural Exchanges between Jews and Christians in the Palaeologan Period", pp.712–714.

<sup>54</sup> Phillipe Gardette, "Pour en finir avec Plethon et son maitre juif Elisee" in Phillipe Gardette, *Etudes imagologiques et relations interconfessionnelles en zone byzantino-ottomane* (Istanbul: Editions Isis, 2007), pp.147–164.

## The fate of the Plethon-Averroes dispute in the Latin West

Let us now move on to the fate of Plethon's criticism of Averroes among the Byzantine émigrés and Italians. Although the Byzantine exile to Italy is a wider phenomenon concerning not only teaching and learning, historians of philosophy are primarily interested in the transmission of ideas, concepts, translations and commentaries of ancient texts.<sup>55</sup> Byzantine émigrés and some of Plethon's pupils were forced to leave the Byzantine Empire. They primarily went to Italy and brought a greater interest in Plato's and Aristotle's works to their new country. A Byzantine émigré, who is connected to Averroism, is John Argyropoulos, an important translator of ancient texts.<sup>56</sup> Argyropoulos, together with other significant Byzantine scholars, such as Demetrius Cydones, Georgios Scholarios, George of Trebizond or Cardinal Bessarion, was a student of Latin Scholasticism.<sup>57</sup> Argyropoulos in his lectures *De anima* (1460) became engaged in the discussion about the nature of one intellect which was going on continually since the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>58</sup> He rejected the opinion of Alexander of Aphrodisias that the soul was mortal as well as the Averroist doctrine of the unity of the intellect.<sup>59</sup> He followed the Christian tradition in his belief that the soul exists after death and also that there must be many intellects which correspond to individual persons. However, there are varied opinions on the question of Argyropoulos' relationship to Averroes as both aspects can be found in his works – those that are averroistic and

<sup>55</sup> Deno John Geanakoplos, "Italian Renaissance Thought and Learning and the Role of the Byzantine Emigres Scholars in Florence, Rome and Venice", *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi*, 3 (1984), pp.129–157; Nigel Guy Wilson, *From Byzantium to Italy: Greek Studies in the Italian Renaissance* (London: Duckworth, 1992); Jonathan Harris, *Greek Emigres in the West, 1400–1520* (Camberley, Surrey: Porphyrogenitus, 1995).

<sup>56</sup> Stephen Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.120.

<sup>57</sup> John Monfasani, *Bessarion Scholasticus. A Study of Cardinal Bessarion's Latin Library* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), p.71.

<sup>58</sup> Jill Kraye, "The philosophy of the Italian Renaissance" in *The Renaissance and Seventeenth-Century Rationalism: The Renaissance and Seventeenth Century*, Volume 4, edited by George Henry Radcliffe Parkinson (London: Routledge, 1993), p.21.

<sup>59</sup> *Averroes and the Aristotelian Tradition: Sources, Constitution, and Reception of the Philosophy of Ibn Rushd (1126–1198)*, edited by Gerhard Endress, Jan Aertsen and Klaus Braun (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 1999); Orlando Todisco, *Averroè nel Dibattito Medievale: Verità o bonità?* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 1999).

those that are not (John Monfasani, James Hankins).<sup>60</sup> Argyropoulos' attitude to Averroes arises from his extensive knowledge of Latin scholastic commentaries during his stay in Padua.<sup>61</sup>

Another important figure, who deals with Averroes' philosophy, is Cardinal Bessarion, undoubtedly one of the most famous disciples of Plethon. It is interesting to note that Bessarion does not cite Plethon in his discussion on the immortality of the soul in *In calumniatorem Platonis*.<sup>62</sup> The question of the human soul is connected in Bessarion not only with the apologia of Plato's philosophy, but also with medieval discussions of the soul, in which Averroes, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Wylton, and John Duns Scotus dominate. Bessarion's library clearly shows that he had a great number of works by these authors, including Averroes.<sup>63</sup> Bessarion cites the scholastic authors when he demonstrates the impossibility of harmonizing Aristotle's opinions with the acceptance of the immortality of the individual human soul. He states that the Averroistic and Alexandrian interpretations of Aristotle dealing with the immortality of the human soul are opinions, which we need to accept since it is extremely difficult to demonstrate the immortality of the soul in Aristotle. He adds that this cannot be overcome by any rational reasons. Bessarion's quote from John Duns Scotus and his reference to Thomas Wylton partly support this stance: the question of the immortality of the human soul cannot be

<sup>60</sup> James Hankins believes that, "[Argyropoulos]...if not a declared Averroist, was at least willing to mention with approval Averroes' interpretation of Aristotle's psychology." See James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, vol.I. (Leiden: Brill, 1990), pp.275–6; John Monfasani attempts to prove that John Argyropoulos became an Averroist. See John Monfasani, "The Averroism of John Argyropoulos and His Quaestio utrum intellectus humanus sit perpetuus", *Villa I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance*, 5 (1993), pp.157–208.

<sup>61</sup> In light of these controversial opinions there should be a deeper examination of Argyropoulos' teaching. As *syncretism* can be seen in his philosophy, there can in all probability be found both aspects that are averroistic and aspects that are not. Jozef Matula, "John Argyropoulos and his Importance for Latin West", *Acta Universitatis Palackianae Olomucensis, Facultas Philosophica, Philosophica VII* (2006), pp.45–62.

<sup>62</sup> Bessarion pays special attention to Plato's arguments on the origin, immortality and preexistence of the human soul in book II. Chapter 8: *De anima quid senserit Plato* and book III. 22: *Platonis de animae immortalitate argumenta probationibus Albertus approbat et de Aristotelis*. See Bessarion, *Bessarionis in calumniatorem Platonis libri IV*, edited by Ludwig Mohler (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1927), pp.365–393.

<sup>63</sup> Bessarion possessed 6 volumes of Averroes' commentaries to Aristotle. See Monfasani, *Bessarion Scholasticus. A Study of Cardinal Bessarion's Latin Library*, p.17.

proved by rational means as it is instead a question of faith.<sup>64</sup> Bessarion, on the other hand, following Aquinas and Albert the Great, does not agree with Averroes' theory of one intellect because he wants to maintain the individuality of human thinking and acting.<sup>65</sup>

Neither Argyropoulos nor Bessarion explicitly proceed from Plethon's criticism of Averroes. Both the Byzantine émigrés developed their opinions of Averroes on the background of scholastic discussion which Plethon himself was not particularly familiar with (Duns Scotus, Thomas Wylton). The similarity to Plethon lies in their identical persuasion of the dangerousness of Averroes in the question regarding the immortality of the human soul. This attitude was common to all Byzantine authors (Gennadios Scholarios, George Amiroutzes, John Argyropoulos, Bessarion).

Apart from the above-mentioned Byzantine émigrés, there were also Italians who were interested in Plethon's thought.<sup>66</sup> Although Plethon wrote *De Differentiis Platonis et Aristotelis* for the benefit of the humanists, none of them can be named that would have read it in Plethon's lifetime.<sup>67</sup> The only known immediate reaction to Plethon's treatise after the Council came from the Venetian humanist Lauro Quirini at Padua in 1440.<sup>68</sup> Although Quirini

<sup>64</sup> This aspect of Bessarion was noticed by Pietro Pomponazzi, who very carefully read Bessarion's treatise. Laurence Boulègue, "À propos de la thèse d'Averroès. Pietro Pomponazzi versus Agostino Nifo" in *Pietro Pomponazzi entre traditions et innovations, Bochumer Studien zur Philosophie* 48, edited by Joël Biard and Thierry Gontier (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: B.R. Grüner, 2009), p.44n: "Pomponazzi connaissait bien le traité de Bessarion *In calumniatorem Platonis*".

<sup>65</sup> Bessarion also possessed more manuscripts of Thomas Aquinas than of any other Latin author, although this does not mean that Bessarion adhered to all of Aquinas' theories. Although he was not a Thomist, he greatly appreciated Aquinas' thought, even calling him "divus Thomas." Monfasani, *Bessarion Scholasticus. A Study of Cardinal Bessarion's Latin Library*, pp.61–81.

<sup>66</sup> Monfasani, "George Gemistos Plethon and the West: Greek Emigres", pp.19–34; Albrecht Berger, "Plethon in Italien" in *Der Beitrag der Byzantinischen Gelehrten zur abendländischen Renaissance des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Evangelos Konstantinou (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 2006), pp.79–89.

<sup>67</sup> Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, p.217.

<sup>68</sup> On Lauro Quirini see Marwan Rashed, "Der Averroismus des Lauro Quirini" in *Wissen über Grenzen. Arabisches Wissen und lateinisches Mittelalter*, edited by Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2006), pp.700–714, John Monfasani, *George of Trebizond. A Biography and a Study of His Rhetoric and Logic* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), pp.204–205.

is a fascinating but still somewhat obscure person, he nevertheless provides us with a small piece of information on the intellectual atmosphere both in Italy and at Crete. He was especially familiar with Candia in Crete, the above-mentioned important center of education and a flourishing Jewish community.<sup>69</sup> Although Quirini admired Aristotle so much that he wanted to translate all his works into Latin, he was extremely generous to Plato as well; he demonstrates Plato's superiority over Aristotle on the subject of the soul's immortality. Quirini therefore agrees with Plethon in this matter. On the other hand, while Plethon attacked Averroes in general, Quirini was an admirer of this Arabic philosopher and praised him as a great commentator.

Marsilio Ficino is the most important person, and perhaps the only one who directly quotes Plethon's negative attitude to Averroes. In his principal work, *Theologia Platonica* (1474) he used various Platonic as well as scholastic arguments to combat the Averroists.<sup>70</sup> After a long period during which the doctrines of the philosophers influenced by Averroes had reigned at Italian universities, Ficino revived attempts to establish rational proofs for the immortality of the soul.<sup>71</sup> Ficino refuted Averroes for impiously denying the immortality of the human soul. The question of the soul's immortality was perhaps the most hotly debated philosophical issue of the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Ficino

<sup>69</sup> Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant, 1204–1571: The Fifteenth Century* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1978), p.131. On Lauro Quirini see *Lauro Quirini umanista*, edited by Konrad Krautter and Vittore Branca (Firenze: Olschki, 1977) and Hans-Veit Beyer, "Lauro Quirini, ein Venezianer unter dem Einfluß Plethons", *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 44 (1994), pp.1–20.

<sup>70</sup> The question of the soul's immortality was perhaps the most hotly debated philosophical issue of the later 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. For an account of Averroes' wider influence in the Renaissance see for instance Charles Burnett, "The second revelation of Arabic philosophy and science: 1492–1562", in *Islam and the Renaissance*, edited by Charles Burnett and Anna Contadini (London: The Warburg Institute, 1999), pp.185–98; Craig Martin, "Rethinking Renaissance Averroism", *Intellectual History Review*, 17 (1) (2007), pp.3–19; Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "Averroes in the Renaissance," *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales, Bibliotheca*, 4 (supplement to) 69 (2002), pp.xv–xviii.

<sup>71</sup> Paul Oskar Kristeller, "The Theory of Immortality in Marsilio Ficino", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1:3 (1940), pp.299–319; Paul Richard Blum, "The immortality of the soul" in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, edited by James Hankins (Cambridge, UK/ New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.211–233.



quotes Plethon several times in his works.<sup>72</sup> The first time was in the *Platonic Theology* in a passage written at the earliest in the 1470s or at the latest in 1482. He states that at the beginning of *De Differentiis Platonis et Aristotelis* Plethon condemned Averroes for claiming that Aristotle denied the immortality of the human soul when in fact the opposite was true. Marsilio Ficino reacts systematically to the Averroistic understanding of the intellect in book 15 of *Theologia platonica*, although his letters demonstrated his general interest in Averroes. In the letter (*Contra Averroem, scilicet, quod non sit unicus hominum intellectus*) from 1492 Marsilio Ficino complained about the presence of the “sect” of Averroists.<sup>73</sup> In another letter (*Quod divina providentia statuit antiqua renovari*) he states that Averroists together with Alexandrians equally undermine the whole of religion.<sup>74</sup> Ficino conveys worries that Averroes’ understanding of the intellect is dangerous for religious matters. The individuality of the human being as a unity of body and soul would be destroyed with the theory of one intellect. Ficino paid attention to those tendencies in Averroes’ interpretation of Aristotle which led to a dangerous separation of the divine and the earthly spheres.

Ficino’s objections to Averroism are more sophisticated than the superficial refutations of Averroes by the early humanists. With the help of scholastic philosophy, Ficino elaborates his arguments against Averroes’ denial of the possibility of proving the immortality of the soul by reason. Although Ficino’s attitude to scholastic thought is a question of debate, in his criticism of Averroes he used and modified the arguments from Thomas Aquinas, whose work he

<sup>72</sup> See the detailed analysis of the presence of Plethon in Ficino’s manuscripts in John Monfasani, “Marsilio Ficino and the Plato-Aristotle Controversy” in *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, edited by Michael J.B. Allen and Valery Rees (Boston: Brill, 2002), pp.196–199. See also Paul Richard Blum, “‘Et Nuper Pletho’-Ficino’s Praise of Georgios Gemistos Plethon and His Rational Religion” in *Laus Platonici philosophi: Marsilio Ficino and His Influence*, edited by Stephen Clucas, Peter J. Forshaw and Valery Rees (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp.89–104.

<sup>73</sup> Marsilio Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, vol. IV, translated by the Language Department of the School of Economic Science (London: Shephard-Walwyn, 1988), pp.82–83; Dag Nikolaus Hasse, “Averroica secta: Notes on the Formation of Averroist Movements in Fourteenth-Century Bologna and Renaissance Italy” in *Averroes et les Averroismes juif et latin*, edited by Jean-Baptiste Brenet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp.312 and 316.

<sup>74</sup> Marsilio Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, vol. IV, pp.82–83; James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, p.274.

considered a glory of Christian theology.<sup>75</sup> Brian Copenhaver emphasizes that in rendering Averroes’ ideas about the soul’s immortality, Ficino leans heavily on Aquinas’ refutation of Averroes in the *Summa contra Gentiles*.<sup>76</sup> Aquinas is the most influential thinker of the Middle Ages who criticized Averroes and his understanding of the intellect springs from the metaphysical argument that the human soul is a form of the body. This metaphysical statement necessitated the acceptance of the individuality of the intellect. It had important consequences, not only regarding the immortality and incorruptibility of the soul, but also in ethical spheres. Ficino follows Aquinas’ statement that the individual unity of the human soul is necessary because without substantial unity it would be impossible to think about individual rewards and punishments.<sup>77</sup> Since Ficino supplied his *Theologia Platonica* with the subtitle *de Immortalitate Animae*, Plethon’s criticism of Averroes was a useful bit of ammunition in arguing that Aristotle agreed with Plato on the immortality of the soul.

## Conclusion

The presence of Arabic philosophy in the Byzantium is still shrouded in mystery due to the lack of clear evidence and sources which would help us understand the relationship of Byzantine thinkers to Arabic philosophy. Unfortunately, the discussion of the direct influence of Arabic philosophy in Byzantium is based on speculations rather than facts. Whatever knowledge of Averroes, and other Arabs such as Avicenna, the Byzantines had, it came via translations of Latin works and Jewish intellectual circles. Whether there were any other routes has yet to be investigated in a more detailed way.

<sup>75</sup> Paul Oskar Kristeller, “Florentine Platonism and Its Relations with Humanism and Scholasticism”, *Church History*, 8:3 (1939), pp.201–211; James Hankins, “Marsilio Ficino as a Critic of Scholasticism”, *Vivens Homo*, 5 (1994), pp.325–34.

<sup>76</sup> Brian Copenhaver, “Ten Arguments in Search of a Philosopher: Averroes Advanced Search Ten Arguments in Search of a Philosopher: Averroes and Aquinas in Ficino’s Platonic Theology”, *Vivarium*, 47.4 (2009), pp.444–479; Ardis B. Collins, *The Secular is Sacred: Platonism and Thomism in Marsilio Ficino’s Platonic Theology* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974); Jozef Matula, “Marsilio Ficino as a Critic of Averroes” in *Festschrift: Renaissance Studies in Honor of Joseph Connors*, edited by Machtelt Israëls and Louis A. Waldman (Florence: Villa I Tatti – The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, 2013), pp.432–437.

<sup>77</sup> Christopher Celenza, “Late Antiquity and Florentine Platonism: The ‘Post-Plotinian’ Ficino” in *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, edited by Michael J. B. Allen and Valery Rees (Boston: Brill, 2002), p.89.

In spite of the lack of preserved materials it can be argued that Plethon left a small but important reference about the knowledge of Arabic philosophy in Byzantium. He was not a critic of Islam, the target of his criticism was Averroes and his interpretation of Aristotle regarding the immortality of the human soul. Averroes can serve as a certain symbol of the radical interpretation of Aristotle by which scholastic philosophy diverted from the spiritual heights of the Platonic tradition. Plethon saw the danger of this scholastic Aristotle which meant a turning away from the spiritual and divine sphere. His knowledge of the medieval controversy with Averroes, supported by his knowledge of Aquinas and probably also of the discussion among the Jewish thinkers, helped Plethon boldly attack the Arabic thinker.

On the basis of the available materials, it is not possible to overestimate Plethon's influence on the criticism of Averroes because the Latin West and Byzantine Thomists had a thorough knowledge of the fundamental arguments against Averroes' teaching. Plethon was not such an important person that his remarks on Averroes would make the Renaissance philosophers study this significant commentator of Aristotle in a deeper way. I am not aware of any evidence that authors who inclined to Averroism, such as Nicoletto Vernia, Agostino Nifo, John Argyropoulos or Lauro Quirini, would mention Plethon's criticism. The most important figure to deal with Plethon's criticism of Averroes is in all probability Marsilio Ficino, who explicitly warns us of the danger of an exaggerated admiration of Aristotle's philosophy. This is why Plethon supported the efforts of such thinkers as Marsilio Ficino, which led to the criticism of strict Aristotelism and spiritual corporealism.

Taking into account Averroes' manuscripts present among Jewish scholars in the 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> century in Byzantium, it can be assumed that Arabic philosophy penetrated into Byzantium through Jewish communities. Plethon might have known about Averroes from the Jewish intellectuals (Elissaios in Adrianople or Jewish communities in Constantinople and Crete). There is textual evidence about the study of Averroes in Jewish communities in the Late Byzantium which can be a solid foundation for further research regarding the reception of Averroes in Byzantium.

The Renaissance thinkers were well aware of Averroes whose commentaries on Aristotle substantially shaped the thought paradigm between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. They viewed Plethon as a promoter of Platonism rather than as a critic of Averroes. We cannot deny, however, Plethon's charisma with which he influenced his followers who contributed to the flourishing of

Renaissance thinking in Italy in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Bessarion, John Argyropoulos). Byzantine thinkers (Scholarios, Bessarion, Amiroutzes, Argyropoulos) admired Averroes' mastery in his comments on Aristotle. Their admiration for Averroes arose from their solid knowledge of the Latin scholastic tradition. The moderate view on Averroes among the Byzantine émigrés was a result of their familiarity with Averroes' Latin commentaries on Aristotle. The various medieval scholastic sources and the Italian academic spirit helped them appreciate Averroes more than their teacher in Mistra did. In summary, Plethon did not know Averroes that thoroughly and his knowledge of Averroes seems to be very limited. He used this Arabic thinker as good ammunition to support his own efforts to revive Plato. Plethon's criticism of Averroes mediated from various sources uncovers the fact that in Byzantium Averroes was viewed as an important but dangerous commentator on the most important pupil of the divine Plato.

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## **Plethon's *Opuscula de historia Graeca* and Bruni's *Commentarium rerum Graecarum*: Rewriting Greek History Between the Byzantine and the Latin Renaissance**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of the paper is twofold. First, it tries to compare Plethon's *Opuscula de historia Graeca*, which consist of two texts in the codex *Marcianus Graecus* 406 that were edited in 1989 by Enrico V. Maltese, to Bruni's *Commentarium rerum Graecarum* (1439), a Latin reworking of Xenophon's *Hellenica*, which still lacks a critical edition. In particular, this comparison is possible because the two works complement each other from a chronological point of view and are based on the same methodological core; moreover, both probably originated from the meeting between Bruni and Plethon on the occasion of the Council of Ferrara-Florence. Second, this paper intends to shed light on other little-known historical and geographical excerpts contained in Plethon's autographs by arguing that among Plethon's works they bear the closest resemblance to the *Opuscula de historia Graeca* if we consider the way their sources are abridged and reshaped.

**Keywords:** Humanist historiography; Byzantine literature; Ancient Greek historiography and its transmission; *Excerpta*; Council of Ferrara-Florence; Plethon's minor works

1. Despite the recent revival concerning the figure and works of Leonardo Bruni, one of the most important humanists of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, his *Commentarium rerum Graecarum* (1439) still remains unknown.<sup>1</sup> It is a Latin reworking of Xenophon's *Greek History*, acknowledged by Bruni himself as not a mere translation, and its importance becomes immediately clear if we take into account that the main subjects of Renaissance historiography were contemporary and ancient Roman history: this is the reason why Bruni is considered the 'initiator' of the study of ancient Greek history by some modern scholars.<sup>2</sup>

2. The same holds true somehow for Plethon's historiographical production, although the *Opuscula de historia Graeca* were one of the first among his works to be the subject of a critical edition.<sup>3</sup> While his philosophical texts are of

common knowledge, it is Plethon's all encompassing erudition in particular that still remains neglected, a learning which ranged over all the fields of knowledge, from history and historiography to geography, from grammar and rhetoric to astronomy, from Homeric scholarship to music theory.<sup>4</sup>

3. To my knowledge, nobody has drawn up a canon of historiographical works of the Byzantine and Latin Renaissance concerning ancient Greek history.<sup>5</sup> In a canon like this I would definitely include not only Bruni's *Commentarium rerum Graecarum* and Plethon's *Opuscula de historia Graeca*, but also the treatise on the ancient Athenian calendar *On Months* [περί μηνῶν] by Theodorus Gaza (1470) and a short life of Epaminondas by the Italian humanist Lorenzo Astemio, published in Fano in 1502.<sup>6</sup> These texts belong to three different sub-genres of Humanistic historiography: military, political and evenemential history (Bruni and Plethon), antiquarianism (Gaza) and historical biography (Astemio).<sup>7</sup> Moreover, a reliable critical assessment of the 15<sup>th</sup> century reception of Greek history should deal with the historical-geographic works by Cristoforo Buondelmonti, namely the *Book on the Aegean*

<sup>1</sup> For a general introduction to the life and works of Leonardo Bruni see *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni: Selected Texts*, edited by Gordon Griffiths, James Hankins and David Thompson (Binghamton, New York: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1987); Leonardo Bruni, *Opere letterarie e politiche*, a cura di Paolo Viti (Torino: Utet, 1996); Leonardo Bruni Aretino, *Histoire, éloquence et poésie à Florence au début du Quattrocento*, textes choisis, édités et traduits par Laurence Bernard-Pradelle, Textes de la Renaissance, 118 (Paris: Champion, 2008). The first essay entirely dedicated to the *Commentarium rerum Graecarum* dates from 2012: Gary Ianziti, *Writing History in Renaissance Italy: Leonardo Bruni and the Uses of the Past* (Cambridge, Massachusetts-London: Harvard University Press, 2012), Ch. 11: "A Distant Mirror: Athens, Sparta, and Thebes", pp.237–256.

<sup>2</sup> Emilio Santini, "Leonardo Bruni Aretino e i suoi *Historiarum Florentini populi libri XII*", *Annali della R. Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, 22 (1910), p.25; Carmine Ampolo, *Storie greche: La formazione della moderna storiografia sugli antichi Greci* (Torino: Einaudi, 1997), pp.13–16; Giuseppe Cambiano, *Polis: Un modello per la cultura europea* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2000), pp.22–45; James Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2003–2004), I: *Humanism*, Ch. 9: "Manuel Chrysoloras and the Greek Studies of Leonardo Bruni", pp.243–271 (262) [= *Manuele Crisolora e il ritorno del greco in Occidente*: Atti del Convegno internazionale (Napoli, 26–29 giugno 1997), a cura di Riccardo Maisano and Antonio Rollo (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 2002), pp.175–203].

<sup>3</sup> Enrico Valdo Maltese, "Una storia della Grecia dopo Mantinea in età umanistica", *Res publica litterarum*, 10 (1987), 201–208; Georgii Gemisti Plethonis *Opuscula de historia Graeca*, edidit Enrico Valdo Maltese (Leipzig: Teubner, 1989). On Plethon and ancient Greek history see also Aubrey Diller, "Pletho and Plutarch", *Scriptorium*, 8 (1954), pp.123–127; Mario Manfredini, "Il decreto di Aristide sull'arcontato e un *excerptum* plutarcheo di Giorgio Gemisto Pletone", *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, s. III 1 (1971), pp.81–86; *Id.*, "Giorgio Gemisto Pletone e la tradizione manoscritta di Plutarco", *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, s. III 2 (1972), pp.569–581; Peter Allan Hansen, "Pletho and Herodotean Malice", *Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen-Âge Grec et Latin*, 12 (1974), pp.1–10; Enrico Filippomaria Pontani, "L'Homère de Pléthon", *Scriptorium*, 68 (2014), pp.25–48. Maltese, "In margine alla

tradizione manoscritta di Diodoro Siculo: gli *excerpta* di Giorgio Gemisto Pletone", *Studi italiani di filologia classica*, 77 (1984), pp.217–234; *Id.*, "Diodoro Siculo XV, 60, 3 e Giorgio Gemisto Pletone", *Medioevo greco*, 11 (2011), pp.145–150.

<sup>4</sup> On some of these works see the recent critical editions of Marina Scialuga, "Un'inedita grammatica greca alle soglie dell'età moderna: il περί παιδείας di Giorgio Gemisto Pletone", *Atti della Accademia delle Scienze di Torino – Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche*, 129 (1995), pp.3–34; George Gémiste Pléthon, *Manuel d'astronomie*, édition critique par Anne Tihon et Raymond Mercier, *Corpus des astronomes byzantins*, 9 (Louvain-La-Neuve: Academia-Bruylant, 1998); Filippomaria Pontani, "L'Homère de Pléthon", *Scriptorium*, 68 (2014), pp.25–48.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur Maurice Woodward, "Greek History at Renaissance", *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 63 (1943), pp.1–14; Agostino Pertusi, *Storiografia umanistica e mondo bizantino* (Palermo: Istituto siciliano di studi bizantini e neoellenici, 1967); Edmund Boleslaw Fryde, *The Revival of a 'Scientific' and Erudite Historiography in the Earlier Renaissance* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1974) [= *Humanism and Renaissance Historiography* (London: Hambledon Press, 1983), Ch. 1, pp.3–31].

<sup>6</sup> On Gaza's work see Paul Botley, "Renaissance Scholarship and the Athenian Calendar", *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 46 (2006), pp.395–431 (408–413); on Astemio's see Carlo Mutini, *Astemio (Abstemius, Abstemio)*, Lorenzo, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, IV (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1962), pp.460–461.

<sup>7</sup> For a general overview of the humanistic historiography see *La storiografia umanistica* (Messina: Sicania, 1992); Riccardo Fubini, *L'Umanesimo italiano e i suoi storici: Origini rinascimentali – critica moderna* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2001); *Id.*, *Storiografia dell'Umanesimo in Italia da Leonardo Bruni ad Annio da Viterbo* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2003).



*Islands* [*Liber insularum archipelagi*], the *Description of Crete* [*Descriptio insulae Cretae*] and with the epigraphical inquiries of Ciriaco d'Ancona.<sup>8</sup>

These considerations become more significant if we keep in mind that a number of these humanists (among them Bruni, Plethon and Ciriaco) knew one other and debated issues with each other that were of great importance in their works. It is enough to say that Ciriaco, who had already been in Mistra in 1435, was able, like Bruni, to establish a friendly relationship with Plethon during the Council of Ferrara-Florence and was again a guest at Plethon's home in Mistra during the winter of 1447–1448<sup>9</sup>. According to what Iacopo Zeno, Bishop of Padua from 1460, says in his praise of Ciriaco, it was probably Ciriaco himself who convinced Plethon to attend the Council.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> On Buondelmonti's works see Cristoforo Buondelmonti, *Liber insularum archipelagi*, Transkription des Exemplars Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Düsseldorf Ms. G 13, Übersetzung und Kommentar von Karl Bayer (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2007); *Id.*, Περιγραφή τῆς νήσου Κρήτης: Ἐνας γύρος τῆς Κρήτης στὰ 1415, μετάφραση καὶ εἰσαγωγή Μάρθας Ἀποσκήτη, πρόλογος καὶ δύο ἄρθρα Στυλιανοῦ Ἀλεξίου (Ἡράκλειον: Ἐκδόσεις “Μικρὸς Ναυτίλος”, 2002). On Ciriaco see Anna Pontani, “I *Graeca* di Ciriaco d'Ancona (con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti)”, *Thesaurismata*, 24 (1994), pp.37–148; *Ead.*, “Ancora sui *Graeca* di Ciriaco d'Ancona”, *Quaderni di storia*, 43 (1996), pp.157–172; *Ciriaco d'Ancona e la cultura antiquaria dell'Umanesimo*: Atti del Convegno Internazionale di studio (Ancona, 6–9 febbraio 1992), a cura di Gianfranco Paci e Sergio Sconocchia (Reggio Emilia: Diabasis, 1998); Marco Petoletti, “Nuove testimonianze sulla fortuna di epigrafi classiche latine all'inizio dell'Umanesimo (con una nota sul giurista Papiniano e *CIL*, VI/5, N. II\*)”, *Italia medioevale e umanistica*, 44 (2003), pp.1–26; Ciriaco d'Ancona, *Later Travels*, edited and translated by Edward W. Bodnar with Clive Foss, The I Tatti Renaissance Library, 10 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003); Lorenzo Calvelli, “Ciriaco d'Ancona e la tradizione manoscritta dell'epigrafia cipriota”, in *Humanistica Marciana: Saggi offerti a Marino Zorzi*, a cura di Simonetta Pelusi e Alessandro Scarsella (Milano: Biblion, 2008), pp.49–59; Marina Belozerskaya, *To Wake the Dead: A Renaissance Merchant and the Birth of Archaeology* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Aubrey Diller, *The Textual Tradition of Strabo's Geography* (Amsterdam: A.M. Hakkert, 1975), p.121; Enrico Valdo Maltese, “Il diario della guerra di Troia (Ditti Cretese) tra Ciriaco d'Ancona e Giorgio Gemisto Pletone”, *Res publica litterarum*, 10 (1987), pp.209–213; Maria Capone Ciollaro, “*Excerpta* di Pletone da Strabone e da Plutarco”, *Bollettino dei Classici*, 11 (1990), pp.104–126 (106); Pontani, “I *Graeca* di Ciriaco d'Ancona”, *cit.*, pp.93–102; Giuseppe De Gregorio, “Attività scrittoria a Mistra nell'ultima età paleologa: il caso del cod. Mut. gr. 144”, *Scrittura e civiltà*, 18 (1994), pp.243–280 (247).

<sup>10</sup> Sebastiano Gentile, “Giorgio Gemisto Pletone e la sua influenza sull'Umanesimo fiorentino” in *Firenze e il concilio del 1439*: Convegno di Studi (Firenze, 29 novembre–2 dicembre 1989), a cura di Paolo Viti (Firenze: Leo. S. Olschki editore, 1994), pp.813–832 (822).

4. We can be certain about the date of the *Commentarium rerum Graecarum*, as we have a letter (*epistola* VIII 3 in Mehus' edition) from Bruni to Jacopo Foscari, the son of the doge of Venice Francesco Foscari, dated to 25 December 1439, in which the humanist speaks about his work as recently written (*noviter*), presumably in the months immediately preceding:

Recently, I have been writing a sort of summary of Greek events so that the mistakes made by others can be useful for us to understand how much we have to fear the dangers caused by wars and conflicts. [...] You will detect the reason why I wrote this work in the introduction to it. It is because I think you have to read this introduction that I am so brief in this letter. Since I have finally come back to my books and to my studies, I will inform you about my efforts if I write something new in the future. Regards. Please read carefully that summary, as it contains an excellent history you have to know because of the multiplicity of its facts and events.<sup>11</sup>

When Bruni wrote this letter exhorting Foscari to read carefully his *Commentarium rerum Graecarum*, he was taking leave of a period of great political commitment connected with the prestigious office of chancellor of the Florentine Republic, to which he had been raised for the second time more than ten years before, precisely the first of December 1427.<sup>12</sup> As chancellor, he was

<sup>11</sup> “Scripsi noviter commentarium quoddam rerum Graecarum, ut nobis aliorum pericula forent exemplo, quam sint bellorum, contentionumque discrimina formidanda. [...] Quae vero me causa impulerit id commentarium scribere, in proëmio ejus libri poteris intueri. Ego enim ob id in hac epistola brevior sum, quod proëmium illud tibi legendum censeo. Et quoniam ad libros, studiaque tandem redivimus, si quid novi posthac a nobis componetur, dabimus operam, ut ad tuam noticiam labores nostri perducantur. Vale, et Commentarium illud lege quaeas diligenter. Continet enim luculentam historiam, et scitu dignissimam propter incredibilem rerum, casuumque varietatem.” The Latin text is that of Leonardo Bruni, *Epistolarum* libri VIII recensente Laurentio Mehus (1741), edited by James Hankins (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2007). On this letter and its date see also Francesco Paolo Luiso, *Studi su l'epistolario di Leonardo Bruni*, a cura di Lucia Gualdo Rosa con prefazione di Raffaello Morghen (Roma: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1980), p.144. The English translation is mine.

<sup>12</sup> For a very useful chronological partition of Bruni's life and works see James Hankins, “The Dates of Leonardo Bruni's Later Works (1437–1443)”, *Studi medievali e umanistici*, 5–6 (2007–2008), pp.11–50 (17–18 and 48–49): “First Period: Florence and the Curial Years (1400–1415)”, “Second Period: Literary Retirement in Florence (1415–1427)”, “Third Period: Early Chancery Years (1 XII 1427–27 X 1437)”, “Fourth Period: Final Chancery Years (1437–1443)”.

also involved in the organization of the Council of Ferrara-Florence, and it was Bruni himself who welcomed with an official Greek oration the Emperor John VIII Palaeologus and the Greek delegation at their arrival in Florence.<sup>13</sup> The humanist was hindered in his studies by his engagement on the policy front and was able to return to them shortly before this letter was written ("Since I have finally come back to my books and to my studies" [*Et quoniam ad libros, studiaque tandem redivimus*]). Moreover, in 1439 Bruni served the first of three sixth-month terms (1439, 1440, 1441) as a member of the Ten of War [*Dieci di Balìa*], a war commission charged with conducting the Republic's military affairs. His colleagues were, among others, Cosimo de' Medici himself and Angelo Acciaiuoli, the dedicatee of Bruni's *Commentarium rerum Graecarum*.<sup>14</sup>

Not only is the *Commentarium rerum Graecarum* connected with the meeting between Bruni and Plethon on the occasion of the Council, but also the *Constitution of the Florentines* [περὶ τῆς τῶν Φλωρεντίνων πολιτείας], a short treatise in ancient Greek whose model was the *Politics* of Aristotle, probably written in order to illustrate the political system of Florence and the workings of Florentine institutions to the visiting members of the Greek delegation.<sup>15</sup> Plethon surely knew this work, as one of the manuscripts that contains it, the *Marcianus Graecus* 406, was written almost entirely by Plethon himself: the section that contains the text of the *Constitution of the Florentines* (ff. 141–145)

<sup>13</sup> Paolo Viti, "Leonardo Bruni e il concilio del 1439", in *Firenze e il concilio del 1439*, cit., pp.509–575; Anna Pontani, "Firenze nelle fonti greche del Concilio", *ibid.*, pp.753–812 (762). On the Council see also Cesare Vasoli, "La biblioteca progettata da un Papa: Niccolò V e il 'suo canone'", *Babel*, 6 (2002), pp.219–239; Luca Boschetto, *Società e cultura a Firenze al tempo del Concilio: Eugenio IV tra curiali, mercanti e umanisti (1434–1443)* (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2012), pp.177–189; John Monfasani, "George Gemistos Pletho and the West: Greek Émigrés, Latin Scholasticism, and Renaissance Humanism" in *Renaissance Encounters: Greek East and Latin West*, edited by Marina Scordilis Brownlee and Dimitri H. Gondicas (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2013), pp.19–34; Judith Herrin – Stuart M. McManus, "Renaissance Encounters: Byzantium Meets the West at the Council of Ferrara-Florence 1438–39", *ibid.*, pp.35–56.

<sup>14</sup> Hankins, "The Dates of Leonardo Bruni's Later Works (1437–1443)", cit.

<sup>15</sup> The work was edited by Athanasios Moulakis, "Leonardo Bruni's Constitution of Florence", *Rinascimento*, n.s. 26 (1986), pp.141–190. On it see also Giovanni Cipriani, "Per una lettura del Περί πολιτείας Φλωρεντίνων di Leonardo Bruni", *Ricerche storiche*, 11 (1981), pp.619–624; Russell Dees, "Bruni, Aristotle, and the Mixed Regime in *On the Constitution of the Florentines*", *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 15 (1987), pp.1–23; Viti, "Leonardo Bruni e il concilio del 1439", cit., pp.573–574; Hankins, "The Dates of Leonardo Bruni's Later Works", cit., pp.37–38.

was not written by him personally, but a number of autograph notes in the margins demonstrate that he read it.<sup>16</sup>

5. Plethon's *Opuscula de historia Graeca* are contained in *Marcianus Graecus* 406 (ff. 2r–36r) as well. They consist of two texts, a *Summary of the Events after the Battle of Mantinea Based on Plutarch and Diodorus* [ἐκ τῶν Διοδώρου καὶ Πλουτάρχου περὶ τῶν μετὰ τὴν ἐν Μαντινείᾳ μάχην ἐν κεφαλαίοις διάληψις] and some *Marginal Notes from Diodorus* [ἐκ τῶν Διοδώρου παρασημειώσεις], which in Maltese's critical edition appears as the first and second book of the same work since they complement one other. The first concerns the events between 362 BCE, the date of the battle of Mantinea, and 341 BCE, the date of the battle of the Crimissus river, the second those between 357 BCE, the date of Alexander of Pherae's death, and 336 BCE, the date of Philip II of Macedon's death.

There is a close resemblance between the *Commentarium rerum Graecarum* and the *Opuscula de historia Graeca* as concerns the themes, the structure, and the literary technique used in the composition. However, while the Latin work derives from only one source, the Greek one is based not only on what Plethon declares (*i.e.* Plutarch's *Lives* and Diodorus' *Historical Library*), but also on Plato's *Letters*, Diogenes Laertius, Aeschines and Demosthenes.<sup>17</sup> Like the *Commentarium rerum Graecarum*, which encompasses events between 406 BCE and 362 BCE, that is from the battle of Arginusae to the battle of Mantinea, the *Opuscula de historia Graeca* contains some of the most relevant events of the fourth century BCE organized as a series of exemplary deeds. As the end of the *Commentarium rerum Graecarum* and the beginning of the *Opuscula de historia Graeca* demonstrate, the one ends exactly where the other begins:

<sup>16</sup> On the handwriting of *Marcianus Graecus* 406 see Pontani, "L'Homère de Pléthon", cit. For a description of the manuscript see Aubrey Diller, "The Autographs of Georgios Gemistos Pletho", *Scriptorium*, 10 (1956), pp.27–41 (34–39) [= *Id.*, *Studies in Greek Manuscript Tradition* (Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1983), pp.389–403 (396–401)]; Elpidio Mioni, *Codices Graeci manuscripti Bibliothecae Divi Marci Venetiarum*, II (Romae: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1985), pp.157–159; Georgii Gemisti Plethonis *Opuscula de historia Graeca*, cit., p.vi.

<sup>17</sup> Diller, "The Autographs of Georgios Gemistos Pletho", cit., pp.34–35 [= 396–397]; Maltese, "Una storia della Grecia dopo Mantinea in età umanistica", cit., p.205; Georgii Gemisti Plethonis *Opuscula de historia Graeca*, cit., pp.v–vi. I could not find other sources than Xenophon's *Hellenica* in Bruni's work, *pace* Ianziti, *Writing History in Renaissance Italy*, cit., pp.391–392 note 39, who speaks about borrowings from Plutarch's *Life of Lysander*.

Because of the wound Epaminondas died soon after, but the Thebans' victory was an illustrious one, since the leadership was taken away from the Spartans and the Thebans themselves rose to power. Thus the domination over Greece passed from the Athenians to the Spartans, and then from the Spartans to the Thebans thanks to a quirk of fate.<sup>18</sup>

After the battle of Mantinea – during it Epaminondas, who was boeotarch and strategus, died – the Greeks, oppressed by the length of the wars, signed a peace treaty with one other and included Messene in the agreement as well.<sup>19</sup>

The similarities between them do not end here of course. The two works were associated in a printed edition as well, since Plethon's summary of Greek history was published along with Bruni's work in 1546 in a Latin translation by Joachim Camerarius which was actually a piece of plagiarism.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Plethon's *Opuscula de historia Graeca* were connected to and transmitted together with Xenophon's *Greek History* by some *recentiores* of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, with the same holding true for the Aldine *editio princeps* of the *Hellenica* (1503), which contained both works.<sup>21</sup>

The association between the *Commentarium rerum Graecarum* and the *Opuscula de historia Graeca* on the one hand, and between the latter and the

*Hellenica* on the other, leads to another relevant consideration that concerns the way ancient Greek history was transmitted and read in Byzantium.<sup>22</sup> In the eyes of the ancient Greeks and Romans, and of their Byzantine readers as well, Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon constituted a narrative cycle, which began with the Persian wars and ended with the fall of the Theban hegemony. Plethon's *Opuscula de historia Graeca* bow to this principle and are conceived as part of this narrative chain; the historical period they focus on was encompassed by no organic work like those of the three Greek historians and various pieces of information were scattered within several different narrations (e.g. those of Plutarch and Diodorus) because of the almost complete lack of historians writing between Xenophon and Polybius.

This idea of a narrative chain constituted of Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon is physically reflected in the two manuscripts containing the text of the three historians, i.e. *Marcianus Graecus* 365, which according to the subscription is dated to 30 May 1436 and was written by Bessarion during the final period of his stay in Mistra at Plethon's school, and its apograph *Marcianus graecus* 364, written for Bessarion by Iohannes Plusiadenus in 1469.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> “Epaminondas ex vulnere paulo post expiravit. Victoria tamen manifestissime parta, Lacedemoniis principatu adempto et auctoritate potentiaque omni ad Thebanos victores traducta. Ita principatus Grece ab Atheniensibus ad Lacedemonios, de Lacedemoniis rursus ad Thebanos mirabili fortune conversione devenit.” I am preparing a new critical edition of the *Commentarium rerum Graecarum*: Leonardo Bruni, *Commentarium rerum Graecarum*, a cura di Davide Amendola, Il ritorno dei classici nell'Umanesimo – Edizione Nazionale dei testi della Storiografia Umanistica (Firenze: SISMEL · Edizioni del Galluzzo). The Latin text is that of Alicia Cortés Herrero, *Studia Aretina: Leonardo Bruni Aretino, «Commentarium rerum Graecarum»: texto crítico y traducción* (Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, Col·lecció de Tesis Doctorals Microfixtades núm. 1929, 1992). The English translation is mine.

<sup>19</sup> “Μετὰ τὴν ἐν Μαντινείᾳ μάχην, ἐν ᾗ Ἐπαμύνωνδας ὁ Θηβαῖος βοιωταρχῶν τε καὶ τὴν μάχην ἐκείνην ἐστρατηγηκὼς ἐτελεύτησεν, οἱ μὲν Ἕλληνες, κεκακῶμενοι τῷ μήκει τῶν πολέμων, εἰρήνην πρὸς ἀλλήλους συνέθεντο, συμπεριλαμβάνοντες ταῖς κοιναῖς ὁμολογίαις καὶ Μεσσήνην.” The Greek text is that of Maltese's critical edition. The English translation is mine.

<sup>20</sup> Maltese, “Una storia della Grecia dopo Mantinea in età umanistica”, *cit.*, pp.207–208; Georgii Gemisti Plethonis *Opuscula de historia Graeca*, *cit.*, p.viii.

<sup>21</sup> For a list of the apographs of *Marcianus Graecus* 406 and a description of their contents see Diller, “The Autographs of Georgios Gemistos Pletho”, *cit.*, pp.34–35 [= 396–397]; De Gregorio, “Attività scrittoria a Mistra nell'ultima età paleologa”, *cit.*, pp.249–251.

<sup>22</sup> *Il lessico Suda e la memoria del passato a Bisanzio*: Atti della giornata di studio (Milano, 29 aprile 1998), a cura di Giuseppe Zecchini (Bari: Edipuglia, 1999); Leone Porciani, “Storici greci a Bisanzio: alcuni problemi di ricezione del classico” in *Voci dell'Oriente: Miniature e testi classici da Bisanzio alla Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana*, a cura di Massimo Bernabò (Firenze: Polistampa, 2011), pp.55–65; Anthony Kaldellis, “The Byzantine Role in the Making of the Corpus of Classical Greek Historiography: A Preliminary Investigation”, *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 132 (2012), pp.71–85; Inmaculada Pérez Martín, “The Reception of Xenophon in Byzantium: The Macedonian Period”, *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 53 (2013), pp.812–855.

<sup>23</sup> It was for the same reason that the *Hellenica* were transmitted along with Thucydides' work in some manuscripts: see Luciano Canfora, *Conservazione e perdita dei classici* (Padova: Antenore, 1974), p.30; Guglielmo Cavallo, *Dalla parte del libro: Storie di trasmissione dei classici* (Urbino: Quattroventi, 2002), Ch. 5: “Conservazione e perdita dei testi greci: fattori materiali, sociali, culturali”, pp.49–175 (134) [= *Società romana e impero tardoantico*, IV, *Tradizione dei classici, trasformazioni della cultura*, a cura di Andrea Giardina (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1986), pp.83–172]; Roberto Nicolai, “Thucydides Continued”, in *Brill's Companion to Thucydides*, edited by Antonios Rengakos and Antonis Tsakmakis (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2006), pp.693–719. On *Marciani Graeci* 364–365 see Donald F. Jackson, “The TLDV Manuscripts of Xenophon's *Hellenica* and Their Descendants”, *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 105 (1975), pp.175–187 (181–182); Mioni, *Codices Graeci manuscripti Bibliothecae Divi Marci Venetiarum*, II, *cit.*, pp.125–126; Bessarione e l'Umanesimo: Catalogo della mostra, a cura di Gianfranco Fiaccadori, con la collaborazione di Andrea Cuna, Andrea Gatti e Saverio Ricci, presentazione di Marino Zorzi, prefazione di Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli (Napoli: Vivarium, 1994), p.383 (P. Eleuteri).

6. Maltese's hypothesis about the fruitful interaction that Bruni had with Plethon has been recently strengthened by some documentary sources found by James Hankins in the Florence Record Office, demonstrating that "Bruni's house in the via Anguillara shared a wall with the Casa dei Peruzzi where Plethon was almost certainly housed during the Council" of Florence.<sup>24</sup> There is, however, a point on which Maltese's reconstruction can be brought into question: if it is conceivable that both the *Commentarium rerum Graecarum* and the *Opuscula de historia Graeca* originated from the cultural exchange between the two, we cannot necessarily assume that it was Bruni who exerted his influence on Plethon, and not the other way round. It would be better to address once again the issue of the 'direction' of the cultural influences both by looking at their literary production to find some parallels for works like these and by reconsidering the concepts of 'excerpt', 'compendium' and 'epitome' in the history of classical tradition. In order to strengthen his point, Maltese argues that it is impossible to find something similar to *Opuscula de historia Graeca* in Byzantine literature and historiography between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> century AD, while among Bruni's works relating to ancient history there are several that could reflect many features of Plethon's work.<sup>25</sup> Bruni's historiography on the ancient world comprises both biographies, such as the *Cicero novus* (1415) or the *Vita Aristotelis* (1429), and narrative reconstructions of certain events of Roman history not adequately covered by ancient sources, such as the *Commentaria primi belli Punici* (1422), which in Bruni's intentions should have replaced the lost second decade of Livy's *Ab urbe condita libri*, or the *De bello Italico adversus Gothos gesto* (1441), which should have shed light on a neglected period of proto-byzantine history such as that of Justinian's

<sup>24</sup> Hankins, "Manuel Chrysoloras and the Greek Studies of Leonardo Bruni", *cit.*, p.263 note 42; *Id.*, "The Dates of Leonardo Bruni's Later Works", *cit.*, p.37 note 1.

<sup>25</sup> Maltese, "Una storia della Grecia dopo Mantinea in età umanistica", *cit.*, p.202; Anna Pontani, *La filologia*, in *Lo spazio letterario della Grecia antica*, direttori Giuseppe Cambiano, Luciano Canfora e Diego Lanza (Roma: Salerno editrice, 1992–1996), II: *La ricezione e l'attualizzazione del testo*, pp.307–351 (340–341). It is true, however, that the selection which Plethon made from ancient historiographers in *Marcianus Graecus* 406 fits specific aspects of the Byzantine historical outlook. On this point see Kaldellis, "The Byzantine Role in the Making of the Corpus of Classical Greek Historiography", *cit.*, p.73: "These works [i.e. the world chronicles], and their middle Byzantine adaptations, display almost no interest in the later history of the Greek city-states, being more interested in the Persian empire, which was the context for much of the sacred history of the Old Testament. They were also uninterested in the Hellenistic era, with the exception of the (alleged) Ptolemaic patronage of the Septuagint and the Seleucid role in the Maccabee revolt."

expeditions against the Ostrogoths.<sup>26</sup> Most of these works were conceived and written by Bruni prior to 1439, so, when he composed the *Commentarium rerum Graecarum* and the *De bello Italico adversus Gothos gesto*, he adopted a method already tested and tried in the past: just as Plethon's *Opuscula de historia Graeca*, they were intended to fill in gaps, connect scattered pieces of information and provide a complete, albeit slim, account of relevant events.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the strong similarities between Bruni's and Plethon's works no one has tried, to the best of my knowledge, to connect them to a common background and to suggest that both could belong to a historiographical tradition based on excerpts and epitomes which began at the end of the Hellenistic period with Diodorus Siculus<sup>28</sup> and continued being vital in the Byzantine period: it will suffice to recall the cases of the excerpts of ancient historians by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD, of Dio Cassius' epitome by John Xiphilinus in the 11<sup>th</sup>, of the *History* of Zonaras [ἐπιτομή ἱστοριῶν] in the 12<sup>th</sup>.<sup>29</sup> Humanists quite close to Bruni also adopted similar methods: one of these was Sozomenus (or Zominus) from Pistoia (1387–1458), who wrote a *Chronicon universale* described by Eugenio Garin as the "estremo punto

<sup>26</sup> On these works and on Bruni's historical method see Ianziti, *Writing History in Renaissance Italy*, *cit.*, Ch. 1: "Bruni on Writing History"; Ch. 3: "A New Life of Cicero"; Ch. 4: "Between Livy and Polybius: Bruni on the First Punic War"; Ch. 7: "Bruni and Biography: A Life of Aristotle"; Ch.13: "Writing from Procopius".

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Georgii Gemisti Plethonis *Opuscula de historia Graeca*, *cit.*, pp.v–vi: "fontes non solum Gemistus compilavit et cumulavit, sed interdum opportune excussos emendavit, passim interpretationibus suis auxit, semper fere renovavit et in suum scribendi genus traduxit." Bruni used exactly the same method for his historical works.

<sup>28</sup> Luciano Canfora, *Il copista come autore* (Palermo: Sellerio, 2002), p.47.

<sup>29</sup> On the *Excerpta Constantiniana* see *Excerpta historica iussu imperatoris Constantini Porphyrogeniti confecta*, ediderunt Ursul Philip Boissevain, Carolus De Boor, Theodorus Büttner-Wobst (Berolini: Weidmann, 1903–1906); András Németh, "The Imperial Systematisation of the Past in Constantinople: Constantine VII and His *Historical Excerpts*" in *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, edited by Jason König and Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.232–258. On Zonaras see Ioannis Zonarae *Epitome historiarum*, cum Caroli Ducangii suisque annotationibus edidit Ludovicus Dindorfius (Lipsiae: in aedibus B.G. Teubneri, 1868–1875); *The History of Zonaras: From Alexander Severus to the Death of Theodosius the Great*, translation by Thomas M. Banchich and Eugene N. Lane, introduction and commentary by Thomas M. Banchich (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).



di arrivo delle compilazioni medievali”.<sup>30</sup> Similar remarks can also be made on Bruni's biographies, whose connection with Petrarch and the medieval tradition of *accessus ad auctores* still has to be carefully investigated.

7. Although in the intentions of their author the *Opuscula de historia Graeca* were meant to be pieces of historical writing in their own right, they can be associated and usefully compared with the excerpts from ancient historians contained in *Marcianus Graecus* 406 and made by Plethon during his stay in Italy or in all probability in Mistra after he returned.<sup>31</sup> On folios 42r–57v occurs a reworked version of part of the eleventh book of Appianus' *Roman History* (App. Syr. 261–348 + 1–141), on the Macedonian kings of Syria [ἐκ τῶν Ἀππιανοῦ ἱστοριῶν περὶ τῶν κατὰ Συρίαν Μακεδονικῶν βασιλέων],<sup>32</sup> while on

<sup>30</sup> Eugenio Garin, *La letteratura degli umanisti*, in *Storia della letteratura italiana*, direttori Emilio Cecchi, Natalino Sapegno, III (Milano: Garzanti, 1965), pp.7–353, (248). See also Sozomeni Pistoriensis presbyteri *Chronicon universale* (aa. 1411–1455), a cura di Guido Zaccagnini, *Rerum Italicarum scriptores*, 16/1 (Città di Castello: Lapi, 1907–1908); Lucia Cesarini Martinelli, “Sozomeno maestro e filologo”, *Interpres*, 11 (1991), pp.7–92.

<sup>31</sup> On this point see Diller, “Pletho and Plutarch”, *cit.*, pp.125–126 [= 385–386]: “The uniformity of material and arrangement in all the autographs seems to indicate that they were all written within a limited time. [...] So probably all the autographs were written at Mistra in the '40's. But they are all fair copies and may have been copied from earlier rough copies, so possibly they still represent, at least in part, reading that was done in Italy”; *Id.*, “The Autographs of Georgios Gemistos Pletho”, *cit.*, pp.28–29 [= 390–391]: “Since the extant autographs seem to date from the 1440's, after Plethon attended the Union Council, we cannot assume that all the sources were available in Mistra. Plethon read some works he had never seen before in the possession of the Italian humanists or his own Greek colleagues. This persistent ambiguity detracts seriously from the precision of the data to be obtained from Plethon's autographs for the history of texts.” Although *Marcianus Graecus* 406 is surely dated to the fifth decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, there is no agreement among scholars on the chronology of these works, and some of them wrongly ascribe the excerpts to the early years of Plethon's activity, assuming that they were collected by some of Plethon's pupils for the school of Mistra just as it happened in Aristotle's school: see e.g. Georgios Gemistos Plethon, *Politik, Philosophie und Rhetorik im spätbyzantinischen Reich* (1355–1452), übersetzt und erläutert von Wilhelm Blum (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1988), pp.7–9; Vasile Adrian Carabă, *Pletho Apostata: Die Ablehnung des Christentums durch Georgios Gemistos Plethon (ca. 1355–1452) und dessen Konversion zur griechischen Religion* (Giessen: VVB Lauferweiler Verlag, 2010), pp.40–46. I believe that admitting a sort of teleological development in Plethon's literary production from excerpts to philosophical treatises is absolutely incorrect, since “these summaries and excerpts presumably illustrate Plethon's life-long interests” (Christopher Montague Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p.19).

<sup>32</sup> It was edited by Kai Brodersen, *Appians Antiochike* (Syriake 1, 1–44, 232), Text und Kommentar nebst einem Anhang: *Plethons Syriake-Exzerpt* (München: Editio Maris, 1991), pp.51–68. The most recent editor of the sixth book [Appian, *Histoire Romaine, Tome VI, Livre*

folios 94r–114r we find an excerpt from the second book of Diodorus' *Historical Library* (D.S. 2.1.4–2.34.6) on the Assyrian and Persian kingdoms [ἐκ τῶν Διοδώρου τοῦ Σικελιώτου ἱστοριῶν περὶ τῆς Ἀσσυρίων τε καὶ Μήδων βασιλείας].<sup>33</sup> Moreover, in Plethon's hand seems to not only be his excerpt about Muhammad from George Cedrenus on f. 123r [Μωαμέτης ὁ ἀραβάρχης τε καὶ νομοθέτης], but also a list of the seven kings of Rome on the *verso*.<sup>34</sup> It is not clear whether the other excerpts of historical argument contained in *Marcianus Graecus* 406 on ff. 114v–121r and written “by various later hands” can derive from Plethon or be connected with him:<sup>35</sup> they consist of a short note on the composition of the ancient Greek army “related,” as Diller points out, “to Arrian and Aelian” (ff. 114v–115r),<sup>36</sup> two excerpts from D.H. 1.61, 68–69

XI, *Le livre Syriaque*, texte établi et traduit par Paul Goukowsky (Paris: Les belles lettres, 2007), pp.CXL–CXLII comes to different conclusions from those of Brodersen about the value and the position of this work in the history of Appianus' text. It is the ‘historical work’ that Blum and Carabă wrongly call *Die Könige Makedoniens*: see Wilhelm Blum, “Das Leben und die Schriften Plethons” in *Georgios Gemistos Plethon (1355–1452): Reformpolitiker, Philosoph, Verehrer der alten Götter*, herausgegeben von Wilhelm Blum und Walter Seitter (Zürich-Berlin: Diaphanes, 2005), pp.35–43 (41); Carabă, *Pletho Apostata*, *cit.*, p.42.

<sup>33</sup> Even if the importance of this excerpt from Diodorus' text was emphasized by Maltese, “In margine alla tradizione manoscritta di Diodoro Siculo”, *cit.*, and Pierre Bertrac, “Le texte de la *Bibliothèque historique*”, in Diodore de Sicile, *Bibliothèque historique, Introduction générale, Livre I* (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1993, 2002), pp.LXXVII–CLXIV (pp. CXLIII–CXLIV), the most recent editor of the second book [Diodore de Sicile, *Bibliothèque historique, Tome II, Livre II*, texte établi et traduit par Bernard Eck (Paris: Les belles lettres, 2003), pp.LV–LXVIII] seems to not be aware of it. It is the ‘historical work’ that Blum and Carabă wrongly call *Die Geschichte der Assyrier und Meder*: see Blum, “Das Leben und die Schriften Plethons”, *cit.*, p.41; Carabă, *Pletho Apostata*, *cit.*, p.42.

<sup>34</sup> Other excerpts on Roman and Byzantine history in Plethon's hand are contained in *Marcianus Graecus* 517, f. 120r–v: on this point see Diller, “The Autographs of Georgios Gemistos Pletho”, *cit.*, p.31 [= 393].

<sup>35</sup> Diller, “The Autographs of Georgios Gemistos Pletho”, *cit.*, p.37 [= 399]: “Although these excerpts have been attributed to Pletho on the basis of the apographs, the autograph codex does not support the attribution.” *Contra* Blum, “Das Leben und die Schriften Plethons”, *cit.*, p.41, who among Plethon's historical works wrongly quotes “Exzerpte aus [...] Appian, Strabon, Theophrast, Aristoteles, Diodor von Sizilien, Xenophon, Dionysios von Halikarnass, Prodikos, Arrian, Polybios, Zonaras, Flavius Josephus, Eusebios von Kaisareia”.

<sup>36</sup> Diller, “The Autographs of Georgios Gemistos Pletho”, *cit.*, p.37 [= 399]. Is it this work which Blum and Carabă refer to as *Der Feldzug Alexanders der Großen*? See Blum, “Das Leben und die Schriften Plethons”, *cit.*, p.41; Carabă, *Pletho Apostata*, *cit.*, p.41. I do not know any text bearing this title among Plethon's works or excerpts. For the problem of the titles see Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon*, *cit.*, pp.18–19 (with examples): “His excerpts from classical authors in many cases appear in different manuscripts under titles which disguise their true origin.”

concerning certain mythical legends about the origins of Rome and surely connected to a work by Joannes Canabutzes (ff. 117r–119v),<sup>37</sup> and the famous passage from X. *Mem.* 2.1.21–34 on Hercules at the crossroads (ff. 119r–121r, 136r–v).

Thanks to some scholars, whose research represents a methodological model for studying this part of Plethon's literary production,<sup>38</sup> it is now known that his excerpts are more than mere compilations or anthologies and that he was not interested in a mere transcription or copy of his sources: the way Plethon reshapes them by correcting, cutting and above all inserting information from other works leads in some cases to a new, different text, which mirrors his historical interests.<sup>39</sup> In the case of the excerpts from the tenth book of Strabo's *Geography*, for example, Plethon rewrites the main account using Plutarch and Ptolemy: the outcome primarily consists of pieces of mythical and historical information concerning the migrations of populations that came from

Peloponnese and settled continental Greece and the islands, and is not so different from the two works – connected to each other and contained in *Marcianus Graecus* 379 (ff. 1r–15r) along with other geographical excerpts from Strabo's books II, I, V–X (ff. 15v–108v)<sup>40</sup> – in which he gathered his remarks and objections to some information given by the geographer:<sup>41</sup> the first, *On the Shape of the Inhabited Part of the World* [ἐκ τῶν Στράβωνος γεωγραφικῶν περὶ τοῦ τῆς γῆς τῆς οἰκουμένης σχήματος], which was published in 1798,<sup>42</sup> is a selection of passages from Str. 2.118–131, while the second, *Correction of Certain Errors Made by Strabo* [διόρθωσις ἐνίων τῶν οὐκ ὀρθῶς ὑπὸ Στράβωνος λεγομένων], which was edited in 1937 by Aubrey Diller, is “an independent treatise dealing with certain misstatements on the part of Strabo in the first

<sup>37</sup> Ἰωάννου Καναβοῦτζη τοῦ μαγίστρου πρὸς τὸν αὐθέντην τῆς Αἴνου καὶ Σαμοθράκης / Ioannis Canabutzae magistri *Ad principem Aeni et Samothracas in Dionysium Halicarnassensem commentarius*, primum edidit atque praefatus est Maximilianus Lehnerdt (Lipsiae: in aedibus B.G. Teubneri, 1890). Cf. Diller, “The Autographs of Georgius Gemistus Pletho”, *cit.*, p.37 [= 399]; *Id.*, “Joannes Canabutzes”, *Byzantion*, 40 (1970), pp.271–275 (273–275) [= *Id.*, *Studies in Greek Manuscript Tradition*, *cit.*, Ch. 40, pp.363–367 (365–367)]. The titles of the chapters λ'–λγ' of Canabutzes' work (πρῶτος στόλος ἑλλήνων [*sic*] εἰς ἰταλίαν ὃν ἤγαγεν οἰνωτρος, δεύτερος στόλος ἑλληνικός [*sic*] εἰς ἰταλίαν τῶν καλουμένων πελασγῶν, τρίτος στόλος ἑλληνικός [*sic*] εἰς ἰταλίαν ὃν ἤγαγεν εὐανδρος, τέταρτος στόλος ἑλληνικός [*sic*] ὃν ἤγαγεν ἡρακλῆς) are contained on the last page (f. 147v) of *Marcianus Graecus* 406, and since Canabutzes quotes the same passages from the Ῥωμαϊκὴ ἀρχαιολογία in his work, Diller thinks that he “may have handled codex Marc. gr. 406 in the possession of Demetrius Palaeologus or Demetrius Cavaces in Constantinople or the islands.”

<sup>38</sup> In particular, Manfredini, “Giorgio Gemisto Pletone e la tradizione manoscritta di Plutarco”, *cit.* studied the *excerpta* from Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*, *Adversus Colotem*, *Vita Thesei*, *Vita Solonis*, *Vita Aristidis*, *Vita Camilli*, *De Herodoti malignitate* contained in *Marcianus Graecus* 517, ff. 67r–76r), while Capone Ciollaro, “*Excerpta* di Pletone da Strabone e da Plutarco”, *cit.*, pp.114–126 edited those from the tenth book of Strabo's *Geography* contained in *Marciani Graeci* 517 (f. 119r–v), 406 (ff. 70v–73v) and 379 (ff. 105r–108v).

<sup>39</sup> On Plethon's method and selection see also Manfredini, *Il decreto di Aristide*, *cit.*, pp.82–82; Brodersen, *Appians Antiochike*, *cit.*, p.52: “Plethon exzerpiert die Syriake ähnlich wie andere Werke sehr frei; seine Eingriffe erstrecken sich von attizistischen Schreibweisen (meist ττ statt σσ) und Wortänderungen (meist οὔτος statt ὅδε, τοιοῦτος statt τοιόσδε, τοσοῦτος oder τηλικούτος statt τοσόσδε, ἐς statt εἰς) über Umstellungen, Auslassungen und Zusammenfassungen bis zur Neuordnung des Buches, dessen Exzerpt ja Sy 1–141 nach Sy 261–348 gibt.” *Contra* Carabă, *Pletho Apostata*, *cit.*, 41.

<sup>40</sup> Apart from those from book X, they still deserve a specific study.

<sup>41</sup> These are the only geographical works which Plethon wrote: both the χωρογραφία τῆς Θεσσαλίας and the διαγραφὴ ἀπάσης τῆς Πελοποννήσου παραλίου καὶ μεσογείου, which some scholars ascribe to him and consider still unpublished (see e.g. Blum, “Das Leben und die Schriften Plethons”, *cit.*, p.42; Carabă, *Pletho Apostata*, *cit.*, 41), are nothing but excerpts from Strabo and Ptolemy, respectively. See Diller, “The Autographs of Georgius Gemistus Pletho”, *cit.*, pp.35–36 [= 397–398]: “It is plain that 406 ff. 62–121 were once the end of codex 379 and then removed to leave that codex entirely to Strabo. Of course the apographers and bibliographers did not know this, and they have propagated and recorded 406C [i.e. *Marcianus Graecus* 406, ff. 62–73] endlessly as a separate work of Plethon, *Descriptio Graeciae*, *Chorographia Thessaliae*, etc. Bessarion himself refers to it on f. 1<sup>v</sup> as ἔτι χωρογραφία θετταλίας and on 62<sup>v</sup> as εἰλημμένα ἐκ τῶν τοῦ στράβωνος”; *Id.*, *The Textual Tradition of Strabo's Geography*, *cit.*, p.123: “There are many apographs of Pletho's autographs, especially the chapter AB in codex 379 and the end of E in codex 406 fol. 62–73, mistaken for a separate work and entitled Θεσσαλίας χωρογραφία (Strabo 430 a ff.)”; *Id.*, “A Geographical Treatise by Georgius Gemistus Pletho”, *cit.*, p.451 note 13 [= 381 note 13]: “An excerpt on the Peloponnesus from Ptol. III 14, 25–43 is associated with Pletho's discourses on the Peloponnesus in several MSS. (Vatic. gr. 2236, Ambr. gr. 348, etc.), and hence has been ascribed to Pletho. The excerpt is taken from Urbinas [i.e. *Vaticanus Urbinas Graecus* 82], since it includes its secondary annotations; but it may not be by Pletho.” On this point see also Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon*, *cit.*, p.18; Teresa Shawcross, “A New Lykourgos for a New Sparta: George Gemistos Plethon and the Despotate of the Morea” in *Viewing the Morea: Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese*, edited by Sharon E. Gerstel (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collections, 2013), pp.419–452 (436–437). On the reception of Ptolemy's *Geography* see *Firenze e la scoperta dell'America: Umanesimo e geografia nel '400 Fiorentino*, catalogo a cura di Sebastiano Gentile (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki editore, 1992); Patrick Gautier Dalché, *La Géographie de Ptolémée en Occident (IV<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, *Terrarum orbis*, 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009).

<sup>42</sup> It was published from *Vaticanus Graecus* 174 in *Anecdota Graeca e praestantissimis Italicarum bibliothecarum descriptis* Iohannes Philippus Siebenkees (Norimbergae: in officina Steiniana, 1798), pp.97–105.

chapter”, and surely originated from his conversations with the Italian cartographer Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli (1397–1482).<sup>43</sup>

What has so far been briefly stated about the relationship between Plethon and his sources would require a systematic analysis to be extended not only to the other excerpts from Strabo, but also to those from Theophrastus' *Enquiry into Plants* [ἐκ τῶν Θεοφράστου περὶ φυτῶν ἱστορίας] and Aristotle's *History of Animals* [ἐκ τοῦ περὶ ζώων ἱστορίας Ἀριστοτέλους], contained in *Marcianus Graecus* 406 as well (ff. 74r–76v and 78v–93v, respectively). Detailed inquiries are needed in order to assess which role they play in Plethon's kaleidoscopic production, to what extent they can be considered ‘original’ works and for which purpose they were conceived.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Diller, “A Geographical Treatise by Georgios Gemistos Pletho”, *cit.*, p.442. On the other sources of this work see *ibid.*, p.450: “aside from the two contemporary sources on Scandinavia and Russia and a couple of stray quotations from Aristotle (§ 1) and Strabo III (§ 9), Pletho's treatise is no more than a comparison of the excerpt from Strabo II with Ptolemy.” On the chronology of the treatise and of the geographical excerpts see *ibid.*, 448; the passage of the διόρθωσις on which Diller bases its claim is “Paul of Florence, so trustworthy a man, showed us a map he said he received from a man from Dateia [ἐπέδειξε δ' ἡμῖν Παῦλος ὁ Φλωρεντίνος, ἀνὴρ πολλοῦ ἀξίος, πῖνακα ὃν ἔφασκε παρὰ τοῦ τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς Δατείας παρεληφέναι].” On this work see also Milton V. Anastos, “Pletho and Strabo on the Habitability of the Torrid Zone”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 44 (1950), pp.7–10 [= *Id.*, *Studies in Byzantine Intellectual History* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979), Ch. 16]; *Id.*, “Pletho, Strabo and Columbus”, *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves*, 12 (1952), pp.1–18 [= *Id.*, *Studies in Byzantine Intellectual History*, *cit.*, Ch. 17]; Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon*, *cit.*, pp.182–186; Gentile, “Giorgio Gemisto Pletone e la sua influenza sull'Umanesimo fiorentino”, *cit.*, pp.822–831 (with some interesting observations about Plethon, Toscanelli and Theophrastus' *De plantis*).

<sup>44</sup> On the purpose of these excerpts see e.g. Demetrios Dedes, “Die Handschriften und das Werk des Georgios Gemistos (Plethon): (Forschungen und Funde in Venedig)”, *Ἑλληνικά*, 33 (1981), pp.66–81 (70–71): “Ein Vergleich der Werke des Gemistos mit seinen Exzerpten aus verschiedenen Autoren oder seinen Notizen erweist, daß Gemistos diese Exzerpte oder Notizen als Belegmaterial für seine Werke gesammelt hat. [...] Jetzt kann man klarer feststellen, daß Gemistos nicht die Absicht hatte, sich den Ruhm eines Historikers durch Kompilationen zu schaffen [...]. Hätte er einen solchen Ehrgeiz gehabt, würde er nicht anonym solche Opuscula hinterlassen haben”; Diller, “The Autographs of Georgios Gemistos Pletho”, *cit.*, p.28: “Pletho's autographs are interesting in various ways. Presumably they give a perfect text of those of his own works they contain. They also show something of the character and methods of the author. The excerpts from ancient literature, which make up the greater part of the autographs, show what Pletho read and where he got his ideas. They also illustrate the history of the sources excerpted.”

8. The issues discussed so far also concern Bruni's *Commentarium rerum Graecarum*, which was accused of being either a mere translation of Xenophon or an epitome. My research on the Latin text has in some manner confirmed Maltese's hypothesis, leading to the conclusion that the two works were planned and written by applying the same criteria. An obvious difference between them consists in the fact that Bruni did not write in the same language as his source, and this requires that in addition a careful analysis of his translation technique to be conducted. A very quick look at two passages from the *Commentarium rerum Graecarum* will suffice to show the three main techniques used by Bruni to assemble his history, namely synthesis and abridgement, translation and rewriting.

The first passage, which comes from X. *HG* 2.2.19–20, clearly shows the way Bruni both translated and integrated his source:

So when Theramenes and the other ambassadors arrived at Sellasia and were asked why they had come there, they replied that they had full powers from the Athenians to make peace; after hearing this, the ephors ordered the ambassadors to come before them. When the ambassadors arrived at Sparta, the ephors called an assembly, at which the Corinthians and Thebans especially, but also many other Greeks, urged the Spartans not to make peace with the Athenians but, rather, to destroy them. The Spartans, however, said they would not enslave a Greek city that had accomplished so much good for Greece during the time of its greatest dangers; they preferred, rather, to offer peace to Athens upon the following conditions: that the Athenians take down their Long Walls and the fortifications of the Peiraieus; that they hand over all of their ships except twelve; that they allow their exiles to return to Athens; that they have the same friends and enemies as the Spartans; and that they be willing to follow the Spartans as their leaders on land or sea, on whatever campaign the Spartans should order them.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup> “Θηραμένης δὲ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι πρέσβεις ἐπεὶ ἦσαν ἐν Σελλασίᾳ, ἐρωτώμενοι δὲ ἐπὶ τίνι λόγῳ ἤκοιεν εἶπαν ὅτι αὐτοκράτορες περὶ εἰρήνης, μετὰ ταῦτα οἱ ἔφοροι καλεῖν ἐκέλευον αὐτοὺς. ἐπεὶ δ' ἤκον, ἐκκλησίαν ἐποίησαν, ἐν ᾗ ἀντέλεγον Κορίνθιοι καὶ Θηβαῖοι μάλιστα, πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι τῶν Ἑλλήνων, μὴ σπένδεσθαι Ἀθηναίους, ἀλλ' ἐξαρεῖν. Λακεδαιμόνιοι δὲ οὐκ ἔφασαν πόλιν Ἑλληνίδα ἀνδραποδιεῖν μέγα ἀγαθὸν εἰργασμένην ἐν τοῖς μεγίστοις κινδύνοις γενομένης τῇ Ἑλλάδι, ἀλλ' ἐποιούντο εἰρήνην ἐφ' ᾧ τὰ τε μακρὰ τεῖχη καὶ τὸν Πειραιᾶ καθελόντας καὶ τὰς ναῦς πλὴν δώδεκα παραδόντας καὶ τοὺς φυγάδας καθέντας τὸν αὐτὸν ἐχθρὸν καὶ φίλον νομίζοντας Λακεδαιμονίους ἔπεσθαι καὶ κατὰ γῆν καὶ κατὰ θάλατταν ὅποι ἂν ἡγῶνται.”



When they [*i.e.* Theramenes and the other ambassadors] were in Selasia, being asked on what proposal they had come, they said that they went having full power to negotiate for peace. After this they were ordered to enter Sparta, and after they had reported the same discourses, the Spartans had an assembly to decide what to do. During this assembly the Corinthians and Thebans especially spoke out, along with many other Greeks, not to make a treaty with the Athenians, but to destroy them. *If Athens, which seems now to be overthrown and demolished, would be allowed to survive, thanks to its location it would have gained a terrifying and dangerous power again. Moreover, they recalled the arrogance towards other Greek cities and the brutality that the Athenians showed in the past.* For these reasons they urged to destroy Athens. But the Lacedemonians said they would not permit to demolish a city that had rendered great service in the direst danger to Greece. So they made peace with the Athenians on condition that they tear down the long walls, *which extended from the city to the harbor as if they were arms*, surrender all but twelve of their ships, welcome back their exile, consider the same friend and foe as did the Lacedemonians, and follow wherever they should lead by land and sea.<sup>46</sup>

The Greek text is that of Xenophontis *Historia Graeca*, recensuit Carolus Hude, editio maior (Lipsiae: in aedibus B.G. Teubneri, 1930). The English translation is that of John Marincola in *The Landmark Xenophon's Hellenika*, edited by Robert B. Strassler (New York: Pantheon Books, 2009).

<sup>46</sup> “Hi cum Selasiam venissent, interrogati quid afferrent, cum plena potestate ad pacem petendam se venire dixerunt. Ita Lacedemona introire iussi, cum eadem illa exposuissent, concilio sociorum advocato, quid agendum foret a Lacedemoniis consultabatur. In ea consultatione Corinthii et Thebani maxime et alii quidam sociorum, omnes conditiones repudiandas penitusque delendas Athenas censebant. *Si enim stare civitas illa sineretur, quamvis nunc afflicta videatur atque disiecta, tamen situs bonitate futurum ut iterato in potentiam formidabilem sibi periculosamque evadat. Commemorabatur insuper Atheniensium superbia atque sevitia quam per superioris temporis potentiam contra minores civitates edidissent; quibus de causis delendam penitus eam civitatem suadebant.* At Lacedemonii nequaquam se passuros dixerunt ut civitas, que dudum tantas utilitates in maximis Graeciae periculis attulisset, deleteretur. Atque ita pax Atheniensibus data his conditionibus, ut Longa Menia, *que ab urbe ad portum quasi brachia quaedam extendebantur*, diruerentur, utque naves preterquam duodecim, quas retinere liceret, omnes Lacedemoniis traderent, exules omnes reciperent, eosdem amicos hostesque quos Lacedemonii putarent, sequi Athenienses terra marique quocumque Lacedemoniis ducere placeret.” The italicized words have no correspondence with Xenophon's text. The English translation is mine.

The second, which comes from X. *HG* 1.6.33–34, is a good example of the way the source is abridged and summarized:

After this they fought, and the battle lasted a long time, first with the ships all crowded together, then with them scattered. When Kallikratidas' ship rammed another ship, he himself fell into the sea and disappeared and was not seen again; then the Athenian Protomachos and those with him on the right wing defeated the Lacedaemonian left, after which there was a general flight of the Spartans to Chios, although most of them went to Phocaea. The Athenians sailed back to the Arginousai Islands. The Athenians lost twenty-five ships together with their crews, except for a few who made their way to shore; the Spartans lost nine of the ten Spartan ships that were engaged, as well as sixty ships of their allies.<sup>47</sup>

During that battle the Spartans were defeated after a long combat. The navarch Callicratidas died, and of the Spartan ships more than seventy were lost. But for the Athenians victory was not bloodless, as of their ships twenty-five with their crews were rammed and sunk.<sup>48</sup>

From this examples it is easy to see how much Plethon's and Bruni's works have in common from a methodological and structural point of view.

9. Despite the similarities described thus far there is nevertheless an element that Plethon's *Opuscula de historia Graeca* and Bruni's *Commentarium rerum Graecarum* do not share, that is the specific purpose for which they were conceived. As the preface to Angelo Acciaiuoli shows, Bruni's work was deeply

<sup>47</sup> “Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα ἐναυμάχησαν χρόνον πολὺν, πρῶτον μὲν ἀθρόοι, ἔπειτα δὲ διεσκεδασμένοι. ἐπεὶ δὲ Καλλικρατίδης τε ἐμβαλοῦσης τῆς νεῶς ἀποπεσὼν εἰς τὴν θάλατταν ἠφανίσθη Πρωτόμαχος τε καὶ οἱ μετ’ αὐτοῦ τῷ δεξιῷ τὸ εὐώνυμον ἐνίκησαν, ἐντεῦθεν φυγὴ τῶν Πελοποννησίων ἐγένετο εἰς Χίον πλείστων, <τινῶν> δὲ καὶ εἰς Φώκαιαν· οἱ δὲ Ἀθηναῖοι πάλιν εἰς τὰς Ἀργινούσας κατέπλευσαν. ἀπώλοντο δὲ τῶν μὲν Ἀθηναίων νῆες πέντε καὶ εἴκοσιν αὐτοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐκτὸς ὀλίγων τῶν πρὸς τὴν γῆν προσενεχθέντων, τῶν δὲ Πελοποννησίων Λακωνικαὶ μὲν ἑννέα, <τῶν> πασῶν οὐσῶν δέκα, τῶν δ’ ἄλλων συμμάχων πλείους ἢ ἑξήκοντα.” The English translation is that of John Marincola in *The Landmark Xenophon's Hellenika*, cit.

<sup>48</sup> “In ea pugna post longum certamen Lacedemonii superantur. Callicratidas prefectus interiit, et supra naves septuaginta ex classe Lacedemoniorum periit. Nec Atheniensibus incruenta fuit victoria. Nam eorum viginti quinque naves cum ipsis pugnatoribus fracte ac submerse sunt.” The English translation is mine.



rooted in the Florentine political context at the end of the 1430s and gave full expression to his personal views on military events, while Plethon's probably did not have either so broad an audience or a political dimension.<sup>49</sup>

A look at the preface, which reiterates the key point made in the letter to Foscari, will suffice to understand that the humanist wrote the *Commentarium rerum Graecarum* in order to illustrate the dangers derived from pursuing aggressive war:

I have sometimes noticed, Angelo, that you have been puzzled by my – shall I call it hesitation and slowness? – when there are deliberations about war, or about actions that might easily lead to war. If I do have such a tendency, however, I want you to know that it comes not so much from my nature as from the fact that the recollection and examples of things I have read have led me to dread all such contentions and perils. There has never been a state so wealthy and flourishing that it has not been obliged to face the gravest threat to its very existence as a consequence of what were sometimes minor mistakes. And some have even been brought to final ruin as a result. Accordingly, if we have seemed hesitant and tardy – indeed timid and diffident in such matters, either to you or to others, know that the reason was that historical examples are always holding me back and frightening me away from every kind of confrontation. [...] And so, moved by such considerations, I have written this commentary on the Hellenica for you (I would rather write about others' mistakes than about our own), in which you will observe the various disasters, downfalls and astonishing reversals of fortune that befell the most powerful states of Greece, those indeed with the broadest dominions.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> For the doubtful hypothesis of the *Opuscula de historia Graeca*'s political purpose, according to which they may have been intended as an admonition to the royal family aimed either at Manuel II or at the Despot Constantine, see Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon*, cit., p.222. For Pletho's use of examples taken from Greek history in his orations see Christos P. Baloglou, "The Institutions of Ancient Sparta in the Work of Pletho" in *Πρακτικά Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου ἀφιερωμένου στον Πλήθωνα και την εποχή του με την συμπλήρωση 550 ετών από τον θάνατο του (Μυστράς, 26–29 Ιουνίου 2002) / Proceedings of the International Congress on Plethon and His Time (Mystras, 26–29 June 2002)*, edited by Λίνος Γ. Μπενάκης - Χρήστος Π. Μπαλόγλου (Αθήνα-Μυστράς: Διεθνής εταιρεία Πληθωνικών και Βυζαντινών μελετών, 2003), pp.311–326; Shawcross, "A New Lykourgos for a New Sparta, cit.

<sup>50</sup> "Animadverti non numquam, o Angele, te admirari solere meam, ut ita dixerim, cunctationem ac tarditatem quotiens aut de suscipiendo bello consultatur aut de his rebus

Otherwise, Plethon's *Opuscula de historia Graeca* seem to have a sort of 'philosophical' meaning inside Plethon's system, which is completely absent from Bruni's work; for a relevant part of them is dedicated to Syracuse and its tyrants in the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and this clearly represents the historical context of Plato's journeys:

Plato is also present there from Athens, having travelled to these parts of Italy and Sicily to study the cities there and their constitutions. When he joined this tyrant (Dionysius), who was the most powerful of the Greeks there, intending to try whether some divine chance would enable him, by prompting him towards philosophy, to be the source of great benefits to the cities over which he ruled, knowing that tyrants have the greatest power in whatever they might set themselves to do, whether good or ill.<sup>51</sup>

quas bellum sit faciliter secuturum. Ego autem si quid est in me tale, illud volo aperte scias non tam ex natura mihi provenire quam ex eo, quia multa legisse mihi videor per quarum rerum memoriam atque exempla contentiones omnes atque pericula reformido. Nulla enim fuit unquam civitas neque tam aucta opibus neque tam florens que non ex parvis interdum erratis in maxima inciderit pericula status sui; non nulle etiam ex hoc ipso in extremam ruinam devenerunt. Qua re si cunctatores et tardi, si denique timidi ac diffidentes in huiusmodi rebus aut tibi aut ceteris visi sumus, eam scias causam fuisse quod exempla me revocant et deterrent ab omni protinus dimicatione. [...] Atque ego his considerationibus inductus scripsi tibi *Commentarium rerum Graecarum*, malo enim aliorum errores narrare quam nostros, in quibus videbis potentissimarum Graeciae civitatum que latissime dominabantur varios casus atque ruinas et mirificas fortune conversiones." A slightly different text of the preface can also be found in Leonardo Bruni Aretino, *Humanistisch-philosophische Schriften*, herausgegeben und erläutert von Hans Baron, Leipzig-Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1928, p.176. The English translation is that of *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni*, cit., p.194.

<sup>51</sup> Georgii Gemisti Plethonis *Opuscula de historia Graeca*, cit., I 16: "οὕτως ἔχοντι τῷ Διονυσίῳ τοῦτ' παραγίγνεται καὶ Πλάτων ἐξ Ἀθηνῶν, ἀποδεδημηκῶς μὲν ἐς τοὺς περὶ Ἰταλίαν τε καὶ Σικελίαν τοὺτους τόπους ἐπὶ ἱστορίαν τῶν τε πόλεων καὶ πολιτειῶν τῶν ἐκεῖ, ἀφιγμένος δὲ καὶ παρὰ τὸν τύραννον τοῦτον, μέγιστον τῶν ἐκεῖ Ἑλλήνων δυνάμενον, πειρασόμενος, εἴ πως θεῖα τινὶ τύχῃ οἷος τε γένοιτο ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν προτρεψάμενος μεγάλων ἀγαθῶν αἷς ἦρχε πόλεσιν αἴτιος καταστῆναι, εἰδὼς τοὺς τυράννους μέγιστον ἔφ' ὃ τι ἂν ὀρμήσειαν δυναμένους, εἴτε ἀγαθὸν ἂν τι εἴτε μοχθηρόν." The English translation is that of Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon*, cit., p.222. In my opinion some scholars overrated the philosophical significance that Plato's experience in Sicily could have had for Plethon: see *ibid.* pp.221–222; Dedes, "Die Handschriften und das Werk des Georgios Gemistos (Plethon)", cit., p.71; Milton V. Anastos, "Pletho's Calendar and Liturgy", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 4 (1948), pp.183–305 (188): "Pletho was obviously greatly impressed by Plato's Sicilian adventures, and seems, in planning his own career, to have made a conscious effort to follow Plato's example."

The apparently different purpose for which Bruni's *Commentarium rerum Graecarum* and Plethon's *Opuscula de historia Graeca* were conceived cannot shed shadow, however, on the methodological and thematic core which binds them; indeed, the value and the importance of these neglected works is due not only to the remarkable personality of their authors, who were so close to one other at a specific moment of their lives, but also to the fact that they constitute the first detailed accounts specifically dedicated to Greek History to be written since antiquity by a Western and a Byzantine author.

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## Plethon in Duplicate, in Triplicate ... The Question of Portraits

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**Abstract:** Was Plethon portrayed in his lifetime (1355–1452)? Surely not in his Greek home-land (Constantinople, Mistras) but rather in Italy where he spent almost two years (1437–1439), where the Byzantine delegation attracted strong interest and where the Renaissance-Iconomania was in full blossom. Only one official portrait of Plethon hardly can be found in Italy: in the Florentine Offices under the ceiling of the corridor one picture in a series of hundreds of portraits is that of Plethon; it carries the inscription PLATO and was made at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. But soon after Plethon's death, in 1459, Benozzo Gozzoli painted in the large *Magi's Procession* (in the Medici-Palace, Florence) some characteristic Byzantine faces, two next to Benozzo's self-portrait, and each of them could be an unofficial but "authentic" picture of Plethon. Particularly the fact that there is one in which the model's features were reproduced by Piero della Francesca in the Tempio Malatestiano (Rimini); that what leads to the conclusion that the intelligent-insolent Signore Sigismondo Malatesta as admirer and imitator of Plethon could be an other indirect effigies of the stubborn philosopher.

**Keywords:** Georgios Gemistos Plethon; Portrait; Renaissance; Benozzo Gozzoli, *Magi's Procession*; Piero della Francesca; Sigismondo Malatesta; Effigies.

Some years ago I occupied myself with the question if there is any portrait of the Greek philosopher Georgios Gemistos Plethon (1355–1452) that is handed down to us. Then I supposed that the question for the time being had to be answered negatively, because no official and authenticated portrait was

known, and this zero-hypothesis motivated me to search in Italian pictures or picture cycles of the quattrocento where contemporary „Byzantines“ seemed to emerge and where sometimes Plethon already had been guessed for some unofficial but authentic portrait of the philosopher.<sup>1</sup> This my search seemed to be not unsuccessful and I thought to have found at least one rather plausible portrait of Plethon: namely the very exotically clothed old man just to the right of the self-portrait (and signature) of the painter Benozzo Gozzoli (1420–1497) in the retinue of the three *Magi* in the chapel of the Medici-Palace at Florence. A picture that seemed to be a twenty-years-belated „print“ of Plethon's Florentine stay in 1439. Florence stands for the official reception of Plethon in Italy: his presence there, in the year 1439, should trigger the foundation of the Platonic Academy in 1459. Just this time lag shows that Plethon is a specialist for delayed effects. On the other hand we cannot exclude that there were receptions of Plethon which were less „correct“: less compatible with the official Christian religion – so in the Roman Academy, directed by Pomponio Leto (1428–1497), or in the Riminese Academy, that was called „Parnassus“ and could not exist without the knowledge and the benevolence of the Signore Sigismondo Malatesta.<sup>2</sup>

The assumption of a portrait of Plethon in the named Florentine frescoes has been taken up in a detailed treatise in 2006, but it has been modified through another assignment of picture: Silvia Ronchey doesn't see the apocryphic portrait of the Greek philosopher in the old man to the right of the painter but just in the more officially clothed old man to the left of him (seen from the observer).<sup>3</sup> So we have already two divergent theses about an apocryphic portrait of Plethon in the same Florentine frescoes. But another fact is coming up: since the end of the cinquecento an official but also enigmatic portrait of Plethon is installed at Florence. So the question today is no longer if there is any portrait of Plethon: but how many and which ones there are.

<sup>1</sup> Walter Seitter, „Gibt es ein Bild von Plethon?“ in *Georgios Gemistos Plethon (1355–1452): Reformpolitiker, Philosoph, Verehrer der alten Götter*, edited by Wilhelm Blum and Walter Seitter, Tumult: Schriften zur Verkehrswissenschaft, Band 29 (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2005), pp.31–142. The present article is based on the just mentioned and on Walter Seitter, „Was für Bilder gibt es von Plethon?“, *Accademia. Revue de la Société Marsile Ficin*, IX (2007), pp.7–36.

<sup>2</sup> Moreno Neri, *Giorgio Gemisto Pletone: De differentiis* (Rimini: Raffaelli, 2001), p.49 et sequ.

<sup>3</sup> Silvia Ronchey, *L'enigma di Piero. L'ultimo bizantino et la crociata fantasma nella rivelazione di un grande quadro* (Milano: BUR, 2006), p.115.

At first, let's go to the picture hanging in the eastern corridor of the Florentine Uffizi: in the so-called corridoio primo: more than two hundred portraits of equal size are there fixed very highly just underneath the ceiling – far from the attention of the visitors; they seem to be rather fittings of the museum than objects of exhibition, even in the long corridors which reach before the halls of exhibition. At least some little panels of information are installed at eye-level for the visitors, where the series of portraits is indicated and the names of the portrayed persons are named. Without these indications nobody would perceive the pictures and identify the persons.

The normal portrait includes the explicit or contextual indication of the name of the person portrayed. Also in the here observed series of pictures (painted in oils) the names are inscribed (with brush). The inscriptions of names are executed in good writing. But in the most cases they are not legible for the visitor standing underneath. Only some few portraits show the inscribed names very tall and well legible. So does the picture that interests us. But: above the head of the portrayed appear the letters PLATO. (Fig.1)

Nevertheless, the modern panel indicates: Georgios Gemistos Plethon ... There's every reason to believe that the picture doesn't show the antique philosopher, but that the name of this is attributed to the newer philosopher Gemistos, who was called a „*Plato secundus*“ and replaced his own name with „Plethon“ that sounds almost like „Platon“. The title PLATO expresses his special identity through the metamorphosis of his identity. This strange portrait of Plethon at the window-side of the first corridor bears the number 99 and it is ranged between the portraits of other intellectuals of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It shows nothing of the well known features of Platon and nothing of the typus „antique philosopher“. His face is composed of dark and far-looking eyes, a long and straight nose, a short beard and dark hair. His skirt has nothing of the „Byzantine“ exotism, that often has been represented by the quattrocento-painters. Impression of a noble gown in the style of late Renaissance, perhaps an aristocratic hunting skirt: light green with big golden buttons. Nothing of the appearance radiating from the eighty-year-old man at Florence in 1439. The portrait installed at the museum of Florence was produced some 140 years after that stay in the town – no continuity of similarity is visible. It's a very *après coup* construction of Plethon, underlining its artificial character by the attribution of a name for its part two thousand years old. The whole series of portraits shows famous persons beginning with Charlemagne, most of them having lived in the quattrocento. The neighbours of the Plato-Plethon-portrait

are Neri Cappone (1388–1457) and Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472), then Domenico Burchiello (1404–1449) und Leonardo Bruni (1370–1444). All these humanists in gowns we know for the 15<sup>th</sup> century, first of all for Florence.

This series of portraits has been produced by the painter Cristofano dell'Altissimo (1520–1605). The portrait of Plethon belongs to the sub-series „Giovana“, called after the portraits engraved in 1530 by Paolo Giovio (1482–1552) – but the Plethon has no model in the collection of Giovio: he is a new invention of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. The collection of Giovio has an older archetype: drawings from the series of illustrious men painted in 1459 by Piero della Francesca in the Vatican Chambers (later destroyed).<sup>4</sup> It seems however almost impossible that Plethon Apostata has been portrayed for the Pope himself.

But the year 1459 and even the just mentioned painter point at tracks that we should follow.

The foundation of the Platonic Academy at Florence was not the only event which in 1459 echoed the Union-Council having taken place in 1439. At the political level, a meeting in the new chapel of the Medici-Palace in April 1459 is remarkable: Cosimo de' Medici (1389–1464) received there the Pope Pius II. (1405–1464), Galeazzo Maria Sforza of Milano (1444–1476), Sigismondo Malatesta of Rimini (1417–1468) and they discussed about the project of a crusade against the Ottomans, who in 1453 had conquered Constantinople, destroyed the Eastern Roman Empire and were conquering all Greek regions.<sup>5</sup> Instead of undertaking a military crusade into the Near Orient Cosimo de' Medici engaged in the summer of 1459 Benozzo Gozzoli to paint *The Magi's Procession* on the walls of the chapel. Since long time, the conjecture exists that the three protagonists in the three-dimensional frescoes represent three persons which had been present at the Union-Council of Florence: in the young Magus Caspar one has seen the son of Cosimo, the promising Lorenzo (1449–1492), in the splendid Balthazar the Eastern Roman Emperor Johannes VIII (1392–1448) and in the old Melchior the Orthodox Patriarch Joseph II

<sup>4</sup> Ronchey, *L'enigma di Piero. L'ultimo bizantino et la crociata fantasma nella rivelazione di un grande quadro*, p.252 et sequ.

<sup>5</sup> Cristina Acidini Luchinat, “The Chapel of the Magi” in *The Chapel of the Magi. Benozzo Gozzoli's Frescoes in the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi*, edited by Cristina Acidini Luchinat (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), p.7 et sequ. (5–17); Diane Cole Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1996), p.83.

(1360–1439). (Fig.2) These conjectural identifications have been criticized by Ernst Gombrich and by Cristina Luchinat because the *Magi* don't show similarity with the well-known faces of the three historical persons and secondly: the Union-Council of 1439 should have lost any political relevance in 1459.<sup>6</sup> The first argument seems to be convincing, not so the second one. Both the failure of the ecclesiastical union with Constantinople and the political catastrophe of the Oriental metropolis continued to occupy at least the pope and his legate, the cardinal Bessarion (1403–1472).

It's inevitable to see, that in the crowd of people behind the *Magi* (nearly hundred persons are discernible) many persons are painted with portrait-like delicacy. Luchinat pretends to have identified thirty-three individuals: Florentine and some other Italians.<sup>7</sup> First of all Cosimo and other members of the Medici-family, but also the three personalities which had been received just in the same chapel (before its frescoes-decoration). This for the key year 1459.

Oddly enough Luchinat did not pay attention to the obvious fact that in the crowd of Florentine people some „Byzantine“ heads are visible: I would say „fresh“ Byzantine heads as they were strikingly visible in 1439. One group of them gets a certain prominence because it is arranged round a really central head: the head of the painter whose name (in a Latin genitive) is inscribed on his hat: OPUS BENOTII. (Fig.3) This Benozzi is the art director of the „massive“ enterprise, where an Oriental journey of the year 1 A. D. is combined with some political ambitions and wishes of the year 1459. Bound together round the political event of 1439: the great visit of the Orient in the Occident. For the „Byzantine“ elements in the Florentine frescoes (in the background also a little group with the Eastern Roman emperor) represent the splendid, although meanwhile failed Union-Council.

The two best visible Oriental heads can be seen just beside, at the two sides of the painter. (Fig.4) Formerly one thought sometimes of Bessarion as a portrayed. Bessarion was a very active member of the Oriental legation in 1439, in 1459 he was the most engaged protagonist of a Western „Ostpolitik“

<sup>6</sup> Luchinat, “The Chapel of the Magi”, p.7 et sequ., 126.

<sup>7</sup> Cristina Acidini Luchinat, “The Medici and Citizens in *The Procession of the Magi: A Portrait of a Society*” in *The Chapel of the Magi. Benozzo Gozzoli's Frescoes in the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi*, edited by Cristina Acidini Luchinat (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), pp.p. 363 et sequ.



– insofar he is the best link between 1459 and 1439. But certain esthetic aspects contradict the hypothesis.<sup>8</sup> Recently these two persons have been taken into consideration as possible candidates for reproductions, for apocryphic but „authentic“, for „iconic“ in the sense of „photographic“ portraits of Plethon. So by Moreno Neri or by Juan Signes Codoñer.<sup>9</sup>

The two heads are very different, just contrasting characters. At left a frontally painted face. Long and straight nose, full beard and a blue-golden dome-shaped cap, almost episcopal. In contrast to the frontal position the sideways directed look. A sharp, a political look. (Fig.5) For Silvia Ronchey it's Plethon. Her argument: a certain similarity with the Uffizi-„Plethon“.<sup>10</sup> But the similarity with that rather constructivist portrait is not very convincing, I think.

One year before Ronchey's research I published my hypothesis which sees in the other neighbour the Greek philosopher: another old bearded man, given in three-quarters profile, lowered head, open and thinking eyes. Very strange headgear: high violet cap of soft cloth; wrapped round with a light rosa cloth that falls on his shoulders – an exotic, almost female packaging, rather Asian than European. (Fig.6) My argument for this Plethon: the meditative and rather private character of the person; no proximity to any official – ecclesiastical oder bureaucratic – appearance. Plethon was not a cleric and his activities at Florence were devoted more to philosophical discussions than to declarations of Council.<sup>11</sup>

My hypothesis for the head at left: it's the patriarch Joseph II, who in contrast to Plethon promoted the decision for the union with the Western church (decision that was made – but without lasting success). His very official appearance and attitude, but also a similarity with the picture at his tomb in Santa Maria Novella seem to confirm this thesis. And just above (!) this hieratic appearance the rather modest and melancholical countenance of the actual pope Pius II. In my view the two prominent places to the right and to the left of the painter are reserved to the orthodox patriarch and to the philosopher who participated

<sup>8</sup> Seitter, „Gibt es ein Bild von Plethon?“, p.132 et sequ. (131–142).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.133; Neri, *Giorgio Gemisto Pletone: De differentiis*, p.12.

<sup>10</sup> Ronchey, *L'enigma di Piero. L'ultimo bizantino et la crociata fantasma nella rivelazione di un grande quadro*, p.115.

<sup>11</sup> Seitter, „Gibt es ein Bild von Plethon?“, p.135; Seitter, „Was für Bilder gibt es von Plethon?“, p.22.

in the Council as companion of the emperor but whose real role was: give an impulse to the Western philosophy and recall the Eastern origin of philosophy. So the painter would have staged in the midst of the Florentine crowd a kind of diptychon, a contrastive diptychon of two contrary truth-leaders, of two spiritual spokesmen. Or a triptychon with the painter himself in the center: the Western painter with the two Eastern „ἡγεμόνες λόγων“ (to cite Plethon himself).<sup>12</sup>

If Silvia Ronchey sees Plethon in the official type with the almost ecclesiastical appearance she identifies the other figure, the almost anarchistic one, with Theodorus Gaza (1410–1475), a Greek teacher and scholar, who went to Italy where he remained for life. He defended Aristotle against Plethon. There is one argument in favour of Ronchey's hypothesis: the physiognomical similarity between the old man in the violet cap and the known portraits of Theodorus is impressive (apart from the fact that Theodor in 1459 – and even less in 1439 – was not an old man). Ronchey's hypothesis would imply that the two exotic heads near to the painter belong to two Greek scholars of different age and of different orientation: a rather banal juxtaposition where the cardinal Bessarion (whose face just behind the violet-rosa cloth-hill is well identifiable) would not make great sense.

Nevertheless it cannot be excluded that Ronchey's identification of the two striking heads has some plausibility. In this case, Plethon should have been – for the painter and his simultaneous *milieu* – a personality of high rank: as official participant in the Council he could take the habit of a bishop – or as philosopher he could be something like Plato himself (the Uffizi-portrait entitled „PLATO“ has the appearance of an aristocrat). But the absence of the patriarch would open a rift in the collection of the Greek portraits here scattered into the Florentine crowd.

Is Plethon the violet-rosa cloth-hill or is he the blue-golden dome-cap? In any case: he must be at least one of them ... The ten or twelve Byzantine figures discernible in the mass of people prove, that the painter integrated also the great event of 1439 into his frescoes that combines the years 1 and 1459. And therefore Plethon must have been figured.

<sup>12</sup> Georgios Gemistos Plethon, *Traité des Lois* (Paris: J.Vrin, 1982), p.26 et sequ.

The frescoes of Gozzoli is an explosion of the specific Renaissance „iconomania“ where the portrait, the iconic representation of each somewhat important individual was a matter of honour and passion.<sup>13</sup>

In his full sense my postulate implies that Gozzoli had seen with his eyes not only the people living in 1459 but also those who had stayed at Florence in 1439. At that time he lived already in Florence as a young painter (collaborating with Fra Angelico at San Marco) and we can assume that he didn't ignore some of the great public scenes of the Council.<sup>14</sup> Just at that time he painted with *The Rape of Helen* his only secular picture: „an original training outside of the orbit of the pious Frau Angelico“.<sup>15</sup>

Also another young painter experienced the year 1439 at Florence: Piero della Francesca (1420–1492), in whose paintings Byzantine gowns and faces often emerge, so that we can assume, that he had looked with interest. His teacher was Domenico Veneziano (1410–1461), who painted about 1440 an *Adoration of the Magi* (where the cardinal Bessarion seems to get an apocryphic portrait). This Piero succeeded as painter to come into a more physical nearness with Plethon than others. And this passed by Sigismondo Malatesta, at whose presence in the chapel and in the fresco the reader should have been astonished. Sigismondo resided relatively far from Florence, at Rimini on the Eastern coast of Italy and this geographical position brought already a certain proximity with the Greece of Plethon. On the other side he was the tiniest prince in Italy: neither duke, neither count, just „signore“ – he had to earn his money as condottiere, he had to be very mobile. And he was mobile also

<sup>13</sup> This „iconomania“ allows, that the painter in the chapel is portrayed by himself in triplicate; that the emperor perhaps is represented in duplicate; even that Plethon – an ambivalent figure – perhaps is represented in two versions ... The picture regime I call „iconomania“ invented in the Renaissance and valid till nowadays is very different from the other that was typical in „Byzantine“ culture: „iconolatry“ (interrupted sometimes by „iconoclasm“). For this wide complex see Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence. A History of the Image Before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Gildert Dragon, *Décrire et peindre. Essai sur le portrait iconique* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007); Hans Belting, *Faces. Eine Geschichte des Gesichts* (München: Beck, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, p.26 et sequ.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8. Without doubt great parts of *The Magi's Procession*, above all the portraits of the contemporary more or less important persons, must be classified as secular painting. And as tiniest footnote: the episode round Helen took place near Sparta (in his first Memorandum on the Peloponnese Plethon sharply criticized that rape of Helen).

in the sense of intellectual, emotional, familial adventurism – where his family had preceded him.

At the Malatesta-courts on the Eastern coast a certain philhellenism has grown already about 1400 – with discussions about the superiority of the Greek language over the Latin one.<sup>16</sup> In 1432 the Greece-traveller Cyriacus of Ancona (1391–1452) was received by Sigismondo Malatesta at Rimini.<sup>17</sup>

But already in 1421 a relative to Sigismondo, Cleopatra Malatesta, coming from Pesaro, married Theodor II, despot of Mistra and member of the imperial family – this one to whom Plethon dedicated his first Memorandum on the Peloponnese. Plethon knew her and revered her and after her death in 1433 he dedicated a Funeral Dirge to her.<sup>18</sup> There was a relationship link between Rimini and Mistra and we have to assume that Sigismondo in 1437 heard speedily on the great journey of the Eastern Roman elite (together with the old Plethon) to Venice, Ferrara and later to Florence. And it seems rather probable that the mobile young Sigismondo who in 1433 had been knighted by the Western Emperor Sigismund (1368–1437) would see the Eastern Emperor and his splendid escort. Perhaps he was even interested in the old philosopher Plethon who at Florence was very active in philosophical discussions.

These conjectures are based on the intellectual ambitions which inspired the great building projects of Sigismondo: the castellum Sismundum and the redesign of the church San Francesco with the support of artists like Leon Battista Alberti and Piero della Francesca. The church has been furnished with many figurations taken from the antique culture: planets, sibyls, virtues, liberal arts, children games; it was littered with innumerable symbols of his (scil. Sigismondo's) person. First he would dedicate the new chapel to his loved Isotta degli Atti (1432–1474), but ecclesiastical rules forced him to appoint his name patron Holy Sigismundus (who had been a Germanic King in the 6<sup>th</sup> century). So Piero della Francesca was commissioned to paint a fresco: a very large picture with the kneeling Sigismondo in the center, the emblem above him indicates that the scene is passing in his palace; but he kneels praying before

<sup>16</sup> Francesca Chieli, *La grecità antica e bizantina nell' opera di Piero della Francesca* (Firenze: Alinea, 1993), p.43 et sequ.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>18</sup> Steven Runciman, *Mistra, Byzantine Capital of the Peloponnese* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), p.69 et sequ.

an old king at his throne; behind him visible through a round window and entitled with Latin letters the CASTELLUM SISMUNDUM.<sup>19</sup> (Fig.7) The traditional form of the „Stifterbild“ is maintained: Sigismondo seems to kneel humbly and he does it, although he is not created to venerate. Here he makes an exception and he venerates. But whom? Originally he would venerate officially his beloved Isotta, now he must accept Sigismundus, a saint who at that epoch was very popular. But which one is he? A largely sitting old man in coloured vestments with scepter and orb. Three-quarters profile, lowered gaze to the young kneeling man. He appears tired, but the eyes intensify and sharp. Bizarre the headgear: a big yellow apparatus with a all-round-shielding whose front part is folded up. (Fig.7)

This head is not only the starting point of Piero's career of hat-painter: it shows analogous traits to the face of violet-rosa head at Florence. With this head Piero designated the real object of Sigismondo's worship (beside Isotta). Sigismundus was only a substitution for Isotta. The exotic Sigismundus-portrait is the screen-picture for the Greek and simultaneously Chaldean philosopher. Sigismondo perhaps had seen and heard Plethon at Ferrara or Florence. In any case he knew him and some few connoisseurs knew that he knew him.

At the same time as the fresco with the very few persons Sigismondo published another declaration where he adopts Plethon's theological patriotism – down to the letters. At the left and the right to the façade of the temple two „identical“ marble tablets were installed where Sigismondo boasts his victories in the Italic war what enabled him to bequeath this monument to the „Immortal God and the City“. <sup>20</sup> (Fig.8)

This aniconic imitation of Plethon nevertheless does not renounce some iconic elements: the inscription is given in Greek language and letters and it is installed in duplicated. So in this temple Plethon is represented in double duplication: iconically and aniconically and the aniconical is doubled for its part.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Pier Giorgio Pasini, *Il Tempio Malatestiano* (Bologna: Specimen, 1986), p.21 et sequ.; Antonio Paolucci, „Piero della Francesca a Rimini“ in *Piero della Francesca e le corti italiane*, edited by Carlo Bertelli and Antonio Paolucci (Milano: Skira, 2007), pp.47–52.

<sup>20</sup> Lavin Marilyn Aronberg, *Piero della Francesca a Rimini. L'affresco nel Tempio Malatestiano* (Bologna: Nuova Alfa, 1984), p. 5 et sequ.

<sup>21</sup> Also the ceremonial Rimini-fresco participates in the new iconomantic system: Piero has duplicated the „same“ portrait of Sigismondo, only head and shoulder – sharp silhouette of

These utterances are not too explicit – and with good reason. Some poets at the court of Sigismondo were allowed to make some allusions. So Basinius Basini (1425–1457) wrote about the temple as a security for the return of old times.<sup>22</sup> Roberto Valturio (1405–1475) wrote, that the temple was inspired by the most concealed mysteries of philosophy accessible only to the most experienced and that in whole christianity there was nothing more antique (than the temple).<sup>23</sup>

In the year 1459 when the Tempio Malatestiano was not really achieved but already had received its character Sigismondo Malatesta was always welcome in the „high society“ of his epoch – as we have seen in the Florentine chapel, where he was consulting even with the pope. Soon after 1460 his situation changed radically.

He fell into disfavour with the pope, who was also his liege lord. He was excommunicated and accused for different crimes like murder of his wife, incest, persecution of Jewish people... Pope Pius II was an intellectual and the Prosecutor, the cardinal and philosopher Nicolaus Cusanus (1401–1464), was also, therefore the accusation included intellectual points which here are more interesting. First the pope recognized that Sigismondo was a very gifted man, that he knew history and some philosophy. But just the Tempio Malatestiano became the great *corpus delicti* – the delicts listed are: pagan works, adoration of demons, idolatry.<sup>24</sup> A certain version of „Bilderstreit“. Other crimes are added which start from a commission for a portrait of the Sultan Mohammed II (1430–1481) and include a map of Italy, a medium for high treason.<sup>25</sup>

profile, and has given to it the modern status of private panel painting and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was installed in the according institution: the Louvre; see for it Walter Seitter, „Von der Widerspenstigkeit der Erscheinungen“ in *Die Frage nach dem Kunstwerk unter den heutigen Bildern*, edited by Belting, Hans and Gohr, Siegfried (Stuttgart: Cantz Verlag, 1996), p.133 et sequ. (117–138).

<sup>22</sup> Antonio Paolucci, „Anno Domini 1450“ in *Il potere, Le Arti, La Guerra. Lo splendore dei Malatesta*, edited by Angela Donati (Milano: Electa, 2001), p.44 (41–48).

<sup>23</sup> Pier Giorgio Pasini, *Il Tempio Malatestiano*, p. 11; Antonio Paolucci, „Anno Domini 1450“ in *Il potere, Le Arti, La Guerra. Lo splendore dei Malatesta*, edited by Angela Donati (Milano: Electa, 2001), p.44.

<sup>24</sup> Mario Tabanelli, *Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, signore del Medioevo e del Rinascimento* (Faenza: Stab. grafico F.lli Lega, 1977), p. 119ff.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

Other versions of picture politics. 1462 Sigismondo in Rome is burned „in effigie“ – und this in triplicate. The last chance for saving his life is a performance that all good Christian princes since many years refused: to lead a crusade against the Ottomans who conquered Greece, the Balkan and threatened Italy. Sigismondo's crusade in the years 1464, 1465 and 1466 is one of his volte-faces: instead of liberating any „Holy Sepulchry“ he besieged and conquered Mistra, kidnapped the corps of Plethon and brought him home to Rimini, where he layed him in a sarcophagus underneath the arcades of the temple, sarcophagus decorated with a Latin inscription speaking of his love to wise men.<sup>26</sup> With this action he revealed finally and officially a real worship that had inspired the buidling of the Tempio Malatestiano and that had been reflected there in the two Greek tablets and in the big camouflage by Sigismundus.

Corps and skeleton are iconic or even indexical figures of human beings; the sarcophagus with inscription is a symbolic sign. The sarcophagus underneath the third arcade at right to the temple at Rimini is the only authentic monument for Plethon, the only material legacy – apart from personal manuscripts. It is the first thing that gave me the information of the existence of that philosopher – in the year 1990 when I was searching the frescoes of Piero.<sup>27</sup>

In this fresco Piero della Francesca has painted a really seen Plethon – under pseudonym, in the year 1451. Benozzo Gozzoli portrayed him in the Florentine chapel, in the year 1459. Piero continued the relay race and repeated the same portrait under different names, masques, camouflages: King Solomon in the *Legend of the True Cross* at Arezzo, in the same cycle of frescoes God Father in the *Annuntiation*, then the defeated blasphemic Persian king Chosroes, and the sceptical observer of the triumphal *Entrance to Jerusalem*.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Wilhelm Blum, „Die Anerkennung Plethons in der Nachwelt“ in *Georgios Gemistos Plethon (1355–1452): Reformpolitiker, Philosoph, Verehrer der alten Götter*, edited by Wilhelm Blum and Walter Seitter, Tumult: Schriften zur Verkehrswissenschaft, Band 29 (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2005), pp.47–59; Ronchey, *Lenigma di Piero. L'ultimo bizantino et la crociata fantasma nella rivelazione di un grande quadro*, p.162 et sequ.

<sup>27</sup> Walter Seitter, „Die beiden Sigismunde im Tempio Malatestiano“ in Walter Seitter, *Piero della Francesca. Parallele Farben* (Berlin: Merve-Verlag, 1992), pp.75–104.

<sup>28</sup> For the details see Seitter, „Was für Bilder gibt es von Plethon?“, p.30.

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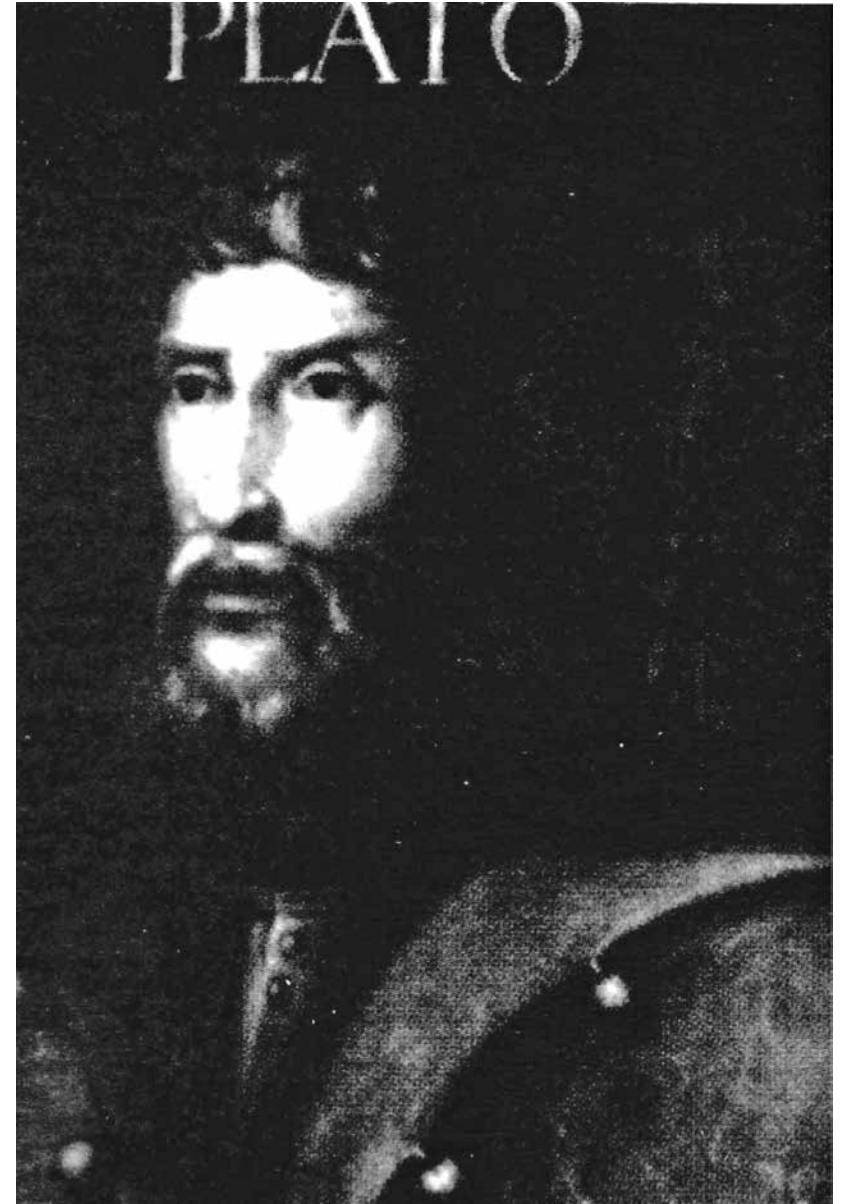


Fig. 1

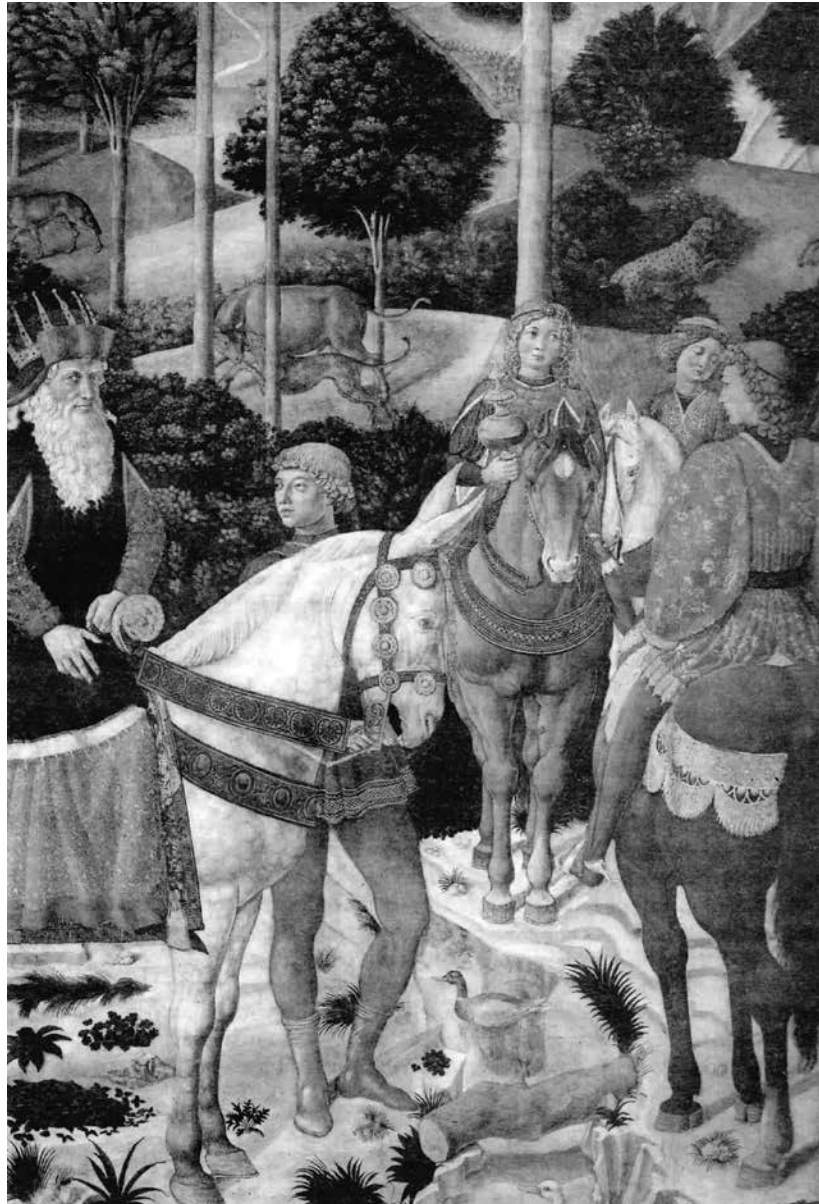


Fig.2



Fig.3





Fig.4



Fig.5



Fig.6

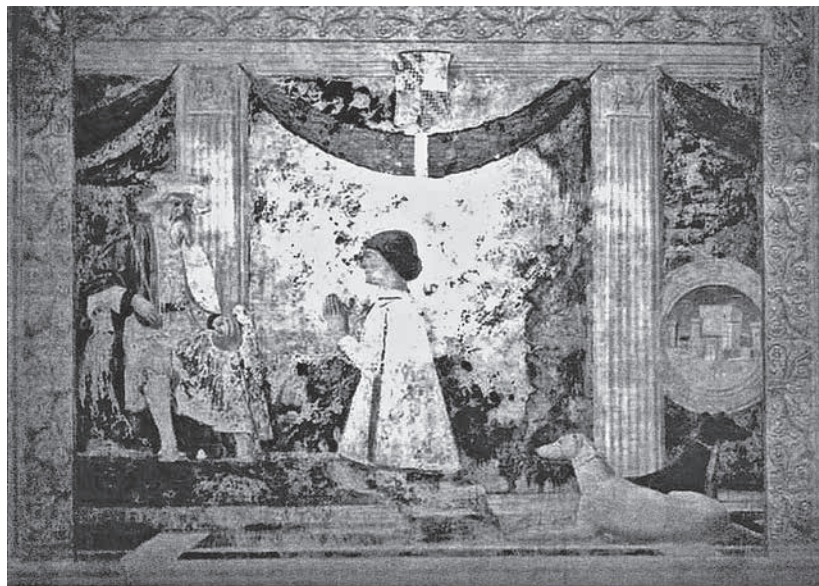


Fig. 7

The illustrations (1–7) in this article are taken from Walter Seitter, "Was für Bilder gibt es von Plethon?", *Accademia. Revue de la Société Marsile Ficini*, IX (2007), pp. 7–36 with permission of the journal.

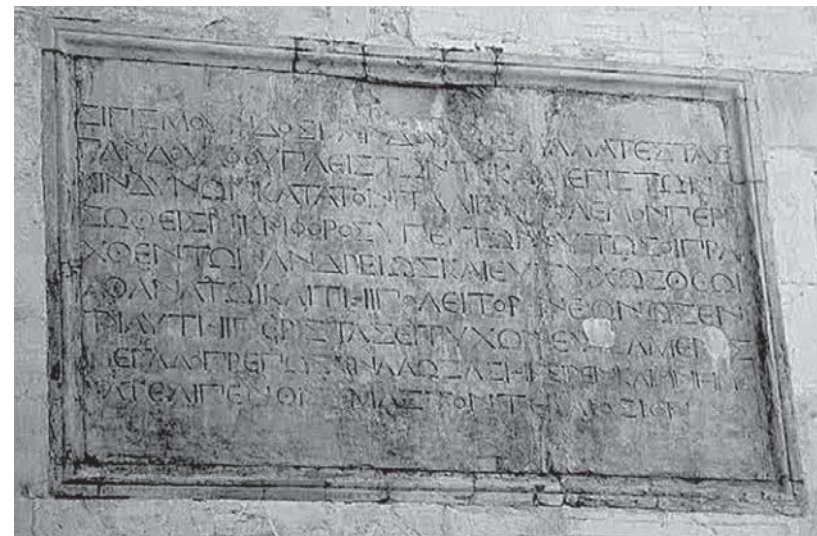


Fig. 8

Photo Courtesy of Jacek Raszewski



# Post-Byzantine Plethon

## Are Psellos's and Plethon's *Chaldaean Oracles* Genuine?

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**Abstract:** Is there a link between the question of whether the “Chaldaick Oracles of Zoroaster and his followers” are genuine or not, and the disputes between Catholics and Protestants, Trinitarians and anti-Trinitarians, in early modernity? In order to answer this question, it will be explained why and how Psellos's collection of the “Chaldaean Oracles” became, after Plethon's revision, a collection of “Magic oracles”, namely Oracles collected by the Magi who were followers of Zoroaster. Then, it will be examined how both the collections and commentaries of Psellos and Plethon were re-employed by humanists, first within the framework of the “Prisca theologia” with Ficino, and then within the framework of the “Philosophia perennis” with Agostino Steuco. It will finally be considered how the problem of the authenticity of the “Chaldaick oracles of Zoroaster” was a subject of debate between dissident Christians, namely Remonstrants, orthodox Protestants, and even Catholics.

**Keywords:** Gemistos Plethon; Michael Psellos; Jean Le Clerc; Pierre Jurieu; Marsilio Ficino; Chaldean Oracles; Zoroaster; Prisca Theologia

As shown by Philip Dixon, certain “hot and nice disputes” were taking place in Europe between anti-Plato and pro-Plato supporters over the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>. Jacques Soverain's book entitled *Platonism Unveil'd Or an Essay*

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<sup>1</sup> See Philip Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes. The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventeenth Century* (London New York: T&T Clark, 2003).

*Concerning the Notions and Opinions of Plato, in Two Parts*<sup>2</sup> is still regarded today as a masterpiece as far as these disputes are concerned. According to Jacques Souverain, Trinitarian consubstantialist Christianity (one essence and three persons) was not an authentic form of Christianity. Souverain claimed that Christianity became Trinitarian, when influenced, and even polluted, by a popular form of Platonism which acknowledged a God, the first principle of everything, a Son of God, also called Intellect, and the Soul of the world. This kind of Trinity which in fact, according to Souverain, described a cosmogonic process and not an ontological Trinity, was taught by Plato within the context of the polytheistic society of his time. It was pedagogically adapted for people who actually believed in numerous gods and who persecuted those who did not so. Plato, according to Souverain, also had, however, an esoteric teaching, which he kept for his extremely close and true friends, since Plato was afraid of what had happened to Socrates. So he would not openly teach the truth, namely that there was one and unique God and principle. The Church Fathers, however, and even the Apostles, in as much as they were instructed in the popular Platonism, created the fiction of a Christian Trinity.

Souverain's book came out after his death in 1700, but was read and corrected to some extent by Jean Le Clerc (Joannes Clericus) prior to being published. Jean Le Clerc taught Philosophy and Hebrew at the Remonstrant College and Seminary in Amsterdam. The Remonstrants were dissident Protestants who did not acknowledge the Calvinist conception of predestination. They were tolerant and dared to be in communion with the Socinian refugees who were arriving from Poland particularly after 1658. The Socinian movement was a non-Trinitarian form of Christianity. Jean Le Clerc was also a renowned journalist who regularly published an academic journal entitled *Bibliothèque universelle et historique* namely *Universal and Historical Library* (1686–1693), where he would review books which were published in Europe, and particularly in England (he was a close friend of John Locke). Jean Le Clerc was himself tolerant and open to non-Trinitarian forms of Christianity.

Now, Jean Le Clerc was also extremely interested in Plethon's and Psellos's collections and commentaries of "The Chaldaick Oracles of Zoroaster and his followers". In 1687, he wrote a review of the second edition of *The History*

of *Philosophy* written by Thomas Stanley (London, 1662) and was particularly interested in the last chapter entitled "The History of the Chaldaick philosophy". In his review, Le Clerc, following Thomas Stanley, stated that "these oracles which goe under the name of Zoroaster" were genuine Chaldaick verses. And "to persuade us that they are genuine, and not of Greekish invention" he provided a number of solid arguments. One might consequently wonder whether there was a link between Jean Le Clerc's pro-unitarian positions and his interest in Plethon's and Psellos's collections of *Oracles* and *Commentaries*.

Almost at the same time, the French Catholic bishop and scholar Pierre-Daniel Huet asserted that *Oracula Magica Zoroastris cum Scholiis Plethonis & Pselli*<sup>3</sup>, printed anew in Amsterdam in 1686<sup>4</sup>, were spurious and in 1702 Pierre Bayle recorded this piece of information in his *Dictionary*, under the entry "Zoroaster"<sup>5</sup>. But the extremely orthodox Calvinist Pierre Jurieu, in his turn, maintained in his *Critical History of Dogmas and Cults*<sup>6</sup> that these oracles were genuine. So is there a link between the question as to whether "Chaldaick Oracles" are genuine or not, and the disputes between Catholics and Protestants, Trinitarians and anti-Trinitarians in early modernity?

In order to answer this question, I shall explain in the first part, why and how Psellos's collection of "Chaldaean Oracles" became, after Plethon's revision,

<sup>3</sup> *Sibylliakoi Chrēsmoi hoc est Sibyllina oracula, ex veteribus codicibus emendata ac restituta, et commentaries diversorum illustrata opera, et studio Servatii Gallaei, Accedunt etiam Oracula Magica Zoroastris, Jovis, Apollinis et Astrampsychi onirocriticum, et graece et latine, cum notis variorum* (Amsterdam: apud Henricum et Viduam Theodori Boom, 1689).

<sup>4</sup> See the edition by Petrus Lambecius (Peter Lambec), Hamburg 1659 and Leipzig 1710, *Liber primus Prodromi Historiae Literariae*. See Michael Stausberg, *Faszination Zarathushtra, Zoroaster und die Europäische Religionsgeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit*, vol. I–II (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1998), p.84; 239; 386–387.

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (Rotterdam: Reinier Leers, 1702), article "Zoroastre", note H : « On a imprimé en dernier lieu avec les Vers des Sibylles à Amsterdam 1686 selon l'Édition d'Opsopoeus, *Oracula Magica Zoroastris cum Scholiis Plethonis & Pselli*. Ces prétendus Oracles Magiques ne contiennent pas deux pages. Voici le jugement de Mr. Huet sur tous les Livres en général qui ont couru sous le nom de Zoroastre. Il les traite tous de supposés: *Ex cujus (Zoroastris) fama & existimatione provenit eorum fallacia, qui sub ejus nomine Oracula quaedam Magica Graece scripta incautis obtruserunt. Edita illa sunt cum Pselli & Plethonis Scholiis: sed si nares admoveris, fraus subolebit [...]*. »

<sup>6</sup> Pierre Jurieu, *Histoire critique des dogmes et des cultes*, Amsterdam, 1704.

<sup>2</sup> English translation of *Le Platonisme Dévoilé ou Essai Touchant le Verbe Platonicien, en deux parties* (Cologne [Amsterdam]: Pierre Marteau [R. Leers], 1700). See the edition by Sylvain Matton (Paris: Fayard, 2004).

a collection of "Magic oracles" namely Oracles collected by the Magi who were followers of Zoroaster.

In the second part I shall examine how both the collections and commentaries of Psellos and Plethon were re-employed by humanists, first within the framework of the "Prisca theologia" with Ficino, and then within the framework of the "Philosophia perennis" with Agostino Steuco.

In the third part, I shall look at how the problem of the authenticity of the "Chaldaic oracles of Zoroaster and his followers" was a subject of debate between dissident Christians, namely Remonstrants, orthodox Protestants and even Catholics.

### From the "Chaldaean oracles" to the "Magic oracles of the Magi followers of Zoroaster"

It is now well known that Plethon discovered the so-called *Chaldaean oracles* through Michael Psellos, a renowned scholar and politician of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Psellos was interested in, and collected, every kind of unorthodox teachings, all sorts of forgeries, Hermetica, Chaldaica, Assyriaca, Egyptiaca, etc.). At that time, Roman people, whom we refer to as Byzantine, felt the need to reaffirm their leadership, promoting their tradition of scholarship and culture, against the German Empire which also pretended to be *the* Roman Empire, but was supporting theological errors. Franks had prevailed upon Rome to add the words "Filioque", concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit, into the creed of the councils of Nicaea and Constantinople.<sup>7</sup> Psellos's documentation concerning old un-orthodox texts and beliefs can be understood in the light of the following question: how can new heresies, such as the Latins' errors, arise, and how can they be fought? So according to Psellos, the Chaldaean oracles were not very old. They had been recorded by two Chaldaeans, in other words by two oriental Magicians, both named Julian who lived in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century at the time of Marcus Aurelius. These two Julians, father and son, were theurgists and Platonists. The father used his son as a medium, and after some preparation led him to the direct vision of Plato's soul (*epoptia*). He consequently recorded

the answers which supposedly came directly from Plato's soul, via his son's mouth. Julian the father then put the answers into good Greek hexameters, for Greek was the common cultural language at the time.

From Psellos's point of view, the Chaldaean oracles were heretical, despite the fact that they seemed to be quite close to Christian dogmas. So in his *Commentary*, Psellos explained, firstly, the Chaldaic point of view of each oracle, and then the orthodox point of view, referring to the Church Fathers.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century Plethon in his turn read the *Chaldaean oracles*. He also knew about Chaldaism through Greek literature and for example through Lucian of Samosata, whose writings he himself excerpted<sup>8</sup>. Lucian said in jest in his celebrated work entitled *Menippus*, that Menippus<sup>9</sup>, bored with the contradictions between the various philosophical schools concerning the most important questions, decided to descend into Hell, into Hades, in order to ask for advice from Tiresias the renowned soothsayer. He consequently went to Babylon, in Chaldea, in order to find a guide, and this guide was a magus, a follower of Zoroaster<sup>10</sup>: according to this charming story, this magus was, of course, a Chaldean, that is, an oriental Magician, a *goûters*.

In other respects, Plethon also needed to establish his political reforms on a solid and secure philosophical background so as to avoid debates and dissensions, such as those terrible disputes concerning the Trinity. It is well known that Plethon, in his esoteric writings, namely in his *Nomothesia* (his *Laws*), is clearly not a Trinitarian Christian, although at the council of Florence he firmly defended the orthodox notion of the Trinity, inasmuch as it maintained the theological principle of the monarchy of the Father. Since Trinitarian Christianity was based on the books of Moses, the Holy Bible, Plethon had to find another holy book which could obliterate the authority of the Bible. Authority in those days was based on antiquity.

Plethon must have been impressed by the beautiful and erudite verses of the Chaldaean oracles which were considered by the Neoplatonists as their Holy book. If these oracles had been written, however, by Chaldean magicians in

<sup>7</sup> "L'échec du Concile d'Aix-la-Chapelle, les réactions des papes Léon III et Jean VIII prouvent assez que les Romains des Gaules et d'Italie ont résisté bien plus d'un siècle au *Filioque*": Patric Ranson, in Saint Photios, *La Mystagogie du Saint-Esprit, Œuvres trinitaires II* (Paris: Fraternité Orthodoxe Saint Grégoire Palamas, 1991), Introduction, p.15.

<sup>8</sup> In codices *Marciani graeci* 517 et 406.

<sup>9</sup> Lucian, *Menippus*, edited by Ellis Charles Mackie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1892), p.6, 5–8.

<sup>10</sup> Full references in Brigitte Tambrun, *Pléthon. Le retour de Platon* (Paris: Vrin, 2006), p.63.

the 2<sup>nd</sup> century after Christ, they would not be regarded as serious; they would remain somewhat ridiculous, and even spurious. In other respects, Chaldaean people had certain links with the Bible's teachings, for according to the Old Testament, Abraham came from Chaldea, from the city of Ur. Plethon consequently decided to link the so-called *Chaldaean oracles* with the oldest wise guide and legislator he could find: Zoroaster who, according to Plutarch (*De Iside*, 369D), had lived in extreme Antiquity namely 5,000 years before the Trojan War. Zoroaster was of course much older than Moses and even than Adam. Zoroaster was the lawgiver of the Persian people. Plethon knew about Zoroaster through a number of Greek sources, and in all probability through certain oriental sources as well. According to them, Zoroaster's followers, the Persian Magi, were pious and religious men, and not magicians.<sup>11</sup> George Scholarios claimed that Plethon's master Elissaios<sup>12</sup>, a Jew living in the barbarian, namely Ottoman, court, had told Plethon all the latter knew about Zoroaster.<sup>13</sup>

Plethon's Zoroaster was the old Persian lawgiver of the Persian people and not a recent Zoroaster: he was neither the Zoroaster who supposedly lived at the time of Semiramis, nor the Zoroaster who was reportedly contemporary with Pythagoras.<sup>14</sup>

Plethon thus attributed the collection of Oracles which Psellos referred to as "Chaldaean", to the Magi who were not magicians, but wise men, who were the followers of Zoroaster, the most ancient guide and legislator and whose doctrine had been preserved. Therefore he renamed them *Magika logia tôn apo Zoroastrou magôn* making absolutely no mention of the Chaldeans. These oracles had been slightly distorted, however, by theurgists and Plethon thereby

<sup>11</sup> References in *Magika logia tôn apo Zoroastrou magôn. Oracles chaldaïques. Recension de Georges Gémiste Pléthon*. Édition critique avec introduction, traduction et commentaire par Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker. *La recension arabe des Magika logia* par Michel Tardieu, *Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi, Philosophi Byzantini* 7 (Athènes-Paris-Bruxelles: Academy of Athens-J. Vrin-Editions Ousia, 1995), p.40.

<sup>12</sup> See Michel Tardieu, "Pléthon lecteur des Oracles", *Métis*, 2 (1987), pp.41–164, and Philippe Gardette, "Pour en finir avec Pléthon et son maître juif Elisée", in Philippe Gardette, *Études imagologiques et relations interconfessionnelles en zone byzantino-ottomane* (Istanbul : Editions Isis, 2007), pp.147–164.

<sup>13</sup> Gennade Scholarios, *Œuvres complètes*, edited by Martin Jugie, Louis Petit and Xenophon A. Siderides (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1928–1936), t. IV, 1935, p.153, line 6 et p.162, line 9.

<sup>14</sup> *Magika logia tôn apo Zoroastrou magôn*, pp.40–41.

corrected the verses, reorganized the collection and wrote a new commentary to demonstrate that both the Pythagorean and Platonic traditions were concordant with them because they derived from them. So in summary, in Psellos's collection these Oracles were "Chaldaean oracles", but according to Plethon these Oracles were not Chaldaean but "Magic oracles", Magi being the true followers of Zoroaster, the extremely old, ancient and Persian Zoroaster.

### How these oracles were discovered and re-employed by Christian Humanists

These Oracles were transmitted and copied in the West after the council of Florence (1438–1439). But in fact both collections and both commentaries by Psellos and Plethon, could be found in the same manuscripts. They were in fact often linked together, with some contamination taking place whereby they were occasionally mixed together.

Marsilio Ficino was commissioned by Cosimo de' Medici to undertake a translation of all the dialogues of Plato, and first of all a translation of the freshly arrived in Florence, Greek collection of *Hermetica*. He then established the notion of a "Prisca theologia" in order to sustain Christianity which was threatened by the Averroistic conception of the collective and not individual immortality of the human soul. The idea of a concordance between Plato and Christianity was not completely new, of course, for instance, Ficino could find the idea of a concordance between them in Augustine's and Lactance's works. By using an alchemist metaphor, Ficino taught that some extremely ancient theologians had preserved sparkles of light of the primordial wisdom all around the world, that they had been melted into the crucible of Plato's theology and could be useful to secure tottering Christianity. Among the very old theologians, Marsilio Ficino placed Hermes Trismegistus at the head of the list of the "principes theologiae", with his followers being: Orpheus, Aglaophemus, Pythagoras, Philolaus and Plato.<sup>15</sup> From 1469 onwards, however, Ficino considered Zoroaster the "caput magorum", and situated him at the head of the list of "Prisci theologi". In 1474, Ficino wrote in *De Christiana religione*: "Prisca gentilium theologia in qua Zoroaster, Mercurius, Orpheus,

<sup>15</sup> Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker, "Marsile Ficino et le *Commentaire* de Pléthon sur les *Oracles chaldaïques*" and "Un exemple d'utilisation du *Commentaire* de Pléthon par Ficino : le véhicule de l'âme, le pneuma et l'idole", *Accademia. Revue de la Société Marsile Ficino*, I (1999), pp.9–48, pp.16–17.



Aglaophemus, Pythagoras, consenserunt, tota in Platonis nostri voluminibus continetur". And in a manuscript, the *Riccardianus* 76 (folio 27v), in the margin of Plethon's *Reply to Scholarios*, Ficino wrote: "arkhê platonikês thelogias apo Zoroastrou": "Platonic theology begins with Zoroaster".<sup>16</sup>

In his own *Platonic Theology*, Ficino incorporated the *Chaldaean Oracles*, using them with extracts or quotations from both Psellos's and Plethon's *Commentaries* in order to show that Christian theology and particularly the Christian notion of immortality of the human soul, was better secured by Plato and by all the Prisci, than by Aristotle's Arab interpreter, Averroes.

The connection between Christianity and "Prisca theologia" is typical of the Humanist movement. It presupposes, however, an amalgam between Psellos and Plethon, who must be concordant. The *Oracles* were therefore from that time attributed to Zoroaster, the Magi, the Chaldaeans, and even the Magicians. They became "The Chaldaick Oracles of Zoroaster and his followers".

Certain scholars, nevertheless, even within the Humanist movement, remained suspicious about these "Zoroaster among the Persian and Orpheus among the Greeks". Agostino Steuco (1497–1548), the librarian who was in charge of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's books after the latter's death, thought that "idolatrae, et daemonum cultores fuerunt": that they were "idolaters and devoted to the daimons". When the need for Christian reformation arose, however, within the Catholic Church, Steuco completely changed his mind and established the notion of "Philosophia perennis".

Steuco had lived in Venice where Erasmus was printing his books and spreading his ideas. At the same time Luther had already separated from the Catholic Church. Steuco thus established the idea of a "Philosophia perennis" in order to demonstrate that every attempt at schismatic reform was in vain. Agostino Steuco's arguments were as follows:

<sup>16</sup> Brigitte Tambrun, *Pléthon. Le retour de Platon*, p.243; "Georges Gemiste Plethon: *Contre les objections de Scholarios en faveur d'Aristote (Réplique)*", edited by Bernadette Lagarde, *Byzantion*, no. 59 (1989): p.378, 14–17: "et s'il enseigna la philosophie, ce fut en partageant non pas la sienne propre, mais celle qui de la tradition de Zoroastre était à travers les Pythagoriciens arrivée jusqu'à lui. Pythagore, en effet, pour avoir fréquenté en Asie des mages disciples de Zoroastre, passa à cette philosophie; or, Plutarque et d'autres "situent la naissance de Zoroastre à plus de 5000 ans avant la guerre de Troie".

Firstly, that Adam and the first Fathers were in contact with God, and that they were granted a pious wisdom and not merely a natural philosophy. Wisdom and piety thus originated from the same source and were not distinct.

Secondly, that this wisdom of Adam and the first Fathers was actually the Catholic Christian doctrine which had been transmitted through ages in spite of certain accidents: for example, a certain number of writings were definitively lost during the Deluge and after Babel. Abraham brought about a revival of this wisdom, which was then supported by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ restored the pure doctrine of Adam which was already Christian and Catholic. Every attempt at a schism would consequently be in vain in as much as it would call for a restoration and a reunification.

Thirdly, that the reality of such a "Philosophia perennis" could be demonstrated through the doctrines of the oldest nations, every people having preserved sparkles of wisdom. Gathering them together would serve to confirm the Catholic primordial wisdom. From this point of view, the theology of the Chaldeans people was extremely interesting, because according to Steuco, the Chaldean people had settled in the countries that were the nearest to Paradise. The wisdom of the Chaldeans had been transmitted to the Hebrews, consequently from the Hebrews to the Egyptians, from the Egyptians to the Greeks and from the Greeks to the Romans. In order to prove his thesis, Steuco employed the collection of "Chaldaean oracles". He quoted the 30<sup>th</sup> oracle of the Plethon collection: "The Father carried out everything and gave them to the Second, whom the nations of men call the First" (the Psellos text being slightly different from Plethon's). According to Steuco, the verses of the Magi involved the complete Christian theology and even the Trinity. Steuco (*De perenni philosophia* II, 16) explained that the Magi actually considered the son of God as a "*Mens*" "ab aeterno genita", begotten from the beginning of time onward. Steuco translated the 30<sup>th</sup> oracle as following: "Omnia perfecit Pater, ac Menti tradidit secundae, quam vocat primam omne hominum genus. Sic ait Theologia Magorum."<sup>17</sup> This means that men adore the Son through the Father, even in an obscure and confused way.<sup>18</sup> The Father can only be known through the Son. Men know the Intellect, the *Mens* or the *Nous*, because he appears

<sup>17</sup> Agostino Steuco, *De perenni philosophia* (Lyon: Seb. Gryphius, 1540), I, 3, 8D; cf. I, 11, 25 A: "Omnia perfecit Pater, et Menti, [sive Intelligentiae] tradidit secundae, quam vocat primam, omne humanum genus."

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 3, 9A: "erat ille ipse, quem olim obscure cuncti venerabantur."

in the theophanies of the Old Testament. Men generally think, however, that he is the first principle, and the Hebrews actually do so. According to Steuco, the Magi actually displayed the Catholic doctrine through their oracles; they confirmed its perennality, and the uselessness of every schism and separation.

### How the Chaldaick oracles of Zoroaster and his followers were used in the 17<sup>th</sup>-century disputes about the Trinity

One would imagine that in reaction against the Catholic position, Calvinists would not hold the "Chaldaean oracles" for genuine. According to Theodore Beza, the successor of Calvin at the head of the church of Geneva, the Chaldaean Oracles were actually considered spurious.<sup>19</sup> In his Commentary on the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Matthew, Beza wrote that Clement of Alexandria had stated in his *Stromates* that the Chaldaean Oracles were composed by a pseudo-Christian little Greek "graeculus". The Chaldaean Oracles were consequently forgeries. In 1687, the Remonstrant journalist and philosophy teacher, Jean Le Clerc (Ioannes Clericus) wrote a review of the second edition of *The History of Philosophy* composed by Thomas Stanley.<sup>20</sup> Jean Le Clerc was particularly interested in the last chapter of this book, entitled "The History of the Chaldaick Philosophy". Thomas Stanley first tried to reconstruct the history and thought of the ancient Chaldeans using a number of different sources, among them Plutarch, Diogenes Laërtius, Plinius, and the Church Fathers, and rejecting as spurious Annio da Viterbo and Clement of Rome (see the "Preface"). Stanley then explained that the "Chaldaick Oracles of Zoroaster and his Followers" were "the most considerable remains of the Chaldaick Philosophy", namely, the most direct source of information about Chaldaean theology. He thus made an English translation of "Plethon's Exposition" and of "Psellos's Exposition" and added them at the end of his book<sup>21</sup>, along with the extensive collection of the Chaldaean Oracles gathered by Francesco Patrizi (in Greek with a Latin translation). Were the Chaldaick oracles thus genuine or spurious?

<sup>19</sup> See Michael Stausberg, *Faszination Zarathushtra*, p.85 and 649.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Stanley, *The History of Philosophy* (London: Humphrey Moseley & Thomas Dring, 1655–1662), 3 vol.; new edition of vol. I and II in 1656, 1687, 1701, 1743; facsimile of the third edition (London: W. Battersbury, 1710) and (Hildesheim-New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1975).

<sup>21</sup> With some "Conjectures upon the Greek Text of the Oracles", pp.63–67.

According to Thomas Stanley, the "Chaldaick Oracles of Zoroaster and his Followers" were genuine. He provided certain arguments to demonstrate their Chaldean authenticity: namely that the original verses in the Chaldean language were translated into Greek by Greek Platonist philosophers.

The first argument was the multiplicity of sources and testimonies dealing with these Oracles: "Some indeed condemn them as suppositious forged by some Pseudo-Christian Greek. But this seems less probable, in regard they lye dispersed amongst several Authors."

Secondly, there were stylistic arguments: "Some argue that they are not Chaldaick, because many times accommodated to the Greek Style; But there are in them many so Harsh and Exotick Expressions, as discover them to be Originally forein." Thus the harshness of certain expressions and the numerous exotic words in them, demonstrated that they could not have been forged by Greek philosophers.

Thirdly, there was historical evidence: Pico della Mirandula said in a letter he wrote to Marsilio Ficino [in October 1486] that he had purchased the original and even complete text of these Oracles in the Chaldean language and that he was learning both the Arabic and Chaldaean languages in order to understand them: "To perswade us that they are genuine, and not of Greekish invention, Mirandula professeth to Ficino, that he had the Chaldee Original in his possession; 'I was (saith he) forcibly taken off from other things, and instigated to the Arabick and Chaldaick Learning by certain Books in both those Languages, which came to my Hands, not accidentally, but doubtesse by the Disposal of God in favour of my Studies. Hear the inscriptions, and you will believe it. The Chaldaick Books, (if they are Books and not rather Treasures) are, The Oracles of Aben Esra, Zoroaster and Melchior, Magi: in which those things which are faulty and defective in the Greek, are read perfect and entire [...]; Thus Mirandula, after whose Death these Books were found by Ficino, but so worn and illegible that nothing could be made out of them." These books were consequently found after Pico's death but it was impossible to read them.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> For more details, see Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker, "Jean Le Clerc lecteur des *Oracles de Zoroastre*", in *Platonismus und Esoterik in byzantinischem Mittelalter und italienischer Renaissance*, edited by Helmut Seng, Bibliotheca Chaldaica 3 (Heidelberg: Winter, 2013), pp.303–338.

Why was Jean Le Clerc himself so particularly interested in proving the authenticity of the “Chaldaick Oracles”? Jean Le Clerc was very tolerant and open to non-Trinitarian opinions, which had been developing since the Socinians had left Poland and settled in Germany, England and Holland. Through the “Chaldaick Oracles”, it was now possible to show how the primitive doctrine of the one and unique God, had slowly degenerated. As recorded in the Bible, Abraham had lived in Ur in Chaldea. According to Le Clerc, the Chaldaean people had in fact become heretics, and this is the reason why God had protected Abraham's pure belief from any pollutions. In his *Compendium historiae universalis*, Le Clerc explained how the pure, in fact Unitarian, doctrine of the one and unique God, had degenerated into subordinatianism which had become increasingly idolatrous: At the beginning, he explained, men adored only one God, but then they thought that angels or spirits had been sent to men by God as his lieutenants, as his ministers, or as certain little gods who take care of empires, cities and families. Men therefore began to worship these little gods as if they were the supreme God.

The “Chaldaick Oracles” commented on by Plethon and Psellos were thus a very good example of this idolatrous derivation of the pure Unitarian doctrine. They dealt with the true God, but also with the cult of daimons and spirits even organised into trinities and even in triple trinities, and further dealt with the cult of celestial bodies and elements. According to Le Clerc's purpose, however, the “Chaldaick oracles” were an example of the very first stage of corruption, Trinitarian consubstantialist theology, which was decided and voted on at the councils of Nicea and Constantinople in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, showing a deeper heretical degradation.

In reaction to Jean Le Clerc's position, the very orthodox Calvinist minister Pierre Jurieu who settled in Rotterdam some years after king Louis (XIV) the Great had forbidden protestant religion in France in 1685, firmly condemned every kind of un-orthodoxy, and particularly Unitarian, Socinians and neo-Arian heresies. In his *Histoire des dogmes et des cultes* (*A History of Dogmas and Cults*) published in 1704, Pierre Jurieu examined the following problem: Did the first patriarchs know something about the Trinity? And if so, on what evidence is it based?

Firstly, Jurieu acknowledged along with Le Clerc, that the “Chaldaick paraphrases”, namely the *Targums*, were in fact composed by Jews and that they were not very ancient.

Secondly, could the Platonist philosophers be of some help? It is true, said Jurieu, that Porphyry acknowledged a Son of God and referred to him as “Patrikos Nous”, as reported by Saint Augustine. In fact, however, the Neoplatonists borrowed their knowledge about the Trinity from Christians. Plato himself, who lived before Christ, was perhaps aware of the Mystery of Trinity as can be shown, for example, in his 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> *Letters*. The best way to demonstrate, however, that the oldest patriarchs really knew about the Trinity could be found in the “Chaldaick Oracles of Zoroaster”, and Jurieu quoted Opsoepoes's edition of Plethon's collection: “The father begot everything and gave them to the second Intelligence that men think to be the first”: this being the renowned 30<sup>th</sup> oracle of Plethon's collection, interpreted as Steuco had done.

Catholics in their turn did not follow Agostino Steuco's humanist position: the French bishop and scholar Pierre-Daniel Huet, a private teacher of the son of King Louis XIV of France, claimed that the “Oracles of Zoroaster”, printed anew in 1689 in Amsterdam, were in fact spurious.<sup>23</sup>

I have tried to show how scholars found very different kinds of theology in the “Chaldaean oracles”, which were in fact linked to their own religious positions: these *Oracles* were considered now polytheistic, now subordinatianist (or pre-Arian), now Trinitarian. They were considered genuine at one time and spurious at another time, by both Catholics and Protestants.

Plethon's philosophy, which is based on these *Oracles*, can also be interpreted in various ways. We can elaborate Arian interpretations, neo-Platonist interpretations and even Christian interpretations of Plethon. Our Plethon, however, just as the “Chaldaean Oracles”, will perhaps be regarded as a kind of mirror of what we are.

<sup>23</sup> For more details, see Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker, “Les Oracles chaldaïques entre idéologie et critique (XVe/XVIIe s.)”, in *Oracles chaldaïques. Fragments et philosophie*, edited by Adrien Lecerf, Lucia Saudelli, Helmut Seng, Bibliotheca Chaldaica 4 (Heidelberg: Winter, 2014) (forthcoming).

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## Plethon the First Philhellene: Re-enacting the Antiquity

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**Abstract:** Plethon's impact on western philosophy has two major features: he inspired a complex attitude toward ancient wisdom, and lives on in the myth that Ficino's philosophy of religion drew upon Plethon's initiative to re-found ancient theology. This paper focuses on the first aspect, namely the specific attitude towards the past. That is to say that Plethon initiated a new awareness of past history. Plethon's Hellenism is more than familiarity with the past of the Greeks, it is an '–ism' about Greece, a new attitude; and in that sense, Plethon as "the last of the Hellenes", as Woodhouse had it, is also the first Philhellene. The paper will outline some main features of 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup>-century Philhellenism and then show their presence in the early reception of Plethon: the desire to appropriate and invent ancient glory in one's present time already characterized the fame of Plethon from the very beginning.

**Keywords:** Philhellenism; Greece; Grand Tour; Classicism; Henry Lytton Bulwer; Giacomo Leopardi; Cyriac of Ancona; Georgius Chariander; Adolph Occo; Bernardinus Donatus; Christoph August Heumann; Georgios Trapezuntios

In the framework of this conference, I do not have to dwell upon the works and feats of Georgios Gemistos Plethon, and not even on his importance in Renaissance philosophy. Among the many important things known about him, one can well argue that Plethon's impact on western philosophy consisted in his inspiring a complex attitude toward ancient wisdom, and – at the same time – in a myth, for which he, of course, supplied the material basis when he appeared at the Council of Florence in 1438/39, but which first and foremost has been forged by Marsilio Ficino, who in 1492, i.e., half a century later, justified

the founding of the Platonic Academy of Florence (this being a myth on its own) by Gemistos' influence on Cosimo de' Medici. Many people have written on the Ficinian myth, and I myself took it as an important indicator concerning Ficino's philosophy of religion and how he drew upon Plethon's initiative to re-found ancient theology.<sup>1</sup> I am not planning to compare Plethon's works with Marsilio Ficino, who also never hesitated to refer to Greek mythology in order to promote his Platonizing theology. Ficino's dependence on Gemistos' inspiration is a key to understanding Ficino and other Renaissance Platonists of the West, as it is well known.

Rather, in this contribution I want to consider the first aspect, namely *the attitude towards the past as initiated by Plethon*. Please notice the irony: the past is not just past, the awareness of it needs to be initiated. Plethon's Hellenism is more than familiarity with the past of the Greeks, it is an '-ism' about Greece, a new attitude; and in that sense Plethon as the last of the Hellenes – as Woodhouse had it<sup>2</sup> – is also the first Philhellene.

### Philhellenism

What do I mean by a Philhellene? According to Christopher Montague Woodhouse, who before studying Plethon as "the last Hellene" published a book on Philhellenism, this movement consists mostly of "eccentrics, ruffians and romantics" – at least in the eye of the general public and its view on the 19<sup>th</sup>-century movement.<sup>3</sup> According to the same scholar, the main components of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century interest in Greece were "classical education, the Grand Tour, the antiquities brought back by the tourists; and also a strategic concern for the eastern Mediterranean."<sup>4</sup> What else do we need to classify Plethon as the initiator of Philhellenism?

<sup>1</sup> Paul Richard Blum, *Philosophy of Religion in the Renaissance* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), chapter 6, with the relevant references. Idem, "Die Graue Eminenz des Renaissance-Platonismus: Georgios Gemistos Plethon" *Georgios Gemistos Plethon (1355–1452): Reformpolitiker, Philosoph, Verehrer der alten Götter*, edited by Wilhelm Blum and Walter Seitter, Tübingen: Schriften zur Verkehrswissenschaft, Band 29 (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2005), pp.119–129.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Montague Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Montague Woodhouse, *The Philhellenes* (Rutherford etc.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1969), p.9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p.10.

The Philhellenes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were non-Greeks concerned with returning that freedom to modern Greece that Ancient Greece had given to European civilization; and it should be noted that the said liberation included political and armed fight for freedom. Hence, Philhellenism had to become, at some point, revolutionary and military – but this for intellectual reasons.<sup>5</sup> It is this blending of the humanistic with the political that made philhellenism paradigmatic for nationalistic movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One of its most recent public manifestations, although the term Philhellenism was not used, was Günther Grass's poem "Europas Schande" that was published in 2012 as a protest against European politics and policies with regard to the economic crisis in Greece. It concluded with the lines:

*Geistlos verkümmern wirst Du ohne das Land,  
dessen Geist Dich, Europa, erdachte.*<sup>6</sup>

The component of classical education in this sort of reasoning cannot be over-emphasized. To 21<sup>st</sup>-century readers of Plethon it does not need to be pointed out that classical education entails the assumption that, far back in Antiquity, there exists a learning that is actual today. But we should make no mistake: this assumption is valid only if it is *taken* to be valid. One strike with a pen, executed in an office of public education, annihilates it. It was the humanists, starting with Francesco Petrarca, who built up this assumption and made it the ideology of the class of the learned people. Although I, personally, fully endorse it, I also know that there is no guarantee for it outside the mind of those who think that way. Classical education is something that needs to be defended again and again. Its major battles were fought in the Renaissance,

<sup>5</sup> See Heinrich Scholler, "Der Philhellenismus und die geistesgeschichtlichen Strömungen in Europa zur Zeit des griechischen Befreiungskampfes von 1821" in *Europäischer Philhellenismus: Ursachen und Wirkungen*, edited by Evangelos Konstantinou and Ursula Wiedenmann (Neuried: Hieronymus, 1989), pp.151–166; 153: "Die Philhellenen sind jene, welche das von Griechenland Empfangene zur Befreiung und zur Unabhängigkeit der geistigen Heimat Europas, Griechenlands, wieder Griechenland zurückgeben wollten."

<sup>6</sup> Günther Grass, "Europas Schande" in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2012, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/gedicht-von-guenter-grass-zur-griechenland-krise-europas-schande-1.1366941> (retrieved May 4, 2013). "Europas Schande / Ein Gedicht von Günter Grass / / Dem Chaos nah, weil dem Markt nicht gerecht, / bist fern Du dem Land, das die Wiege Dir lieh. ... / / Geistlos verkümmern wirst Du ohne das Land, / dessen Geist Dich, Europa, erdachte." A rough translation of these lines: „Europe's shame. ... Near to chaos, because not apt to the market, you are remote from that country that afforded you the cradle ... Mindless, you will wither without the country, whose mind had thought you out, o Europe."

and not only in Renaissance humanism but also (as is known from Ficino, the Paduan school of philosophy, Lorenzo Valla, and Giordano Bruno) in Renaissance Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, and Epicureanism, and then in the many apologetic treatises on humanism through the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. After modern “secular humanism,” a label that covers some sort of materialism and secular religion, has occupied this term, the struggle continues as a fight for budgets and endowments for university departments of the humanities. Humanism, the epitome and the home of classical erudition, is known to be an invention of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, an invention aimed at bolstering the achievements of Enlightenment, specifically the care for individual education and freedom, with a system of humane values that allegedly was developed in ancient Greece and Rome.<sup>7</sup> This merger had its paradigmatic moment when in 1767 the Jewish outsider in Prussian Berlin Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) re-wrote Plato’s *Phaidon* for the sake of claiming personal freedom on the basis of human nature. What made Mendelssohn the “German Socrates” was the Neo-humanist inclination to vest modernity in classical garb. Aware of the ambiguity, he emphasized that he profited from the ancient eloquence and described his own work as an “in-between of translation and original work.”<sup>8</sup> That is a fair description of the ‘-ism’ about antiquity. In France, it even became a true fashion to write new novels and to claim them to be translations from Greek sources.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Paul Richard Blum, “Was ist Renaissance-Humanismus? Zur Konstruktion eines kulturellen Modells,” in *Philologie und Erkenntnis, Beiträge zu Begriff und Problem frühneuzeitlicher “Philologie”*, edited by Ralph Häfner (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2001), pp.227–246; Paul Richard Blum, *Das Wagnis, ein Mensch zu sein: Geschichte - Natur - Religion. Studien zur neuzeitlichen Philosophie*, Philosophie: Forschung und Wissenschaft 31 (Münster: Lit, 2010), pp.85–96: “Jacques Maritain against Modern Pseudo-Humanism.”

<sup>8</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, *Phaedon oder über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele* (Stettin, Berlin: Nicolai, 1767), <http://digital.slub-dresden.de/id339456728>, fol. )(4r and )(5v: “Mittelding zwischen meiner Uebersetzung und eigenen Ausarbeitung.”

<sup>9</sup> Johann Dimakis, “Die griechische Antike als Inspirationsquelle des französischen literarischen Philhellenismus von der Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ende des griechischen Befreiungskampfes” in *Die Rezeption der Antike und der europäische Philhellenismus*, edited by Evangelos Konstantinou (Frankfurt etc.: Lang, 1998), pp.36–51; p.42.

## Travelling

What could have motivated English and other wealthy people to go on the Grand Tour? Of course the same classical education plus a sense of adventure, that is, a combination of temporal and geographical travel into a country (identified as the birthplace of culture) that is both far away and worth bringing home. From the Crusaders to the modern tourists, travelling always finds its purpose, pretext, or excuse. The vast travel literature that flourished especially from the 17<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> century suggests that explorations were a purpose in and of themselves, a purpose that was easy to veil under discoveries of any sort.<sup>10</sup> Nowadays, students report about their studies abroad on blog sites titled “An American Student in Italy”, or “Adventures in Belgium”. What is most visible is their amazement that even in Naples there is pizza, and in Leuven, beer tastes like Belgian beer.<sup>11</sup> What this illustrates is: travelers carry their home abroad and bring vivid confirmations of their expectations back to the origin of their travel.

A paradoxical example of this is the known fact that Martin Heidegger, who claimed to restore ancient Greek philosophy, for many years refused to travel to Greece.<sup>12</sup> He apparently made a sort of wager: travelling to Greece he might fail finding his mythos, staying at home he would miss nothing. To him, *das Land der Griechen mit der Seele suchen*,<sup>13</sup> meant exactly to emulate *Griechentum* (Greekhood) without being exposed to its tangible reality. Goethe’s felicitous line, as just quoted from his play *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, was perceived by erudite Germans to mean the impulse to restore human civilization to naturalness with the means of returning to its real origins, which were supposed to be

<sup>10</sup> Cf., with further references, *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, edited by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge, U.K./New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> In Woodhouse’s classification (*Philhellenes*, p.22) these are not philosophical but *dilettanti* travelers.

<sup>12</sup> Rüdiger Safranski, *Ein Meister aus Deutschland: Heidegger und seine Zeit* (München: C. Hanser Verlag, 1994), chapter 23.

<sup>13</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, I 1: *Und an dem Ufer steh’ ich lange Tage / Das Land der Griechen mit der Seele suchend; / ...* <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/2054/pg2054.html>. Of course, Grass did not fail to refer to it.

found in ancient Greece, as Günther Grass still stipulated.<sup>14</sup> In the first place, Iphigenie's line captures the essence of *Heimweh*, the sentiment that identifies oneself as being alienated from one's roots. Travelling to Greece would be projected as coming home, although one never had been there. While 'seeking with one's soul' could suggest, as it did to Heidegger, to keep it as an inner experience, Goethe's line also motivated romanticist travels into the physical reality of 18<sup>th</sup>-/19<sup>th</sup>-century Greece. It was only on his travel to Rome, into which he projected (Greek) antiquity, when Goethe managed to complete his *Iphigenie*, thus converting her homesickness into his own classicist adventure. He carried his projection of ancient wisdom as an unfinished manuscript to Rome, fulfilled his dream, and brought it back to Germany as a bestselling play on freedom and autonomy.<sup>15</sup>

In a broad sense of the word, Northern European classicism and traveling to the ancient locations was romantic. It was part of Romanticism in the sense that the achievements of Enlightenment were to be complemented with deliberate options for the mythical, the experiential, and for the enactment, or rather re-enactment, of long lost genuineness and ingenuity.<sup>16</sup>

I am using the term re-enactment as it is applied to festive recapitulations of battle scenes of the Civil War in the United States with costumes and cam-pouts and all. They are appropriately termed re-enactments because not only do the participants act as though they were soldiers on the battle field, they also

<sup>14</sup> On Friedrich Schiller's understanding of classicism and educations see Stiftung Klassik Weimar: *Das Land der Griechen mit der Seele suchend. Antikerezeption im Kontext der Weimarer Klassik*; [http://www.klassik-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Bildung/Lehrer\\_und\\_Erzieher/Materialien\\_fuer\\_Lehrerinnen\\_und\\_Lehrer/Lehrerheft\\_Antikerezeption.pdf](http://www.klassik-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Bildung/Lehrer_und_Erzieher/Materialien_fuer_Lehrerinnen_und_Lehrer/Lehrerheft_Antikerezeption.pdf) (retrieved April 20, 2013), p.13. – On German Philhellenism and its roots in erudition see Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), p.8.

<sup>15</sup> On Philhellenism in Goethe's son Wolfgang see Walter Seitter, "Philhellenismus oder Byzantinistik? Wolfgang von Goethe über den Kardinal Bessarion" in <http://www.spinnst.at/seitter/nova/goethe.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> On Romanticism and Philhellenism see Constanze Güthenke, "Translating Philhellenism: Comments on the Movement of a Movement," *Philhellenische Studien* 13 (2007): Ausdrucksformen des Europäischen und Internationalen Philhellenismus vom 17.–19. Jahrhundert, pp.181–189.

firmly believe that this historic moment was the pristine state of their country – regardless of whether they mean the Confederation or the Union.<sup>17</sup>

This is truly a broad meaning of 'romantic', but it has the advantage of covering, for instance, Byron's visits to ancient battle places<sup>18</sup> but also Petrarch's experience on the Mount Ventoux. It also entails that enactment and re-enactment is meant to be tangible and personal, like Petrarch becoming Poet Laureate on the Capitol Hill in Rome, but is not in need of all too much respect for nitty-gritty details of reality. The difference in the cause of the two humanists, Cola di Rienzo and Petrarch, may serve as an illustration. The poet Petrarca idealized ancient learning and poetry, while the revolutionary Cola di Rienzo aimed at political power. They both romanticized antiquity in that they believed, or at least argued, that it is possible to re-establish antiquity. We need to keep in mind the dialectical situation that re-enacting and re-establishing needs to admit the antecedent loss and thus points towards the distinctiveness while claiming identity.

Needless to say that Philhellenism was part of Romanticism. As Henry Lytton Bulwer remembered without embarrassment:

*There is that in this country [sc. Greece], which amply repays one the trouble, if I do not say danger, of visiting it: — all we meet is fresh, and unlike what we ever saw before. The dress, the manners, the very ignorance of the people has something in it wild and original. We are brought back to our boyhood by the very name of Greece; and every spot in this beautiful land reminds us of the days devoted to its classic fables, and the scenes where we were taught them.*<sup>19</sup>

It appears a Philhellene could even long for the land of the Greeks with his soul alone while standing on its soil.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998).

<sup>18</sup> Woodhouse, *Philhellenes*, p.15.

<sup>19</sup> Henry Lytton Bulwer, *An Autumn in Greece; Comprising Sketches of the Character, Customs, and Scenery of the Country; with a View of Its Present Critical State. In Letters, Addressed to C.B. Sheridan, Esq.* (London: J. Ebers, 1826), p.62; also quoted in Woodhouse, *Philhellenes*, p.122.

<sup>20</sup> More of such paradoxes in the survey on British travel literature Kyriakos N. Demetriou, "A Bibliographical Guide to Nineteenth-Century British Journal Publications on Greece," *Modern Green Studies Yearbook*, 18/19 (2002–2003), pp.287–330; 293 f.



Therefore, we may notice that not only modern humanism, but specifically Philhellenism as the movement to admire and re-enact, to identify with and to study Greek civilization, has always had the circular structure of projecting, finding, and endorsing. Wilhelm von Humboldt set the tone by pronouncing: “Es zeigt sich in dem Griechischen Charakter der ursprüngliche Charakter der Menschheit überhaupt.” With this he initiated the Neo-humanism that would shape public education in Germany for about two centuries, but he also smuggled into the educational project the paradox of making humans human only through a projected ancient concept of humanity – a projection of humanity that could only be realized by turning towards the ancients.<sup>21</sup> As Sebastian Matzner put it: “... classical antiquity is ... the resident alien at the core of Western civilization.”<sup>22</sup>

The new is convertible with the ancient – this is one underlying idea of this sort of Renaissance. Giacomo Leopardi also affirmed it, when he produced, in 1826–27, his Italian translation of Plethon’s funeral oration for Elena Paleologina. Leopardi believes that ancient books serve modern times better than contemporary works.<sup>23</sup> He praises the Byzantine author – both and in one breath – for writing perfect classic Greek<sup>24</sup> and for setting up a new religious creed and practices; and all that Plethon would have achieved one hundred years before Luther and without the German’s livor.<sup>25</sup> Plethon is second in

<sup>21</sup> The quotation from Humboldt in Friedrich Heyer, “Das philhellenische Argument: ‚Europa verdankt den Griechen seine Kultur, also ist jetzt Solidarität mit den Griechen Dankeschuld’” in *Die Rezeption der Antike und der europäische Philhellenismus*, edited by Evangelos Konstantinou (Frankfurt etc.: Lang, 1998), pp.79–91; 84. On the paradoxes of the notion of humanism see Blum, “Jacques Maritain against Modern Pseudo-Humanism”, cited above.

<sup>22</sup> Sebastian Matzner, “From Uranians to Homosexuals: Philhellenism, Greek Homoeroticism and Gay Emancipation in Germany 1835–1915,” *Classical Receptions Journal*, 2.1 (2010), pp.60–91; 60.

<sup>23</sup> Giacomo Leopardi, *Discorso in proposito di una orazione greca* [together with] *Orazione di g. Gemisto Pletone in morte della Imperatrice Elena Paleologina*, edited by Moreno Neri (Rimini: Raffaelli, 2003), p.22.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p.15: “Leggendo io la orazione [...] quasi che a fatica avrei potuto credere [...] che ella fosse del secolo decimoquinto, e non piuttosto dell’età di Platone e di Senofonte [...]”

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p.12: “E cento anni prima della Riforma (movendosi, non per animosità ed ira, come Lutero, ma per sue considerazioni filosofiche e per discorsi politici) disegnò, intraprese e procurò [...] lo stabilimento di nuove credenze e di nuove pratiche religiose, secondo che egli pensava, ai tempi ed al bisogno delle nazioni.”

nothing to the ancients, except for not being ancient.<sup>26</sup> Plethon, such is the Italian’s metaphor, is one of the flames of a dying fire that produces even greater light, brings forth most noble geniuses, worthy of better times, and while escaping from ruins becomes, once again, *maestra* of culture and letters.<sup>27</sup>

Leopardi seems to see himself as the reborn Plethon. And yet, he is echoing, knowingly or not, what Christopher Plantin, the publisher, had stated in his preface to his 1575 edition of Stobaeus with Plethon’s orations on the Peloponnesus:

*We see some writings like premature fruits not getting old but almost dying before their authors ... because they shun the paradigm of the antecessors; therefore one returns to the cult of the venerable antiquity and begins to embrace it as a familiar parent.*<sup>28</sup>

## Antiquities

‘Bringing home’ was obviously the driving motive in all antiquarian activities in search of classical Greece. That was true from the time of Cyriac of Ancona, who searched for Plethon who, during his lifetime, had the fame of the mythic sage, up to the Earl of Elgin at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, who copied the marbles from Athens by abducting them, thus bringing home to modern England the monuments of antiquity.<sup>29</sup> But let us stay with Cyriac. He is an antiquarian, collecting ancient inscriptions. He probably knew Plethon personally from the Council of Florence,<sup>30</sup> and was set to visit him in Mistra. In his own narrative, it becomes clear that Plethon to him is somewhere on

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p.12.

<sup>27</sup> Leopardi, p.14: “[...] parve che a modo d’una fiamma, spegnendosi, gittasse una maggior luce: produsse ingegni nobilissimi, degni di molto migliori tempi; e caduta, fuggendo dalla sua rovina molti di essi a diverse parti, un’altra volta fu all’Europa, e per’ o al mondo, maestra di civilt’ a e di lettere.”

<sup>28</sup> Beriah Botfield, *Praefationes et epistolae editionibus principibus auctorum veterum praepositae* (Cantabrigiae: E Prelo academico, 1861), p.585.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Woodhouse, *Philhellenes*, pp.14–16.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Stoneman, *Land of Lost Gods: The Search for Classical Greece* (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2010), p.31.

the level of ancient inscriptions (as I have claimed already elsewhere<sup>31</sup>), for he narrates that he came to see “the ancient and once famous city of the Lacedaemonians” and meets in Mistra “the most learned of the Greeks in our time, and ... in his life, character and teaching a brilliant and highly influential philosopher in the Platonic tradition,” namely Plethon.<sup>32</sup> It is a microscopic detail, but significantly Cyriac mentions that, before meeting the senior sage, he was distracted by a young man, thus marking the difference between the present and the ancient worlds. On this travel, Cyriac notices “the ruins of once-famous Laconican towns ... [and] the pitiable ruin of the human race ... [that] have fallen from their pristine grandeur, [and] throughout almost all the regions of the world, that pristine human virtue and renowned integrity of spirit has fallen to an even worse condition ...”<sup>33</sup> What drives Cyriac’s explorative travel is his deep longing for the pristine grandeur in life, humanity, and learning. And if he cannot re-enact it with the old sage Plethon, at least he can capture it with erudition and bring that home. In that, he prefigures the archaeological impulse of 18<sup>th</sup>–/19<sup>th</sup>-century Philhellenes.<sup>34</sup>

The same attitude that foreshadows the neo-humanist longing for ancient Greece can again be seen in a dedicatory poem to the 1539 edition of the *Oracula magica Zoroastri*, which invokes

<sup>31</sup> Blum, *Philosophy of Religion in the Renaissance*, p.96 f.

<sup>32</sup> Ciriaco d’Ancona, *Later Travels*, edited by Clive Foss, translated by Edward W. Bodnar, The I Tatti Renaissance Library 10 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), Diary V, p.299. I follow Bodnar’s translation.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.328: “At et cum equidem inde Gemistei Platonici dilectissimi nostri gratia Laconicam Mysisthratem revisissem ... aegro magis animo ferendum censebam miserabilem ipsam humani generis calamitatem, quod et non tam graviter conspicua illa mundi oppida sacrae superis mirifica templa speciosae simulachra, ac alia humanae quidem potentiae atque artis eximia ornamenta a prisco suo splendore cecidisse videmus, quam deteriores in modum per omnes fere mundi regiones humanam illam priscam virtutem et animi inclytam probitatem corruiisse visum.” A different translation of this passage is quoted in Stoneman, *Land of Lost Gods*, p.31. On Cyriac’s antiquarian passion: Charles Mitchell, “Archaeology and Romance in Renaissance Italy,” in *Italian Renaissance Studies. A Tribute to the Late Cecilia M. Ady*, edited by Ernest Fraser Jacob (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), pp.455–483; 468–474. On his travels and religion: Karl August Neuhausen, “Die Reisen des Cyriacus von Ancona im Spiegel seiner Gebete an Merkur (1444–1447)” in Wolf-Dieter Lange, *Diesseits- und Jenseitsreisen im Mittelalter = Voyages dans l’ici-bas et dans l’au-delà au Moyen Age*, Studium Universale 14 (Bonn: Bouvier, 1992), pp.147–174.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, passim. At this point I should deal with Sigismondo Malatesta’s bringing Plethon to Rimini, but for that I may refer to Wilhelm Blum’s contribution in this volume.

... id quod aetas  
Fortunator aedidit Sophorum,  
Dum starent, decus orbis universi,  
Viris nobilibus graves Athenae.  
Unum si sapis, hunc capesse lector,  
Cum suadae ferat intimam medullam.<sup>35</sup>

## The Early Reception of Plethon

Given these considerations and observations, we may state that humanism and Philhellenism overlap in the sense mentioned above, namely, when the appreciation of antiquity expresses itself as the urge to re-live and re-enact ancient wisdom. To be sure, this is not quite the same as the movements of *philosophia perennis* and of *prisca theologia*. The former claims – on whatever metaphysical, theological, or historical grounds – that there is only one wisdom that pervades all human endeavors, and the task of the philosopher is precisely to uncover that wisdom.<sup>36</sup> Since the proof for the continuity and coherence of truth depends on the past, it is consistent to seek truth in the origins of humanity; and hence theology can only be true if it is in conformity with the ancient theology or *prisca theologia* – whatever the implications and complications with regard to Christian doctrine. Needless to say that Plethon was the key initiator for this pattern of thought to become virulent in the Renaissance.<sup>37</sup> However, the motif I am pursuing is how Plethon inspired the component of appropriation and re-enactment within the syndrome of rediscovery of antiquity.

<sup>35</sup> Poem by Lodovicus Molinaeus in Marthanus, Jacobus, trans., *Magica Zoroastri Oracula Plethonis commentariis enarrata* (Parisii: Lodoicus, 1539), fol. a2v, lines 18–23.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. especially Augustinus Steuchus, *De perenni philosophia. With a new introd. by Charles B. Schmitt*, Texts in Early Modern Philosophy (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1972); on him see Michael Stausberg, *Faszination Zarathushtra: Zoroaster und die Europäische Religionsgeschichte der frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin ; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), pp.262–290. In general see Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia Perennis: Historical Outlines of Western Spirituality in Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern Thought* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2004).

<sup>37</sup> Since other papers in this volume will address that topic, I limit myself to mentioning Stausberg, *Faszination Zarathushtra*, pp.35–92; Daniel Špelda, “Genealogie Mudrců v Renesančním Myšlení: Prisca Sapientia,” *Pro-Fil* 12, no. 1 (2011): pp.42–60, doi:10.5817/pf12-1-148.

One important indicator is the reception of his work in close temporal vicinity with his appearance in the West. My examples and evidences look very similar to what is known *ad nauseam* as the humanist revival of the past, and I already mentioned its champion, Petrarch. And yet my emphasis lies on the syndrome of projection, rediscovery, and appropriation that leads towards the impulse, if not illusion to re-live the past, that impulse that also fueled Philhellenism.<sup>38</sup>

An important evidence is Georgius Chariander's preface to his Latin translation of Plethon's *De differentiis*: publishing in Basel in 1574, he makes his case that Platonic philosophy is the closest possible to Christian doctrine. There is nothing original with that, given that it had been Plethon's intent to debunk Aristotelianism and that he had effectively been promoted by Ficino as the inspiration of Renaissance Platonism. Chariander's arguments focus on the incompatibility of the doctrine of the eternity of the world with Christianity and include, as an implication, the doctrine of the mortality of the individual soul and the unity of the soul for all humans. He concludes that Christian philosophers may rightly be called Platonists, since they teach: nature is the will of God; the heavenly spheres are *per se* mortal, but due to the presence of the immortal moving soul they are immortal; they define the concept of being to be univocal rather than equivocal; and, most importantly, they hold that the souls are immortal.<sup>39</sup> This set of claims would make it possible to locate Chariander in the history of late medieval and Renaissance philosophy. But this is not important in our context; for the reception of Plethon the following is revealing. Chariander concludes with remarks on his conception of the past: he labels Plethon a philosopher and mathematician; he laments that in

<sup>38</sup> Ted Zervas, "(Re)Creating a National Identity in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Greece: National Identity, Education, and European Perceptions of Greece," accessed January 27, 2014, [https://www.academia.edu/2084653/\\_Re\\_Creating\\_a\\_National\\_Identity\\_in\\_19th\\_Century\\_Greece\\_National\\_Identity\\_Education\\_and\\_European\\_Perceptions\\_of\\_Greece](https://www.academia.edu/2084653/_Re_Creating_a_National_Identity_in_19th_Century_Greece_National_Identity_Education_and_European_Perceptions_of_Greece). Zervas, p.17 f., makes a distinction between Plethon and the national movement of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. He also states a similarity between Renaissance humanism and Pletho — the point is, that this humanism fostered the return to the ancient world. Cf. also Maria Couroucli, "Le nationalisme d'État en Grèce. Les enjeux de l'identité dans la politique nationale, xixe–xxe siècle," in *Nationalismes en mutation en Méditerranée orientale*, edited by Alain Dieckhoff and Riva Kastoryano (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2002), pp.41–59.

<sup>39</sup> Plethon, *Georgii Gemisti Plethonis De platonicae et aristotelicae philosophiae differentia libellus ex Graeca lingua in Latinam conversus; cum praefatione de philosophiae usu ad cognitionem rerum divinarum accommodato*, trans. Georgius Chariander (Basileae: Perna, 1574), fol. B1r [MPG p.887].

his own time *Aristotelica* dominated the schools; he praises Plato's obscurity and assures the reader that at Cicero's times, Plato was the philosopher of the schools while Aristotle was disregarded.<sup>40</sup> It should be pointed out that, without further argument, Chariander takes it for granted that philosophy has to do with school teaching, that return to the era before Aristotle is feasible and desirable, and that obscurity, that is, Pythagoreanism (because it is the Platonic mathematics that affords obscurity), is the trade mark of good philosophy and education.

Chariander was a medical doctor, an educator, and a polymath.<sup>41</sup> So far, I have not found any indication as to when and why he changed his name from Henisch to Chariander: it associates *charis* and *andr-* and hence something like: grateful or graceful man;<sup>42</sup> maybe he intended to coin a variant of *philanthropos*, i.e., loving mankind. The edition of Plethon's programmatic work on Platonism was dedicated to the abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Sankt Gallen in Switzerland, Otmar Kunz,<sup>43</sup> who, as the author emphasized, had just increased the abbey's library.<sup>44</sup> The territory dominated by the abbey had only recently returned to Catholicism and hence became a focal point of Catholic

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. B1v [MPG p.887]: "Nostro igitur seculo genus philosophandi Platonium fere exolevit, in scholis vero omnibus Aristotelica traduntur ... Sunt enim Platonica pleraque tam obscura ... ut proverbio locum dederint, quo aliquid dicitur, Numeris Platonis esse obscurius. Aetate vero Ciceronis contra accidit, qua nimirum pauci fuerunt, quibus philosophia peripatetica esset cognita. Omnes itaque scholae tum Platonem legebant..."

<sup>41</sup> On Chariander (1549–1618) see Karl Friedrich Heinrich Marx, "Zur Anerkennung des Arztes und Schulmannes Dr. Georg Henisch," *Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften in Göttingen*, Phys. Classe XIX (1874–75), pp.1–39. Leonhard Lenk, "Henisch, Georg," *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 8 (1969), p.524 f. [Onlinefassung]; URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd116702052.html>. Jakob Franck "Henisch, Georg" in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (1880), S. [Onlinefassung]; URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd116702052.html?anchor=adb>. Among other achievements, he was instrumental in introducing the Gregorian Calendar and edited a dictionary of the German language.

<sup>42</sup> If "Chariander" was the humanist translation of a German name (as "Melanchthon" was for "Schwarzerd"), then the German name could have been "Liebermann" or "Schönmann."

<sup>43</sup> On Otmar (abbot 1564–1577) see the web site of Kanton St. Gallen: [http://www.sg.ch/home/kultur/stiftsarchiv/geschichte/abtei\\_st\\_gallen/aebte/otmar\\_kunz\\_popup.html](http://www.sg.ch/home/kultur/stiftsarchiv/geschichte/abtei_st_gallen/aebte/otmar_kunz_popup.html)

<sup>44</sup> Plethon, *De platonicae et aristotelicae philosophiae differentia* 1574, fol.B2r.

Reform (or Counterreformation).<sup>45</sup> Chariander was obviously hoping to have some impact on the sort of study and education offered among the Benedictines, most likely with an eye on the rising success of the Jesuits who, in their *Ratio studiorum* (formally promulgated in 1599), were about to establish Aristotle as the bench mark of good philosophy. Chariander does not mention it, but at the time of this publication, Otmar Kunz was under pressure to open a Jesuit college in his territory.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the dedicatory letter reads like an abridged program of higher education. There can be no doubt that Chariander, in bringing the Byzantine Plato-Aristotle controversy as a resident alien into the abbey of Sankt Gallen, had the rebirth of ancient wisdom in mind and aimed at practically implementing it in the education of his day.

With that in mind, fully alert of the revitalization agenda, let us re-read the first sentence of Plethon's critique of Aristotle: "Tam Graeci quam Romani veteres, qui nostrum seculum antecesserunt, Platonem Aristotele multo praestantior fecerunt ..."<sup>47</sup> This is what intellectuals interested in Plato and Aristotle read in the last quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Most likely they understood it then in the same way as the neo-humanists like Humboldt would read it, namely, that one should emulate the ancients, Greeks and Romans alike, in preferring Platonic wisdom over Aristotelian scholasticism. However, the question remains: did Chariander really ignore that "Romaioi" in Plethon's Greek text did not mean Romans, but rather Christian Greeks, and accordingly, "Hellenes" meant pagan pre-Christians?<sup>48</sup> Did he fail to know or deliberately ignore it?

<sup>45</sup> Lorenz Hollenstein, "Sankt Gallen (Fürstabtei)" *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D8394.php>.

<sup>46</sup> Paul Oberholzer, "Carlo Borromeo und die ersten Jesuiten in der Eidgenossenschaft," in *Karl Borromäus und die katholische Reform: Akten des Freiburger Symposiums zur 400. Wiederkehr der Heiligsprechung des Schutzpatrons der katholischen Schweiz, Freiburg Schweiz, 24.–25. April 2009*, edited by Mariano Delgado and Markus Ries (Fribourg, Stuttgart: Paulus Verlag, W. Kohlhammer, 2010), pp.145–193, 178 f.

<sup>47</sup> Plethon, *De platonicae et aristotelicae philosophiae differentia* 1574, fol. B2v. The text in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca* is that published by Chariander. The translation takes some liberties but renders the Greek text rather faithfully.

<sup>48</sup> Zervas, "(Re)Creating a National Identity in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Greece" quotes Scholarios rebuking Plethon: *Οὐκ ἂν ποτέ φαίην Ἕλλην εἶναι* " – 'Never call me a Greek.' For Gennadios, his Orthodox Christianity constituted the most important dimension of his personal identity as well as those of his Church and his people identity. To call yourself a Greek would also declare that you were not a Christian." Reference to *Oeuvres complètes de George Scholarios*, edited by Xenofon A. Sideridis and Martin Jugie (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1930), p.241.

The fact is that Plethon in his opening sentence claimed that the preference of Plato over Aristotle was what pagan and Christian Greeks shared – until recently. Therefore, one possible meaning of his opening statement is that there was a rift between Platonists and Aristotelians, but not between Christians and pagans. However, the thrust of his statement is that "nostrum seculum" missed the basic agreement among the ancients and, consequently, he is calling for a return to that primeval agreement between Christian and pagan Greeks. Chariander is evidently emulating this lament about "our times" and suggests the same remedy: to do again what the Ancients did.

It is probably surprising that a physician from Augsburg, and a Protestant, sent such a missive to the Benedictine abbot in Switzerland.<sup>49</sup> However about twenty years earlier, another Augsburg physician also printed in Basel a work of Gemistos Plethon: Adolph Occo<sup>50</sup> published in 1552 a Greek and Latin booklet with Plethon's *Quatuor virtutum explicatio*, to which he added excerpts from Plato's *Theaitetos* and from Aristotle.<sup>51</sup> It is not the proper place to discuss this booklet, which is quite convoluted. At this point, it may suffice stating that anti-Aristotelianism was not Occo's agenda, but he precedes Chariander in taking Plethon as a model writer. The book is dedicated to Hieronymus Fugger<sup>52</sup> as a young man and was intended for his education. Occo admits not

<sup>49</sup> Among the biographies cited above, only Marx mentions this Plethon edition. The question remains: how did Henisch come into contact with St. Gallen? Franz Anton Veith, *Bibliotheca Augustana. Alphabetum VIII* (Augustae Vindelicarum: Veith, 1792), pp.156–170; 165, refers for the identification of the pseudonym to Christoph August Heumann, *Acta philosophorum, das ist gründl. Nachrichten aus der historia philosophica: nebst beygefügtten Urtheilen von denen dahin gehörigen alten und neuen Büchern*, 2, 2 = Stück 7–12 (Halle: Renger, 1716), p.539, note d., <http://opacplus.bsb-muenchen.de/metaopac/search?db=100&View=default&lokalkey=3255011>.

<sup>50</sup> Adolph Occo III (1524–1606), the youngest of three physicians with this name. He studied in Ferrara and was known for his classical education (*Allgemeine deutsche Biographie*, Bd.: 24, van Noort – Ovelacker (Leipzig, Duncker & Humblot, 1887), p.127; [http://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/bsb00008382/image\\_129](http://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/bsb00008382/image_129))

<sup>51</sup> Plethon, *Georgii Gemisti Plethonis elegans ac brevis quatuor virtutum explicatio*, trans. Adolphus Occo (Basileae: Oporinus, [1552], n.d.), <https://opacplus.bsb-muenchen.de/metaopac/search?db=100&View=default&lokalkey=926708>.

<sup>52</sup> The context may have been that Johann Jakob Fugger was a collector of Greek manuscripts and owned a copy of Bessarion's *In calumniatorem Platonis* (this copy went to the Hofbibliothek in Munich in 1571): Ludwig Mohler, *Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist, und Staatsmann. Funde und Forschungen [1923–1942]*, Quellen und Forschungen aus dem Gebiete der Geschichte 20, 22, 24 (Aalen: Scientia-Verlag, 1967), I, p.362, n.3.



to know much about the life and work of Plethon, but he commends him as a Christian and as the one who was able to write succinctly about ethics – after Cicero and Aristotle.<sup>53</sup> Even here, the pattern of Renaissance as repetition of the glorious past shines through.

Now let us look at the *editio princeps* of the *De differentiis*. Bernardinus Donatus (died 1543) was the personal teacher of Rodolfo Pio da Carpi (one of the major collectors of antiquities in early 16<sup>th</sup>-century Italy) and a protégé of Pietro Bembo. Donatus published editions of the Greek Church Fathers and of other Greek works; to Rodolfo Pio, meanwhile Cardinal, he dedicated in 1540 simultaneously his translation of Aristotle's *Oeconomica* and Plethon's *De differentiis*.<sup>54</sup> The bulk of the book consists in an apologetic dialogue between teacher and student that defends Platonic philosophy in 17 chapters.<sup>55</sup> It starts with a discussion of the Platonic Ideas/Forms, which are presented as indispensable for the notion of God as Creator, i.e., for philosophical theology; then follow chapters on the notion of being, genus and species, perception and epistemology, immortality and activity of the soul, freedom, virtues, and cosmological issues. Apparently, Donatus follows Plethon's treatise closely but takes the liberty to rephrase the arguments. However, he breaks off after rephrasing chapter 16 (ις')<sup>56</sup> or 6 (Lagarde edition), although the remaining chapters are present in the Greek text. So his audience had to miss out on how Plethon brings nature and God close together (ch. 17) To my knowledge, this dialogue has not been studied in the context of Renaissance Platonism (but I may have not searched diligently enough). But I think one should take a closer look at it.

<sup>53</sup> Plethon, *Quatuor virtutum explicatio*, fol. a5r.

<sup>54</sup> Tiziana Pesenti, "Donato, Bernardino," *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 41 (1992). Lilio Gregorio Giraldi, *Dialoghi duo de poetis nostrorum temporum / Modern Poets*, edited by John N. Grant (Cambridge, Mass.: I Tatti Library), 2011, p.101 (biogr. p.286), mentions Donatus as a poet from Verona, whose poetry he claims not to know and whose prose works "smell of the oil lamp" and not of Cicero. – A Letter by Lodovico Nogarola, together with a letter to Cardinal Contarini and excerpts from Pomponazzi's *De incantationibus* by Nogarola are mentioned in Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Iter Italicum*, volume I; Italy; Firenze; Biblioteca Laurenziana (1933–38, 1949, 1952, 1955, 1958); Fondo Ashburnham (part 1) and volume V; Italy; Firenze; Biblioteca Laurenziana, officially known as Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana (1966, 1968–70, 1972, 1974, 1976, 1978–80, 1984, 1985, 1987); Fondo Ashburnham.

<sup>55</sup> Georgios Gemistos Plethon, *De Platonicæ atque Aristotelicæ philosophiæ differentia, libellus*, ed. Bernardino Donato (Venetiis: Apud Hieronymum Scotum, 1540), cf. outline pp.70–71.

<sup>56</sup> In Donatus' numbering which is the same as in Chariander and Migne's counting.

As it has been observed, Plethon's treatise goes under the incorrect rephrasing of the title "De differentia" or "De differentiis", exactly because Donatus had set the tone, over 100 years after it was written. One question is the dissemination of Plethon's Greek text; another is the appropriation and reception starting with its first publication and paraphrase. In our context, we have to notice that the appropriation of Plethon's attack on Aristotle and his advocacy of Platonism takes on the form of an emulation and re-enactment, not much different from what Ficino had done with Plato's *Symposium* and Mendelssohn would do with the *Phaidon*.

In the middle of his exposition of what he deems to be Platonic doctrine, Donatus refers to Bessarion's report on Plethon, according to which Plethon was "not only a follower, defender, and friend of Plato" but "even as zealous imitator;" and in the same sentence the editor admits to have drawn most of the present treatise from Plethon's "booklet on the difference between Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy" (which he is about to publish in this book). He tops his confession with the information that he finds important, namely, that "all this and more of that kind was used to be recited in our schools."<sup>57</sup> It is not at all clear, when Platonic philosophy is supposed to have been school doctrine. However, from this claim it becomes clear that Donatus is instilling in his reader the paradigm that Plethon is the impersonation of Plato, and that he is proud of emulating the Byzantine sage for the sake of instituting the solemn proclamation ("cantari") of Platonism.

Let me conclude reporting on two interpretations of Gemistos's name Plethon.<sup>58</sup> Obviously, it seems to support my thesis that Plethon is not just

<sup>57</sup> Plethon, *De Platonicæ atque Aristotelicæ philosophiæ differentia* 1540, p.64.: "non solum idem Platonis sectator, defensor, amator Bessarion eodem in libro, sed etiam eiusdem aemulus ... ab huius viri libello quem de Platonicæ atque Aristotelicæ philosophiæ differentia scripsit, potes tu quidem suspicari me plaeraque ex his quae nunc protuli, hausisse, quod sane ego non inficior: sed tamen scire te oportet, et omnia haec, et alia multa eiusdem generis apud nostros in scholis publice cantari solere." Cf. Cardinal Bessarion, *Bessarionis ... In calumniatorem Platonis libri quatuor ... Eiusdem Correctio librorum Platonis de legibus, Georgio Trapezuntio interprete ... Eiusdem De natura & arte aduersus eundem Trapezuntium tractatus* (Venetiis: Aldvs, 1503) VI 1, fol. 105r: *Plethon Constantinopolitanus vir nostra aetate opinionum Platonis aemulus, atque defensor*.

<sup>58</sup> On this question see, with the references, Vojtěch Hladký, *The Philosophy of Gemistos Plethon: Platonism in Late Byzantium, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2014), chapter 16.

advocating ancient philosophy but that he is intent on appearing to be *Plato redivivus*. Christoph August Heumann, in his *Acta philosophorum*, is aware of this interpretation, but he challenges it by objecting: “why should it have pleased him to mutilate the beautiful name of his esteemed Plato, making it *Plethon*?”<sup>59</sup> Later on, when reporting about the Plato-Aristotle controversy among the Byzantines, Heumann quotes (in German) from Georgios Trapezuntios (conclusion of his *Comparatio Platonis et Aristotelis*<sup>60</sup>), who suspected and insinuated that Gemistos chose this name “on the example of Patriarchs” in order to claim that he had “descended from heaven to the effect that his audience could accept his new doctrine and religion.”<sup>61</sup> This testimony has mostly been studied in the debate over Plethon’s religious conviction.<sup>62</sup> However, at this point it is interesting as a counterexample of the Hellenistic attitude that, in my view, was inspired by Plethon. Heumann is implicitly demarcating the line that divides antiquarian scholarship from re-enactment. For what he quotes from Georgios is the allegation that Plethon is precisely not reviving Plato but making himself a new prophet of a new religion, although that new religion would not be distinct from the ancient paganism, as Georgios reports a few lines down. Heumann did not dwell upon the allegation of the revival of paganism, he, rather, annihilated the programmatic momentum of the name change by ridiculing it. His argument is a philological and an esthetic one: “Plethon” does not sound good and injures the reputation of the ancient Plato.

What I hope to have shown is that the Philhellenic obsession with the ancients, the “ancestoritis” as Richard Clogg called it mockingly,<sup>63</sup> and their struggle to find, appropriate, and invent the ancient glory in their present time, whatever

<sup>59</sup> Heumann, *Acta philosophorum*, 539, note c.

<sup>60</sup> Georgios Trapezuntios, *Comparationes philosophorum Aristotelis et Platonis* (Venetiis: Per Iacobum Pentium de Leuco, 1523), fol. V6r/v.

<sup>61</sup> Heumann, *Acta philosophorum*, p.561.

<sup>62</sup> E.g. John Monfasani, “Platonic paganism in the fifteenth century,” in *Reconsidering the Renaissance*. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 93, edited by Mario A. Di Cesare (Binghamton, N.Y.: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1992), pp.45–61; 59 f. (reprinted in John Monfasani, *Byzantine Scholars in Renaissance Italy: Cardinal Bessarion and Other Émigrés: Selected Essays*, Collected Studies Series 485 (Aldershot, Hampshire, Great Britain ; Brookfield, Vt., USA: Variorum, 1995)).

<sup>63</sup> Richard Clogg, “The Rediscovery of Antiquity in the Greek World 1770–1821,” in *Die Rezeption der Antike und der europäische Philhellenismus*, edited by Evangelos Konstantinou (Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1998), pp.27–35; 27.

that time, accompanied the reception of Plethon from the very beginning. With the historicizing perspective that is typical of scholars like Heumann the ideological appropriation of antiquity becomes unlikely.

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# Plethon and the Philosophy of Nationalism

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**Abstract:** Do nations come before states, or do states evolve out of nations? This is the apple of discord in the philosophy of nationalism. Plethon's conceptualisation of *genos* implies that even if nationalism as a mainstream political agenda is particularly modern, the actual phenomenon of nationalism has deeper, pre-modern roots; moreover, it implies that nationalism matured contemporaneously in the Eastern Roman Empire *and* in the Western Empire: at the time of the Council of Constance (1414–1418), Plethon employed the terms *genos*, *ethnos*, *to homophylon*, and *to homodoxon* in ways conformable to a theoretical elaboration of versions of natural and political nationalism. In the *Memoranda*, the criteria of ancestry and heredity define a military ingroup within *genos*, whereas *genos* as such relies on a cultural and political understanding of nationhood. Eventually, *genos* is identifiable with *polis* rather than with race. In the *Nomoi*, proto-nationalism ushers in a hybrid of utopianism and traditionalism, according to which the urgent salvation of *genos* coincides with the restitution of an ancient shared mode of being.

**Keywords:** Plethon; Nationalism; Utopianism; Hellenism; Paganism

## 1. Revisiting the “modernist turn” in nationalism studies

Do nations come before states – or do states evolve out of nations? This is the apple of discord in the philosophy of nationalism. The question concerns the relation between nationhood and statehood. One view says that the state is a manifestation of the nation. As Max Weber put it: a nation is a community that normally tends to produce a state of its own. The state is “a relation of men

dominating men, a relation supported by means of legitimate violence”.<sup>1</sup> But these days, the prevalent view is the exact opposite: ideas of nationhood are *grosso modo* taken to be socially constructed products of modern states. Since the contributions of Gellner, Anderson and Hobsbawm in the early 1980’s, nations are seen as the offspring of Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. This is a constructivist view: according to a notorious catchphrase, nations are “imagined communities” and dependent upon theories of nationalism for their existence. One author puts it thus: “nationalism is a modern phenomenon, and the concept of the nation it employs, is a modern concept unintelligible outside of its modern political context”. The objection is that even though the term nationalism is modern, the phenomenon of nationalism may be much older.<sup>2</sup> Utopian thought existed before Thomas More; and experiments with communality existed before communism. Likewise, though the term “nationalism” is modern, nationalism in itself need not be. The conceptual components of this or that term are often anterior to their linguistic expression.

In fact, contemporary study of nationalism suggests a revision of the modernist approaches advanced by Anderson, Gellner and Hobsbawm, or, at any rate, of their more widely disseminated vulgarised version. Caspar Hirschi recently argued that nationalism evolved in pre-modern European societies and showed that nationalist language predates the actual adoption of nationalism at the level of political practice.<sup>3</sup> During the late Middle Ages kingdoms competed for dominion within the framework of Roman Christianity. During the Council of Constance (1414–1418) voting participants were classified within four *nationes*: the Gallicana, Italica, Anglicana and Germanica. The discussions on the essence of Roman Christianity brought to the foreground the specific characteristics of descent, geography and outlook, thus leading to the conceptualisation of disparate and competing “communities of honour”. Hirschi notes that Renaissance humanism provided the driving force for the re-introduction of traditional Roman values like *civilitas*, *urbanitas*, *gravitas* in the West. According to this thesis, “the chief architects of nations throughout European history have been scholars or scholars-cum-politicians”. Hirschi effectively corrects the modernist constructivist theory by turning the spotlight

on pre-modern nationalism; however, he also argues that nationalism is an essentially European phenomenon that “was not conceivable outside of the orbit of European culture”<sup>4</sup> and the Holy Roman Empire. The argument is that a “world of nations” competing for supremacy could only emerge out of a big cultural entity, which was dominated by imperialist political thinking while being at the same time territorially fragmented without end. Such a contradictory cultural entity was Roman Christianity during the Middle Ages.<sup>5</sup>

I will draw on the case of the Byzantine philosopher and “scholar-cum-politician” Gemistos Plethon in order to provide evidence corroborating this revisionist view, insofar it suggests that nationalism is not a modern construct: neither the Enlightenment, nor the industrial revolution or press capitalism are necessary or sufficient presuppositions for the conceptualisation of nationalism. But I will also argue that the emergence of nationalism is not an exclusive product of those tensions developed within the Holy Roman Empire. At the exact same time that the Council of Constance takes place, that is between 1414 and 1418, Plethon recalibrates and re-conceptualises the Greek word *genos* in two *Memoranda* that he addresses to Despot Theodore and Emperor Manuel Palaiologos.<sup>6</sup> My main thesis is that the notion of a political community claiming national sovereignty matures contemporaneously in the Eastern Roman Empire *as well as* in the Western Empire.

In a nutshell: Plethon applies the word *genos* diversely. On the outset, the word belongs to an idiosyncratic utopian vocabulary and signifies social stratification within an ideally just *politeia*. On a parallel level of urgent political action, *genos* corresponds to a late Byzantine community in the Peloponnese claiming its freedom and self-definition. This *genos* is interchangeable with what Plethon calls elsewhere *ethnos*. Still, contrary to what is commonly assumed,

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>6</sup> On Plethon’s *Memoranda* see Peter Garnsey, “Gemistus Plethon and Platonic political philosophy” in *Transformations of Late Antiquity: Essays for Peter Brown*, edited by Philip Rousseau and Emmanuel Papoutsakis (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), pp.327–40; Chrestos Baloglou, *Georgios Gemistos-Plethon: ökonomisches Denken in der spätbyzantinischen Geisteswelt* (Athens: Basilopoulos, 1988); Christopher Montague Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp.79–118; Savvas Spentzas, *Γ. Γεμιστός Πλήθων, Οι οικονομικές, κοινωνικές και δημοσιονομικές του απόψεις* (Athens: Kardamitsa, 1996); Niketas Siniossoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp.327–384.

<sup>1</sup> Max Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, translated by Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), p.176.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Gilbert, *The Philosophy of Nationalism* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998), p.11.

<sup>3</sup> Caspar Hirschi, *The Origins of Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

Plethon's conceptualisation of *genos* does not lead to naturalist or racial nationalism, for it does not presuppose race as its specific characteristic. The criteria of racial continuity and heredity define a military ingroup within *genos*, whereas *genos* as such relies upon a cultural and political understanding of nationhood. Eventually, *genos* is identifiable with *polis* rather than race.

## 2. Between social engineering and racial continuity: Plethon's *genos*

Plethon was seen as a prophet of Greek nationalism a number of times in the past – that is, before the “modernist turn” in nationalism studies. Writing on the “birth and formation of Modern Hellenism” in the early 1960's, the Marxist historian Nikos Svoronos thought that Plethon represents the first attempt at re-organising Hellenism within a unified national state. Svoronos correctly noted that the criteria introduced by Plethon to define his utopian state in the *Memoranda* are exactly those which authorised the creation of modern nation states in the West after the collapse of medieval feudalism: Plethon calls for a national army; an independent economy with a national currency; a reformed tax system; a monarchy moderated by the enhanced role of advisors. Plethon also opposes a secular worldview to an overwhelmingly religious one. Last but not least, Plethon re-localises the territorial borders of the new Greek state.<sup>7</sup> We may add that Plethon's *Memoranda* satisfy two of Benedict Anderson's main criteria for the emergence of nationalism: one is the priority of a secular vocabulary over clerical and sacred language; the other is the parting from absolute monarchy to the advantage of a powerful secular state. Finally, his insistence on common language and a shared culture point to an early version of linguistic and cultural nationalism. All this suffices to see in Plethon an exponent of proto-nationalist discourse in late Byzantium. After 1453 Greek intellectuals in search for a post-Byzantine identity in Renaissance Italy continued the problematisation of Hellenism along similar lines.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Nikos Svoronos, *Το ελληνικό έθνος, γένεση και διαμόρφωση του Νέου Ελληνισμού* (Athens: Polis 2004), p.78.

<sup>8</sup> On Plethon's notion of Hellenic identity see Leonidas Bargeliotes, “The Enlightenment and the Hellenic ‘genos’: From Plethon to Vulgaris”, *Skepsis*, 20 (2009), pp.44–6; Jonathan Harris, “Being a Byzantine after Byzantium: Hellenic identity in Renaissance Italy”, *Kambos: Cambridge Papers in Modern Greek*, 8 (2000), pp.25–44.

Nationalism may take various forms extending from racial to cultural and religious nationalism. In what sense exactly is Plethon a nationalist? In the *Memoranda* he speaks on behalf of a group of agents claiming a proper version of statehood (πολιτεία) and liberty. The word often applied to describe this novel entity striving toward statehood is *genos*. On the outset, the word entails the connection and sympathy among members of a pre-existent community: because there is a *genos*, there is a need for recovering the proper *politeia*. Statehood (*politeia*) evolves out of nationhood (*genos*). But there is a notorious passage in Plethon's *Memorandum to Manuel*, where *genos* refers to more than an existing community: it signifies the common descent of that community:

Ἐσμεν γὰρ οὖν ὧν ἡγεῖσθέ τε καὶ βασιλεύετε Ἕλληνες τὸ γένος, ὡς ἢ τε φωνὴ καὶ ἡ πατριὸς παιδεία μαρτυρεῖ.

We, whom you lead and over whom you reign, are Hellenes by descent (*genos*) as both the language and the *paideia* of our fathers testify to this.<sup>9</sup>

Here Plethon makes an appeal to language and *paideia* as evidence of a shared mode of existence invigorating the transmission of that particular language and ancestral *paideia*. The question I am concerned with concerns the relation and tension between the two possible meanings of the word *genos* in Plethon's *Memoranda*: *genos* as a collective agent and community presently claiming its freedom; and *genos* (here in the accusative) as specifying the biological ancestry and descent of that community. Plethon's conceptualisation of Hellenic *genos* clearly opposes the Stoic (and Cynic) versions of cosmopolitanism and universalism. But is this *genos*, the offspring of ancestry and continuity, or the product of social engineering? The issue here is whether Plethon's proto-nationalism is racial and naturalist or political and cultural. Naturalist nationalism sees nations as natural divisions of the human species. The main criterion is biological ancestry, heredity and continuity. By contrast, the necessary condition for political nationalism is participation in a shared set of political principles, while versions of cultural nationalism prioritise values or beliefs, language and history.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Plethon, *Or. Man.* 247.14–15 (*Παλαιολόγεια καὶ πελοποννησιακά*, edited by Spyridon P. Lambros (Athens, 1930) = further Lambros).

<sup>10</sup> On these and other versions of nationalism see Paul Gilbert, *The Philosophy of Nationalism* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998), p.56.

The problem is reflected in the ambiguities of the word *genos* according to *LSJ*. In classical Greek *genos* means class, sort, kind; that is, things that do not presuppose an ethnic or racial connection among members of a group. One example is the philosophical connotation of *genos*: this is a technical term in logic and ontology that Plethon discussed in *De differentiis*. But *genos* is also translated into English as race, stock, kin; or tribe, as a subdivision of *ἔθνος*. In Homer (Hom. 15.267), we encounter a formulation very similar to Plethon's "we are Hellenes by descent". Ulysses says that *ἐξ Ἰθάκης γένος εἰμι*: as *LSJ* has it: "from Ithaca I am by race". In a passage from *Panegyricus*, that is often confusingly brought in conjunction with Plethon's dictum, Isocrates sees *genos* as reducible to a "common nature" (*κοινὴ φύσις*), namely natural or racial ancestry. In Isocrates' view, the necessary condition of Hellenic identity is not *genos* or natural kinship (*φύσις*), but participation in a shared *paideusis* and collective mode of thinking (*διάνοια*).<sup>11</sup> Plethon appears to accord with Isocrates in regard to the existence of such intellectual and cultural criteria of Hellenism; moreover, both Isocrates and Plethon speak of a *genos*. Still, in his conceptualisation of Hellenism, Plethon does not prioritise *paideusis* over *genos/phusis* as Isocrates does. Rather, *genos* and *paideia* coincide in the same agents; and, (as we shall see) there is no evidence that Plethon thought of *genos* in terms of "physical" or racial ancestry in the first place. I do not mean to argue that Plethon's *Ἕλληνες τὸ γένος* is, indeed, modeled after Homer, or that it is a correction of Isocrates. The Byzantines had already begun to designate themselves as *Hellenes* from the thirteenth-century, a process overlapping with the rapid reduction of the territories of the Eastern Roman Empire and the collateral weakening of imperial identity and Byzantine self-consciousness. One is naturally led to think that Plethon's use of the word *genos* is a continuation of Byzantine applications of the word rather than yet another direct loan from the ancient Greek thought-world. In this regard, two examples are pertinent here. George Akropolites distinguished between the physical submission of the Greek *genos* to the Latins in 1204 and the mental as well as psychological self-definition and autonomy of that *genos*:

«ἡμεῖς μὲν,» ἔφασαν, «ἄλλου γεγονότες γένους καὶ ἄλλον ἀρχιερέα ἔχοντες ἑαυτοὺς τῷ κράτει σου ὑπετάξαμεν, ὥστε σωματικῶς κατάρχειν ἡμῶν, οὐ μὴν γε ψυχικῶς ἢ πνευματικῶς».

<sup>11</sup> Isocrates, *Paneg.* 50 (*Isocrates*, edited by George Norlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980)).

Although [they said] we are of another *genos* and have another bishop we have subjected ourselves to your rule, so that you rule over our bodies, but certainly not our spirits and souls.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, in a 1237 letter to pope Gregorius IX, the emperor of Nikaia Ioannes Batatzes talks of the authority and power of a Greek *genos* that extended "for about a millenium" and is heir of Constantine's legacy.<sup>13</sup> These examples show that in Homeric, as well as in classical and Byzantine Greek, *genos* may well designate the ancestry, historical continuity and ethnic origins of a community. That Plethon was fully aware of this signification of the word *genos* is obvious from the use of the word in his work covering the historical period between the battle of Mantinea and the death of Philip, which draws extensively on Diodorus and Plutarch. There, *genos* clearly signifies descent and heredity.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, the *Memoranda* show that Plethon employed the word *genos* in a technical sense too. In fact, the most common application of the word *genos* concerns classification rather than descent. In the *Memorandum to Theodore*, *genos* is a category of social stratification. Plethon suggests a tripartite division of the social body into three genera (*γέννη*): The 'essential' (*ἀναγκαιότατον*) *genos* covers primary production and consists of farm labourers (*αὐτουργικόν*), land cultivators (*γεωργικόν*) and shepherds. Manufacturers (*δημιουργικόν*), merchants (*ἐμπορικόν*) and retailers (*καπηλικόν*) are classifiable within the second *genos*. Significantly, the word *φύλον* is used interchangeably with *genos*. Thus, the ruling class (*ἀρχικόν φύλον*) occupies itself with the preservation of order, administration, justice and the security of the state. Both *genos* and *phulon* introduce a division of classes according to skill, role and profession that is crucial to Plethon's plan of social engineering.

<sup>12</sup> George Akropolites, *Historia in brevius redacta*, edited by August Heisenberg (Lipsiae, 1903), p.17.16–20; George Akropolites: *The History*, translated by Ruth Macrides (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.155. But note that Macrides translates *genos* with *race*.

<sup>13</sup> On Batatzes' letter see Anthony Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.370–1.

<sup>14</sup> Plethon, *E Diodoro et Plutarcho de rebus post pugnam ad Mantineam gestis per capita tractatio*, edited by Ennio V. Maltese (Leipzig B. G. Teubner, 1989), p.33.15–17 (Maltese): "οὗτος Ἰκέτης, Συρρακοῦσις μὲν ὦν τὸ γένος, τῶν δὲ Διωνείων φίλων γεγονώς καὶ ἔπειτα κάκιστος περὶ τὸ γένος γενόμενος τὸ Δίωνον, ἐπολέμει καὶ τότε Διονυσίῳ τὴν τυραννίδα ἀρτὶ ἀνελήφοτι."



These *genera* resemble political and social strata. Their specific difference appears to concern their function within an ideal *polis*, rather than any distinction according to heredity or endogamy. This impression is accentuated by the absence of those breeding criteria and eugenics pertinent to the ruling class of Plato's *politeia* (449a–472a).

Things become more complicated because Plethon tacitly takes all three socio-political *γένη* to be subdivisions of a collectivity that is simply referred to as: τὸ γένος. The three genera are species or subcategories of a single genus and the author of the *Memoranda* is preoccupied with both its salvation and preservation:

οὐ ῥαδίως ἂν εὖροις οὔτε μείζον οὔτε κάλλιον τοῦ τὸ γένος τε ἂν  
σῶσαι καὶ τὴν βασιλείαν ἐκ τῶν ἐνόντων ἀσφαλίσασθαι.<sup>15</sup>

This *genos* amounts to more than the sum of the three artificial *genera* to evolve out of Plethon's social engineering in a future ideal *politeia*. And obviously this *genos* amounts to something more precise and real than the abstract *genos* of human beings to which a philosopher might refer. Here, *genos* stands for the specific community inhabiting the Peloponnese at that time, one that was subject to the rule of Theodore Palaiologos and one that Plethon saw as potential agent of utopian experimentation. For the time being let us bracket the crucial question of how to translate into English this and similar applications of the word *genos* and let us suggest that from where Plethon was standing *genos* also amounts to an *ethnos*: for in the *Encomium of Helena Palaiologina* *genos* is used interchangeably with *ethnos*. In this context, when we read that *hoi Thrakes* are a honourable *ethnos* (people or nation) and that Helen τὸ μὲν γένος Θράττα ἦν, we can safely assume that “she was Thracian by descent”, namely that Plethon has in mind ethnicity in terms of ancestry and continuity:

Αὕτη τοίνυν τὸ μὲν γένος Θράττα ἦν· οἱ δὲ Θράκες παλαιόν τε τὸ γένος  
καὶ ἐν γενῶν τοῖς μεγίστοις τῶν κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην ἀριθμούμενον  
οὐχ ὅσον ἐντὸς Ἰστροῦ ἀπὸ Εὐξείνου πόντου ἕς τ' ἐπὶ Ἰταλίαν καθήκει,  
ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅσον Ἰστροῦ πέραν τοῖς ἐπὶ τάδε ὁμόγλωττον ἕς τε ἐπ'  
Ὀκεανόν τε τὸν ἐκεῖ νέμεται καὶ ἡπειρον σχεδὸν τοὶ τὴν ἀοίκητον διὰ  
ψῦχος. Πολὺ δὲ κάκεινο καὶ τοῦ ἐπὶ τάδε τοῦ Ἰστροῦ πολλῶ πλέον. Καὶ  
μὲν δὴ οὐδὲ φαῦλον ἐκ παλαιοῦ τὸ ἔθνος, ἀλλ' ἀνδρεῖόν τε ἅμα καὶ τὰς

<sup>15</sup> Plethon, *Ad Theod.* 130.13–15 (Lambros).

δόξας οὐκ ἀμαθές. Ὁ γοῦν τὰς ἐλευσινίας τελετὰς Ἀθηναίοις ἐπὶ τῇ τῆς  
ψυχῆς ἀθανασία καταστησάμενος Εὐμόλπος ἀνὴρ Θραξ ἦν καὶ τὸν  
γε τῶν Μουσῶν χορὸν Ἑλλήνες παρὰ Θρακῶν λέγονται μεμαθηκότες  
τιμᾶν. Τὸ δὲ Μούσας τιμῶν ἔθνος οὐκ ἄμουςον οὐδ' ἀπαίδευτον, οὐδὲ  
γε τὸ ψυχῆς ἀνθρωπίνης τῇ ἀθανασίᾳ νομίζον ἀγενές.<sup>16</sup>

Plethon was not alone moving in the direction of an ethnical description of populations. In the *Epitaph to Theodore Palaiologos*, Manuel Palaiologos affirms the existence of an ancient indigenous Peloponnesean people that is autochthon (αὐτόχθονες).<sup>17</sup> Plethon may have hoped to provide a nationalist narrative that Manuel could use for rhetorical and political ends. In the *Memoranda*, he ends up with an invented tradition – to use Hobsbawm's catchword, and forges a history of the Peloponnese that suits the aims of political propaganda. As one scholar put it, the *Memoranda* “demonstrate an early and visionary appreciation of the precondition of nationalism and national mobilisation.”<sup>18</sup>

Be that as it may, the question persists: how should we translate Plethon's references to this *genos-cum-ethnos* struggling for survival? Woodhouse opts for *race*:

the greatest and finest achievement would be to save the race [sic] and  
secure the kingdom by its own resources.<sup>19</sup>

Woodhouse also renders *genos* with *race* in a crucial passage from the *Nomoi* that again, appears to refer to Plethon's contemporary socio-political situation rather than to any utopian city-state:

Τὸ τε κοινὸν τῆς πόλεως τε καὶ γένους, ἐς ὃ τελοῦμεν, συμφέρον πρὸ  
τοῦ ἰδίου ἀεὶ τιθείμεθα.<sup>20</sup>

we must put the common interest of city and race [sic] before our own<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Plethon, *Monodia in Helenam Palaeologinam*, 267.3–268.5 (Lambros).

<sup>17</sup> Manuel II Paleologus, *Epitaphium in fratrem Theodorum* 201.24 (Lambros).

<sup>18</sup> N. Patrick Peritore, “The political thought of Gemistos Plethon: a Renaissance Byzantine reformer”, *Polity*, 10 (1977), p.172, p.190. (168–191)

<sup>19</sup> Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, p.96.

<sup>20</sup> Plethon, *Nomoi* 3.34, 1.228 (Pléthon, *Traité des Lois*, edited by Charles Alexandre, translated by A. Pelissier (Paris: Librairie de Firmin Didot, 1858) = further *Nomoi*)

<sup>21</sup> Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, p.347.

Woodhouse's translation credits Plethon with a straightforward idea of naturalist nationalism. It assumes that Plethon understood *genos* as one natural division of the human *genos* broadly construed. Perhaps in the case of the *Nomoi* this is, indeed, a particularly attractive assumption. In the *Nomoi*, Plethon assumes a biological procession of gods,<sup>22</sup> and it is tempting to suppose that the *anthropeion genos*, that is the *genos* of human beings, accords with the pattern of procession common to the *genos* of gods. If divinities are tied together by bonds of heredity and ancestry, then it is a plausible assumption that the same applies to the evolution and preservation of human communities.

But is really racial continuity the *proprium* of Plethon's understanding of *genos* and *ethnos* in the *Memoranda*? To begin with, ethnic division does not necessarily entail a racial one. Even if Plethon believed that the salvation of *genos* amounts to that of *ethnos*, there is little evidence that his version of nationalism is necessarily racial/natural rather than political.

This suspicion is strengthened insofar as there is a Greek word, other than *genos*, that makes abundantly clear that Plethon possessed a certain notion of racial continuity – albeit one that he utilised in the *Memoranda* only once: it is the word *ὁμόφυλον*. According to *LSJ*, *homophylon* means of the same tribe, race, or kin. The word occurs in the *Memorandum to Theodore*, but not in order to describe the Hellenic *genos*; rather, it is applied to specify a necessary precondition for organising the army of the new state:

Τὸ πολὺ δὲ τῆς στρατιᾶς καὶ τὸ ἀναγκαϊότατον ὁμόφυλόν τε εἶναι καὶ οἰκεῖον, ἀλλὰ μὴ ξενικόν.<sup>23</sup>

The main body of the army and that which is most essential should be of the same race, and not foreign.

Plethon uses the word *homophylon* only on this instance in order to suggest that the main body of the military division of the *polis* should exclusively consist of members of the same race or stock. Crucially, he does not apply

this term when speaking of the Hellenic *genos* as a whole. This is a very odd move if, indeed, he were advocating a straightforward naturalist version of nationalism. If membership in a national community necessarily meant a racial connection to the Hellenic *genos*, then there would be no need to specify that the army should be *homophylon*. It would by default follow that soldiers are members of the same tribe or stock, as heredity would bond together all *politai* in the first place.

Put differently: were Plethon a naturalist nationalist, he would either omit the application of the word *homophylon* altogether, assuming that its semantic associations were already implied by *genos*; or, he would apply the word *homophylon* at least twice: to the subgroup corresponding to the army and to the main group, that is the *genos* as such. This appears even more sensible given that Mazaris, a contemporary source, affirms that at that time the Peloponnese was populated by mixed groups or *γένη* of diverse origin:

Ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ, ὡς καὶ αὐτὸς οἶδας, ξεῖνε, οἰκεῖ ἀναμιξ γένη πολιτευόμενα πάμπολλα, ὧν τὸν χωρισμὸν εὐρεῖν νῦν οὔτε ῥάδιον οὔτε κατεπεῖγον· ἃ δὲ ταῖς ἀκοαῖς περιηχέται, ὡς πᾶσι δῆλα καὶ κορυφαῖα, ταῦτα τυγχάνει· Λακεδαιμόνες, Ἴταλοί, Πελοποννήσιοι, Σλαβῖνοι, Ἰλλυριοί, Αἰγύπτιοι καὶ Ἰουδαῖοι (οὐκ ὀλίγοι δὲ μέσον τούτων καὶ ὑποβολιμαῖοι), ὁμοῦ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐπαριθμούμενα ἑπτὰ.<sup>24</sup>

This situation of interacting *gene* of “Lacedaimonians, Italians, Peloponnesians, Slavs, Egyptians and Jews” certainly called for precise formulations stressing racial homogeneity and precluding ostensibly arbitrary usages of *genos*, if, indeed, we persist in reading Plethon as an advocate of naturalist nationalism. But no such formulations appear in the *Memoranda*.

In fact, even in the case of the army, Plethon appears to qualify the criterion of racial unity. Membership in the same race (τὸ ὁμόφυλον) is a specific and necessary condition for the formation of the main body of the army and not of the army as a whole. It is the majority of the army (τὸ πολὺ) and the most essential part (τὸ ἀναγκαϊότατον) that should be of the same race. What then, is the descent of those members of the army who are not Hellenes? They may

<sup>22</sup> Plethon, *Nomoi* 1.5.48: “τὸ γένος τῶν θεῶν.” Cf. *Nomoi* 1.5.102–19: “Ὦν διχῇ αὐ τοῖς γεγεννηκόσι διακεκριμένων τὸ μὲν γνήσιον αὐ ἀποδεδεῖχθαι οὐράνιον γένος ἀστρων, ψυχῶν μὲν τοῦ κρατίστου τε εἶδους καὶ πάντων ἂν ἐπιστήμη ἐφικνουμένου γεγονός, σωμάτων [δ'] ὅτι καλλίστων καὶ δραστηριωτάτων, κινητὸν μὲν ἤδη καὶ πλανητὸν τι δὲ γένος θεῶν, κατὰ δὲ ταῦτα περιῶντας ὁμαλῶς· τὸ δὲ νόθον αὐ σφίσι φῦναι χθόνιον γένος δαιμόνων.”

<sup>23</sup> Plethon, *Ad Theod.* 121.15 (Lampros).

<sup>24</sup> Mazaris, *Peregrinatio Mazaris ad inferos*, in *Mazaris' Journey to Hades: or Interviews with dead men about certain officials of the imperial court*, edited by J.N. Barry et al (Buffalo: Dept. of Classics, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1975), 2.76.18–24.

not be mercenaries, given Plethon's explicit rejection of mercenary troops. The possibility arises that no racial ties determine membership in Plethon's *politeia*. The criterion of *homophylon* is predicated to a species of the Hellenic *genos*, but not to the *genos* as such.

What seems to corroborate this thesis is that when talking of the people of his ideal state as a whole, Plethon does not couple *genos* with *phylon* but with *polis* – and he does so to the effect that the two terms, *genos* and *polis*, appear to be interchangeable and equivalent:

Εἰσὶ δ' οἱ καὶ τὴν τοῦ σώματος ῥώμην μισθοῦμενοι διακονοῦντες ἄλλοτε ἄλλοις διαζῶσιν. Ἐπὶ δὲ τούτοις τὸ ἀρχικὸν φύλον, σωτήρων τέ τινων τῆς ὅλης πόλεως ἢ γένους ἢ γενῶν, ἂν οὕτω τύχη, καὶ φυλάκων, ὧν κορυφαῖος μὲν βασιλεὺς ἢ τις ἡγεμὼν, μεθ' ὃν ἄλλοι ἄλλα διειληφότες γένους ἢ πόλεως μέρη διασώζουσιν ἕκαστα.<sup>25</sup>

εἰ ἡ τῆς πόλεως τε καὶ γένους, ἔτι δ' ἡ τῆς χώρας ἐνδέχοιτο φύσις, μᾶλλον τὴν πεζῇ, ἢ δεήσει καθ' ἑκατέραν ἐλαττουμένους καὶ...<sup>26</sup>

What is in the foreground here is participation in an ethnic community rather than in an exclusive *homophylon* group. In these cases, the translation of *genos* as race does not work: rather, *genos* amounts to “the whole *polis*”: it means “people” or “nation”, rather than “race” or “stock”.

Thus, a possible translation of Plethon's “Ἕλληνες τὸ γένος is “our nation is Greek”, especially insofar as the meaning of *genos* here accords with contemporary Latin uses of the word *natio* and *nationes*. Cyriacus of Ancona, a friend of Plethon's, writing in Gallipoli in 1447, describes “captives from the Greek nation, miserable in their iron chains” (*vidimus... Graia ex natione captivos miserandum in modum ferreis sub catenis*). Though careful to note that the Greeks “in a sense deserve punishment”, Cyriacus sees the origins of this Greek *natio* as intrinsically linked to those of the Latins: “Alas for the ancient nobility of our superior race!” (*nostrorum generosissimae gentis nobilitas*). Greeks and Latins are divisions of a single race (*gens*) juxtaposed to the race of the “Barbarians”. The Turkish invasion of the Peloponnese is an “enormity” and

the downfall of Orthodox Greeks implies “a great humiliation of the Latin name” (*Latini nominis*).<sup>27</sup> This does not mean that Cyriacus was indifferent to heredity and continuity. On the contrary, in a diary entry significantly written in Mistra, Cyriacus notes the process of political, military, religious and agricultural degeneration (*degeneres homines*) affecting the “renowned race of Spartans” (*Spartanum genus*).<sup>28</sup> The comparison between ancient and modern Spartans reverberates perhaps Plethon's preoccupation with the restitution (ἐπανόρθωσις) of Spartan institutions. Cyriacus was a religious syncretist praising Neptune, referring to Jesus as *Jupiter humanatus* and witnessing in his travels the constant appearances of land and sea nymphs. He was not a straightforward neopagan philosopher like Plethon. But his uses of *natio*, *genus* and *gens* appear motivated by the same geopolitical shift that occasioned Plethon's appeal to the Hellenic *genos*. One can imagine Plethon and Cyriacus in Mistra discussing the relation between ancient and modern Sparta. The origins of modern nationalism lie in these and similar discussions.

Let us recapitulate: Plethon allows for naturalist nationalism in the case of the military division of the *genos/polis* – but he is a representative of political, cultural and linguistic nationalism when it comes to *genos/polis* as a unified entity. This explains why the racial criterion of *homophylon* is applied in one case only, whereas the political criterion that appears more often is that of common interest: *to koinon*. *Genos* is tied together by common cultural descent, language and common economic and political interests. This seems to imply an attempt to solidify nationhood upon an emerging political ideology. What is, after all, political ideology if not a worldview upon which rests the conceptual relation between nationhood and statehood?

### Political ideology and esoteric nationalism in the *Nomoi*

The causal network of ideology and nationhood re-appears in the *Nomoi*. There, Plethon makes an appeal to *homodoxia*. The word means agreement in opinion and unanimity, but in the context of the *Nomoi* it stands for a shared worldview and common *Weltanschauung*. The just *polis* of the *Nomoi* is meant to connect with the long history of an *ὁμόδοξον γένος*, an ideologically unified

<sup>25</sup> Plethon, *Ad Theod.* 120.10–13 (Lampros).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.122.5.

<sup>27</sup> Cyriac of Ancona, *Later Travels*, edited and translated by Edward W. Bodnar and Clive Foss (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 279.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 331.

political community. Plethon addresses not only gods, heroes, and ancestors, but also his “comrades” (σύντροφοι), “companions” (ἐταῖροι), “fellow-inhabitants”, “fellow-citizens” (πολίται), “friends” and significantly “brothers” (φράτορες). He especially addresses “those of you who have taken care of our common interests, above all you who have sacrificed your life for the freedom of your compatriots and of a *genos* that thinks like you do”:

ὦ ἐταῖροί τε καὶ φίλοι πάντες· ὦ πολῖται, οἳ τε ἄλλοι, καὶ οἱ τῶν κοινῶν  
ἡμῶν καλῶς προστάντες, οἱ δὲ καὶ τὸν τῆδε βίον ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κοινοῦ  
τε καὶ ὁμοδόξου γένους ἐλευθερίας ἀποβεβληκότες...<sup>29</sup>

These are the men who fought for ensuring the prosperity of the people and for “mobilising the restitution (ἐπανόρθωσις) of what was incorrectly altered”.<sup>30</sup> The *homodoxon genos* is a unified social body sharing an intellectual, religious as well as political agenda: like ideology, Plethon’s *homodoxia* is a mode of existence, a pagan rather than Orthodox system for organising social reality and for pursuing *to koinon sympheron*: the common interest.<sup>31</sup> Thus, historically the *Nomoi* may well count as an early ideological articulation of proto-nationalist sentiment; but philosophically, the *Nomoi* are more than that. They are an early example of meta-nationalism, for they are concerned with establishing the conceptual components of nationhood in the first place.

The parting from ecumenism and the return to ancient *polis* is one such component; religious orthodoxy – not Christian, but pagan – is another; so is the re-sacralisation of the *sancti loci* of traditional paganism, a process purportedly unveiling the soil of a ritually purified *topos*.<sup>32</sup> This religious bond between land and its inhabitants fosters communality (τὸ κοινόν) and re-territorialises the new state in a more radical way than does the historical account of an

<sup>29</sup> Plethon, *Nomoi*, 3.34,5.207–210.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.34,5.212.

<sup>31</sup> Plethon’s dogged opponent, Gennadios Scholarios uses the word *ὁμοδόξος* in its ordinary Byzantine sense, that is in order to designate an Orthodox community: Cf. Gennadios Scholarios, *Adnotatio ad Eccl. Adv.*, in *Ceuvres complètes*, vol.IV, edited by Martin Jugie, Louis Petit and Xenophon A. Siderides (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1935), 3.167.25–6: “ἡ πνευματικὴ τῶν ὁμοδόξων κοινωνία καὶ ἡ τελεία ὑποταγὴ πρὸς τοὺς γνησίους ποιμένας.” Scholarios’ *genos* is first of all Orthodox.

<sup>32</sup> See Plethon, *Nomoi*, 3.36.11–13 on the ritual purification of land: “Τόπος δὲ, τὰ τε ἱερὰ, καὶ πᾶς ὁ κόπρου τε ἀνθρωπίνης καὶ νεκρῶν ἀνθρωπείων δὴ καὶ τούτων καθαρεύων θηκῶν.”

ancient indigenous Peloponnesean people (γένος) in the *Memoranda*. More than citizens (πολίται) of a *spoudaiotate politeia*, those who acknowledge this communal bond shall be *phratores*, members of a unanimous pagan-nationalist guild. The word *phratores* hints at one of the most ancient meanings of the word *genos*, which refers to members of a clan tied by bonds of blood, that is, a tribe of kindred race – a *πάτρα* (Dor. for φράτρα, cf. πατρίδα).<sup>33</sup> Still, there is a long esoteric tradition of metaphorical and allegorical notions of brotherhood on which Plethon could draw without ever reverting to the eugenics of the *Republic*.<sup>34</sup>

The survival of *to genos* in the immediate future is concomitant with an undoing of the degenerative historical passage from ancient *polis* to Byzantine *ecumene* coupled with an undoing of the ostensibly disastrous passage from polytheism to monotheism. In the *Nomoi* proto-nationalism ushers into a hybrid of utopianism and traditionalism, according to which the urgent salvation (σωτηρία) of *to genos* coincides with the restitution (ἐπανόρθωσις) of an ancient shared mode of being. The future depends upon the recurrence of the past. In this sense the *Nomoi* look forward to a state and community that is a “noch-nicht” or “not-yet”. Whereas modern nationalism is commonly seen as a sentiment, doctrine or policy related to an already existent community and state, Plethon’s proto-nationalism in the *Nomoi* concerns an order of things as well as an ideologically solid political community that is yet to come. The established state of things (τὰ καθεστηκότα) to be really saved and preserved is in itself a desideratum, an imaginary projection upon the current state of affairs. Plethon prepares his shadowy audience for the preservation of a utopian *politeia*, while its potential carrier, the *genos*, lingers in a state of political degeneration with the Ottoman forces *ante portas*. Pressed hard by this dire and liquid situation, Plethon compiled his *Nomoi* as if the order of things he had in mind were already realized to a smaller or larger degree.

Let us conclude by revisiting the initial point of departure, the prevalent modernist view according to which nationalism is the product of Enlightenment and press capitalism that is of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Even if we think of national identities in the sense of “narratives”, the nationalist discourse

<sup>33</sup> See .v. φράτρα in *A Greek-English lexicon*, compiled by Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p.1953.

<sup>34</sup> See here Niketas Siniossoglou, “Sect and utopia in shifting empires: Plethon, Elissaios, Bedreddin”, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 36.1 (2012), pp.38–55.



and vocabulary that generated these identities is pre-modern. And even if nationalism as a mainstream political agenda is particularly modern, the phenomenon of nationalism has deeper, pre-modern roots. Plethon employs the terms *genos*, *ethnos*, *to homophylon*, *to homodoxon* in ways conformable to theoretically elaborate versions of natural and political nationalism. In the *Memoranda*, naturalist nationalism defines the main body of the military division of the *genos/polis*, while rhetoric of political and cultural nationalism takes over when it comes to *genos/polis* as a unified entity. The *Nomoi* reveal utopian, sectarian and pagan strands of nationalism that were succeeded by particularly modern and secular conceptualisations of nationalism. Though often deemed as politically obsolete, these esoteric aspects of nationalism reverberate in Romantic philosophy and literature.

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# George Gemistos Plethon and the Crisis of Modern Greek Identity

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**Abstract:** The aim of the paper is to examine Plethon's role in the works of Greek writers of the Generation of 1880 and in Greek culture of that time. Alexandros Papadiamandis in *Gypsy Girl* and Kostis Palamas in *Dodecalogue of a Gypsy* present the heretic philosopher as one of the key figures of Greek identity; thus, these works can be read as challenging the dominant historical narrative of Hellenic-Christian culture. Greek scholars of that time, on the other hand, while commenting on Plethon's apostasy in their scholarly works, do not elaborate on this subject when they speak to a broader public. They present Plethon as a vital link in the chain of transferring ancient knowledge. It seems that they are trying to protect their audiences from the threat of questioning the values of romantic Hellenism and to restrict the discussion of controversial issues to their own sphere.

**Keywords:** George Gemistos Plethon; Greece (19<sup>th</sup> century); Byzantium (15<sup>th</sup> century); Nationalism; Cultural continuity; Alexandros Papadiamandis; Kostis Palamas; Constantine Paparrigopoulos; Agisilaos Karambasis; Greek Romanticism; Neoklis Kazazis; Anastasios Diomidis-Kiriakos;

The aim of this paper is to examine the role of George Gemistos Plethon in the works of the Greek writers of the Generation of 1880 and in the Greek culture of that time.

The identification of the early 1880's as a breakthrough period in the history of Modern Greek literature is arbitrary. Indeed, it was chosen by Kostis Palamas, who, as a critic, felt the need to distinguish his literary output and that of his contemporaries from what had previously existed in Greek culture in the

first 50 years of the existence of the Greek state, namely, Greek Romanticism.<sup>1</sup> As artificial as this dividing point may be, it cannot be doubted that the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought new and fresh developments within the intellectual life of the Greeks. I will argue that the interest in Plethon that arose in this period was symptomatic of these changes. The outbreak of the Balkan Wars will mark the end of the period under examination, since engagement in local, and subsequently global conflict, ultimately resulting in the Asia Minor Catastrophe, brought about major changes in the whole Greek world.

### Hellene socialist in the 15<sup>th</sup> century

Interest in George Gemistos was not the invention of the Generation of 1880. The first sign of interest in Plethon's thought in the Modern Greek state was an anonymous article in the periodical *Pandora* entitled 'Hellene socialist in the fifteenth century'.<sup>2</sup> This article has been attributed to the leading Greek historiographer of the time, Constantine Paparrigopoulos.<sup>3</sup>

It seems to us – Paparrigopoulos writes – that the historians of the Socialist movement have overlooked one of the most pragmatic supporter [of their beliefs], Gemistos Plethon, who [...] proposed [...] a scheme for a social reform rooted in the principles of the heresy now haunting western Europe, the heresy assuming the need to abolish, to some extent at least, every real estate ownership [...].<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mario Vitti, *Ιστορία της νεοελληνικής λογοτεχνίας* (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Οδυσσέας, 2003), pp.291–296. See also Roderick Beaton, *Εισαγωγή στη Νεότερη Ελληνική Λογοτεχνία. Ποίηση και πεζογραφία 1821–1992* (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Νεφέλη, 1996), pp.120–129.

<sup>2</sup> “Έλλην σοσιαλιστής της δεκάτης πέμπτης εκατονταετηρίδος”, *Πανδώρα*, 1:7 (1850), pp.154–155. For Modern Greek (post 1821) quotations and titles original orthography always retained, although monotonic accentuation introduced.

<sup>3</sup> Λίνος Γ. Μπενάκης, “Ο Πλήθων στην νεοελληνική σκέψη και έρευνα (1900–1975)” in *Πρακτικά διεθνούς συνεδρίου αφιερωμένου στον Πλήθωνα και την εποχή του. Proceedings of the international congress on Plethon and his time. Μυστράς, 26–29 Ιουνίου 2002* edited by Λίνος Γ. Μπενάκης and Χρήστος Π. Μπαλόγλου (Αθήνα-Μυστράς: Ζαχαρόπουλος, 2003), pp.33–49 (35).

<sup>4</sup> “Οι ιστοριογράφοι του Σοσιαλισμού παρέλειψαν, νομίζομεν, να αναφέρωσιν ένα των πρακτικωτέρων αυτού οπαδών, τον Γεμιστόν Πλήθωνα, όστις [...] προέτεινεν [...] σχέδιον οικονομικής και κοινωνικής μεταρρυθμίσεως, στηριζόμενον βεβαίως επί των αρχών της αιρέσεως, ήτις σήμερον τάράττει την δυτικήν Ευρώπην, προϋποθέτον, δηλαδή, την κατάργησιν,

Plethon is, for Paparrigopoulos, a forerunner of modern socialism. In the context of Paparrigopoulos' work, Plethon represents yet more proof that the most important cultural contributions to European identity have Greek roots. In his view, this particular manifestation of Greek thought is worth mentioning even though it is not worthy of support. Indeed, such a shameful idea could only have emerged within deeply corrupt and half barbaric societies.<sup>5</sup> Maybe Paparrigopoulos' sense of embarrassment can be accounted for by the fact that the article was published anonymously. In his “History of a Greek Nation,” Paparrigopoulos carefully omits such words as σοσιαλιστής or κοινωνιολόγος. Instead, he prefers pointing out the resemblance of Plethonian fiscal propositions to those suggested by French physiocrats. Paparrigopoulos also does not approve of such schemes, deeming them to be unjust.<sup>6</sup> The 5<sup>th</sup> volume of the “History” was published in the 1870's. Alexandre's edition of Plethon's “Laws” had already been published and Paparrigopoulos claims that in his admiration of Ancient culture Plethon had gone too far and had embraced the erroneous doctrines of Julian the Apostate. Naturally, a Modern Greek historian had to condemn such tendencies. Surprisingly, however, Plethon could count on Paparrigopoulos' support in the passages where the Peloponnesian philosopher expressed his disapproval of monastic life. He compares these ideas to those of the iconoclast Emperors.<sup>7</sup> On another occasion, Paparrigopoulos stresses that the attempts at reorganizing church structure were one of the most precious legacies of the Byzantine Empire.<sup>8</sup>

Connections with socialist thought would be explored by the following generations of Greek authors. Agisilaos Karambasis calls Plethon's social ideas

μέχρι τινός τουλάχιστον, πάσης ακινήτου κτήσεως.” „Έλλην σοσιαλιστής της δεκάτης πέμπτης εκατονταετηρίδος”, *Πανδώρα*, 1:7 (1850), p.154.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.154.

<sup>6</sup> Κωνσταντίνος Δ. Παπαρρηγόπουλος, Παύλος Κ. Καρολίδης, *Ιστορία του ελληνικού έθνους από των αρχαιοτάτων χρόνων μέχρι του 1930* (εν Αθήναις: Εκδοτικός Οίκος “Ελευθερουδάκης”, 1932), vol. 5.1, p.243.

<sup>7</sup> Παπαρρηγόπουλος, Καρολίδης, *Ιστορία του ελληνικού έθνους*, vol. 5.1, p.244. See also Σπυρίδων Ζαμπέλιος, *Άσματα δημοτικά της Ελλάδος* (Κέρκυρα: Τυπογραφείον Ερμής Α. Τερζάκη Θ. Ρωμαίου, 1852), p.538.

<sup>8</sup> He also points out the similarities between the ideas of the iconoclast Emperors and those of the European Reformation movement. Κωνσταντίνος Δ. Παπαρρηγόπουλος, “Απόπειρα εθνικής αυτοκτονίας” in *Ιστορικά πραγματεία κατ' εντολήν του συγγραφέως εκδιδόμεναι* (εν Αθήναις: Εκδότης Γεώργιος Κασδόνης, Τύποις Αδελφών Περρή, 1889), pp.198–212 (208–209).

σοσιαλισμός, or κοινωνισμός.<sup>9</sup> Neoklis Kazazis's judgement is that these socialist ( κοινωνιολογικές ) ideas show Plethon's inability to comprehend the realities of his own era.<sup>10</sup>

What seems worth mentioning is that Paparrigopoulos's context was different than that of Kazazis or Karambasis. For Paparrigopoulos, socialism was a remote danger affecting only Western Europe. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century this threat was not distant at all. The 1890's crisis had driven rural populations away from the villages. Many chose immigration, but some decided to seek their fortune in the cities. Political developments in Crete in 1897 and in Eastern Roumelia in 1906–1907 forced Ottoman Greeks to abandon their homes. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Athens was a city flooded by unskilled workers. The ensuing poverty and exploitation suffered by these masses compelled them to seek redress. The first strikes took place in Lavrio in 1895 and in 1906. The labour movement in Greece was gaining traction.<sup>11</sup> Not only its organizational but also its ethical bases were being developed.<sup>12</sup> In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, international ideological influences were becoming more and more prevalent. In 1918 the Socialist Labour Party would be established and soon renamed to the Communist Party of Greece. It became a member of Comintern.<sup>13</sup> Paparrigopoulos describes a peculiar detail of the Byzantine legacy, while Kazazis and Karambasis comment on the actual phenomenon. That is why their outlook is somewhat less tolerant.

<sup>9</sup> Αγησίλαος Σ. Καραμπάσης, *Το φιλοσοφικόν σύστημα του Πλήθωνος* (εν Ηρακλείω: Τυπογραφείον Στυλ. Μ. Αλεξίου, 1910), pp.63–63.

<sup>10</sup> Νεοκλής Καζάζης, *Γεώργιος Γεμιστός Πλήθων και ο κοινωνισμός κατά την αναγέννηση* (No place of publication: no publisher, no date), pp.45–48.

<sup>11</sup> Χριστίνα Αγριαντώνη, “Βιομηχανία” in *Ιστορία της Ελλάδας του 20ού αιώνα. Οι Απαρχές: 1900–1922* edited by Χρήστος Χατζηιωσήφ (Αθήνα: Βιβλιόραμα, 1998), vol. 1.1, pp.173–226 (199–202).

<sup>12</sup> Κώστας Φουντανόπουλος, “Εργασία και εργατικό κίνημα στην Ελλάδα” in *Ιστορία της Ελλάδας του 20ού αιώνα. Ο Μεσοπόλεμος 1922–1940* edited by Χρήστος Χατζηιωσήφ (Αθήνα 2002: Βιβλιόραμα), vol. 2.1, pp.295–336 (313–319).

<sup>13</sup> Ευάγγελος Αβέρωφ-Τοσίτσας, *‘Φωτιά και Τσεκούρι!’*. *Ελλάς 1946–1949 και τα προηγμένα. Συνοπτική Ιστορική Μελέτη* (Αθήνα: Βιβλιοπωλείον της Εστίας, 1974), pp.17–24.

## Descendants of the 300

But it was the problem of Plethon's apostasy rather than his social ideas that preoccupied Modern Greek writers. This issue had been raised as early as the 1860's by Constantinos Sathas<sup>14</sup> and remained relevant for the following generations.<sup>15</sup> The first literary work of Modern Greek culture in which we encounter Gemistos is *Gypsy Girl* by Alexandros Papadiamandis. The main character of the novel, Aima, is a very young girl. We meet her in the Gypsies' cottage among people she believes to be her family. Yet she has her doubts about that and spends the rest of her life trying to ascertain who her parents really were. From the very introduction, the reader suspects that Plethon will have something to do with the girl's fate.

Plethon appears in Papadiamandis's novel as a half-fictional character.<sup>16</sup> According to Papadiamandis, at the time of the fall of Constantinople he was about sixty years old. He travelled to the East with the recognition of the Byzantine emperors and despots, presenting himself as a Jew or a Gypsy leading the life of a vagabond. After a brief stay back in the Peloponnesus, he visited Rhodes, where we encounter him fleeing persecution at the hands of the local population or the Franks.

Until the very end, Plethon considered it his duty to support the Byzantine state. His deepest concern was revealed in his conversation with Scholarios, who, again, according to Papadiamandis, visited Plethon in Mystra on the eve of the fall of Constantinople. They both agreed that Constantinople was in great danger. Plethon's main concern was that foreign soldiers were not reliable and should be replaced with Byzantines.<sup>17</sup> Papadiamandis's Plethon was

<sup>14</sup> Κωνσταντίνος Σάθας, *Νεοελληνική φιλολογία. Βιογραφίαι των εν τοις γράμμασι διαλαμπάντων Ελλήνων, από της καταλύσεως της βυζαντινής αυτοκρατορίας μέχρι της Ελληνικής Εθνεγερσίας (1453–1821)* (εν Αθήναις: εκ της Τυπογραφίας των τέκνων Ανδρέου Κορομηλά, 1868), pp.1–12.

<sup>15</sup> Κωνσταντίνος Δημαράς, “Η διακόσμηση της ελληνικής ιδεολογίας” in *Ιστορία του ελληνικού έθνους* edited by Γιώργος Χριστόπουλος and Ιωάννης Μπαστιάς (Αθήνα: Εκδοτική Αθηνών, 1977), pp.398–409 (402–403).

<sup>16</sup> For the discrepancies between the *Dodecalogue* and the state of research regarding Plethon's life see Σοφοκλής Γ. Δημητρακόπουλος, “Ο Πλήθων στην ελληνική λογοτεχνία” in *Πρακτικά διεθνούς συνεδρίου αφιερωμένου στον Πλήθωνα*, pp.363–383 (367).

<sup>17</sup> Αλέξανδρος Παπαδιαμάντης, *Η Γυφτοπούλα* (εν Αθήναις: Εκδοτικός Οίκος Γεωργίου Βασιλείου, 1912), pp.123–124.



a patriot.<sup>18</sup> Towards the end of May 1453, he met the mighty men of Laconia; convincing them to offer their military help to the dying capital, he urged:

Inspire your men with faith and enthusiasm. Hasten towards the greatest danger in the most honourable struggle. Endure. The fatherland is grateful to us. Remember that you are descendants of Leonidas and the three hundred [Spartans]. And, as the majority of those men did not even know that Leonidas had ever existed, and who the three hundred were, Plethon, on the spur of the moment, felt obliged to recount to each of them the story of the Battle of Thermopylae.<sup>19</sup>

Plethon's mission was to restore the ancient cult. It was commanded to him by the gods.<sup>20</sup> It was believed that he wanted to popularise the pagan religion among the whole nation.<sup>21</sup> But the nation did not wish to be reconverted. In 1448, riots broke out, during which the mob was ready to burn the philosopher's house.<sup>22</sup>

In his refuge, he had gathered paraphernalia related to the pagan cult.<sup>23</sup>

George Gemistos, or Plethon, lived in a cave, the interior of which he had arranged according to ancient Greek tradition. Images and idols of the gods, nothing else was salvaged from the fanatic lunacy of the monks, ancient symbols, emblems, altars, offering places, thyrsi, owls, nothing was missing of the classical entourage in the cave of Plethon.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Δημητρακόπουλος, "Ο Πλήθων στην ελληνική λογοτεχνία", p.366.

<sup>19</sup> "Εμπνεύσατε εις τους άνδρας σας πίστιν και ενθουσιασμόν. Πορεύεσθε εις τον μέγιστον κίνδυνον και εις τον ενδοξότατον αγώνα. Εγκαρτερήσατε. Η πατρίς ευγνωμονεί ήδη υμίν. Αναμνήσθητε ότι είσθε απόγονοι του Λεωνίδα και των τριακοσίων. Και επειδή οι πλείστοι των ανδρών εκείνων ηγνόνουν αν υπήρξε ποτε Λεωνίδας και τίνες ήσαν οι τριακόσιοι, ο Πλήθων αυτοσχεδίων ηναγκάζετο να διηγείται εις ένα έκαστον αυτών την ιστορίαν της μάχης των Θερμοπυλών." *Ibid.*, p.221.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.252–255.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.62.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.256.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.114.

<sup>24</sup> "Ο Γεώργιος Γεμιστός ή Πλήθων κατ'όκει εν τω Πληθωνείω άντρω, όπερ είχε φροντίσει να παρασκευάση ευαρόμστος προς τας αρχαίας ελληνικάς παραδόσεις. Είδωλα και ξόανα θεών,

This is the place where Plethon and Aima meet. The girl feels there is something satanic about the entourage and her host.<sup>25</sup> Aima was searching for her roots, as the Greek nation was searching for its identity. She was torn between Orthodox society, which excluded her but also gave her a sense of familiarity, and the strange figure of a prophet-philosopher, who seemed to know the truth about her origins, but whose presence caused her anxiety. As a Gypsy, she had no roots and she was considered inferior by the native Peloponnesians.<sup>26</sup> She was not bound by any religion because "the Gypsies have no church" (οι γύφτοι δεν έχουν εκκλησίαν).<sup>27</sup> This brought her closer to Plethon: "He was free and had no worldly commitments to the spiritual domain" (Ήτο ελεύθερος και ουδεμία υλική υποχρέωσις συνέδεεν αυτόν προς το πνευματικόν καθεστώς).<sup>28</sup> Neither Aima nor the reader will ever know her true story with certainty. Nevertheless, Papadiamandis claims that she might be the spawn of ancient gods or demons and that she may owe her very existence to Plethon himself.<sup>29</sup> This is a surprising conclusion chosen by a writer bound so strongly to his Byzantine and Orthodox heritage.

As Robert Peckham writes, "By focusing on the ambiguous historical figure of Plethon (...) Papadiamandis's novel foregrounds the interrelated issues of religion, national identity and the prevalent nineteenth-century conception of cultural continuity."<sup>30</sup> The identity of the Modern Greek state had been founded on an ideological basis rooted in the Enlightenment and popularised among others by Adamandios Korais.<sup>31</sup> The domination of this doctrine was

τα μόνα άτινα είχαν διασωθή εκ της φανατικής μανίας των μοναχών, σύμβολα και εμβλήματα αρχαία, βωμοί, θυμέλαι, θύρσοι, γλαύκες, ουδέν εκ των κλασσικών εμβλημάτων έλειπεν εκ του άντρου του Πλήθωνος." *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.249.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28 and below.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.39.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.117.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.268–275.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Shannon Peckham, "Papadiamantis, ecumenism and the theft of Byzantium" in *Byzantium and the modern Greek identity* edited by David Ricks and Paul Magdalino (Aldershot: Ashgate 1998), pp.91–104.

<sup>31</sup> Άννα Ταμπάκη, *Περί νεοελληνικού Διαφωτισμού. Ρεύματα ιδεών & διάλογοι επικοινωνίας με τη δυτική σκέψη* (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Ergo, 2004), pp.41–59; Δημήτριος Χαραλαμπίδης,

challenged soon by the Romantic Movement. Although both shared a perception of the past in which Antiquity was seen as a positive point of reference for Greek civilisation, only the Romantics—and not before the 1850s—saw the Byzantine Empire positively as well.<sup>32</sup> Romantic Hellenism, as perceived by Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, was an organic totality composed of three “sub-Hellenisms”: the ancient, the medieval and the modern. Byzantium was an essential stage in the development of the Greek nation and denying this fact was “An approach of national suicide” ( *Απόπειρα εθνικής αυτοκτονίας* ). The main contribution of the period was the Empire’s protection of Christianity, which enabled it to spread throughout the world. Byzantium is a part of Greek-Orthodox civilisation or, as Spyridon Zambelios would say, of Hellenic-Christian culture ( *ελληνοχριστιανισμός* ).<sup>33</sup> For decades, romantic Hellenism was a foundation of Modern Greek identity. The political context of Greek Romanticism was that of the ideology of the “Great Idea” ( *Μεγάλη Ιδέα* ), of the expansion of the Greek state so that it encompassed every native Greek territory within its borders.

In 1884, when the *Gypsy Girl* was published, the Paparrigopulean schema was a *communis opinio* among the Greek intellectuals. Presenting the events of the year 1453 in connection with the story of the heretic philosopher holding a key to the problem of the main character’s identity can be read as challenging the dominant historical narrative. Papadiamandis does not dot the i’s or cross the t’s. Nothing is definite in his novel. He seems to argue that it is hazardous to treat historical periods as mere components. Antiquity and Byzantium had dynamics of their own, and they may also have had cultures of their own.

Ο Αδαμάντιος Κοραΐς και η πολιτική (Αθήνα: Κάκτος, 2002), pp.89–97; Πασχάλης Μ. Κιτρομηλίδης, “Οι φάσεις της πολιτικής σκέψης του Κοραΐ. Πρόταση ερμηνείας” in *Διήμερο Κοραΐ 29 και 30 Απριλίου 1983. Οι προσεγγίσεις στη γλωσσική θεωρία, τη σκέψη και το έργο του Κοραΐ* (Αθήνα: Κέντρο Νεοελληνικών Ερευνών ΕΙΕ, 1984), pp.102–112; Λουκία Δρούλια, “Τα πολιτικά φυλλάδια του Κοραΐ” in *Διήμερο Κοραΐ 29 και 30 Απριλίου 1983*, pp.216–236.

<sup>32</sup> Φώτης Δημητράκοπουλος, *Βυζάντιο και νεοελληνική διανόηση στα μέσα του δεκάτου ενάτου αιώνα* (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη, 1996), pp.28–30.

<sup>33</sup> Καραθανάσης, *Η τρίσημη ενότητα του ελληνισμού*, pp.33–57; George Huxley, “Aspects of modern Greek historiography of Byzantium” in *Byzantium and the modern Greek identity*, pp.15–23; Βαγγέλης Δ. Καραμανωλάκης, *Η συγκρότηση της ιστορικής επιστήμης και η διδασκαλία της ιστορίας στο πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών (1837–1932)*, Ιστορικό Αρχείο Ελληνικής Νεολαίας Γενικής Γραμματείας Νέας Γενιάς, 42 (Αθήνα: Κέντρο Νεοελληνικών Ερευνών Ε.Ι.Ε., 2006), pp.100–106.

Modern identity cannot be reduced to the sum of the historical experience of three thousand years.

### Raise anew the fallen shrine of Hellas

Kostis Palamas also provides us with a more complex perspective. Like Papadiamandis’s *Gypsy Girl*, Palamas’s *Dodecalogue of a Gypsy* is set in the period directly preceding the fall of Constantinople. Plethon is at that time a nobleman of advanced age. He is right in the centre of a passionate conflict. He is present in the poem only as the object of this controversy. In fact, the sixth chapter is a poetic rendering of the scene of the burning of Plethon’s *Laws*. The chapter, the λόγος, is in fact a διάλογος, a dialogue between Christians and pagans. According to the former, Plethon poses a threat to their identity:

O Hellenism [originally – Ρωμιουσύνη ( Romiosyne )], forlorn, embittered, slave, [...]

Your breast is pierced, before you waits the grave! [...]  
The atheist’s vile treatise cast it there;  
Into the blaze that book of Satan’s lure!  
Or it will trap in its deceiving snare  
All that remains of you unscathed and pure.<sup>34</sup>

The polytheists reply from the other side of the bonfire, praising their master for bringing back the wisdom of the ancients in the face of such life-hating Christians.

May you be ever blessed, you who attempted  
To raise anew the fallen shrine of Hellas  
Upon your shoulders’ mighty span!<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> “Έρμη, σκλάβα, πικρή Ρωμιουσύνη, [...] / σε τρυπάει στην καρδιά και σε σβήνει. [...] / Κάψε το έργο του άθεου που το ‘χει / Σατανάς φυσημένο / προτού πέσει στο πλάνο του βρόχι / κι ό,τι μένει σου αγνό και παρθένο” in Κωστής Παλαμάς, *Άπαντα* (Αθήνα: Μπίρης, 1963), p.358; translation by Theodore Ph. Stephanides and George C. Katsimbalis in Kostas Palamas *The Twelve Words of the Gypsy* (Memphis, Tennessee: Memphis State University Press, 1975), p.111.

<sup>35</sup> “Μακαρισμένος εσύ που μελέτησες / να τον ορθώσεις απάνω στους ώμους σου / το συντριμμένο ναό των Ελλήνων!” in Παλαμάς, *Άπαντα*, p.360; Palamas *The Twelve Words...*, p.113.

Both sides formulate their accusations through psalms. There is also a separate psalm sang by the gypsy. According to him the conflict is futile because the ancient wisdom cannot be defeated – it has become the heritage of all of Europe, of the East and the West. Antiquity itself may not be brought back to life. The gypsy rejects neither the Hellenic nor Christian heritages. He points out the lack of vitality of both. The solution may be found in the mountains of Thrace and among the peaks of Epirus. The people who live there do not constitute a nation; they do not know books. They are, rather, like pagan statues: they have vitality, they have resolve, and they worship Christ. Thus speaks the gypsy, who declares that he is the voice of the beautiful truth. He is also quite positive that his quarrelsome audience will rejoice one day.

The value of Antiquity and Byzantium was dubious and relative for Palamas. On the one hand, he proclaimed Antiquity dead, while on the other he stressed the influence that the ancient heritage had and still has on European culture. Byzantium was portrayed decaying on the eve of its fall in his *Dodecalogue*. It was a civilisation that should be overturned and replaced with a civilisation of love, wisdom and science.<sup>36</sup>

It has been argued that, for Palamas, Plethon was a symbol of freethinking who brought to Greek culture a balance between Orthodoxy and Antiquity.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, Anthony Hirst stresses that the poet's works focused on the difficulties of endeavouring to create a synthesis of Ancient and Byzantine that would be capable of serving as a solid basis for a modern identity.<sup>38</sup> This interpretation is more persuasive. Palamas, as Papadiamandis before him, allowed the components of the Paparrigopulean schema to live their own life and speak their own words. And they revealed their true identity. Greekness had been apportioned between both non-Christian Hellenism and Byzantine Romiosyne ( *Ρωμιосύνη* ). Unlike Papadiamandis, Palamas seemed to point in a possible direction – towards the crude people of the mountains, neither Byzantine nor Ancient in origin, but dignified through their Christianity and classical heritage. Plethon's legacy is essential for their future identity. If it became dominant, however, it would pose a threat.

<sup>36</sup> Anthony Hirst, "Two cheers in the poetry of Palamas and Cavafy" in *Byzantium and the modern Greek identity*, edited by David Ricks and Paul Magdalino (Aldershot: Ashgate 1998), pp.105–117. See also Beaton, *Εισαγωγή στη Νεότερη Ελληνική Λογοτεχνία*, pp.120–129.

<sup>37</sup> Θεοδόσης Πυλαρινός, "Ο Γεώργιος Γεμιστός-Πλήθων στον *Δωδεκάλογο του Ύψφτου του Κωστή Παλαμά*" in *Πρακτικά διεθνούς συνεδρίου αφιερωμένου στον Πλήθωνα*, pp.385–393.

<sup>38</sup> Anthony Hirst, "Two cheers in the poetry of Palamas and Cavafy", pp.106–109.

## Fight for the faith and for the Fatherland

The turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a period in Greek culture during which Plethon also attracted attention as a subject of scientific and popular publications. One of these was published in 1909 by the aforementioned Agisilaos Karambasis in the periodical *New Sion* ( *Νέα Σιών* ), an official journal of the Jerusalem patriarchate.<sup>39</sup> In Karambasis's opinion, the philosopher had, through his apostasy, sacrificed Christianity for the sake of Hellenism.<sup>40</sup> Following his vision for the resurrection of the nation would thus be one-sided and short-sighted. "The synthesis of those two forces, of Hellenism and Christianity was a design of resurrecting a modern nation of Hellenes and it was expressed in a glorious commitment: 'Fight for the faith and for the Fatherland.'"<sup>41</sup>

It seems symptomatic that the same summons, associated with Alexandros Ipsilandis, "Μάχου υπέρ πίστεως και πατρίδος", was also present in another Plethon-related publication printed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this time in Athens. Its author, Neoklis Kazazis, argued that, although incomplete, Plethon's proposal was necessary to the process of forming a nation:

From the ashes of Turkish-ruled Constantinople, from the flames that consumed Plethon's 'Laws' on the orders of Scholarios, a new Hellenism will shine, Hellenic and Christian at the same time, not one-sided, as its representatives wished, sacrificing one idea for the sake of another, Christianity for the sake of Hellenism or the other way round. Such was the design of the resurrection of Hellenism from its ashes. It was fully expressed later by a noble and uncompromising war-cry of the Greek rebirth 'Fight for the faith and for the Fatherland.'<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Αγησίλαος Σ. Καραμπάσης, "Το φιλοσοφικόν σύστημα του Πλήθωνος", *Νέα Σιών*, 9 (1909), p.220 and below, 408 and below. Later the publication has been reprinted in Crete Αγησίλαος Σ. Καραμπάσης, *Το φιλοσοφικόν σύστημα του Πλήθωνος* (εν Ηρακλείω: Τυπογραφείου Στυλ. Μ. Αλεξίου, 1910). See also Λίνος Γ. Μπενάκης, "Ο Πλήθων στην νεοελληνική σκέψη και έρευνα (1900–1975)" in *Πρακτικά διεθνούς συνεδρίου αφιερωμένου στον Πλήθωνα*, pp.33–49 (37).

<sup>40</sup> Καραμπάσης, *Το φιλοσοφικόν σύστημα του Πλήθωνος* (1910), pp.15–17.

<sup>41</sup> "Η σύνθεσις όμως των δύο τούτων μεγάλων δυνάμεων, του Ελληνισμού και του Χριστιανισμού υπήρξε το πρόγραμμα του επαναβιώσαντος νεωτέρου έθνους των Ελλήνων, όπερ θαυμασίως διευτώθη διά της ρήτρας 'Μάχου υπέρ πίστεως και πατρίδος'" in Καραμπάσης, *Το φιλοσοφικόν σύστημα του Πλήθωνος* (1910), p.17.

<sup>42</sup> "Από των ερειπίων της υπό τους Τούρκους βασιλευούσης, από της πυράς της καταστροφής της περί 'Νόμων' συγγραφής του Πλήθωνος διαταγή του Σχολαρίου έμελλε να εκλάμψη ο νεώτερος Ελληνισμός, ελληνικός τε άμα και χριστιανικός, και ούχι μονομερής, ως ήχοντο

The times required a clash of two antithetic conceptions: a renaissance of Plethon's pagan Hellenism alongside and in antithesis with the crude Christian spirit personified by Georgios Scholarios.

But Plethon's story is an unfinished one. For Kazazis, the primary axiom of history is the development of the nations.<sup>43</sup> In this process, the Greeks should learn from the examples of other strong nations. Especially instructive was the example of recent German history. On the eve of Bismarck's era, the Germans, according to Kazazis, were spiritually ready for the new national order.<sup>44</sup> Their leader could then lead them towards national unity.<sup>45</sup>

Although Plethon's Platonism was, on its own, insufficient for a Hellenic-Christian synthesis to emerge, it was a vital element of the antithesis from which that synthesis could emerge.<sup>46</sup> Once this synthesis had been achieved, the Greeks could then march towards national unity like Bismarck's Germany.<sup>47</sup> In Plethon's times, the conditions had been ripe to achieve it. Kazazis emphasized the mostly questionable opinion that the Peloponnesus was ethnically homogenous. Even if Mazaris reported the existence of other groups, these were, according to Kazazis, quickly assimilated.<sup>48</sup> However, there were no cultural grounds for unity. The culture was still antithetical and national synthesis had not yet been achieved.

αυτόν και επεζήτησαν οι τελευταίοι αντιπρόσωποι αυτού θυσιάζοντες την μίαν ιδέαν εις την άλλην, τον Χριστιανισμόν εις τον Ελληνισμόν και τανάπαλιν. Τοιούτο υπήρξε το πρόγραμμα του αναβιώσαντος από της τέφρας Ελληνισμού και το οποίον τοσούτον ευγενώς και απαραμιλλώς διευτυπώθη βραδύτερον διά του κηρύγματος της ελληνικής παλιγγενεσίας 'Μάχου υπέρ πίστεως και πατρίδος' in Καζάζης, Γεώργιος Γεμιστός Πλήθων και ο κοινωνισμός κατά την αναγέννηση, p.15.

<sup>43</sup> Πώργος Κόκκινος, "Η ιστορική κουλτούρα της ελληνικής ακαδημαϊκής διανόησης του τέλους του 19ου αιώνα και η εμπέδωση του τρισήμου σχήματος της ελληνικής ιστορίας. Η θεωρία ιστορίας του καθηγητή της Νομικής Σχολής Νεοκλή Καζάζη (1849–1936)" in *Ο Χαρίλαος Τρικούπης και η εποχή του. Πολιτικές επιδιώξεις και κοινωνικές συνθήκες*, edited by Καίτη Αρώνη-Τσίχλη and Λύντια Τρίχα (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Παπαζήση, 2000), pp.425–486.

<sup>44</sup> Νεοκλής Καζάζης, *Εκ Γερμανίας. Σελίδες εκ των αγώνων υπέρ της Γερμανικής ενότητας*, (Αθήνησι: Τύποις Αφών Περρή, 1898), p.271.

<sup>45</sup> Καζάζης, *Εκ Γερμανίας*, p.277 and below.

<sup>46</sup> Καζάζης, Γεώργιος Γεμιστός Πλήθων και ο κοινωνισμός κατά την αναγέννηση, p.15.

<sup>47</sup> Καζάζης, *Εκ Γερμανίας*, p.277 and below.

<sup>48</sup> Καζάζης, Γεώργιος Γεμιστός Πλήθων και ο κοινωνισμός κατά την αναγέννηση, pp.21–22.

Karambasis compared Plethon's point of view on the relation between Antiquity and Byzantium to that of Gibbon. The magnitude of ancient civilisation had succumbed to the domination of Christianity.<sup>49</sup> The nation would be reborn from the ashes of ancient culture.<sup>50</sup> This belief is depicted in Palamas's poetic vision in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Dodecalogue of a Gypsy*, the prophecy of the resurrection of Greece.<sup>51</sup> But for both writers, such a one-sided renaissance is dangerous for the existence of Hellenic culture. Karambasis and Kazazis preach a simple solution – synthesis. The poetical outlook is quite different. Palamas's people of the mountains are removed from both Antiquity and Byzantium. Papadiamandis gives no simple answer.

### Almost Orthodox

Those four examples illustrate how Plethon was utilized in the literary and philosophical output of the Generation of 1880. This was the outlook of the elite. If we agree that the affirmation of the national historical narrative constitutes a vital element of Greek identity at that time, Gemistos becomes a symbol of the crisis of this romantic Hellenic identity among this elite. Is it possible to examine a broader circle than only the exclusive milieu of the intellectuals? Is this identity crisis among the elite a symptom of a broader cultural crisis in Greece of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century?

In the first decades of the Modern Greek state, the dissemination and circulation of conscious historical knowledge among the Greeks was restricted to the intellectual and economic elite. Scholarly impact on the popular perception of history was limited.<sup>52</sup> In the following decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century this changed. The constitution of 1864 gave the Greeks the freedom of association.<sup>53</sup> Soon the public life of the country was enriched by the phenomenon of συλλογομανία,

<sup>49</sup> Καραμπάσης, *Το φιλοσοφικόν σύστημα του Πλήθωνος* (1910), pp.11–15.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.17–18.

<sup>51</sup> Παλαμάς, *Άπαντα*, pp.396–400. Palamas *The Twelve Words...*, pp.187–195.

<sup>52</sup> Δημητράκοπουλος, *Βυζάντιο και νεοελληνική διανόηση στα μέσα του δεκάτου ενάτου αιώνα*, Αθήνα 1996, pp.20–27.

<sup>53</sup> ΦΕΚ Α' 48 (1864), p.302, Art.11.



an equivalent of the German *Vereinseuphorie*, a mania for association.<sup>54</sup> This was the opportunity to create fora in which both the elites and the common people could meet, and the intellectuals were very eager to seize this opportunity. The mission of the university was broadened. The historical narrative became more available. New, inclusive ways of popularisation were proposed<sup>55</sup> and tested.<sup>56</sup> The void was filled by lectures and speeches delivered in public places during association meetings on national holidays, as well as in churches. Topics related to the Greek past were among the most popular. They were usually accompanied by commentary on current affairs.

Byzantine history was also utilized in this context:

Byzantium and Hellenism meet on common political ground. They both desire to reconstruct the Parthenon and to open the gates of the Platonic Academy. Byzantium and Hellenism, like Noah's Ark, have salvaged and preserved the Christian faith safe and sound from its enemies. [...] Oh holy and admirable Fatherland, we promise this holy night that we will raise the banner of victory and restore it on the battlements of Byzantium crying 'Εν τούτω νικά'!!!<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Ioannis A. Tassopoulos, "Constitutionalism and the Ideological Conversion to National Unity under the Greek Constitution of 1864" in *Ways to Modernity in Greece and Turkey: Encounters with Europe, 1850–1950*, edited by Anna Frangoudaki and Caglar Keyder (London, New York: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007), pp.9–25 (9).

<sup>55</sup> Σπυρίδων Π. Λάμπρος, *Νέοι ορίζοντες εν τη ιστορική ερεύνη. Λόγος απαγγελθείς εν τω Εθνικώ Πανεπιστημίω τη 15η Ιανουαρίου 1905* (εν Αθήναις: τύποις Π. Δ. Σακελλαρίου, 1905), p.7.

<sup>56</sup> Καραμανωλάκης, *Η συγκρότηση της ιστορικής επιστήμης και η διδασκαλία της ιστορίας στο πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών (1837–1932)*, pp.261–270; Demetra Tzanaki, *Women and Nationalism in the Making of Modern Greece. The Founding of the Kingdom to the Greco-Turkish War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan in association with St Anthony's College, Oxford, 2009), p.147.

<sup>57</sup> "Το βυζάντιο πλέον και ο Ελληνισμός συναντώνται επί του αυτού πολιτικού εδάφους, ποθούντες την ανέγερσιν ενός Παρθενώνος και την άνοιξιν των θυρών της Ακαδημίας του Πλάτωνος. Το Βυζάντιον και ο Ελληνισμός, ως κιβωτός του Νώε, διέσωσαν και διέτηρσαν αμίαντον και απρόσβλητον κατά των εχθρών την Χριστιανικήν πίστιν. [...] Ω! Ναι, αγία και μεγαλειόβουλος Πατρίς, σοι υποσχόμεθα την νύκτα ταύτην ιεράν και μεγάλην, ότι θέλωμεν αναλάβει το Αβάρον της νίκης και αναστυλώσῃ αὐτό εἰς τὰς ἐπάλξεις του Βυζαντίου, κραυγάζοντες 'ΕΝ ΤΟΥΤΩ ΝΙΚΑ.' [...]" in Δ. Ι. Βελιανίτης, *Η 25η Μαρτίου Λόγος πανηγυρικός εκφωνηθείς εν τη αιθούση του εν Κερκύρα δραματικού συλλόγου την 25 Μαρτίου 1883* (Εν Κερκύρα: Εκ του Τυπογραφείου "ο Κοραΐς", 1883), p.8 and 21.

Those words were pronounced during a meeting of the Dramatic Association of Kerkyra on 25 March 1883. In 1882, another speaker, in an address on the occasion of the baptism of the heir to the throne, Constantine, stressed the rights of Greek kings to the Palaeologan throne and the expectations of triumph in Constantinople.<sup>58</sup> In the forum of the Association 'Concord' ( *Ομόνοια* ), Constantine Palaeologos was presented as a medieval Leonidas.<sup>59</sup> Enlightenment-rooted voices existed<sup>60</sup> but were rarely directed at a popular audience. The widespread rhetorical culture presented Byzantium in the context of the "Great Idea" and as an element of the Paparrigopulean schema.

The aforementioned Neoklis Kazazis was among the speakers fanning the patriotic flame among his audience. A war was in progress. The acropoleis of Hellenism were besieged. Kazazis was not a passive observer. As a leader of the "Hellenism" ( *Ελληνισμός* )<sup>61</sup> society, he was committed to fight the enemies of Orthodoxy, for these were the enemies of the Hellenic race.<sup>62</sup> For Kazazis, Orthodoxy is not just a matter that concerns the church. The holiday of the Three Hierarchs was for him a symbol of continuity of the tradition of science from ancient to modern times.<sup>63</sup> Five years later, on the same occasion, also in Athens, but this time in the interiors of the metropolitan church, Kazazis confirmed that the Patriarch of Constantinople was a visible symbol of the Hellenic idea. Scholarios, the first *ethnarch*, was a forerunner of modern Hellenism, and Mark Eugenicos, even more so. The latter, borne on the wings of

<sup>58</sup> Άγγελος Γ. Σιγάλας, *Λόγος πανηγυρικός επί τη βαπτίσει του διαδόχου Κωνσταντίνου και ενέργειαι προς κατάταξιν εθελοντών, οἱς προστίθενται επίσημα έγγραφα αναφερόμενα εἰς αὐτόν και την οικογένειαν αὐτοῦ* (Αθήνησι: Εκ του Τυπογραφείου "ο Κοραΐς", 1883), p.13.

<sup>59</sup> Μ. Βελέλης, *Λόγος πανηγυρικός εκφωνηθείς εν τω Συλλόγῳ "Ομόνοια" κατὰ την εορτὴν της εθνικῆς παλιγγενεσίας* (Εν Κερκύρα: Εκ του Τυπογραφείου "ο Κοραΐς", 1882), pp.7–8.

<sup>60</sup> Κωνσταντίνος Φρεαρίτης, *Λόγος επί τη 25 Μαρτίου του έτους 1821 εκφωνηθείς ενώπιον του Εμπορικού και Βιομηχανικού Συλλόγου* (Εν Αθήναις: Εκ του Τυπογραφείου Ν. Γ. Πάσσαρη), 1880, pp.5–6.

<sup>61</sup> Κόκκινος, "Η ιστορική κουλτούρα...", pp.425–437.

<sup>62</sup> Νεοκλής Καζάζης, *Το Δηνάριον της Ορθοδοξίας. Περί των κινδυνευόντων προπυργίων της Ελληνικής Ορθοδόξου Εκκλησίας και περί των μέσων της ενισχύσεως αὐτῶν. Διάλεξις γενομένη τη 18 Μαρτίου Ε. Ε. εν τη Μεγάλῃ Αἰθούσῃ της Νομικῆς Σχολῆς* (Εν Αθήναις: Τύποις Π. Δ. Σακελλαρίου, 1901), pp.3–6 and 10–12.

<sup>63</sup> Νεοκλής Καζάζης, *Περί της εκπαιδευτικῆς δυνάμεως της επιστήμης. Λόγος εκφωνηθείς εν τη Μεγάλῃ Αἰθούσῃ του Πανεπιστημίου τη 30ῃ Ιανουαρίου ἐπὶ τη εορτῇ των Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν* (Εν Αθήναις: Τύποις Π. Δ. Σακελλαρίου, 1898).

ecstatic national prophesy and in the name of Orthodoxy, refused to bow to the pope. Against this background, the attitude of Bessarion was regrettable.<sup>64</sup> And Plethon was just another wanderer who sought laurels in foreign lands.<sup>65</sup>

Another scholar, Anastasios Diomidis-Kiriakos, during his speech in the Athenian Metropolitan Church in 1885, argued that it was Byzantium that had preserved ancient knowledge for our times. Interestingly, Plethon was mentioned as a vital link in this chain.<sup>66</sup> The same speaker elaborated on this subject again in 1905 in the same holy place in his lecture *On the Harmony of Religion and Science* stating that “To a great extent it was Plethon, along with Michael Apostolis, who renewed the ancient love for Platonism [...]” ( *Ο πολύς Πλήθων ανανεοί μετά του Μιχαήλ Αποστόλη την αρχαίαν αγάπην προς τον Πλατωνισμόν [...]* ).<sup>67</sup> Eight years later, under similar circumstances, he also expressed his admiration of Plethon for his contribution to the dissemination of Hellenic philosophy in the West.<sup>68</sup> This admiration was not formed in ignorance of Plethon's paganism; Diomidis-Kiriakos was a Professor of Theology at the Athenian University. In his *Church History*, he claimed that Gemistos “[...] pursued the total war against the Aristotelian philosophy that had been transmitted by systematic display of the Christian theology” ( [...] ανέλαβε πόλεμον εξοντώσεως κατά της αριστοτελικής φιλοσοφίας, της παραδεγμένης ούσης εν τη συστηματική εκθέσει της χριστιανικής θεολογίας. ). He quoted Trapezuntios and referred to the pagan content of the *Laws*.<sup>69</sup> Interestingly enough, in his *Essay on Church History for the Students of Theology*,

<sup>64</sup> Νεοκλής Καζάζης, *Η Ελληνική Εκκλησία και η εθνική αναγέννησις. Λόγος* (Εν Αθήναις: Εκ των Τυπογραφείων “του Κράτους”, 1903), pp.11–13.

<sup>65</sup> *Idem*, *Το ελληνικόν πνεῦμα εν τη Ιστορία. Λόγος πανηγυρικός* (Εν Αθήναις: Εκ του Τυπογραφείου Χ. Ν. Φιλαδελφείως, 1884), pp.39–40.

<sup>66</sup> Αναστάσιος Διομήδης-Κυριακός, *Λόγος κατ’ εντολήν της Ακαδημαϊκής Συγκλήτου* (Εν Αθήναις: Εκ του τυπογραφείου του Αττικού Μουσείου, 1885), pp.8–10.

<sup>67</sup> *Idem*, *Περί αρμονίας Θρησκείας και Επιστήμης. Λόγος εις το μνημόσυνον υπέρ των ενεργετών του Πανεπιστημίου* (Εν Αθήναις: Εκ του Τυπογραφείου Αριστομένους Ζ. Διαλησιμά, 1905), pp.22–23.

<sup>68</sup> *Idem*, *Λόγος εις το υπέρ των ενεργετών του Πανεπιστημίου μνημόσυνον* (Εν Αθήναις: Εκ του Τυπογραφείου Σ. Κ. Βλαστού, 1913), p.19.

<sup>69</sup> *Idem*, *Εκκλησιαστική ιστορία από της ιδρύσεως της εκκλησίας μέχρι των καθ’ ημάς χρόνων εκ διαφόρων πηγών ερανισθείσα* (Εν Αθήναις: Εκ του Τυπογραφείου των καταστημάτων Ανέστη Κωνσταντινίδου, 1898), p.76, 96, 121.

Diomidis-Kiriakos admitted only that Plethon “loved Platonic philosophy more than Christianity itself” ( *ηγάπα την πλατωνικήν φιλοσοφίαν πλείον και αυτού του χριστιανισμού* ).<sup>70</sup> All that the audience in the Metropolitan church needed to know was that Plethon existed and that he was important. Students could be taught the further detail that his relationship with Christian dogma was extravagant. The whole disturbing truth was available only to the scholars.

Kazazis seems to utilize a similar strategy. Speaking to the Athenian youth, he mentions Plethon as one of the teachers instructing the West about the mysteries of Hellenic philosophy:

Those great guides [to Hellenic wisdom], Chrysoloras, Gazis, Bessarion, Plethon Gemistos, who was the most prominent of the Platonic philosophers of the West, Argyropoulos and Chalkokondyles, Laskares and Mousouros, they revealed the Hellenic spirit and helped the peoples of the West to comprehend the truth [...]<sup>71</sup>

He seems to follow the pattern tested already by the Romantics: namely, featuring Plethon in a carefully crafted discourse intended for the broader public.<sup>72</sup> According to Zambelios's opinion pronounced half century earlier:

Under the protection of those tireless Philhellenes [of the Medici family], Theodoros Gazis, George Trapezuntios, two Argyropuloi, Chalkokondyles, Bessarion, Secundius the Euboean, Gemistos and others who had reached [Italy] before the fall [of the City], with no exception of the wise Scholarios, who was elected the first Ecumenical

<sup>70</sup> *Idem*, *Δοκίμιον εκκλησιαστικής ιστορίας χάριν των περί την θεολογίαν σπουδαζόντων* (Εν Αθήναις: no publisher, 1878), 209. see also *idem*, *Στοιχειώδης εκκλησιαστική ιστορία χάριν της εν τοις Ανωτέροις Εκπαιδευτηρίοις μαθητεούσης νεολαίας* (Εν Αθήναις: Τύποις Αντωνίου Λαμπρινίδου, 1879), p.71.

<sup>71</sup> “Οι μεγάλοι αυτής [της ελληνικής σκέψεως] μυσταγωγοί, Χρυσολωράς και Γαζής, Βησσαρίων και Πλήθων ο Γεμιστός, ο πρώτος των πλατωνικών φιλοσόφων της Δύσεως, ο Αργυρόπουλος και ο Χαλκοκονδύλης, ο Λάσκαρης και ο Μουσούρος, αποκαλύπτουσιν το ελληνικόν πνεῦμα και χειραγωγούσι τους λαούς της Δύσεως εις την κατανόησιν της αληθείας [...]” in Νεοκλής Καζάζης, *Δέκα λόγοι προς την ελληνικήν νεότητα υπό Νεοκλέους Καζάζη* (Αθήνησιν: Τύποις Αφών Περρή, 1900), pp.174–175.

<sup>72</sup> See also Δημήτριος Σάρρος, *Το ελληνικόν πνεῦμα διά μέσου των αιώνων. Λόγος πανηγυρικός απαγγελθείς τη 30 Ιανουαρίου 1913 εν τη Μεγάλη του Γένους Σχολή* (Εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει: Τύποις Αδελφών Γεράρδων 1914), p.30.

Patriarch by Mehmed after the capture [of Constantinople] -- [all these] have found generous hospitality, consolation in their misery and support in their duties as lecturers.<sup>73</sup>

They became “[...] the Apostles of the past for the sake of the future prosperity” ([...] *Απόστολοι του παρελθόντος διά τας αγαθὰς ἐλπίδας του μέλλοντος*).<sup>74</sup>

This observation brings us to an interesting conclusion: Greek intellectuals could question the values of romantic Hellenism within their own sphere—that of the restricted elite. With few exceptions however, they seemed to have tried to prevent the wider public from becoming acquainted with their doubts. And Plethon's case was a litmus test in this regard. He personified the dilemmas of the writers and philosophers, while to everyone else, he was presented as yet another hero who had built the edifice of national pride. Indeed, the Paparrigopulean point of view on Greek history was not rejected.<sup>75</sup> Plethon entered the national pantheon as a teacher of the nation<sup>76</sup> and an admirer of Hellenic philosophy and language in the times extremely difficult for Hellenism.

The hopes for the resurrection of the nation were in vain, they have dragged him, ‘a boundless sea of wisdom’ into wicked pagan dogmas. But even if his followers in Italy and in Sparta have turned the words of hymns into stones of statues, he himself, an honoured friend of Palailogoi, has accompanied Emperor John as an advisor to the Council of Florence. He ‘protected Orthodoxy with powerful and graceful words from his diamond chest’, supporting the weakened Patriarch,

<sup>73</sup> “Υπό την προστασίαν των ακουράστων φιλελλήνων τούτων ο Θεόδωρος Γαζής, οι δύο Χρυσολωράδες, ο Γεώργιος Τραπεζούντιος, οι δύο Αργυρούποιοι, ο Χαλκοκανδύλας, ο Βησσαρίων, ο Ευβοϊκός Σεκονδίνος, και ο Γεμιστός, και έτεροί τινες προ της αλώσεως ελθόντες, μη εξαιρουμένου δε του Σχολαρίου, όστις μετά την πτώσιν και επί Μωάμεθ εξελέχθη Οικουμενικός Πατριάρχης, εύρον υποδοχήν γενναίαν, και παραμυθίαν εις τας δυστυχίας των, και συνδρομήν εις το έργον της διδασκαλίας.” in Σπυριδών Ζαμπέλιος, *Άσματα δημοτικά της Ελλάδος*, p.537.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, *Άσματα δημοτικά της Ελλάδος*, p.537.

<sup>75</sup> Καραμανωλάκης, *Η συγκρότηση της ιστορικής επιστήμης και η διδασκαλία της ιστορίας στο πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών (1837–1932)*, p.207–212.

<sup>76</sup> Κωνσταντίνος Γ. Ζησιού, *Διδάσκαλοι του γένους* (Εν Αθήναις: Τυπογραφείον Αθανασίου Α. Παπασπύρου, 1915), pp.13–16; *Idem*, *Όραμα του Κωνσταντίνου. Λόγος ρηθείς κατ’εντολήν του Πατριωτικού Συλλόγου τη 29 Μαΐου 1907 επέτειω της αλώσεως* (Εν Αθήναις: Τυπογραφείον “του Κράτους”, 1907), p.34.

[and was] unflappable in his opinions backed by the Holy Gospel and the Apostles, which is to say that he was the ‘luminous bliss of the nation and the divine offering.’<sup>77</sup>

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, one of Plethon's polemical texts was found very useful in an anti-Latin publication by Dositheos, patriarch of Jerusalem, entitled *The Book of Love*.<sup>78</sup> In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an anti-Latin pagan very nearly becomes an Orthodox.

In conclusion, I have tried to show that the Greek intellectuals of the period under consideration were very careful to prevent their own identity crisis from spilling over into a broader cultural crisis. A cultural crisis as defined by David Bidney, that is, a suspension of previously prevailing ideological conditions, was not observed, at least in reference to the Paparrigopulean dogma.<sup>79</sup> And Plethon had to comply. His image had to be tailored to fit the audience. It can perhaps be argued that in the works of Papadiamandis or Palamas, Plethon symbolizes the conception of cultural crisis defined by Hannah Arendt. That is, his presence causes a disruption that is difficult to remedy and brings about an inevitable clash with the needs of a philistine audience, who expects a literary work to be a useful product offering a simple solution.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>77</sup> “Άλλ’ ἐλπίδες μάταιοι περί αναστάσεως του γένους παρέσυρον αυτόν, ‘σοφίας απέραντος πέλαγος’, μέχρι της αβούλου γνώμης της ειδωλολατρείας. Άλλ’ αν οι μαθηταί αυτού και εν Ιταλία και εν Σπάρτη απέτεινον λατρείας ύμνους εις αγάλματα, αυτός ο τετιμημένος φίλος των Παλαιολόγων, πορευθείς μετά του αυτοκράτορος Ιωάννου ως συγκλητικός εν Φλωρεντία σύνδοον, ‘την ορθοδοξίαν διά κομψών και ισχυρών λόγων και αδαμαντίνου στήθους υπερήσπισεν’ ενισχύων τον κλονούμενον Πατριάρχη, ο ακλόνητος εν ταις γνώμαις αυτού, επί του Ευαγγελίου και τον Αποστόλων στηριζόμεναις, δικαίως και διά τούτο κληθείς ‘λαμπρά του γένους ευδαιμονία και θείον δώρημα.’” in Ζησιού, *Διδάσκαλοι του γένους*, pp.15–16.

<sup>78</sup> Γεώργιος Γεμιστός Πλήθων, “Πρός τὸ ὑπὲρ τοῦ λατινικοῦ δόγματος βιβλίον” in *Τόμος Ἀγάπης Κατὰ Λατίνων* edited by Δοσίθεος, πατριάρχης Ιεροσολύμων ([Εν Πισίω της Μολδοβλαχίας]: [Διά Διονυσίου μοναχού], 1689), pp.316–320.

<sup>79</sup> David Bidney, “Cultural Crisis”, *American Anthropologist*, 48 (1946), pp.534–552.

<sup>80</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Μίędzy czasem minionym a przyszłym* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Aletheia, 2011), pp.237–254.

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## Index

### A

- Abraham, 158, 380, 383, 386.  
 Adam, 380, 383.  
 Aelius Aristides, 216.  
 Aeschines, 329.  
 Aglaophemus, 279, 381–382.  
 Albert the Great, 295, 300, 307–308.  
 Alberti, Leon Battista, 356, 361.  
 Alexander of Aphrodisias, 49n, 54, 55n, 56, 59, 62, 92, 306.  
 Alexander of Pherae, 329.  
 Alexandre, Charles, 435.  
 Alfons I. von Neapel, 19, 26.  
 Ammonius, 41, 52–54, 57, 59, 303.  
 Anderson, Benedict, 416, 418.  
 Acciaiuoli, Angelo, 328.  
 Annio da Viterbo, 384.  
 Antiochos of Ascalon, 92.  
 Apostolis, Michael, 229, 448.  
 Appianus, 334.  
 Arabatzis, George, 45.  
 Arendt, Hannah, 451.  
 Argyropoulos, John, 278, 306–308, 312–313, 449.  
 Aristos of Chios, 94.  
 Aristotle, 31, 42–43, 46, 48n, 51–52, 53n, 54, 57, 62, 64n, 66, 68, 76–79, 89–91, 95, 100, 105–107, 113–115, 117–121, 123–125, 127–137, 139–140, 173, 194n, 220–224, 226, 276, 283, 293–295, 297–298, 301, 305, 307, 309–313, 328, 338, 359, 382, 403–408.  
 Asclepius, 183, 281n, 282, 284–285.  
 Atticus, 43, 92.  
 Augustine, 282, 287, 301, 381, 387.  
 Avempace, 296, 299.  
 Averroes, 75, 79, 293–313, 382.  
 Avicenna, 296, 299, 305, 311.

### B

- Balbo, Michael ha-Cohen, 305.  
 Balbo, Shabbetai Cohen, 304.  
 Bartholomew of Edessa, 159.  
 Basinio da Parma (Basinius Basini), 17, 363.  
 Batatzes, Ioannes, 421.  
 Bayle, Pierre, 377.  
 Bembo, Pietro, 406.  
 Benzi, Ugo, 302.  
 Bessarion, 32, 46, 52, 54n, 55, 58, 63, 66–67, 114n, 208n, 223n, 262, 275–276, 293, 306–308, 313, 331, 337n, 357, 359–360, 407, 448–449.  
 Bidney, David, 451.  
 Blemmydes, Nicephoros, 212.  
 Bonaventura, 300.  
 Bruni, Leonardo, 74, 261, 264, 266, 268n, 323–334, 339, 341, 343, 356.  
 Bryennios, Joseph, 160.  
 Bulwer, Henry Lytton, 391, 397.  
 Buondelmonti, Cristoforo, 325, 326n.  
 Burchiello, Domenicho, 356.  
 Byron, Lord, 397.

### C

- Camerarius, Joachim, 330.  
 Campanella, Tommaso, 74.  
 Canabutzes, Joannes, 336.  
 Cappone, Neri, 356.  
 Celsus, 44, 152, 169, 171, 183, 216, 219, 233n.  
 Chalkokondyles, Laonikos, 47, 449.  
 Chariander, Georgius, 391.  
 Chrysippos, 76, 92, 94–96.  
 Chrysoloras, Manuel, 83, 449.  
 Cicero, 91, 94, 332, 403, 406.  
 Clement of Alexandria, 77, 94, 177n, 384.  
 Clement of Rome, 193.  
 Clogg, Richard, 408.  
 Codoñer, Juan Signes, 358.  
 Cola di Rienzo, 397.

Comtino, Mordechai ben Eliezer, 305.  
 Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, 333.  
 Constantine XI Palaiologos, 229–230.  
 Copenhaver, Brian, 311.  
 Cristofano dell'Altissimo, 356.  
 Cydones, Demetrios, 159, 170, 176,  
 187, 193, 196, 299, 306.  
 Cydones, Prochoros, 299.  
 Cyriac of Ancona, 11, 31, 326, 361, 391,  
 399, 400n, 426, 427n.  
 Cyril of Alexandria, 145, 146n, 147,  
 152, 155n, 163n.

## D

Damascius, 217.  
 Demetrios Palaiologos, 230–231.  
 Democritus, 283.  
 Demosthenes, 329.  
 Diller, Aubrey, 325, 337.  
 Dio Cassius, 333.  
 Dio Chrysostom, 94.  
 Diodorus Cronus, 48, 55.  
 Diodorus Siculus, 325, 333, 335.  
 Diogenes Laertius, 81, 329, 384.  
 Diomidis–Kiriakos, Anastasios, 433,  
 448–449.  
 Dionysus, 183.  
 Dionysius Areopagite (Pseudo–), 217n,  
 274n, 277, 285.  
 Dioscuri, 183.  
 Dixon, Philip, 375.  
 Donatus, Bernardinus, 391, 406–407.  
 Dositheos, 451.

## E

Elgin, Earl of, 399.  
 Elia Capsali da Candia, 304–305.  
 Elias Del Medigo, 304–305.  
 Elisabetta da Gonzaga, 12, 14.  
 Elissaios, 174n, 298, 302–304, 312, 380.  
 Engel, Mickey, 304.  
 Epictetus, 41, 60, 61n, 83–84, 93, 103.  
 Epicurus, 48n, 77, 86.  
 Epiphanius of Salamis, 156.  
 Eugen IV., 13–14.

Eugenikos, Ioannes, 83.  
 Eugenikos, Mark, 263.  
 Eusebius of Caesarea, 43, 56n, 77,  
 143, 152, 154n, 156, 161–166, 169,  
 171–173, 177, 179n, 182–183, 185,  
 186n, 192–193, 198, 201, 204–5, 207,  
 219, 220n, 233, 287.  
 Eustratios of Nicaea, 102.

## F

Fabricius, Johannes Albertus, 149, 152.  
 Ficino, Marsilio, 47, 68, 74, 82, 207n,  
 268n, 273, 276, 279, 282, 286, 288,  
 293, 300, 309–312, 375, 378, 381  
 –382, 385, 391–392, 394, 407.  
 Filelfo, Francesco, 278.  
 Foscari, Francesco, 327.  
 Foscari, Jacopo, 327, 342.  
 Fra Angelico, 360.  
 Francesco I. Sforza, 15, 21.  
 Fugger, Hieronymus, 405.

## G

Galileo Galilei, 88.  
 Garin, Eugenio, 333.  
 Gellner, Ernest, 416.  
 George Akropolites, 420.  
 George Cedrenus, 335.  
 Georgios Amiroutzes, 262, 301–302,  
 308, 313.  
 Georgios Trapezuntios, 16–17, 114n,  
 208n, 223, 228n, 306, 391, 408,  
 448–449.  
 Giles of Rome, 300.  
 Ginevra d' Este, 15.  
 Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni, 382.  
 Giovio, Paolo, 356.  
 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang, 395–396.  
 Gombrich, Ernst, 357.  
 Gozzoli, Benozzo, 353–354, 356, 360,  
 364.  
 Grass, Günther, 393, 395n, 396.  
 Gregorius IX, 421.  
 Guicciardini, Francesco, 74, 79.

## H

Hankins, James, 264n, 267n, 307, 332,  
 Harles, Gottlieb Christian, 149.  
 Haussig, H.W., 74.  
 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 89, 91.  
 Heidegger, Martin, 395–396.  
 Helena Palaiologina, 422.  
 Heracles, 18n, 229.  
 Hercules, 18n, 183, 336.  
 Hermes Trismegistos, 208, 273,  
 279–288, 381.  
 Hermippus, 283.  
 Hermonymos Christonymos  
 Charitonymos, 143–259.  
 Hermonymus of Sparta, 150.  
 Herodotus, 331.  
 Heumann, Christoph August, 391,  
 408–409.  
 Hierocles, 152.  
 Hirschi, Caspar, 416.  
 Hobsbawm, Eric, 416, 423.  
 Hodus, Humphredus, 150.  
 Homer, 17, 25–26, 216, 325, 420–421.  
 Huet, Pierre–Daniel, 377, 387.  
 Humboldt, Wilhelm von, 398, 404.

## I

Iamblichus -- 41, 57, 59, 67–68, 87,  
 98–99, 217, 288n.  
 Ianos Laskares, 449.  
 Ibn Ezra, 304.  
 Isocrates, 420.  
 Isotta degli Atti, 16, 26, 361.

## J

Jesus Christ, 143, 145, 147–148, 150,  
 152–158, 160–162, 164–165,  
 168–169, 171–172, 177, 180, 181n,  
 182–184, 186, 188–189, 192–193,  
 199, 204–205, 207–209, 211–212,  
 214n, 215, 217, 219, 224, 226,  
 229–230, 233, 287, 383, 427.

Johannes VIII Palaeologus, 29, 31, 128,  
 356.  
 John Duns Scotus, 307.  
 John Chrysostom, 143, 170.  
 John Chrysostom (Ps.–?), 143, 161, 163,  
 165, 178–180, 193, 207, 214, 233,  
 214n, 335.  
 John Italos, 102.  
 John of Damascus, 65, 145, 147, 154,  
 155n, 156.  
 John VI Cantacouzenos, 159–160.  
 Julian the Apostate, 44, 152, 217,  
 378–379, 435.  
 Jurieu, Pierre, 375, 377, 386–387.  
 Juvenalios, 185, 214, 227.

## K

Kalatzi, Maria P., 144n, 151, 230.  
 Karamanolis, George, 43, 45, 66n, 82.  
 Karambasis, Agisilaos, 433, 435–436,  
 443, 445.  
 Kazasis, Neoklis, 433, 436, 443–445,  
 447, 449.  
 Korais, Adamandios, 439.  
 Kunz, Otmar, 403–404.

## L

Lactantius, 280–282, 287.  
 Le Clerc, Jean, 375–377, 384, 386.  
 Leonello d' Este, 25.  
 Leopardi, Giacomo, 74, 391, 398–399.  
 Leto, Pomponio, 354.  
 Longinus, 78.  
 Luchinat, Cristina, 357.  
 Luther, Martin, 382, 398.

## M

Machiavelli, Niccolò, 74, 79.  
 Maimonides, 304.  
 Malatesta, Antonio, 13, 16.  
 Malatesta, Carlo, 15.  
 Malatesta, Cleopatra (Kleope ), 29–30,  
 361.  
 Malatesta, Domenico, 11–12.

Malatesta, Galeotto Roberto, 11–12, 15.  
 Malatesta, Hugo, 15, 22.  
 Malatesta, Laura, 11, 15.  
 Malatesta, Niccolò, 15.  
 Malatesta, Parisina, 15.  
 Malatesta, Sigismondo Pandolfo, 11–34,  
 80n, 353–354, 356, 360–364, 400n.  
 Manuel II Palaiologos, 29, 160, 185n,  
 211n, 342n, 417, 423.  
 Marinus of Naples, 98–99.  
 Martin V., 12, 30.  
 Masai, Francois, 75–76, 82.  
 Massera, Aldo Francesco, 24.  
 Matthaios Kamariotes (Camariotes), 47,  
 153n, 207n, 228–229.  
 Matzner, Sebastian, 398.  
 Mazaris, 425, 444.  
 Medici, Cosimo de', 19, 31, 92, 328,  
 356–357, 381, 392.  
 Medici, Lorenzo de', 356.  
 Mehmed II, 231, 450.  
 Mendelssohn, Moses, 394, 407.  
 Michael of Ephesus, 77, 86, 100.  
 Mohammed (Muhammad), 158, 161,  
 186–188, 212.  
 Monfasani, John, 46n, 114n, 207n,  
 208n, 221n, 228n, 307.  
 More, Thomas, 74, 416.  
 Moses, 158, 169, 189, 201, 214n, 279,  
 286–287, 379–380.  
 Mousouros, Markos, 449.

## N

Neri, Moreno, 358.  
 Niccolò III d'Este, 22.  
 Nicholas of Cusa (Cusanus), 14, 47, 74,  
 261–270, 273–288, 363.  
 Nicholas of Methone, 212.  
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 74.  
 Nifo, Agostino, 312.  
 Numenius, 43.

## O

Occo, Adolph, 391, 405.  
 Origen, 59n, 65, 143, 152, 157, 161,  
 164n, 165–166, 168–169, 177–178,  
 182–183, 185, 190, 200n, 207, 210n,  
 214, 216–217, 219, 233.  
 Orpheus, 216, 273, 279–280, 285–286,  
 381–382.  
 Orsi, Roberto, 24.

## P

Palamas, Gregory, 159, 203n, 212.  
 Palamas, Kostis, 433, 441–442, 445, 451.  
 Panaetius, 199.  
 Pandoni, Porcellio, 24.  
 Pannonius, Janus, 28.  
 Papadiamandis, Alexandros, 433, 437,  
 439–442, 445, 451.  
 Paparrigopulos, Constantine, 75,  
 434–436, 440.  
 Patriarch Joseph II, 356, 358.  
 Patrizi, Francesco, 384.  
 Paudice, Aleida, 305.  
 Peckham, Robert, 439.  
 Petrarca, Francesco, 297n, 393, 397.  
 Philip II of Macedon, 329.  
 Philolaus, 279, 381.  
 Philoponus, 78.  
 Piero della Francesca, 353, 356,  
 360–362, 364.  
 Piromalli, Antonio, 18.  
 Pius II, 11, 13, 17–21, 25, 34, 356, 358,  
 363.  
 Plantin, Christopher, 399.  
 Plato, *passim*.  
 Pliny the Elder, 283, 384.  
 Plotinus, 87, 90–92, 98–99, 277, 303.  
 Plusiadenus, Iohannes, 331.  
 Plutarch, 51n, 76–77, 200, 329, 331,  
 336, 380, 384, 421.  
 Plutarch (Pseudo), 49n, 51, 90.  
 Polybius, 331, 333.

Pomponazzi, Pietro, 20n, 79, 93, 308n,  
 406n.  
 Pontano, Giovanni, 19n, 93.  
 Porphyry, 44, 91, 99, 152, 217, 387.  
 Poseidon, 80, 216n, 218n, 229.  
 Posidonius, 92.  
 Proclus, 43–44, 58n, 59, 76, 78, 99,  
 101–102, 215–218, 264, 267, 277,  
 298.  
 Protagoras, 97–98.  
 Psellos, Michael, 82, 84, 88, 92, 99–103,  
 107, 145, 278, 297n, 375–384, 386.  
 Ptolemy, 336, 337n, 338n.  
 Pythagoras, 68, 279, 380–382.

## Q

Quirini, Lauro, 308–309, 312.

## R

Rabbi Moshe ha-Cohen  
 Ashkenazi, 305.  
 Ramusio, Paolo, 27.  
 Reis, Michael, 149–150.  
 Riccoldo da Monte Croce, 159,  
 187–188, 193, 194n, 195, 198.  
 Rodolfo Pio da Carpi, 406.  
 Roger Bacon, 295.  
 Ronchey, Silvia, 354, 358–359.

## S

Sathas, Constantinos, 437.  
 Schmitt, Charles B., 285,  
 Scholarios–Gennadios II., 42n, 43,  
 45n, 46–47, 113–115, 118–140, 143,  
 148–149, 152, 160, 162–163, 165,  
 171, 174–176, 178, 181, 184–199,  
 201n, 207–215, 217, 220–234, 247,  
 262, 298, 301, 306, 308, 313, 380,  
 382, 404n, 428n, 437, 443–444, 447,  
 449.  
 Schulze, Fritz, 74.  
 Seneca, 94.  
 Seneca, Tommaso, 24, 27–28.  
 Sforza, Galeazzo Maria, 356.

Shemaryah ha-Icriti, 304.  
 Sherrard, Philip, 74.  
 Sibylla, 209.  
 Siniossoglou, Niketas, 44, 265.  
 Socrates, 50, 60, 96, 98, 376, 394.  
 Sophianos, Ioannes, 277.  
 Souverain, Jacques, 375–376.  
 Sozomenus (or Zominus) from  
 Pistoia, 333.  
 Stanley, Thomas, 377, 384–385.  
 Steuco, Agostino, 286, 375, 378,  
 382–384, 387.  
 Stobaeus, 91, 94–95, 339.  
 Strabo, 32, 336–338.

## T

Tacitus, 21.  
 Tambrun–Krasker, Brigitte, 44, 74, 82,  
 205.  
 Theodore Gazes, 25, 47, 114n, 325, 359.  
 Theodore II Palaiologos, 29, 422–423.  
 Theophanes of Nicaea, 212.  
 Theophrastus, 338.  
 Thomas Aquinas, 79, 107, 119, 122n,  
 131n, 144, 170, 176, 188n, 196, 198,  
 201n, 227n, 231, 293, 295, 299–302,  
 307–308, 310–312.  
 Thomas Palaiologos, 143, 230.  
 Thomas Wylton, 307–308.  
 Thucydides, 187n, 331.  
 Titus Livius, 332.  
 Tobia del Borgo, 23.  
 Toscanelli, Paolo dal Pozzo, 338.

## U

Ulysses, 420.

## V

Valla, Lorenzo, 74, 394.  
 Valturio, Carlo, 24.  
 Valturio, Roberto, 24, 33, 363.  
 Vergil, 13n, 26.  
 Vernia, Nicoletto, 312.



## W

Weber, Max, 415.

Wegelinus, Johannes, 144–151, 153,  
197, 221n, 234.

Wenck, John, 270.

Woodhouse, Christopher M., 29n, 45n,  
46n, 54n, 118n, 391–392, 423–424.

## X

Xenophon, 60, 61n, 324, 330–331, 339.

Xiphilinus, John, 333.

## Y

Yoseph Shlomo Delmedigo, 304.

## Z

Zambelios, Spyridon, 440, 449.

Zeno, Iacopo, 326.

Zeus, 28, 75, 80–81, 89, 94, 96, 104, 183,  
215–217, 218n, 229, 261, 266–268,  
276.

Zonaras, 333.

Zoroaster, 68, 76, 78, 81, 214n, 218, 273,  
278–279, 283, 285–286, 288, 298,  
303, 375–382, 384–385, 387.

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