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Ryan C. Fowler (Ed.)

PLATO IN THE THIRD SOPHISTIC

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Plato in the Third Sophistic

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Plato in the Third Sophistic



Edited by
Ryan C. Fowler

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Lancaster, April 2014

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Ryan C. Fowler and Alberto J. Quiroga Puertas
A Prolegomena to the Third Sophistic

Introduction

This volume (including its *Prolegomena*) is not an argument for the influence of Plato on literature from the late third to the late sixth centuries. The impact of Plato's dialogues and the developing Platonism of various philosophical and rhetorical strains (so-called Middle-, Peripatetic, Stoic, Neo-, etc.) on late antique literature has long been noticed, studied, and discussed to various degrees. In the modern era, we might simply start with the works of Friedrich Schleiermacher in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; but, to take a primary and more recent example, consider the most recent edition of Methodius of Olympus' one complete extant Greek work, his *Symposium* (circa 270/290 CE), which contains Platonic allusions and citations from twenty-seven dialogues and one letter.¹ In other words, an account of Plato's influence on late antique literature and a full bibliography listing recent studies on Plato would be extensive. That said, there are two important characteristics of this particular collection that deserve attention. First, although not a unique endeavor (for example, see Fox 1986, Dodds 1991), this edited volume brings together side by side various examinations of the significance of Plato's thought and literary style on both Christian and non-Christian authors in the late antique period. Second, this volume is meant to reflect what the effect of inclusion that the periodization "Third Sophistic" might have to offer scholars of late antiquity—and it is this last point that our *Prolegomena* specifically addresses.

Discussion of the Term "Third Sophistic" in Modern Scholarship

We would like to face head-on the current status of the short history of the term "Third Sophistic," along with a number of the fruitful problems that have emerged from attempts to define and apply it to specific authors. In fact, we are motivated by an array of questions made possible by these fruitful problems. For example, when looking at late antiquity with an eye toward periodization, should we include only Hellenic, "pagan" (i.e., non-Christian) rhetoric, or has Christian rhetoric been adequately legitimized enough in current scholarship to "matter"—having gone through a long period of deprecation?² Did Christian rhetoric indeed "take over for

1 Musurillo 1958.

2 "Pagan": for some of the complications concerning the term *paganus*, cf. Cameron 2011, 14–32.

pagan”?; further, is one misusing the idea of antique ῥητορικὴ [τέχνη] by applying it in this way?³ Were Greek letters “firmly married” to Christianity, and what did that relationship look like? Was late antique literature simply a matter of “reviving classical standards,” or was there more at work when Hellenic rhetoric and philosophy met a tolerated, sanctioned, and then legitimized Christianity?⁴ Is such a periodic delimitation even desirable (for example, what would it accomplish?); possible (is there anything to encourage it?); or “allowable” (since there is no antique precedent in the vein of Philostratus’ δευτέρα σοφιστικὴ)?⁵ Or, rather, is the literature of the late third century and beyond simply a continuation of the Second Sophistic (if there is such a thing even as *that*, if one were to view Philostratus’ identification of the deuterosophistic as primarily stemming from a sense of self-concern)?⁶ In other words: why should anyone make anything out of what might be merely a “Third Sophistic bubble”?⁷

Neither the definition nor the application of the term “Third Sophistic” is settled in modern studies on the late antique period, especially in the Christian milieu. The importance of the literary texts of the fourth century and beyond, however, is no longer in question.⁸ Albin Lesky, for example, pointed out in 1966 that fourth-century

A long period of depreciation: for examples and discussion concerning the modern negative assessment of rhetoric during the early Christian era; cf. Vickers 1988, Ch. 4: “Medieval Fragmentation,” especially his list of medievalists during the 1970s who describe the medieval “destruction” or “disintegration” of rhetoric. Generally speaking, “rhetoric” as a category of study was ignored or deemphasized in a number of literary disciplines, especially classics (Vickers 1988, 436). For a survey of the reduction and misapplication of rhetoric in modern literary discourse, especially in histories of classical literature up to and through the mid-1980s, cf. Vickers 1988, 435–469.

3 Cf. Pernot 1993, 14 n.9.

4 Cf. Van Dam 2003, 94.

5 In one sense, the term “Second Sophistic” (δευτέρα σοφιστικὴ) has by now become a temporal designation that refers to a period between 50 and the early- to mid-third century CE; that is, the term is used today in a way that it is not in Philostratus’ *Lives of the Sophists*: his definition is methodological and stylistic in origin.

In the fourth century CE, Eunapius describes the events before the start of his own historical work (a *Vitae philosophorum et sophistarum*) as belonging to a different period—one “interrupted and broken up by reason of the calamities of the state (ἔσχε μὲν οὖν διακοπήν τινα καὶ ῥήξιν ὁ χρόνος διὰ τὰς κοινὰς συμφορὰς, 2.2.6).” In that work, Eunapius distinguishes three groups of thinkers: i.e., those up to Plato, those after Plato, and those from Claudius to Severus (41 CE–211 CE; i.e., nearly the dates of the Second Sophistic as we use the term today). He does not write about any of these persons, however, but begins his own narrative briefly with Plotinus (204/5–270), and then launches immediately into the authors he means to treat: those of the period between Porphyry (234? CE–305? CE) and the philosopher Chrysanthius (fourth century CE). Eunapius, in the very least, has identified a “new crop of men” as his subject matter.

6 Cf. Eshleman 2008; this approach to Philostratus’ *Vitae sophistarum* was brought to our attention by David DeVore in a 2013 APA panel on the Third Sophistic.

7 Cf. Van Hoof 2010, 211–224.

8 Cf. Cameron 1994, 2 for the idea that at one time “histories of the development of Christianity in the Roman Empire written by historians and from the historical point of view have focused more on its

literature represents the last great legacy of antiquity.⁹ By the end of the fourth century the *παιδευμένοι* had famously undergone what Peter Brown described as a “sea change”: its pagan values were redefined within the context of Christianity.¹⁰ More recently, in 2003, Simon Swain highlighted the impact of political and religious events on literature, particularly on a Hellenic rhetoric and letters that were “firmly married” to Christianity—that is, in the late third and early fourth centuries during the instantiation of Christianity within a reorganized Roman Empire.¹¹

It was Laurent Pernot—in his 1993 *La Rhétorique de l'éloge dans le Monde Gréco-romain*—who ushered in the concept “Third Sophistic” after analyzing what he calls the Greco-Roman triumph of the Fathers; he announced the fourth century as the start of the Third Sophistic, that is, the period in which Christianity became the official religion and Christian rhetoric took over for pagan.¹² Other scholars have since explored this issue. For Raymond Vam Dam, the fourth century not only maintained Attic Greek standards but also revived classical standards, not in order to utilize Classical Greek myths but rather Christian myths and Christian history.¹³ Eugenio Amato,

social and institutional dimensions than on its modes of expression”; and one reason for this was “the wider indifference among historians to the use of literature (as distinct from ‘literary sources’) as evidence.”

9 Lesky 1966, 870–888.

10 Cf. Brown 1961, 4; Cameron 2011, 7 challenges this direct opposition between “pagans” and Christians, especially regarding the idea of a “pagan culture”: “There was indeed a wave of asceticism that swept through the Christian aristocracy in the last decades of the fourth century. But it is a mistake to connect this hostility on the Christian side with the cultural activities of contemporary pagans. There is no evidence of any sort that pagans themselves felt called upon to defend their culture—or indeed that they saw it as ‘pagan’ culture at all *rather than the culture shared by all educated people*” (our emphasis).

11 An impact in which Swain (2003, 362–363) also recognizes the continuation of elements of the Second Sophistic, but as well acknowledges the divisive shift between a Second and Third Sophistic that we also discuss: “But much comes from the fourth century and later—especially Sopater, Choricus of Gaza (second quarter of the sixth century), and Libanius himself. These figures are part of the literary tradition of the Second Sophistic. *But the world they live in is quite different. The consequences of the establishment of Christianity are one major change; the reorganized Roman Empire of the later third century and after is another.* If in Libanius we can still recognize the combination of letters and political activity recorded by Philostratus, we can also see him trying to make sense of a changed world. In the person of Choricus, the last Greek sophist of Antiquity, Hellenic letters were firmly married to Christianity” (our emphasis).

12 Pernot 1993, 14n.9: “Lorsque le christianisme devint religion officielle, la rhétorique chrétienne prit le pas sur la rhétorique païenne. Le tournant décisif se produisit au IV^e siècle, une des époques les plus brillantes de l’histoire de la rhétorique antique, qui vit à la fois une sorte d’aboutissement de la tradition gréco-romaine et le triomphe des Pères”; cf. also Pernot 2000, 271–272 and 2006–2007, 7–18.

13 Van Dam 2003, 94–95: “Educated Greek authors of the fourth century likewise prided themselves on their ability to maintain language standards and imitate Attic Greek, and their revival of classical standards defined what might be called a Third Sophistic during late antiquity. [...] Yet although this Third Sophistic included expectations about language standards, among Christian authors it did not

who has written on the term “Third Sophistic,” prefers that it be used to describe the third through sixth centuries. Anthony Kaldellis applies it to the eleventh- and twelfth-century CE Byzantine heirs of Michael Psellus.¹⁴ In one of the most comprehensive treatments of the term “Third Sophistic,” the work of Pierre-Louis Malosse and Bernard Schouler discusses continuity between the Second and Third Sophistics but concentrates heavily on emphasizing key differences between the two periods; their conclusion is that the Third Sophistic is the product of the literary *Zeitgeist*.¹⁵ Recently, Raffaella Criatore has picked up on Pernot’s use of “Third Sophistic,” acknowledging the term’s serviceability but finding it problematic because the implication of a gulf between the two periods diminishes their connection.¹⁶ And, similarly, in two articles in 2010 and 2013, Lieve Van Hoof has brought to our attention the problems with the designation “Third Sophistic” as emphasizing discontinuity between the second through fourth centuries CE through the application of an overly simplistic dichotomous religious perspective (i.e., “pagans” versus Christians).¹⁷ Overall, across the literature regarding the Third Sophistic, there have been two sorts of accusations: on the one hand, that the term implies too great a difference between the literature of the first through early third centuries and that of the late third and after; and, on the other hand, that there has been so much emphasis placed on ideological and linguistic continuity that the two periods cannot be distinguished in any meaningful way. We aim here to address both issues.

encourage another revival of allusions to Greek myths and Greek history. Christian authors preferred to use purist classical Greek to discuss instead their own myths and their own history.”

14 Cf. Amato et al. 2006, v–viii. Kaldellis: 2008, cf. Chapter 5: the Komnenoi were a ruling family of the Byzantine Empire, and are often described as slowing or perhaps stopping the political decline of the Eastern Empire during the end of the eleventh century to the second half of the twelfth.

15 Malosse and Schouler 2009; cf. Van Hoof 2010, 213, with n.15.

16 As Criatore (2013, 21) writes: “Demosthenes and Aeschines were the authors with whom the Second and Third Sophistic vied and whom they attempted to surpass in brilliance”; cf. *ibid.* 36–37: “There is no doubt that the so-called Third Sophistic was closely tied to its predecessor; therefore, the phrase ‘Third Sophistic’ is less than ideal, implying as it does a gulf between the two periods and failing to acknowledge the bridge between them. Nonetheless, the term is serviceable because it acknowledges certain differences between the two movements and allows us to include Christian rhetoric.” Criatore (37 n.43) notes as well that there are some hesitations in using the term found in Van Hoof (2010) and Westberg (2010, 19), and that, further, Penella (2013) could accept the term in spite of some ambiguities, but prefers “imperial sophistic”—early and late—which would include the so-called Second Sophistic. Both Pernot and Criatore characterize the would-be Third Sophistic as a time period “in which rhetoric became less *epedeictic*,” i.e., than in the Second Sophistic, “and more engaged with reality”; cf. Criatore 2013, 36. Relatedly, as Schouler’s work shows, writers in the fourth century give the impression that their ability to influence society was increasing when compared to the authors of the Second Sophistic; cf. Schouler 1977, 941.

17 Van Hoof 2010 and 2013, 406.

“Continuity-and-Change” Model

If we were not to recognize anything but simply an historical coincidence distinguishing the biographical works of Philostratus (second and third centuries CE) and Eunapius (fourth and fifth centuries CE)—the events and literary figures both authors happen to discuss while “creating” periodizations based on their own perspectives—a critic might ask: Why *create* a gap between the Second and Third Sophistics? The answer might be simply that there is a major drop-off (though not absolute) in literary production in the middle of the third century, which may or may not be the result of the so-called Third Century Crisis, usually attributed to invasion, civil war, plague, and economic depression in the Roman Empire during the years 235–284 CE, and which, for some, signals the shift between classical antiquity and late antiquity.¹⁸

More to the point, however, is the increasing cultural significance of Christianity for the literature from the late third century and after, and how its prevalence both helps maintain an important continuity by incorporating past Greek models of education, philosophy, and rhetoric, and, at the same time, assures a number of powerful differences because this new context involves different concerns, conflicts, and struggles.¹⁹ Transformation and adaptation, then, were critical to ensure self-preservation within social and political circumstances in which some degree of power, authority, and influence had shifted from “pagan” intellectual figures (or even the emperor) to the bishop.²⁰ The ideological, rhetorical, and literary game had changed; but, we would argue, core aspects of both the means of expression and the end goals had not.

We do argue for a “continuity and change” model between the two Sophistics, some of which is due to the continuity of the Greek and Latin παιδεία, in which the lack of Christianity (not necessarily the “paganism”) of Hellenic models was

18 For discussion and complications, cf. Brown, 1968 and 1975.

For an overview of the so-called Third Century Crisis, cf. the introduction of Watson 1999, 1–20; Jones 1964, 1–36; and Liebeschuetz 2007. For a negative view, cf. de Blois 2002; for a positive view cf. Witschel 2004. For the view that it was “change” over “crisis,” cf. Reece 1981.

19 Brown 1978, 11 argues that “the *locus* of the supernatural had come to shift significantly” between the second and fourth centuries.

20 As Bowersock (1986, 299) writes: “In 325 it was the emperor who ordered the bishops to assemble at Nicaea, but in 390 it was a defiant bishop who was able to order the emperor to abase himself in public and alter his conduct”.

Except for the addition of the importance of Christianity, much of the same can be said for the “sameness and difference” of the issues, arguments, and rhetorical modeling between the “First” (i.e., Plato’s) and Second Sophistics; between the fifth and fourth centuries BCE and the second century CE, a number of particular concerns and relevant realms of influence had changed, but much also remained the same between Gorgias of Leontini and Aelius Aristides.

scrubbed or flaunted, depending on the author and the occasion.²¹ As we have just stated, the growing importance and pervasiveness of Christianity forced battle to be drawn during that third-century interlude. This is not to say that Tertullian and Origen were not serious about their views on Christianity. What we are emphasizing is the pervasiveness of Christianity as a political and social phenomenon, as well as a school of thought, that demanded confrontation in nearly all aspects of public and private life by the end of the third century. In the second century, by contrast, Maximus of Tyre, Albinus, Alcinous, and Apuleius could still write extensively without any mention of Christianity at all.²²

In addition, there no longer seems to be a modern concern about the existence of a “Christian rhetoric,” nor are the issues of the fourth century regarding authority, rhetoric, and persuasion considered to be wholly non-Christian. Our focus, then, does not concern a particular rhetorical style or ideological issue, since we aim to show that the *general* issues remain the same, nor are we advocating a different methodology or science toward this literature than that with which the Second Sophistic, for example, has been approached. The difference we see results from the consequences of the new status of Christianity itself.

Periodization of the Third Sophistic

In terms of periodization, and in line with the established modern dating of this iteration of Greco-Roman rhetoric as a historical period (as an alternative to Philostratus’ characterization of rhetorical τόποι), modern interpreters now generally imagine that the Second Sophistic came to an end by about 250 CE.²³ But unless there is a

21 *Paideiai*: cf. Basil’s *Address to Young Men on the Right Use of Greek Literature*; cf. also Van Hoof 2013, 389: “Greek culture in the fourth century, no less than before, was a powerful but also strongly contested instrument of social promotion”; for a view of the Latin *paideia* (and its having been an under-researched subject of study), cf. Riess 2008.

Paganism: for the best discussion of the difference between “pagan” (παγανός/*paganus*) and ἔλλην, cf. Cameron 2011, e.g., 31–32; cf. also, *ibid.* 16: “ἔλλην = pagan is largely absent from the so-called Apostolic Fathers (E.J. Goodspeed, *Index Patristicus* [Leipzig 1907], s.v.), but becomes common in Aristides, Athenagoras and Tatian (see the useful index to Daniel Ruiz Bueno, *Padres Apologistas Griegos* [Madrid 1954], 935).”

Hellenic models: studies of classical Roman models on early Christian discourse are scarce, when compared with the number focusing on the impact of Greek rhetoric and philosophy, but cf. Hagendahl 1958 (though his focus is more historical and less rhetorical), Barnes 1971, Penner/Stichele 2009 (though not specific to Latin), and Meinking 2013.

22 Cf. Moreira 2000, 13: “In the second century it was still possible for a pagan author to acknowledge the help of the gods alongside other friends in the dedication of a book, thanking them especially for his ‘vivid and recurrent visions of the true inwardness of the Natural Life.’”

23 Russell 2006, 267–268: “The history of Greco-Roman rhetoric may be said, very schematically, to fall into three periods: the age of the sophist, the age of the philosopher, and the age of the rhetor”; cf., also, Whitmarsh 2005.

literature to recommend it, there is no reason to describe the start of the Third Sophistic as beginning immediately after the Second (e. g., starting at the year 251 CE, or something similar).

Instead, since any literary timeframe's boundaries should remain rough and flexible, we would put the start of the Third Sophistic at the Tetrarchic period—under Diocletian and Maximian, with authors such as Porphyry (d. circa 305), Methodius (d. 311), and Lactantius (d. 320s). Given the gap in literary production (perhaps simply an issue of survival) during the “Third Century Crisis,” the Third Sophistic seems to have begun in the later third century CE after the “crisis” had been mitigated—understanding that there was not necessarily a clean break between the Second and Third Sophistics. This transitional period that traversed the third century witnessed a number of events: the Christian turn; internal religious, military, and economic crises; and the creation of a literary orthodoxy. The start of the Third Sophistic's end could be dated at the death throes of the Academy in Athens under Justinian in 529, once the influence of the Hellenic παιδεία was about to become extinct, or at least when the influence of unfiltered παιδεία was lost. It was this curriculum that had previously insured the continuity of literary, cultural, and philosophical canons and the influence of the same models for centuries. In other words, the Hellenic παιδεία was always there, but was transformed and subsumed under the guidance of (and to the benefit of) Christianity. Therefore, some final candidates might include the Latin author Flavius Cresconius Corippus (the late Roman epic poet of the sixth century); or, on the Greek side, Olympiodorus the Younger (c. 495–570), the “last pagan” to maintain the Platonist tradition in Alexandria, the Byzantine historian Zosimus (fl. 490s–510s) who lived in Constantinople during the reign of Anastasius I, or Procopius of Caesarea (c. 500 CE–c. 565), the reputed “last historian of the ancient world.”

The type of cultural, religious, and literary shifts we are discussing had all happened by the end of the third century with, on the Greek side, either Porphyry or Methodius of Olympus and, on the Latin side, Lactantius. These writers, in our opinion, mark the beginning of the Third Sophistic.²⁴ The shift we have been discussing is

²⁴ Porphyry is also an excellent candidate for the start of the Third Sophistic, as someone representative of the increasing prevalence of Christianity during the later third century. Porphyry became a follower and proponent of Plotinus' brand of Platonism after studying with him in Rome from 263–269 CE. He was the first Platonist to comment on the *Chaldean Oracles*, a “pagan” religious text in verse compiled in the second century CE that some later Neoplatonists took for a divine revelation. Though there are no references to Christianity or Christians in the *Enneads* of Plotinus (which Porphyry edited), Porphyry's lengthy *Against the Christians* is perhaps his best-known work, surviving only in fragments; in turn, according to Jerome (*De Viris Illustribus* 81, 83, and 104), Methodius, Eusebius, and Apollinarus all wrote works titled *Against Porphyry*. Finally, Hadot (1968) has argued that Porphyry wrote the anonymous *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, a work that had considerable influence on the Christian theology of Marius Victorinus, specifically on his doctrine of the Trinity (but cf. Bechtle 1999). As previously mentioned, Eunapius begins his *Lives* with Porphyry, after a brief entry on his teacher Plotinus; cf. as well Eunapius' *Vitae*, s.v. “Porphyry.”

quite clear in the case of Methodius. His *Symposium* or *Banquet of Ten Virgins*, clearly modeled on Plato's work of the same name, is a storehouse of allusions to Plato's dialogues although Plato's name is not mentioned once. Methodius is extremely familiar with Plato's dialogues themselves (although not, on the face of it, with particular Platonic handbooks or introductions) and cites the philosopher more than any other Church father; he seems to be well acquainted with over two dozen of Plato's dialogues (both spurious and authentic) as well as the Seventh Letter. Further, Methodius quotes Paul, Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen, Irenaeus, Athanasius, and Tertullian—that is, some of the most prominent authors from the previous generation of Second Sophistic Christians—in addition to incorporating direct and paraphrased quotes from Homer, Hesiod, Euripides, Sophocles, and Aristotle, alongside copious quotations from the New and Old Testaments.²⁵ Methodius melds all of these influences into a nearly seamless Christian philosophical treatise built upon Hellenic models. As happened with most Christian works of the time: if the flesh of this work is Christian, its skeleton is Hellenic.

The continuation of the Hellenic παιδεία, which provided such a consistent and sustained tradition of education, reflects a uniquely prolonged continuity of ideas, quotations, models, tropes, and *exempla*. To take only one example, it is this continuity that allows us to map the originally Platonic formula: “assimilation to god as much as possible” (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν [*Theatetus* 176b1])” within an extremely diverse range of authors: Philo, Galen, Alcinoüs, Albinus, Theon, Clement, Origen, Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblicus, Methodius, Eusebius, Basil, Julian—that is, in more than 300 years of literary work. Yet what had changed from the Second Sophistic (however one wishes to view the “Third Century Crisis”) is a sociopolitically legitimized Christianity that had shifted the balance of power, influence, and access within a radically changing—and centripetally shifting—Empire. And when the two Apollinares respond to Julian's edict “not to teach what they do not think admirable” with an attempt (reportedly) to rewrite the Jewish Bible into heroic verse, and the Gospels into tragic or Platonic forms of discourse, we find a developed interest in expressing both the sameness and the difference that seem to be inherent characteristics during the period between the late third and middle sixth centuries.²⁶ In the

²⁵ Jerome tells us (*De Viris Illustribus* 83) that Methodius also wrote books against Porphyry, “written in polished and logical style (*nitidi compositique sermonis*),” and so was arguably one of the first to write *adversum Porphyrium*; cf. Musurillo 1958, 17. The work survives in only a few fragments in Greek (from the *Sacra Parallela*). We are told as well that he wrote “an excellent work *On the Resurrection*, against Origen, *On the Pythonissa*, and *On Free Will*, also against [Origen],” *De Viris Illustribus* 83.

Second Sophistic Christians: e.g., Bowersock (2004, 53) notes that the Christian apologist Tertullian has been brought under the Second Sophistic rubric by Barnes' 1971 study; cf. also Brent 2006 and Nasrallah 2010.

²⁶ Julian's edict: cf. *Rescript*, circa 362 CE; and Harries 2012.

The younger Apollinaris (d. 390 CE) was a bishop of Laodicea in Syria. According to Socrates Scholasticus (*HE* 3.16), when Imperial law forbade Christians to study Greek literature, the two Apollinares—the father, a grammarian and the son, a rhetorician—“showed themselves useful to the

spirit of defining, justifying, and developing Christian ideas, or fighting against their influence, classical Greek authors were used in a variety of ways, whether scrubbed of their “paganism”—that is, a particular philosophical tenet seen to be inconsistent with a particular Christian concept—or simply left unattributed. Something significant had shifted after the Greek first- and second-century authors and rhetors such as Dio Chrysostom, Apuleius, Aelius Aristides, and Polemon. And yet, though this ideological shift existed, at the same time there is an essential self-conscious continuity between the Second and what we would call the Third Sophistic. To take two illustrative examples, in a letter to Theodorus, Libanius notes that when he reads works by Aristides (one of his most important rhetorical models), he talks to the second-century author while sitting near a portrait of him.²⁷ Likewise, in the medieval florilegium *Doctrina Patrum* (330.7), we are told that John Chrysostom sought inspiration by contemplating a portrait of Paul hung in his room.²⁸

In addition to these issues of classification, we believe that exploring late antique literature from the perspective of the Third Sophistic can help explain the religious and cultural dynamics of that period. Although the term does not tout an ancient source (as δευτέρα σοφιστική), in some ways the usefulness of the term “Third Sophistic” serves as a matter of convenience while providing an opportunity for certain assumptions within conversations about late antique literature in both the Latin and Greek world. In other words, just as it is helpful to keep in mind the important sociohistorical (and linguistic) educational and ideological relationship between

Christian cause (τῶ Χριστιανισμῶ χρειώδεις φανέντες)” by overcoming “the subtlety of the emperor through their own labors (τοῦ βασιλέως τὸ σόφισμα διὰ τῶν οἰκείων πόνων ἐνίκησαν).” The former composed a Christian Greek grammar, translated Moses into “heroic verse,” paraphrased the historical books of the Old Testament (some of them into dactylic meter, some into tragic verse—“all the Greek meters, so that none would be unknown to the Christians [ὅπως ἂν μηδεὶς τρόπος τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς γλώττης τοῖς Χριστιανοῖς ἀνῆκοος ᾖ]”). The latter put the gospels and apostolic doctrines into dialogue, “as Plato had done among the Greeks.” But the failure of the Apollinares’ project did not lead “to the undoing of the Christians,” since “there were many philosophers among the Greeks who were not far from the knowledge of God.” In addition, Socrates Scholasticus argues that Greek literature is in fact beneficial: even though “the divinely inspired Scriptures undoubtedly inculcate doctrines that are both admirable in themselves and heavenly in their character,” nevertheless “they do not instruct us in the art of reasoning, by means of which we may be enabled successfully to resist those who oppose the truth. Besides, adversaries are most easily foiled *when we can use their own weapons against them*. But this power was not supplied to Christians by the writings of the Apollinares.” Therefore, Socrates argues, Christians cannot defend themselves against deceit and philosophy “*unless we possess the weapons of our adversaries* (εἰ μὴ ὅπλα τῶν πολεμίων κτησάμεθα)” (translation Zenos 1890, our emphases).

27 Cf. Letter 1534, written in 365 CE: “And I sit by his portrait, reading one of his works, asking him if he wrote it. Then I answer myself: ‘Yes, he wrote it.’” For Libanius and Aristides, cf. Criboire 2007.

28 As Bowersock (1969, 10) wrote about the Second Sophistic, “continuity, one has always to realize, does not require sameness; and the opposite reaction can nevertheless belong to a single line of development.”

Apuleius and Augustine—that is, we contend, between Latin authors of the Second and the Third Sophistics—so does this benefit apply to the Greek-speaking world. For example, Aelius Aristides and Gregory of Nazianzus share a fundamental and common interest in rhetoric and self-fashioning, and one of the major differences between the two can be attributed to the intervening impact of Christianity. In the case of the rhetoric and oratory of the Third Sophistic, the taste for religio-philosophical issues (Platonic, Christian, etc.) overshadowed the previous mytho-sophistic traditions of the Second Sophistic, and, rather than using them to persuade large audiences often for the sole purpose of entertainment, rhetors and authors used them to analyze and explain the facts at the core of the transition toward a Christian order, arguing either for or against it.

Our interest remains—above all—to facilitate and advocate for the continued and thorough reading and contextualization of persuasive speech and polemics in literature tuned to “a Christian key.”²⁹ We would also readily admit that the literary outcome in some cases has resulted either in a response that is in harmony or discord with the “New Philosophy,” depending upon the ideological purpose and perspective of the particular rhetor or author. Note, for example, the volley between the *Against the Christians* of Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian; and then Origen’s *Against Celsus*, Methodius’ and Eusebius’ *Against Porphyry*, and Augustine’s and Gregory of Nazianzus’ *Against Julian*. Importantly, this general project was accomplished based on classical models that were sometimes acknowledged, but which were more often neutralized when being reused in the name of a Christian discourse.

Third Sophistic and the Dynamics of Late Antiquity

Methodology

Our Third Sophistic approach dovetails with the current multilayered approach of late antique studies that has benefited from social-scientific methodologies (most notably those of de Certeau, Bourdieu, Foucault, Goffman, and Stark), which have helped to bridge epistemological gaps between literature, history, theology, and philosophy, thus continuing to help create a theoretical framework that could be applied to the Third Sophistic. These approaches (mainly Certeau’s) underline the process of reappropriation of cultural legacies as a means to create a new cultural canon that suited new historical circumstances. The Protean nature of late antique society did not suffer from a cultural Diogenean syndrome, since the prevalent tendency was a reappropriation and re-creation of past leitmotifs with the intention of producing new cultural products.³⁰

²⁹ Quiroga 2007, 37.

³⁰ Protean nature: cf. Maxwell 2006, 94–106; the malleable nature of rhetoric in late antiquity is represented by allusions to the figure of Proteus that is used by “pagan” and Christian authors both in

Christianity under the Third Sophistic Light

It seems clear in this post-Harnackian era that we no longer see Christianity as an altogether “other” cultural phenomenon, with Galilee considered to be a unique anomaly in an ancient world that was at this time otherwise utterly Hellenized. Rather, we might now imagine that “Hellenism already preceded Christianity, inasmuch as Judaism, of which Christianity was a part, has already interacted with Hellenism for over three centuries.”³¹ Nor do modern readers any longer seem to hold the notion that, “Christianity, in the tradition of Jewish monotheism, succeeded in replacing invariably polytheistic systems of religious belief with a monotheistic creed.”³² Further, it seems likely that “to a casual pagan observer,” the activities of teaching or preaching, sermon or lecture, exegesis or homily would look less like non-Christian, or “pagan,” religion and more like a day at school.³³

So, if philosophy, and not religion per se, held the ethical and moral purview of the pre-Christian mind within the realm of Hellenism, then Christianity would have had to contend not as much with traditional Greek “pagan” religion (except in the sense that it professed perverted conceptions of the divine), but instead with the philosophical schools around it (being itself viewed as a kind of philosophy); the continuation of philosophical conversions (since we see Christian and philosophical conversions described using the same vocabulary); and the influence of the teachings of—and adherence to—a single master.³⁴ As a result, early Christian authors and scholars would have been pleased to encourage Greek philosophy in its criticisms of traditional—i.e., Homeric and Hesiodic—“pagan” Greek religion, whether

a positive and negative light: e.g., Peregrinus, who is found in Aulus Gellius 12.11 (as a man *gravem et constantem*) and in Lucian (as the con man and fraud), was known to the Philostrati, Tatian, and Anathagoras only as “Proteus.” In addition, for Libanius (*Or.* 18.176), the Emperor Julian was comparable to, among other things, Proteus. And for a derogative use, cf. Gregory Nazianzus *Or.* 4.62 and 82. Cf. as well Augustine’s (*De ver. rel.* 33.61) discussion of the actor as a fraud—but not actually a liar—because he is “openly pretending,” with Webb 2005. Cf. also Van Hoof 2013, 405: “Greek culture was not a fossilized set of ready-made *topoi*, but needed to be performed successfully. In addition to knowing one’s classics, one also had to be able to play with them and adapt them flexibly to ever-changing circumstances: mere reference to, or unsuccessful manipulation of, the classics could be as detrimental for one’s reputation and position as it had been in the second century. Greek culture, then, could be an instrument for social promotion, yet in order to cash in one’s cultural capital for political capital, one had to master it perfectly, handle it carefully and try and create optimal circumstances.”

31 Cf. van Kooten 2010, 5.

32 Cf. Athanassiadi/Frede 1999, 1.

33 Cf. Alexander 1994, *pace* Nock 1933, quoted in van Kooten 2010.

34 Philosophy: cf. Löhr 2010, 160–188; and van Kooten 2010.

Vocabulary: e.g., ἐπιστροφή, *conversio*, and μετένοια; cf. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 2–3; cf. also van Kooten 2010.

Single Master: cf. Sedley 1989, 97–119.

This is all to momentarily sidestep the various tensions between early developing “Christianities” and issues of Christian identity and allegiance; cf. King 2008 and Meyer/Pagels 2007.

in the form of Callimachus' criticism of the Cretans' belief in the tomb of Zeus; Pythagoras', Empedocles', Plato's, and Porphyry's criticisms of animal sacrifices; or various (e.g., Plato's, Plutarch's) criticisms of Zeus' version of "philanthropy."³⁵ In other words, the Harnackian vision of a Christianity moving through a cycle of progress, degeneration, and reformation has been complicated.³⁶

As mentioned above, since Peter Brown's work, it has become clear that there was a complete "sea change" in the status of Christianity at the end of the third century that reflects its shift into a force that demanded conflict: literarily, politically, and socially.³⁷ Further, it now seems more likely that it was not Constantine's conversion that started or encouraged the rapid spread of Christianity, but instead that it might have been the other way around: his conversion can be seen as a reflection of the growth and spread of the religion well before the so-called Constantinian Shift.³⁸ In addition, since Averil Cameron's work it has been difficult to ignore the existence and importance of Christian rhetoric, which was developing at this time not in opposition to, but rather alongside, a continually developing Hellenic philosophical and rhetorical discourse.³⁹ What makes Christian rhetoric distinctive, then, is that fourth-century Christian authors had to bypass Paul's claim ("not with wisdom and eloquence [οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου]"), while at the same time making sure that they were not perceived as ignoring it.⁴⁰ Simultaneously, late antique au-

35 Religion: cf. van Kooten 2010, 15, with examples.

Tomb of Zeus: cf. Dietrich 1996, 408.

Pythagoras and Empedocles: cf. Diogenes Laertius 8.18 and Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians* 203. In general we might note as well what seems to be Celsus' position according to Origen: that *The True Account* rejected the attempt made by Justin and other Apologists to break up Hellenism into two separate elements—philosophy and religion—and then claim philosophy for the gospel.

For the idea that Christianity shut down discussion, rather than encouraged it, cf. Lim (1995). For the idea of the Christian cultivation of internal debates, cf. Cameron 2014 and the forthcoming work by van Nuffelen 2014; e.g., cf. the debates at Nicaea in 325, as described in Soc. Schol. 1.8 and Rufinus, *Historia Eremitica* 10.1–6.

36 Cf. van Kooten 2010, 5; cf. also Löhr 2010: "For Harnack, then, the self-definition of Christianity as a philosophy represented an ambitious self-positioning of Christianity within the religious and intellectual landscape of late antiquity. The most recent phase of the debate about Christianity's self-definition as a philosophy has been enormously helped by a renewed interest in the larger project of ancient philosophy. In numerous publications, Pierre Hadot has reminded us of the original purpose of ancient philosophy: it was not only a theoretical system of arguments and doctrines (philosophy as a discourse) but also an introduction to a way of life (philosophy as a *mode de vie*)."

37 Cf. Brown 1961, 4.

38 Constantine's conversion: for new perspectives on Constantine, cf. Barnes 1998, 274–294; Fox 1986; Hopkins 1998, 185–226; also cf. Bremmer 2006, 57–79.

Constantinian Shift: cf. Stark 1996, 7 table 1.1.

39 Developing Hellenic philosophical and rhetorical discourse: sometimes in the form of anti-Christian discourse, but most often in the form of some sort of contemporary Platonism; cf. Cameron 1994.

40 1 *Corinthians* 1:17; for interpretations of this passage, cf. Litfin 1994, 4–18.

thors' works also had to contain numerous contradictions that interfered with the traditional classical practice of rhetoric: the negotiation of the art of speaking well and its developing relationship with the false “wisdom of this world” both added to the continued (and complicated) influence of philosophy and rhetoric on Christianity. All of these ideas were at the core of the epistemological problems of Christian γνῶσις, πίστις, and ὁμοίωσις; all challenged the very idea of a unified orthodoxy at the cusp of the third century and later; all helped define the source and distribution of power and influence within the Empire.⁴¹

The Palimpsestic Nature of Late Antique Culture

In late antiquity, Christian rhetoric could be seen as a palimpsest, in that Christian authors after the Second Sophistic aimed to erase what had been written, only to re-write it themselves within their own cultural and religious key. Further, Christian rhetoric could be seen as a matter of reviving classical standards, as Van Dam writes, while at the same time treading a rather precarious line between simplicity and straightforwardness (*simplicitas*/ἀπλότης) on the one hand, and sophistication and allusion (*allegoria* or *permutatio*) on the other, only sometimes professed.⁴² Both oppositional poles reflected similar tensions within early Christianity when one views their audience as concomitantly comprised of fishermen and tentmakers on the one side, and scholars and hyper-educated bishops on the other. Authors took a multifaceted approach to this problem: from the apophatic ways of some Christians, to the Philostratean (and predominantly ludic) dimension of expression that some bishops practiced. What is more, these approaches look very much like “pagan” disputes regarding rhetoric and philosophy—both in the late fourth century CE and in the generation before—but suddenly, with much more at stake.⁴³ For example, as Criscuolo writes, Julian’s letters “showed a new rhetoric that was justified by the requirements of a renewed Hellenism.”⁴⁴

These sorts of tensions, therefore, could further confirm an impression of late-antique Christian rhetoric as a kind of palimpsest of ancient rhetoric: neither Christian rhetoric nor “classical” or “pagan” rhetoric could be contained in toto during this

⁴¹ These forces are played out, for example, in the later attitude of the Church to Origen, as well as in Athanasius’ Easter Letter of 367 which established the orthodox list of NT texts, while warning against accepting the heretical “Gnostic texts” that were widely circulated at the time (with which Origen would be associated in the Fifth Ecumenical Council synod in May 553).

⁴² For the former, one is tempted to add “*sancta simplicitas*”; for the latter, we could add the use of ἔνυγμα (*sermo obscurus*), σχηματισμός, νόημα, and σκοτίσθον, which all include varying levels of purposeful obscuring.

⁴³ Cf. Lim 1995; Liebersohn 2010; and Elm 2012.

⁴⁴ Criscuolo 2011, 177–178: “témoinaient d’une nouvelle rhétorique qui trouvait sa justification dans les exigences de l’hellénisme renouvelé”; e.g., Julian’s letter *To the Athenians*, and letters to Themistius 31 and 61.

time period.⁴⁵ For example, although he never seems to specify his religious affiliation (presenting his views largely through a Neoplatonic stance), the fifth-century Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* was the means by which the classical Roman curriculum passed into the early medieval period, only to be modified—but scarcely revolutionized—by Christianity; yet his work helped define a standard formula of study from the fifth-century Christianized Empire until practically the twelfth century. We might also consider a figure such as Nonnus, who composed works of Christian and pagan content, and who both re-elaborated and innovated within the context of the legacy of late-antique epic. Both of these authors straddled—to some extent—the Christian and non-Christian milieux.

Blending of Cultural Traditions, Blurring of Boundaries

The idea that Christianity at the cusp of the third and fourth centuries was far from being an ideologically homogenous religion both resulted from and reflected different attitudes toward language and rhetoric, which resulted in various groups and alliances. The apophatic ways of Gregory in 380 coexisted with his taste for rhetoric and philosophy (the former likely ending with Julian's *dicta*, and the latter starting up again when Gregory retired to Arianzum).⁴⁶ There were few authors in the Christian urban milieu whose consideration of rhetoric and philosophy was crystal clear or unchanging. The figures of Synesius, Augustine, and Gregory of Nazianzus, for example, are paradigmatic cases of such blurring of roles: their careers take them from philosophy and rhetoric considered as professions, to the bishopric, and sometimes back again.

⁴⁵ Palimpsest: for one use of a similar image used in Christian oration, cf. Gregory, *Or.* 2.43: "...but a soul to be written upon should be free from the inscription of harmful doctrine (οὐπω λόγος ἐχάραξε μοχθηρός), or the deeply inscribed marks of vice (βάθος τὰ τῆς κακίας ἐνεσημάνθη γράμματα); otherwise the pious calligrapher (τῷ θεοσεβεῖ καλλιγράφῳ) would have a twofold task, the erasure of the former impressions (ἐξαιλεῖν τε τοὺς προτέρους τύπους) and the inscribed substitution (μετεγγράφειν) of others which are more excellent, and more worthy to remain."

In light of the complications of the attitudes regarding the present and past during the Third Sophistic, we have recently been discussing the Sophoclean image of αὐτάδελφος (e. g., *Antigone* 1 and 696, though it is found elsewhere; cf. Aeschylus, *Seven Against Thebes* 718, *Eumenides* 89; Euripides frs. 495, 13), that has given so much trouble to translators—the idea of "being one's own brother or sister"; cf. Steiner 1984, 209. As the "sum and summoning" of one's identity, as far as the identity can be perceived and realized, Steiner describes the invocation of this term as "simultaneously a calling and a challenge, [aiming] at the unique scandal and sanctification of kinship in the lineage of Oedipus." When we discuss the time period of the Third Sophistic, the Janus-like Christian relationship toward their own (scandalous) Hellenic lineage—as a compulsion to move toward as well as away from it, as simultaneous reinforcement and challenge, and as the consideration of cultural "sameness" (αὐτό) and "difference" (ἀδελφός)—should be paired alongside the title of Elm's (2012) recent work on Julian and Gregory.

⁴⁶ Cf. Elm 2012.

During this time Gregory of Nyssa could be more influenced by Plato than his heretical rival Aetius was by the dreaded Aristotle.⁴⁷ Gregory himself could be a Christian Platonist while Origen could be guilty of philosophical misapplication, since accusations of philosophical heresy (for example, in light of his purported subordinationism) were as numerous as those of “Gnosticism,” polytheism, or a generalized heresy.⁴⁸ From Gregory’s perspective, during this time period, both Julian and Eunomius could be considered “heretics,” but in significantly different ways; and Augustine could be thought to have more in common with Plotinus than with Paul.⁴⁹ This is an era when Christians and pagans and Neoplatonists were identified as, in turn, atheists, barbarians, philosophers, heathens, Hellenes, sophists, and rhetors, depending on the particular context of the speaker, e.g., his perspective, his agenda, and the timing. As a matter of fact, in our fascination with labeling all of these authors, we are often in danger of both oversimplifying and failing to grasp the rich implications that an analytical blurring of lines and merging identities—an integral element of the Third Sophistic movement—could allow us. If their contemporaries read “palindromically,” our insistence on reading left to right (as it were) could miss the point.

Impression Management

An emphasis on the social and religious implications of the blurring of literary genres is especially essential. Certainly, during the third and fourth centuries it may be the case that Gnosticism was simply an all-too-elite Platonistic Christianity, one overly restrictive for the new “Platonismus für’s ‘Volk.’”⁵⁰ At the end of the Second Sophistic, then, Plotinus was perhaps right: Gnosticism was a school of Platonism that had simply distorted the master’s (that is, Plato’s) teachings, just as Tertullian may have been correct when writing that “Valentinus was a Platonist.”⁵¹ It may have been that the rise of Gnosticism simply represented the loss of highly educated, socially powerful Christian thinkers. But while Origen discusses the perverse teachings of the philosophers as found in his Christian rivals (Valentinus, Basilides, Marcion were all “seduced by philosophy”), he himself would be bracketed with the so-called Gnostics and other heretics due to accusations of his own applications of philosophy.

⁴⁷ Aristotle: cf. Meredith 2012. Some doctrines of Aristotle were regarded as sources of inappropriate arguments; cf. Lim 1995, 123, 130–134, 231–232. For example Socrates Scholasticus consistently identifies heretics by their use of Aristotle’s logical works, and from the second century we have criticisms of those who use Aristotle’s ideas of the soul, εὐδαιμονία, and limited providence regarding sublunary affairs.

⁴⁸ On Origen, cf. Ramelli 2011.

⁴⁹ Heretics: cf. Elm 2012. Augustine: cf. Meredith 2012.

⁵⁰ Cf. Nietzsche *Beyond Good and Evil*, Preface.

⁵¹ Gnosticism: cf. *Ermeads* 2.9.6; cf. Boys-Stones 2001, Ch. 8.

Valentinus: cf. *On the Prescription of Heretics* 7.

As he frequently seems to do, the prescient and liminal figure Origen anticipated the rhetorical battles that would continue through the third century, into the fourth and beyond, in his comparison of philosophers and poets, which we quote at length:

There is much elegance in words and much beauty in the discourses of philosophers and rhetoricians, who are all of the city of Jericho, that is, people of this world. If, therefore, you should find among the philosophers perverse doctrines beautified by the assertions of a splendid discourse, this is the “tongue of gold” [*linguam auream*]. But beware that the splendor of the performance does not beguile you, that the beauty of the golden discourse does not seize you. Remember that Jesus commanded all the gold found in Jericho to be anathema. If you read a poet with properly measured verses, weaving gods and goddesses in a very bright tune, do not be seduced by the sweetness of eloquence, for it is the “tongue of gold.” If you take it up and place it in your tent, if you introduce into your heart those things that are declared by the [poets and philosophers], then you will pollute the whole Church of the Lord. This the unhappy Valentinus did, and Basilides; Marcion also did this. Those persons stole the “tongues of gold” from Jericho. They attempted to introduce into the churches sects [*sectas*] not fitting to us, and to pollute all the Church of the Lord.⁵²

The tension between such “sweet eloquence” and the simple truth started with Paul in the first century CE and would rage for centuries. And regarding the fine line between allegory and symbolism, early Christian rhetorical polemics against “Gnosticism” were not examples of the quashing of a minority by an established institution, but an artificially unified engagement with a great number of competing positions during the formulation of a school that was being shaped at that time by means of eloquent argumentation and rhetorical persuasion.⁵³ All of these associations and attributions were likely influenced by subtle and precarious moments of “impression management.”⁵⁴ The importance of theatricality—and accusations of theat-

⁵² *Hom. Josh. 7.6–7/GCS 7.334.25–335.12 (FC 105.80.82–83)*, translation Bruce 2002, with some alterations.

⁵³ Cf. van Kooten 2010, 20–21; when we read the various texts of the Nag Hammadi, it is clear that they do not have very much in common, and even lumping them all together could only be understood if one understands “Gnosticism” to mean, as loosely as possible, “hidden teaching,” sometimes only in an implicit way (e.g., in the case of the *Gospel of Thomas*).

⁵⁴ Cf. Goffman 1959; at this point, we would like to acknowledge that while we may not be using such sociological ideas—or the theoretical frameworks they originate within—in ways that would be immediately recognizable to sociologists, we are interested only in their respectful application to our own conversations. These ideas have too much analytical potential to ignore, but we try to apply them gently.

Cf. also Van Hoof 2013, 402: “Promotion because of one’s cultural capital not only required a great mastery over the classical Greek language and literature and a persuasive self-presentation, it also required *Fingerspitzengefühl*, a feel for the game: no less than in the second century, one had to seize the opportunity (*καιρός*) to say the right thing to the right person in the right place and in the right way.”

rics—was as prevalent moving into the fourth century and the Third Sophistic as it had been previously in the Second, as well as, for that matter, the Classical period.⁵⁵

Theatricality

That said, however, in the third and fourth centuries CE there were religious conflicts driving rhetorical displays. Besides representing personal advancement in the hierarchy of the Church—and better and worse Holy or Apostolic Sees—these battles held personal moral implications for their audiences, if not also a competing interest in continuously gaining members and allies. If we look to Chaniotis' definition of theatricality, for example, by studying “the effort of individuals or groups to construct an image of themselves which is at least in part deceiving, because it either is in contrast to reality or because it exaggerates or partly distorts reality,” we can see this type of performance by bishops not as malicious deception, but as an interaction made clearer through the application of discourse theory.⁵⁶ In fact, “the effort to gain control over the emotions and the thoughts of others, to provoke specific reactions, such as, sorrow, pity, anger, fear, admiration or respect” is nearly the method of the late antique preacher. The sermon, then, can further be paired with Erasmo's study of theatrics by noting that theatricality “is the connection of a person, thing, or event with the theatre, which is itself a combination of texts, actors, and audience.”⁵⁷ The Bible and the homily, the preaching bishop, and the congregation, for example, fit this model perfectly. This is especially true if we see this combination as conscious, intentional, and reciprocal; as Bartsch writes, “[actors] know themselves watched by the object of their view and respond accordingly even as the categories

55 Cf. Demosthenes, *De Corona* (18.129): τριταγωνιστής (“player who took the third part,” and the name of a play by Antiphanes), applied by Demosthenes to Aeschines. In the late antique period, tragedy was a major component of intellectual education and Christian thinking, whether fully formed or not. Note as well the *acta martyronum*, which was uninterested in judges, while hagiographic accounts included pictures of cruel judges to highlight the horror of Christian sufferings; cf. Miles 1999. Also cf. Easterling/Miles 1999, for a discussion of the influence of tragic texts on Christian writing, even though some Christian authors would criticize the ability of tragic performances to move an audience, and though they had moral objections to men “pretending” to be women. Further, as they show, dramatization of biblical texts and hagiographic stories was a means for Christian authors to reach a larger audience, as well as to make it easier to convert non-Christians. Because many Christian authors shared the cultural language and identity of “pagan” culture through tragedy, even the severest critics of drama were products of it themselves and even quoted from tragic plots. Cf. as well Leyerle (2001), who argues that John Chrysostom used images and tropes drawn from the theater to persuade Christians that spiritual marriage was wrong; further, in addition to her analysis of the importance of the rhetorical strategies used by Chrysostom, she discusses the role of the theater in late antiquity, particularly in Antioch. Cf. as well Lugaresi (2008).

56 Cf. Chaniotis 1997, 222.

57 Cf. Erasmo 2004, 3.

of spectacle and spectator lose all stability.”⁵⁸ The search for applause—and the accusation of its solicitation, made from one presbyter against another—can be understood to be parallel with the hunt for applause by the Second Sophistics according to Philostratus.⁵⁹ But as Van Nuffelen argues, besides the spectacular, there were other reasons for engaging in disputations in the Christian milieu, even in the face of adversity: namely, the role of rhetoric in bringing about persuasion and establishing the truth of the speaker. In the fourth century, it was the case that free and fair disputation functioned as an ideal, as a practice that was regarded as the good and proper way of settling differences in religious views. But as well, from the fourth to the sixth century (and beyond) the ideal of an open disputation functioned as a regulatory fiction, which shaped the interpretation and representation of events by late ancient sources. In other words, contrary to the model that Lim (1995) and Goldhill (2008) present, there is clear evidence for the efforts to preserve the continuation of disputations as they happened in the fourth century onward, and, further, for the strong belief that rhetoric and persuasion played an essential part in sustaining this practice.⁶⁰

It is evident that the interferences of theatre and other spectacles in the field of rhetoric (both secular and religious) were a cause for concern among these early Christians. While it may remain true that the similarities between the figure of the rhetor-sophist and the actor have already been noticed and discussed in the Classical period (as well as in the Second Sophistic), it should also be noted that Christian elites wanted to avoid such assimilations at all costs, as proven by the number of lines of text and the great efforts devoted to establish firm differences between the figure of the priest and that of the orator in the Christian treatises of the time.⁶¹ Again, if we adopt Chaniotis’ definition of theatricality, we would see it as a type of self-fashioning; Gregory of Nazianzus, Augustine, and Libanius are masters of this process.⁶² Cribiore’s conclusion in her work on the school of Libanius is useful

58 Cf. Bartsch-Zimmer 1994, 10–11.

59 E.g., *VS* 492, 585, 586. The importance of display and performance was not restricted to the bishopric: Lactantius’ *De ira Dei* has all the makings of a performative display. Whether the work was a rhetorical set piece, an “actual” treatise, or an oration performed in front of Constantine does not matter for the present discussion, but this ambiguity of context alone is enough to indicate the prevalence of the characteristics of theatricality in non-sermonic texts.

60 For more on dialogue and further challenge to the notion that the fifth century CE did not partake in dialogue, cf. Cameron 2014.

61 Second Sophistic: cf. Gleason 1995.

Figure of the priest and orator: cf., for instance, Chrysostom’s *De Sacerdotio*, Ambrose of Milan’s *De Officiis* and Augustine’s *De Doctrina Christiana*. For the interferences between rhetoric and theatre in late antiquity, cf. the work of Hall (e.g., 1995) and Webb (e.g., 2001).

62 That is not to say that we wish to equate self-fashioning and theatricality. Self-presentation, as a more common concern than theatricality *per se*, includes behaviors other than aspects of performance and theater. That said, since Goffman (1959), *dramaturgy* as a sociological perspective, involving aspects of symbolic interactionism in microsociological accounts of social interaction in

here: late antique society was craving noise, spectacle, and entertainment—all of them constituents of the theatricality at the core of that time.⁶³ For these reasons, Gregory’s famous statement, “They [i.e., churchgoers] look for orators, not for priests,” and Jerome’s chastisement, “*Ciceronianus es, non Christianus*,” should come as no surprise.⁶⁴

As a result, we can link this theatrical conception of culture in an increasingly Christian society—the phenomenon of “Philostratean Bishops,” so to speak—with the ways that cultural elites took advantage of this theatricality and in turn used it as the point of departure to fashion themselves. The most obvious example is Gregory of Nazianzus’ “forty days silence,” which has been interpreted as a means of reinforcing his authority; this decision dovetails with his constant denunciation of fellow-bishops as “charlatans.”⁶⁵ As Goffman proposes:

The expressiveness of the individual (and therefore his capacity to give impressions) appears to involve two radically different kinds of sign activity: the expression that he gives, and the expression that he gives off. The first involves verbal symbols or their substitutes which he uses admittedly and solely to convey information that he and the others are known to attach to these symbols. This is communication in the traditional and narrow sense. The second involves a wide range of action that others can treat as symptomatic of the actor, the expectation being that the action was performed for reasons other than the information conveyed in this way.⁶⁶

When looking at the theatrics of the late antique era, then, the tension between how these authors provide overt signals in order to convey their message and how they use inductive impressions from their audience in “real time” (not only before the Emperor, but also now in councils before other bishops and before congregations) is as important as issues and complications of frankness and forthrightness were during the Second Sophistic. These remain important issues, though they are recontextualized. As Goffman writes later in that same work: “we live by inference.”⁶⁷

The act of detaching themselves from charges of theatricality and sophistry—even “Asianism”—was a characteristic feature of the self-fashioning of Christian elites.⁶⁸ But, as we see with Origen, the lines between labels—for example, “sophists,” “philosophers,” and “rhetors”—were at different times either significantly blurred or strictly defined, which led in some cases to a type of cultural cross-poll-

everyday life, has brought a vocabulary of theatrical performance to the study of social interaction. Alternatively, we do not mean to imply that characteristics of theatricality and performance are the only ways to view human interaction with regard to self-presentation, in late antiquity or any period; cf., on these points, Criscuolo 1998.

⁶³ Cf. Roberts 1989 for discussion of how rooted the concept of flamboyancy and entertainment was in this period; cf. also Van Hoof 2013, 389.

⁶⁴ *Or.* 42.25 and *Ep.* 22.30.

⁶⁵ For his “forty days silence,” cf. Storin 2011, 225–257; and, more recently, cf. Elm 2012, 153–166.

⁶⁶ Cf. Goffman 1959, 14.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, quoting William I. Thomas.

⁶⁸ “Asianism”: cf. Hägg 2006, 119–226; for more on Asianic style, cf. *Lib.*, *Ep.* 141 and 376.

nation. On the “pagan” side, the worry about theatricality was present, but absent was the idea of the theater as a demonic place; Libanius, for instance, applied terms from the theatre to name his students or his teaching-room.⁶⁹ And the Church historian Socrates resorts to similar cross-cultural references: for example, when he speaks of sophists who converted to Christianity, he is transferring a cultural label into the realm of religion.⁷⁰ So, when Themistius accused fellow intellectuals of being theatrical and histrionic, he wanted to discredit them in the cultural milieu.⁷¹ However, Eusebius of Caesarea’s criticisms of the sophist-like style of Paul of Samosata were meant to locate the latter in the realm of heresy.⁷² In other words, while in the “pagan” milieu theatricality was a cultural matter, Christian elites made it a religious one.

To look at the late third through sixth centuries CE in this way, it would seem that the issue of inclusion within the Third Sophistic should come down to the author’s own efforts regarding self-presentation. If every author of this time period engaged in rhetoric and self-fashioning based on his own cultural, religious, and political agendas, then inclusion into this tritosophistic would follow. It was enough, in other words, to self-identify as a sophist-preacher. But, in turn, by carefully studying these authors’ attempts at impression management (combined with the historical information we have about them, if any), we will be able to understand their place within the period without glossing over important differences.

Spatial Rhetoric

The consequences of the distinctive significance of late antique literature on issues of identity also reached the townscape, especially in terms of remapping sacred and

⁶⁹ For this topic, see Cribiore 2007, 41 n.156. See also Lib., *Ep.* 172 and 539 (Foerster).

⁷⁰ Soc. Schol., *HE* 1.36, 7.12. Also cf. 7.37: “Silvanus was formerly a rhetorician, and had been brought up in the school of Troilus the sophist; but aiming at perfection in his Christian course, he entered on the ascetic mode of life, and set aside the rhetorician’s pallium” (translation Zenos 1890).

⁷¹ Theatricality: *Or.* 25.310, where sophistic improvisation is associated with theatricality; Themistius’ rhetoric, however, is that of a philosopher; cf. Penella 2000, 26–27.

Histrionic: *Or.* 7.91, where Themistius describes Procopius’ actions as both comedic and tragic; cf. Swain 2014, 99–100.

⁷² Eusebius, *HE* 7.30.9: “Nor [do we judge] the quackery in church assemblies that he devises, courting popularity and posing for appearance’s sake, and thus astonishing the minds of the simpler folk, with the tribunal and lofty throne that he prepared for himself.... Also, he smites his hand on his thigh and stamps the tribunal with his feet; and those who do not applaud or wave their handkerchiefs, as in the theater, or shout and jump up in the same way as do the men and women who are his partisans and hearken in this disorderly fashion, but who listen as in God’s house, with orderly and becoming reverence,—these he rebukes and insults. And toward the interpreters of the Word who have departed this life he behaves in an insolent and ill-bred fashion in the common assembly, and brags about himself as though he were not a bishop but a sophist and charlatan” (translation Oulton).

secular places. The creation of Christian sacred spaces in late antiquity dealt with the reluctant attitude toward secluding God within a physical space as expressed in *Acts* 17:24 and 2 *Corinthians* 6:16, and both of these examples (as well as many others) support Paul's Stoic ideas about dual citizenship in both earthly and cosmic cities.⁷³ In other words, as van Kooten suggests, in contrast to a more ritualistic and locative Judaism or Hellenism, theirs was a philosophical, "logical" message that surpassed space and time (since one worships "in spirit and truth," not in the temple). Paul had, in a sense, created a para-political "assembly" in his letters (e.g., with the Corinthian ἐκκλησία, to which both letters are addressed), in which he plays with the idea of "congregation" as well as with the Hellenic notion of ἐκκλησία as a political assembly, as applied by Aristotle to Homer's assemblies.⁷⁴ But we should note that, contrary to Paul's declarations, space implied legitimization, and legitimization required physical space.

Powerful disputes within Christianity regarding physical space were eventually resolved and churches were built, but relatively late: that is, within the third century (e.g., Dura-Europos and Qirqbize in Belus).⁷⁵ It was only around that time that a "spatial rhetoric" would even become necessary within the Christianization of secular places, and subsequent "pagan" responses can also be seen as disputes fought in the rhetorical arena. Efforts to cement the foundations of a Christian community in cities—as in the composition and delivery of sermons, as well as in the organization of processions and other public displays of Christian symbols—converged when Christians belligerently confronted pagans, Jews, fellow Christians, and the Imperial power, due to conflicts over space.⁷⁶ In other words, locations for gathering and

73 Apparently reluctant attitude: *Acts* 17:24: "The God who created the world and everything in it, and who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands"; 2 *Cor.* 6:16: "And the temple of the living God is what we are..." (translation *NRSV*).

As well as many others: for the Christian assembly as an organic body, cf. 1 *Cor.* 12:12–27. For heavenly citizenship offered to Christians, cf. *Phil.* 3.20. For Christians as free citizens of the heavenly government, cf. *Phil.* 1:27. Cf. van Kooten 2010, 12; with Schofield 2000, 556, 606–607, 611, 613, 648–649.

74 The term "congregation": as in the Septuagint, in which the phrase "assembly of God" occurs only once (2 *Esdras* 23:1); cf. also van Kooten 2010, 32 n.45.

Homer's assemblies: Aristotle, *Pol.* 4. Following Paul, Origen (*Against Celsus* 3.29–30) would then contrast the Christian and the political assembly in a similar way. Rather than an apolitical organization, the assembly of God—as compared to that of a particular Greek city—offers a better alternative; for discussion, cf. van Kooten 2010, 11.

75 Churches: cf. White 1997.

Dura-Europos and Qirqbize: cf. Marksches 2006, 277–279.

76 The discussion concerning the place of the Emperor and Empire within a Christian cosmos became important on both Christian and "pagan" sides: for the former, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom; for the latter, Julian, Libanius, Ammianus, and, in the sixth century, Procopius; cf. Cameron 1994, 123.

preaching were especially and inextricably implicated in the religious and political arena of late antiquity.⁷⁷

Examples of this notion of spatial rhetoric are plentiful within elite Christians' efforts to Christianize secular and urban spaces. John Chrysostom's works abound in such efforts, yet other texts deserve particular attention by modern scholars for explaining how the locations of religious gatherings had to be remapped.⁷⁸ The affair of the basilicas and the Altar of Victory in which Ambrose of Milan became involved, the numerous testimonies of depositions and restorations of churches to Christian communities (e.g., Socrates Scholasticus' *Church History* is full of such references), and the legal dispositions of the *Codex Theodosianus* strongly suggest that gathering and preaching locations were an active element in the religious and political milieu.⁷⁹

Creating recognized religious space was a challenge for early Christians, when it became necessary to grapple carefully with Scriptural passages such as that referenced above from *Acts*, as well as with the reluctance shown by Christians in previous centuries: that is, how to circumscribe God's presence.⁸⁰ This problem, addressed by several late antique Christian authors, was solved by attributing a derivative sacred nature to churches. Christians, who understood themselves to be divine buildings of a sort (from 1 *Corinthians*), began to congregate in specific places which became holy by virtue of the mere presence of God's flock.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Cf. Shepardson 2007; Andrade 2010 and Spuntarelli 2012.

⁷⁸ Cf. Shepardson 2007, especially 485–488; Chrysostom's attempts to Christianize urban public spaces accounted for one of the reasons for his conflict with the empress Eudoxia; cf. Andrade 2010, 8–25. Spaces such as the agora or porticoes were, in Chrysostom's view, potentially demonic and had to be Christianized; for Chrysostom's view of the agora as a public space to be depaganised, cf. Lavan 2007, 157–167 and Sandwell 2007, 144–148. It is worth reading Chrysostom's corpus of homilies, e.g., *Adversus Iudaeos* or *Contra Ludos*, which contain countless admonitions, on the one side, to prevent his flock from attending synagogues and theaters, and, on the other, to guide them to sacred spaces; cf. *De Statuis* 17, PG 49.172–173: “they left their caves and huts, and flocked together in every direction, as if they had been so many angels arriving from heaven. Then might one see the city likened to heaven, while these saints appeared everywhere.” Chrysostom's attempts to remap Antioch included repopulation of the city by comparing it with heaven.

⁷⁹ Cf. Soc. Schol., *HE* 1.23, 27, 37; 2.11–17, 22–24, 37–38; 3.9; 4.1, 6, 7, 13; 5.2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 22, 24; 6.8, 11, 14, 18–19; 7.25.36. For the imperial legislation see *CTh* 16.5.2, 6, 12, 30, 59, 65; cf. also Maier 1995. In a workshop (“Principio y Final: De Amiano Marcelino a Eusebio de Cesarea”) held at University of Navarra on December 12–13, 2013, Jan Stenger proposed Eusebius' *Onomasticon* as an example of spatial rhetoric.

⁸⁰ Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8.17–20; *The letter of Barnabas* 16. On the theological rationale behind this shift, cf. Caseau 1999, 42–44; cf. Markus 1994.

⁸¹ 1 *Cor.* 6:19: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?”

Christian authors: cf. the texts provided by Markus 1990, 140 n.5 and n.6; Augs., *Sermo* 337.2 (cf. 336.1, etc.); Tertull., *De Cor.* 9.2; Minuc. Fel., *Oct.* 32.1–3; Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo* 229.2 (cf. 227.1, 228.1).

On the other side, an interest in remapping the religious spaces of the Empire was also shared by “pagan” authors. Julian’s attempt to resurrect the ancient oracular spring of Castalia at the temple of Apollo at Daphne turned into a disaster from a public relations point of view. When he tried to remove the bones of the third-century patriarch Babylas from the vicinity of the temple, the result was a massive Christian procession.⁸² As well, Libanius’ encomium of his hometown includes a praise of the positive impact of classical cultural legacy on the cultural life of Antioch and on its architecture.⁸³ And Themistius, Eunapius, and Eumenius of Autun also devoted lines to express their views on the impact of classical rhetoric and philosophy on the cultural life of the city as well as on the townscape.⁸⁴ Struggles over the possession of space within late antique literature, therefore, give us new insights into the importance of rhetoric in contemporary city life, something we want to include as a characteristic feature of the Third Sophistic.

Conclusion

When defining the Third Sophistic, what we therefore need and want to consider is the analytical usefulness of a significant blurring of lines. Differences between notions of “sophistic,” “bishopric,” “philosophic,” and “rhetoric” were by no means fixed at the end of the third century. In this era of religious contests, Origen is able to rely on Paul’s anti-sophistic stance from both *Corinthians*, while at the same time calling for Christians to strive to become “the cleverer and sharper minds” and “to convert philosophers to Christianity.”⁸⁵ We might note again here that, early on, Origen had set the tone for the Third-Sophistic tension involving a “paradox of language.”⁸⁶ So, beyond the problem of expressing in words religious ideas that were perceived as unavoidably “inexpressible,” we should keep in mind the difficulty of pulling apart content and form, especially in the fourth century—for example, on one side, biblical λέξις vs. biblical νοῦς; on the other, Platonic λέξις vs. Platonic νοῦς.⁸⁷ This would especially be true when interpretation was be-

82 A fire destroyed the temple of Apollo there, for which the Christian community was blamed. In this case, Julian was acting in the manner of Pisistratus, who removed the bones near the temple of Apollo on Delos in 426 BCE. Cf. Amm. Marc. 22.12.18; Sozomen, *HE* 5.19–20; Julian, *Misop.* 15–33.

83 Cf. specifically *Or.* 11.139–141, 181–195, but also *Or.* 20.42; 30.15; *Ep.* 100.

84 Cf. Themistius, *Or.* 20.237b; 21.246b; 21.251a; 23.304d5–305c7; 24.301d–305c; 26.312b, 318b–319d; 27.338d; 34.12; Eunapius, *VS* 483; Eumenius, *Pan. Lat.* 9.

85 Cf. *Against Celsus*. We might imagine that Paul’s focus in 1 and 2 *Corinthians* was more likely an attack on the Second Sophistics, rather than philosophers, per se (or “wisdom,” in general), especially since he starts his sermon on the Areopagus in *Acts* (28:17) with a quote from the then famous Stoic poet, Aratus. Who else, we might ask, but the audiences of the Second Sophistics would be “wise,” “powerful,” and “those of noble birth”? It would likely not be the philosophers of the time, given stereotypes they had incurred; cf. van Kooten 2010, 18.

86 Cf. Cameron 1994.

87 Inexpressible: cf. Cameron 1994, especially 59–60.

coming authoritative, as in the case of important homilies particularly. Take, for example, the strange status of Ps.-Clement's *Second Letter to the Corinthians*, which seemed to have been read during public worship; the impact of Plotinus' *Enneads* on Augustine; and Book 9 in *City of God*, in which Augustine quotes Apuleius in order to discuss Platonic daemons.

While elements of the Third Sophistic are often reflected in rhetorical and oratorical texts, readers must be aware that other genres are being studied with similar perspectives and methodologies. Certainly, rhetoric was central in the political and religious milieu of the time, but poetry (both "pagan" and Christian) also participated in the literary landscape of the Third Sophistic. One interest we have in all of these authors is that they (indeed, both Christian and non-), in most cases, worked within and transformed established Hellenic genres as introduced and reinforced by the παιδεία.

Even though magic, Neoplatonism, astrology, and oracles are all present in late epic poetry, the development of the hymnal as a new literary genre is something decidedly Christian, and deserves the attention that seems to be developing around it. Modern readers seem to be starting to work on late antique epic works with the deliberateness they deserve.⁸⁸ Perhaps what we could now suggest is further study of the epic and poetry written by authors of the Third Sophistic such as the Christian poet Arator, Saint Romanos the Melodist and Hymnographer, Nonnus of Panapolis, Triphiodorus, Paul the Silentiary (an epigrammatist and hymnist), among other authors.⁸⁹ First, these authors re-elaborated the epic legacy while they also innovated within it (especially the school of Nonnus).⁹⁰ Second, these works also engaged in the debates of their time, albeit more subtly than the incendiary rhetoric of Chrysostom or Libanius. So, understanding Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* as an account of the coming of a savior god in the Imperial period would help us further understand his historical circumstances (e.g., "henotheism"). Third, these poems are intricate and otherwise ambiguous. All of these characteristics make these texts difficult to deal with, but we look forward to seeing such studies emerge in coming years. But in addition to what has been discussed above, new studies of ancient genres are emerging at the same time that the Third Sophistic is gaining prominence as an analytical idea;

λέξις/νοῦς: Theodoret *Cure of the Greek Maladies or Knowledge of the Gospel Truth from the Greek Philosophy* 1.127: "...handling the works of your poets and writers and philosophers, we leave behind the ones as poisonous, while revising (διασκευάσαντες) the rest according to the wisdom of teaching, we offer you a therapy based on an antidote." For the effort to separate Platonic λέξις and νοῦς as found in Theodoret, cf. Siniosoglou 2008.

⁸⁸ Cf., e.g., Koltun-Fromm 2009 and Walsh 2012.

⁸⁹ E.g., Prudentius (and not merely because of the *Psychomachia*), Claudian's *De raptu Proserpinae*, the *epyllia* of Dracontius, Claudian's *De bello Getico*, Corippus' sixth-century *Iohannis*, Juvenicus' early fourth-century Gospel epic, and Venantius Fortunatus' sixth-century *Vita Martini*; cf. Trout 2005.

⁹⁰ Cf. Miguélez Cavero who would argue otherwise; for a reexamination and the "inexistence of a 'School of Nonnus,'" cf. Miguélez Cavero 2008, Chapter 1.

historiography, for instance, in the form of ecclesiastical history, has recently emerged as a new subject of study.

In the interest of suggesting a metaphor, what the term “Third Sophistic” might be able to offer is a type of view—a window as opposed to a wall—between classics and religious studies, between what are referred to as “early medieval history” and “late antique philosophy”; a way we can look at a number of the same events and texts and discuss them while in the same room and looking out of the same aperture. In fact, the continuity-and-change pattern which we have been acknowledging and embracing is meant to be further applied to other genres and disciplines: for example, late antique art history and medicine. And, though not a reason in itself to apply a periodization, it is clear that current studies have moved well beyond the early Byzantine period into the “late middle ages,” and the Third Sophistic may allow for a softer landing when leaping from the Second Sophistic to the encounter between Islam and the Roman Empire.⁹¹ There was at that time a powerful awareness of the need to adapt a religious and cultural legacy to a new era, and it took so many shapes that we suggest we might regard the idea of the Third Sophistic as the frame for that window, which allows us cooperatively to contemplate such a changing, contradictory period.⁹²

⁹¹ As reflected by titles and studies by Sarris 2011, Whitmarsh 2013, and Cameron 2013.

⁹² The analogy of the term “Third Sophistic” as a window for this period of history, as well as a number of other excellent suggestions, came out of a 2013 APA panel on the literature of the Third Sophistic, which was organized by Kristina Meinking and which included Jeremy Schott as a fellow presenter and Beth DePalma Digeser as the respondent. Ryan Fowler would like to thank everyone who attended that panel for their participation and engagement.

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Ryan C. Fowler

Introduction to Plato in the Third Sophistic

The influence of Plato on the thought and literature of late antiquity has long been noted; more recently, however, there has been a focus on the impact of Plato on later antiquity. In the last decade or so, the term “Third Sophistic” that is used in the title of this volume has been ventured to refer to later antique literature, sometimes specifying different periods of time or covering various lists of texts. As the *Prolegomena* to this volume suggests, the term might be helpfully applied to the literature written after the “Third Century Crisis,” when Christianity was taking on an entirely new status within the Empire, up to the point at which the Hellenic παιδεία seems to have been adopted and adapted to a new order and culture at the end of the sixth century. With the application of the term “Third Sophistic” to this period, the hope is that readers of late and later antique texts might take careful note of the remarkable similarities between Christian and non-Christian literature written during the Second Sophistic and this later period. At the same time, we can remain aware of new issues concerning the ownership of urban and religious space, the literary canon and issues of “orthodoxy” (Christian and philosophical), and the full impact of the emerging New Philosophy on Hellenic and Roman identities. This volume gathers together studies of Christian and non-Christian orators, historians, theologians, and philosophers with the purpose of further documenting the differences as well as emphasizing the similarities in these authors’ concerns, methods of argumentation, and goals as expressed often through their understanding and various uses of Plato and his philosophy within their own works. Our purpose is to argue that these various approaches to Plato are dynamic, subtle, and often idiosyncratic, that each of these authors (and their works) is worth his own detailed study, while they should be understood at the same time to be part of a rich and discernible religious and political landscape.

In Section 1 of this volume, which focuses on non-Christian Platonist philosophers, the first three contributors qualify—and in a sense correct—common views of those writing under the banner of Platonism during the fourth and fifth centuries; in these essays we move from later Neoplatonism through the Athenian school, and on to the so-called last Platonist in Alexandria.

John Finamore discusses Iamblichus’ (c. 245–c. 325 C.E.) *De Mysteriis* as a rebuttal of what he saw as the false argumentation of his fellow Platonists. Though Iamblichus favored an approach to philosophical enlightenment that depended heavily on ritualistic and religious beliefs, Finamore argues that there is much more rationalism in Iamblichus’ writings than they are given credit for. In fact, Iamblichus is not any more irrational than many of his Platonic predecessors. By exploring two areas that would be referred to by twentieth-century analytic philosophers as “irrational” (demonology and the souls of the dead), Finamore shows that “one person’s irrational is another’s serious philosophical concern.” His analysis explores how Iamblichus’ doctrine not only solves problems within his contemporaries’ and predeces-

sors' views, it also is more coherent and more thorough than theirs. In the end, Iamblichus gives a rational explanation for the workings of two pressing issues of his times: that is, the role of daemons and souls of deceased human beings in contemporary religion.

Damian Caluori agrees with other modern studies which suggest that there are reasons to believe that relations between Platonism and rhetoric in Athens during the fifth century CE were rather close: both were major pillars of the Hellenic παιδεία and both were essential elements in paganism's defense against an increasingly powerful Christianity. Although there is some truth to the view that philosophers and orators were united in their efforts to maintain traditional ways and values, a closer look reveals that the relationship between philosophy and rhetoric was more complicated than at first glance. With an eye on the Platonist schools of Athens and Alexandria, he explores their members' reactions towards rhetoric, the role that rhetorical texts played in the canonical course of study at the Platonist schools, and the philosophical interest that fifth-century Platonists had in rhetoric. One important notion that emerged at this time was that true rhetoric must reflect an informed understanding regarding the proper way to govern a city, which would only have been available to someone familiar with the noetic realm. Thus, rhetoric for Platonists ideally serves an important function in the political sphere. However, before one has reached the Platonic aim regarding one's soul, rhetoric might be viewed as nothing more than a distraction. That is, except perhaps in one case: employment. Caluori notes that we are able to explain the existence of Platonist sophists because jobs teaching rhetoric outnumbered opportunities to teach philosophy.

Michael Griffin's essay offers some reflections on Olympiodorus' conception of his philosophy and pedagogy. First, Olympiodorus' "pliable" treatment of pagan doctrines and philosophy for his Christian students reflects his self-portrayal in the classroom "as the master of the syncretic language of Hellenic philosophy which is uniquely able to 'translate' between ordinary people, educated people, and different religious traditions." Second, Olympiodorus' construction of the "philosopher" distinguishes him from οἱ πολλοί, the γραμματικός, the rhetorician, and the poet. Third, Olympiodorus strives to convince his pupils that philosophers alone—including himself—do not operate at the level of symbols, but in fact teach πράγματα, which are their real referents. As a result, we can understand philosophers as being in a unique position to teach true virtue.

Section 2, which travels up to the end of the fourth century, includes essays about Christian and non-Christian orators who were engaged with Plato's work and legacy. This section moves us from North Africa to the East, to rest for the moment in Constantinople.

Kristina Meinking explores the moments at which the Christian apologist Lactantius appears to engage with Plato or the philosophical traditions he associated with Plato—Socrates, the Epicureans, and the Stoics. Her list follows Lactantius' own philosophical doxography, while echoing the combinations of previous philosophers in the treatise itself. Lactantius' lumping together of all philosophers from Socrates

through Seneca in his *De ira Dei* is pragmatic, but is also, importantly, structural. Meinking shows that Lactantius engages with Greek philosophers in strategic ways, but by focusing on the *De ira Dei*, she is able to show that the work is surprising not only because of its less common theory of divine wrath, but also for the particular way Lactantius uses various philosophical figures and ideas. Despite his general dissatisfaction with philosophers, Lactantius' use of key philosophical tenets means that Plato and the Platonic tradition survive in this text, albeit through restrained expressions. And it is because of this discernible Platonic expression that Lactantius merits study alongside other authors of the early Third Sophistic—for example, Methodius and Porphyry. Finally, Meinking argues that the particular ways in which Platonism exists in Lactantius' texts can help illuminate by the way of contrast how Greek authors of this time period responded to Platonic philosophy.

“Over the work of the sophist Libanius,” Bernard Schouler writes, “hovers the great shadow of Plato.” This presence does not, however, involve any allegiance to a particular type of Platonism: Plato is invoked in solemn or familiar moments, not as a spiritual guide, but as an undisputed master of Greek style. But at a time when Plato's theology was attracting attention, Libanius remains separate from that movement, despite his personal ties to contemporary philosophers. For this interest, Schouler writes, we should not blame his commitment as a sophist, per se, nor should we infer any aversion to the religious and deliberately mystical nature of Neoplatonism, since he did not avoid religion or piety. Instead, Libanius is a man of tradition, and his religiosity reflects his inherited, traditional Hellenic worship. Schouler's examination shows that in his use of Plato, Libanius brings Socrates into his own century. But far from yielding to any pressure from contemporary Neoplatonism, as has often been claimed, Libanius was working to separate Socrates from Plato, in that Socrates taught true life lessons. The charm emanating from Plato's works seduced Libanius, as—alongside Demosthenes and Thucydides—examples of the height of Greek prose.

Michael Schramm investigates why Julian, after he became Emperor in 362 CE, did not include Themistius in his strategy for political reform, despite the fact that his former teacher was one of the leading pagan orators and philosophers of the second half of the fourth century CE. And though Themistius' career didn't seem to suffer irrevocably from the oversight, several reasons account for the distance between the former student and his teacher. Schramm shows that Themistius diverges from Julian in his theory of kingship and above all in the role that piety plays for the king. It is not surprising, then, that Julian sought philosophical advice from Maximus of Ephesus and Priscus who, in the tradition of Iamblichus, taught the connection between theurgy and philosophy, and who supported Julian's preference for divination and other ritual practices. As a result of his tolerant paganism, Themistius would not have been taken into consideration as an advisor and educator, even if Julian may still have valued him as a former teacher. In point of fact, despite their partial agreement, the distance between the leading panegyrist of the second half of the fourth century CE and the last pagan emperor seems mutually acceptable.

Taking a different approach, Robert Penella writes that Themistius, though a pagan philosopher and a teacher of philosophy, proves himself a master rhetorician; it emerges from his orations that rhetoric was also an important tool for him. What is more, we see that in the wide range of canonical authors found within his public and private orations, Plato holds a place of honor. In fact, Plato's only serious competitor for first place in Themistius' orations is Homer. In this study, Penella significantly adds to our understanding of the relationship between Themistius and Plato by first distinguishing between two different uses of Platonic material in his orations. Second, he looks at how Plato is presented in the orations in the company of other authorities—not all of them philosophical. Plato emerges as a special case among the authors Themistius displays in his orations: he belongs to a philosophical canon, but because of his extraordinary linguistic and stylistic credentials, Plato also belongs to a literary canon. In his examples, Penella shows that when Themistius juxtaposes the philosophical Plato with literary figures, we might read this comparison as displaying the literary Plato among his own kind.

Section 3 includes discussions of the historian and exegete Eusebius and the Cappadocian Fathers, which moves us from Themistius and Constantinople, down through the Cappadocian plateaus, to Eusebius' Caesarea.

George Karamanolis writes that because Eusebius was living in an age of transition, he aims to justify Christianity not only by showing its superiority to pagan culture and philosophy, but also by demonstrating that the best part of paganism is in agreement with Christianity (and indeed anticipated a number of its elements). According to Karamanolis, this relationship is most clear in the philosophy of Plato, whom Eusebius praises as the best philosopher—or, rather, the best *pagan* philosopher. The question Karamanolis raises is how Eusebius' pronouncement of Plato as the best of all pagan philosophers should in fact be understood. In the end, Karamanolis envisions Eusebius as a Platonist of a certain sort, completely different from Plotinus or Porphyry.

As David Bradshaw shows, the work of the Cappadocian Fathers represents some of the finest literary output to emerge from Christianity as it continued to develop in later antiquity. Bradshaw argues that the quality and richness of their work was due to, among other things, the Cappadocians' "Janus-faced attitude toward pagan culture." Their classical educations allowed them to draw freely upon pagan models for both philosophical content and literary style, while at the same time being fully aware that with Christianity something new had entered the world. This orientation—looking around them as well as back to the Hellenic past—was reflected acutely in their attitudes toward Plato. The Cappadocians occasionally mention Plato with respect, and of course there are many unacknowledged borrowings throughout their work which Bradshaw draws our attention to; however, the Cappadocians' evident appreciation for Plato does not prevent them from also being sharply critical. Bradshaw focuses on what seem to be the most important thematic resonances between Plato and the Cappadocians; through adoption and reworking, they subtly transformed Platonic ideas. According to Bradshaw's analysis, the Cappado-

cians' view of life as *iconic* is, among other things, humble. It is natural, then, that Plato, as perhaps the most capacious and modest philosopher in his approach, was for the Cappadocians a reliable ally and guide.

In her contribution, Ilaria Ramelli analyses Plato's impact on Origen's and Gregory of Nyssa's protology and eschatology. She shows that what was important for Origen was, first, the role of Plato's myths in his conception of the ἀρχή and the τέλος, and, second, his correction of some aspects of Plato's doctrine of creation and eschatology. Ramelli is able to detail a remarkable convergence between Plato and Origen within their uses of mytho-allegorical discourse. In addition, Ramelli examines the reception of Plato in Gregory's protology and eschatology as deeply inspired by Origen. By illustrating Gregory's own conception of the ἀρχή and the τέλος, which far from counters Origen's (as is often maintained), Ramelli surprisingly shows that Gregory's approach to the beginning of Genesis is in line with Origen's, while his approach to Revelation is significantly different.

Moving to Gaza in our last section (Section 4), we include one discussion of the sophist and rhetorician Choricus, and a discussion of the Gazan authors Aeneas, Zacharias, and Procopius. Though there has recently been increased interest in the literature of fifth- and sixth-century Gaza, all of these authors deserve much more attention.

Though the Platonic influence on the style and contents of Choricus' prose has long been recognized, Claudia Greco's contribution shows that his selection of material and elaboration of Platonic passages display an extensive knowledge of the dialogues. As well, his discussions show independent reflection concerning Plato's discussions about poetic creation, questions that Choricus himself also dealt with. Greco reviews the many allusions to theoretical principles found in the *Dialexeis*, as well as their concrete literary realization and conceptual foundation. According to her analysis, Choricus' Muse emerges as a synthesis of all that is beautiful and good—a spell for the soul, which, through the sweetness of speech and word, reaches philosophical truths. That said, Choricus is not primarily an abstract thinker, and so he applies these considerations to the more concrete events of a life well lived. Greco's discussion shows that the selection of lexical formulae and the adoption of specific terminology do not reflect thoughtless formal adherence to a set repertoire, but are the result of serious reflection and dialogue.

Also in Section 4, Michael Champion describes the Gazans Aeneas, Zacharias, and Procopius as all stimulated by a renewed challenge from the Neoplatonists, transforming the Platonic tradition as they constructed their own Academies. Earlier in the fifth century, the Athenian Neoplatonist Proclus had published his *Eighteen Arguments for the Eternity of the World* as well as his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, and both works acted as a catalyst for renewed Christian and Neoplatonic thinking about the creation and eternity of the cosmos. The debates of the Gazan authors bridge the space between Proclus and their own sixth-century disputes, and are evidence of Christian thinking about the doctrine of creation, the social dynamics within these rhetorical schools, and the activities of their teachers.

Yet while these Gazan authors seek to turn Plato and Platonism against their Neoplatonic opponents, they also appropriate the Platonic tradition in order to communicate both with their contemporary opponents as well as with their Christian audience. As a result, the Gazan use of Platonism is not simply destructive; Champion's analysis suggests that Aeneas, Zacharias, and Procopius each believed that Greek philosophy could be useful in the formation of Christian ideas, as they simultaneously argued for the continued use of philosophy and at the same time rejected connections between philosophy and heterodox religious practices in the schools of late antiquity. As a result, a century of Christian and pagan philosophers and rhetors in the early Byzantine East contributed to the tradition of the Third Sophistic; careful study of the arguments from Gaza help to cast light on these late antique activities.

In a number of ways, Champion's discussion of the simultaneous use *and* rejection of Plato in the literature of Gaza is a fitting way to end a volume exploring the use of Plato during the Third Sophistic. Christianity's complicated and diverse responses to Hellenism in general, and specifically to Plato, show a kind of repulsion coupled with a dependency. Although one would not always immediately sense it by reading individual works by the ancient authors in this volume, it is now nearly impossible to imagine late antique Christianity or rhetoric without Plato: as an enemy, a source, an inspiration, or an accomplice—at times, it seems that Plato can be all of these things simultaneously. Individually and collectively, the essays in this volume demonstrate the degree to which Plato is the touchstone with which we can evaluate our own understanding of thematic and ideological trajectories in late antique literature.



Section 1: **Platonist Philosophers**

John F. Finamore (The University of Iowa)

Reason and Irrationality: The intersection of philosophy and magic in later Neoplatonism

Iamblichus (c. 245-c. 325 C.E.) established a major school of Neoplatonism in Syria and is known primarily for transforming Neoplatonic philosophy from the rationalism of Plotinus and Porphyry into a religious/ritualistic magical practice. Dodds, writing in the middle of the 20th century, called Iamblichus' *On the Mysteries* "a manifesto of irrationalism."¹ Although there is certainly truth to Dodds' claim that Iamblichus favored an approach to philosophical enlightenment that depended heavily on ritualistic and religious beliefs, there is also much more rationalism in Iamblichus' writings than Dodds gave him credit for. Further, the concept of the "irrational" in Platonism does not begin with Iamblichus but has a long tradition. In this paper I will explore Iamblichus' use of rationalism and irrationalism in his philosophy, especially as it is expressed in his *De Mysteriis*, and will show how it is part of a larger Platonic tradition. I hope to show that Iamblichus is not any more "irrational" than many of his Platonic predecessors and in many ways is more rational.

I wish to explore two areas of what 20th-century analytic philosophers would have considered "irrational": demonology and the souls of the dead. As I hope to show by the end of this paper, one person's irrational is another's serious philosophical concern.

1. Plato

The use of irrationalism and even what we might call magic begins with Plato himself. To begin with demonology, Plato tells us that Socrates listened to a daemon, which he describes as a sort of voice that prevents Socrates from performing certain actions.² In the *Symposium* (202c–203a), Plato has Diotima place daemons as intermediaries between gods and mortals. In so doing, daemons are positioned in a special religious and magical role. Diotima says that the race of daemons is involved in (*Smp.* 202e3–203a4):³

1 Dodds 1951, 287.

2 Plato refers to Socrates' daemon in *Apology* 31c7-d6, where Socrates says that it is "a kind of voice" (φωνή τις, d3) that keeps him from performing but does not prompt him to do an action (d3–4). Cf. *Phdr.* 242b8-c3, where Socrates claims the daemon "always holds me back from that which I intend to do" (ἀεὶ δέ με ἐπίσχει ὃ ἂν μέλλω πράττειν, c1) and again likens it to a voice (τινα φωνὴν ἔδοξα αὐτόθεν ἀκοῦσαι, c1–2). For other instances in the dialogues, see *Alc.* 103a4-b1; *Tht.* 151a3–5; cf. also *Euthyd.* 272e3–4.

3 ἐρμηνεύον καὶ διαπορθμεύον θεοῖς τὰ παρ' ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἀνθρώποις τὰ παρὰ θεῶν, τῶν μὲν τὰς δεήσεις καὶ θυσίας, τῶν δὲ τὰς ἐπιτάξεις τε καὶ ἀμοιβὰς τῶν θυσιῶν, ἐν μέσῳ δὲ ὄν ἀμφοτέρων συμπληροῖ, ὥστε τὸ πᾶν αὐτὸ αὐτῷ συνδεδέσθαι. διὰ τούτου καὶ ἡ μαντικὴ πᾶσα χωρεῖ καὶ ἡ τῶν

...interpreting and carrying matters human to the gods (prayers and sacrifices) and matters divine to humanity (commands and repayments for the sacrifices). Since it is in the middle, it completes both, so that everything is bound itself to itself. Through it, all the mantic art proceeds, the art of priests concerning sacrifices, rites, spells, and every mode of divination and magic. God does not mix with humanity, but through it is every communion and exchange between gods and human beings, for those who are awake and asleep.

It should be noted that the daemons are good and, since they can travel between realms as the gods cannot, perform helpful services for gods and mortals. In the *Phaedrus* Plato also includes daemons among the followers of the gods' processions from the cosmos to the realm of the Forms beyond the sphere of the fixed stars (246e6–247a1). They, like the gods, travel easily to the world of the Forms. Thus, Plato gave daemons a special place and useful role in the cosmos.

Plato also discusses ghosts of the recently dead. In the *Phaedo*, after stating that the souls of philosophers leave the body pure and unsullied (80d6–81a11), Plato says that other souls still hold on to a portion of the corporeal even after the separation from the body. As an example of such souls, Plato mentions the souls of the dead who wander around memorials and tombs in graveyards (81c8–d5).⁴ Plato is not giving the reader a classification of ghosts. Rather he is taking their existence for granted and using that common belief in ghosts to support his contention that non-philosophical souls retain some amount of corporeality. The relationship between ghosts and souls is easy enough to see. Ghosts that wander graveyards were once humans who were too attached to this realm. Plato does not assert any relationship of these ghosts to daemons, and this fact opened up an area for later Platonists to ponder.

2. Demonology, Ghosts, and the Human Soul

The third head of the Academy, Xenocrates (396/395–314/313 BCE), who had studied with Plato and even traveled with him to Sicily,⁵ had, as we learn from the writings of Plutarch, worked out a demonology and gave a geometrical dimension to the daemons. After citing Plato's principle from the *Symposium* that daemons form an intermediary class,⁶ Plutarch reports that Xenocrates relates the gods to equilateral triangles, daemons to isosceles, and human beings to scalene, thereby showing geometrically the intermediary status of daemons. The equilateral has three equal

ιέρων τέχνη τῶν τε περὶ τὰς θυσίας καὶ τελετὰς καὶ τὰς ἐφωδὰς καὶ τὴν μαντείαν πᾶσαν καὶ γοητεῖαν. θεὸς δὲ ἀνθρώπῳ οὐ μίγνυται, ἀλλὰ διὰ τούτου πᾶσα ἐστὶν ἡ ὁμίλια καὶ ἡ διάλεκτος θεοῖς πρὸς ἀνθρώπους, καὶ ἐγρηγοροῖσι καὶ καθεύδουσι.

⁴ See Rowe 1993, 193–194.

⁵ Diogenes Laertius 4.6.

⁶ *Apud* Plutarch, *De Defectu Oraculorum* 416c5–9: δεδειξεται μετὰ μαρτύρων σαφῶν καὶ παλαιῶν, ὅτι φύσεις τινές εἰσιν ὡσπερ ἐν μεθορίῳ θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων δεχόμεναι πάθη θνητὰ καὶ μεταβολὰς ἀναγκαίαις, οὓς δαίμονας ὀρθῶς ἔχει κατὰ νόμον πατέρων ἡγουμένους καὶ ὀνομάζοντας σέβεσθαι.

angles and sides, the isosceles two equal angles and sides, and the scalene none. Thus the isosceles is intermediate in the sense that it is partially like the divine equilateral (having two equals) and partially like the human (having one unequal), just as daemons share immortality with the gods and passions with human beings (*De Defectu Oraculorum* 416c10-d5).⁷

The role of the triangles is puzzling. Plato in the *Timaeus* had the Demiurge make the four elements out of two sorts of triangles, the isosceles right triangle and the scalene right triangle (53c4-d7), but it is hard to see what this construction has to do with Xenocrates', although it may be that he purposely chose triangles not merely to mark off the difference between the makeup of the elements of the gods, daemons, and human beings but also to indicate that gods, daemons, and souls could be transformed into one another, since the three triangles are geometrically convertible into each other simply by adding other triangles to them.⁸ Although we lack sufficient evidence to be sure, we can at least see that the triangles are different in type and the different characteristics mark off one kind of living thing from another.

There is one more aspect of the demonology of Xenocrates that Plutarch also mentions. In his *De Iside et Osiride* 361b1–8, he says:⁹

Xenocrates thinks that unlucky days and any feasts that involve some blows, lamentations, fasts, abusive speech, or obscenities are unrelated to honors given to gods and good daemons but that there are in the environment around us natures that are great and strong but intransigent and sullen that delight in such things and, when they happen upon them, turn themselves to nothing worse.

Xenocrates here introduces a group of evil daemons and distinguishes them from both the gods and from a second, better group of daemons. He is, of course, taking heed of a class of daemons sanctioned in the ordinary, non-philosophical Greek world, but the inclusion of evil daemons represents a change from Plato's doctrines and will become a problem that will have to be dealt with later in the Platonic tradition, as we shall see. How these daemons mesh with the triangular categories of the *De Defectu* is not easy to see. Perhaps they are every bit as scalene as human beings, although it seems that since the quality of being scalene relates to mortality,

7 Παράδειγμα δὲ τῷ λόγῳ Ξενοκράτης μὲν ὁ Πλάτωνος ἑταῖρος ἐποιήσατο τὸ τῶν τριγῶνων, θείῳ μὲν ἀπεικάσας τὸ ἰσόπλευρον θνητῷ δὲ τὸ σκαληνὸν τὸ δ' ἰσοσκελὲς δαιμονίῳ· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἴσον πάντη τὸ δ' ἄνισον πάντη, τὸ δὲ πῆ μὲν ἴσον πῆ δ' ἄνισον, ὥσπερ ἡ δαιμόνων φύσις ἔχουσα καὶ πάθος θνητοῦ καὶ θεοῦ δύναμιν.

8 I wish to thank Colin McKinney of the Department of Mathematics at Wabash College for explaining to me via email that “from a geometric perspective it would be easy to start with any type of triangle and turn it into another type ... just add a chosen length to 1 side or two chosen lengths to two sides.”

9 ὁ δὲ Ξενοκράτης καὶ τῶν ἡμερῶν τὰς ἀποφράδας καὶ τῶν ἑορτῶν, ὅσαι πληγὰς τινὰς ἢ κοπετοὺς ἢ νηστείας ἢ δυσφημίας ἢ αἰσχρολογίαν ἔχουσιν, οὐτε θεῶν τιμαῖς οὐτε δαιμόνων οἶεται προσήκειν χρηστῶν, ἀλλ' εἶναι φύσεις ἐν τῷ περιέχοντι μεγάλας μὲν καὶ ἰσχυράς, δυστρόπους δὲ καὶ σκυθρωπάς, αἱ χαίρουσι τοῖς τοιοῦτοις καὶ τυγχάνουσαι πρὸς οὐθὲν ἄλλο χεῖρον τρέπονται.

evil/irrational daemons would still have to be isosceles, but a different sort of isosceles than the good/rational daemons.¹⁰ If so, the quality of being isosceles would be variable. Whereas every isosceles triangle gives rise to immortality, perhaps some forms are more appropriate for rationality than others. The only manner in which isosceles triangles can differ from one another is in size—that is, in the length of their sides and the degree of their two equal angles. Perhaps as those triangles approach the 60-degree angle of the equilateral triangle, the resulting daemon is more rational and *vice versa*, by the greater disparity between the equal angles and the unequal one, the more irrational the daemon is. Further speculation is useless. We can say definitely only that Xenocrates included a class of evil daemons alongside the good daemons of Plato’s *Symposium*, and he thought that these daemons were the power behind the more emotional sorts of ritual practice in Greece. The last clause in the quotation from Plutarch further suggests that, if they are not softened by obtaining what they want, they are capable of harm.

Plutarch himself was also interested in daemons, and his longer discussion of the daemons in his *De Iside* and *De Defectu* raises other considerations. Like Xenocrates, he sees the daemons as intermediaries. Citing Plato along with Pythagoras, Xenophanes, Chrysippus, and “the earlier theologians,” he says that Isis, Osiris, and Typhon are neither gods nor mortals but daemons (*De Iside* 360d5-e2). In particular he states that “there are differences among human beings and daemons with regard to virtue and vice” (*De Iside* 360e5–6).¹¹ For daemons (*De Iside* 360e2–5):¹²

...sharing in the nature of the soul and in the sense perception of the body (which is receptive of pleasure and pain and the many affections that accompany these changes) are sometimes more stirred up and sometimes less.

Thus, again like Xenocrates, Plutarch thinks that daemons are subject to passions to a greater or lesser degree.

Plutarch, however, may take matters further. We saw that Xenocrates held that the daemons were constructed somehow from isosceles triangles whereas human beings from scalene. This suggested that the two species might be able to transition into one another, since the two triangles are convertible. Plutarch seems to agree that they can change species. The problem for interpreters of Plutarch’s doctrine, however, is that the interlocutor giving the crucial evidence may not represent Plutarch’s own view.

¹⁰ On this topic, see Dillon 1977, 32, who suggests that “two proportions would be required between gods and men, good and evil daemons representing different ratios, such as, perhaps, 4 and 6 between 2 and 8.”

¹¹ γίνονται γὰρ ὡς ἐν ἀνθρώποις καὶ δαίμοσιν ἀρετῆς διαφοραὶ καὶ κακίας.

¹² ἀλλὰ καὶ ψυχῆς φύσει καὶ σώματος αἰσθήσει [ἐν] συνειληχὸς ἡδονὴν δεχομένη καὶ πόνον καὶ ὅσα ταύταις ἐπιγεγόμενα ταῖς μεταβολαῖς πάθη τοὺς μὲν μᾶλλον τοὺς δ’ ἥττον ἐπιταράττει.

The main speaker in the *De Def. Or.* is Lamprias, Plutarch's brother, who speaks in the first person. It is not Lamprias but Cleombrotus, one of the interlocutors, who raises the issue, citing Hesiod (*De Def. Or.* 415b1–6). Note that in the process, he also adds another species, that of heroes, to the list:¹³

Hesiod first posited clearly and distinctly four classes of rational things: gods, daemons, heroes, and in addition human beings. From these he seems to have made a transition of the golden race into many good daemons and the demigods into heroes.

Cleombrotus can conclude that souls change from one species to another (*De Def. Or.* 415b10-c1):¹⁴

The better souls make their transition from human beings into heroes, and from heroes into daemons. A few souls transition from daemons having been completely purified after much time because of their virtue and have a share of godhood.

It should be noted here that the human soul can transition into that of a daemon and even to that of a god.

Although Cleombrotus claims (with Hesiod) that the souls of human beings can be transformed into daemons and heroes and back again, Lamprias does not. Later in the dialogue, referring again to the Hesiodic passage on the Golden Age, Lamprias leaves the question open (*De Def. Or.* 431e1–3), giving both options as possibilities: whether “the souls are separated from a body or never had a body at all.”¹⁵

In the *De Iside*, Plutarch again refers to Hesiod as evidence that there are two sets of daemons, good and bad. He equates the daemons in the *Symposium* 202e (*De Iside* 361b11-c3) with those in Hesiod's *Works and Days* 123f. (*De Iside* 361b8–11):¹⁶ “Hesiod called them noble and good, ‘holy daemons,’ and ‘guardians of human beings;’ [they are] ‘givers of riches, and they have this kingly prerogative.’”

13 Ἡσίοδος δὲ καθαρῶς καὶ διωρισμένως πρῶτος ἐξέθηκε τῶν λογικῶν τέσσαρα γένη, θεοὺς εἶτα δαίμονας εἶθ' ἥρωας τὸ δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώπους, ἐξ ὧν ἔοικε ποιεῖν τὴν μεταβολὴν τοῦ μὲν χρυσοῦ γένους εἰς δαίμονας πολλοὺς κάγαθούς τῶν δ' ἡμιθέων εἰς ἥρωας ἀποκριθέντων. In the sequel (*De Def. Or.* 415b6-c4) Cleombrotus mentions an unnamed set of writers who have these souls transform along with their bodies into other species: human beings into heroes, heroes into daemons, daemons into gods; souls that succumb to passions re-enter bodies. In *De E apud Delphos* 391e4–9, Plutarch says that there are these four species along with a fifth, animals.

14 ἐκ μὲν ἀνθρώπων εἰς ἥρωας ἐκ δ' ἡρώων εἰς δαίμονας αἱ βελτίονες ψυχαὶ τὴν μεταβολὴν λαμβάνουσιν, ἐκ δὲ δαιμόνων ὀλίγα μὲν ἐν χρόνῳ πολλῶ δι' ἀρετὴν καθαρθεῖσαι παντάσῃ θεϊότητος μετέσχον.

15 εἰ γὰρ αἱ διακριθεῖσαι σώματος ἢ μὴ μετασχοῦσαι τὸ παράπαν ψυχὰ δαίμονες εἰσι κατὰ σὲ καὶ τὸν θεῖον Ἡσίοδον: ‘ἀγνοὶ ἐπιχθόνιοι φύλακες θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων’ ...

16 τοὺς δὲ χρηστοὺς πάλιν καὶ ἀγαθοὺς ὁ θ' Ἡσίοδος ‘ἀγνοὺς δαίμονας’ καὶ ‘φύλακας ἀνθρώπων’ προσαγορεύει, ‘πλουτοδότας’ καὶ τοῦτο γέρας βασιλῆιον ἔχοντας.’

These quotations come from the Hesiodic passage on the golden age. Hesiod portrays a golden race of human beings (*Erga* 109: χρύσειον ... γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων) who live an easy life. After they have died, he says (122–126):¹⁷

These are called pure, earthly, good daemons who ward off evil, guardians of mortals who watch over judgments and cruel deeds. They are clothed in air, going everywhere on the earth, givers of riches: they have this kingly prerogative.

For Hesiod, then, the mortals of the Golden Age were transformed into good daemons in their next existence. Plutarch, however, does not commit to the view that these were human beings but instead calls them daemons even when they were alive in the Golden Age. The *De Iside* passage cannot be used, therefore, to confirm that transition from human to daemoniac souls was possible. Plutarch makes use of a fragment from Empedocles to mark the paths for those daemons who lived impurely (*De Iside* 361c3–9):¹⁸

For Empedocles says that daemons pay the penalty for their errors and offenses (DK fr. 115.9–13):

For the strength of the heaven pursues them to the sea,
The sea spits them out onto the surface of the earth, the earth into the rays
of the relentless sun, which casts them into the whirlwinds of the ether.
One receives them from another, and all hate them.

until having been punished in this way and purified again, they recover the place and rank that belongs to them by nature.

And so in the *De Iside* it is specifically daemons that may either be rewarded with better lives as good/rational daemons or be punished for past sins.

Although in the *De Defectu* we cannot be certain that Plutarch endorsed Cleombrotus' words, his discussion in the dialogue shows that he is aware of different interpretations of the doctrine of daemons. In the *De Genio Socratis*, Plutarch returns to the topic once again and again quotes from Hesiod's myth of the golden race (593d7). The speaker is Theano, a guest in Thebes and a Pythagorean. Again, we cannot be

17 τοὶ μὲν δαίμονες ἀγνοὶ ἐπιχθόνιοι καλέονται
ἐσθλοὶ, ἀλεξίκακοι, φύλακες θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων,
[οἷ ῥα φυλάσσουσιν τε δίκας καὶ σχέτλια ἔργα
ἡέρα ἐσάμενοι πάντα φοιτῶντες ἐπ' αἴαν,]
πλουτοδοταὶ καὶ τοῦτο γέρας βασιλῆιον ἔσχον.

18 Ἐμπεδοκλῆς δὲ καὶ δίκας φησὶ δίδοναι τοὺς δαίμονας ὧν <ἀν> ἐξαμάρτωσι καὶ πλημμελήσωσιν
'αἰθέριον <μὲν> γὰρ σφε μένος πόντονδε διώκει,
πόντος δ' ἐς χθονὸς οὐδας ἀπέπτυσσε, γαῖα δ' ἐς αὐγὰς
ἡελίου ἀκάμαντος, ὃ δ' αἰθέρος ἔμβαλε δίναις·
ἄλλος δ' ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται, στυγέουσι δὲ πάντες,
ἄχρι οὗ κολασθέντες οὕτω καὶ καθαρθέντες αὖθις τὴν κατὰ φύσιν χώραν καὶ τάξιν ἀπολάβωσι
Ἐμπεδοκλῆς.

certain that Theano's words echo Plutarch's thoughts. Since Theano is Pythagorean, there is some reason to conclude that he is acting as a Plutarchian voice. Nonetheless, it is Simmias, the companion of Socrates and Plato, who has a better claim to that role in this dialogue, and so we cannot be sure of the status of Theano's report.¹⁹ Theano reports that the souls of the good who have lived out their cycle of births are rewarded by the gods by becoming daemons (593d2–7).²⁰ These in turn aid others as they reach the end of their last cycle (593e1–594a7). Thus, in Theano's account, human souls of the very good transition into daemons and return to aid other good human souls to do the same.

Plutarch represents a transitional figure in Middle Platonism. He has a firm grasp of the Platonic texts and holds in view contemporary notions of demonology. We see him considering non-Platonic doctrines, but not necessarily adopting them. The reason for his hesitancy is obvious enough. In the *Symposium* Plato demarcated gods from daemons: gods cannot descend to mortal creatures but daemons can. Claiming that daemons could become gods and *vice versa* held the potential for contradicting the *Symposium*, and Plutarch may well have been reluctant to do so. Other Middle Platonists were not as reserved.

Middle-Platonic demonology derived from Xenocrates but evolved in other directions. Plutarch may not have committed himself to possible ramifications of the doctrine, but he knew of them. The writings of Philo of Alexandria, in the generation before Plutarch, and of Apuleius, afterwards, show how Xenocratean demonology metamorphosed from the late first century BCE through the second century CE.

Philo discusses daemons and souls in two works, *De Gigantibus* and *De Somniis*. As is his usual practice, Philo comments on passages from the Old Testament but imports Platonic ideas into his interpretation. In *De Gig.* 6–18, he is commenting on *Genesis* 6.2: “The angels of god, when they saw that the daughters of human beings were beautiful, took from among all of them wives for themselves, whomever they

¹⁹ Earlier in the *De Genio*, Simmias presents an account of the soul that was given to Timarchus in a vision (591d3–f7). An unseen god explains the vision to Timarchus. As Simmias reports what the god said to Timarchus, we discover that the human soul is twofold, a higher aspect of it, called the intellect (νοῦς), exists above the body, while the lower, called simply soul (ψυχή) sinks into the body and as a result loses rationality in the process, being overcome with pleasures and pains. Since the intellect is external, it is also called a daemon. In spite of the terminology, what we have clearly enough is the Platonic division of rational soul (which in the *Timaeus* is in the head) and the lower spirited and irrational souls (which exist below in the trunk of the body). The term “daemon” therefore does not indicate a species of soul higher than human except in a metaphorical way. The intellect is the immortal part of the human soul, but it is a human soul. Simmias' speech, therefore, differs from Theano's account of the soul, but it does not necessarily contradict it, since the human intellect may yet later transform itself into a true daemon. Thus, based on Simmias' speech here, we still cannot state with certainty whether Plutarch did or did not support Theano's account.

²⁰ θεοὶ μὲν [γὰρ] οὖν ὀλίγων ἀνθρώπων κοσμοῦσι βίον, οὓς ἂν ἄκρω μακαρίους τε καὶ θείους ὡς ἀληθῶς ἀπεργάσασθαι βουληθῶσιν· αἱ δ' ἀπὸ πηλαγμένα γενέσεως ψυχαὶ καὶ σχολάζουσαι τὸ λοιπὸν ἀπὸ σώματος, οἷον ἐλευθεραὶ πάμπαν ἀφεμένα, δαίμονες εἰσὶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπιμελεῖς καθ' Ἡσίοδον.

chose.”²¹ Philo interpreted these “daughters of human beings” allegorically as vices and passions (4.4), and he now goes on to state that “what other philosophers call daemons, Moses is accustomed to call angels, which fly in the air” (6.3–7.1).²² The verb “is accustomed” (εἶωθεν) is important. Philo is not claiming that these “angels of god” that live lives of passion and vice are daemons, except in a restricted sense, as we shall see.

In 12.3–15.8, Philo divides the classes of ascending and descending souls into three varieties. The first are those that do not descend into bodies but (following the *Symposium*) serve god for the benefit of humanity (12.3–13.1). These are the good Platonic daemons. The second are souls that have descended into bodies but through philosophy re-ascend to have an incorporeal, indestructible life with god (13.1–15.1). The third are those that descend and instead of the life of the mind pursue the things associated with the body such as reputation, money, government posts, and honor (15.1–9). These last two classes describe the human soul that has descended into body, not the daemons of the *Symposium*. Philo adapts the language of the *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Phaedo* to portray these last two classes.²³ In 16.1–3, Philo says that “soul,” “angel,” and “daemon” are different words for one and the same underlying reality.²⁴ Just as we say that souls are good and bad and that daemons are good and bad, so too we can say that angels are good and bad. But how is this possible? The good angels are, of course, equivalent to the good daemons of the *Symposium*, but there are also those that are “unholy and undeserving of the designation.”²⁵ Citing a passage about “evil angels” (δι’ ἀγγέλων πονηρῶν, 17.3) in *Psalms* 77.49, Philo says:

These are evil [entities] who have assumed the name of “angels.” They do not know the daughters of right reason, knowledge and virtue, but seek pleasures, the mortal offspring of mortal human beings, which do not bear the true beauty that mind alone sees but rather the false beauty of form through which perception is deceived.²⁶

21 *De Gig* 6.1–2: Ἰδόντες δὲ οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ τὰς θυγατέρας τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὅτι καλαὶ εἰσιν, ἔλαβον ἑαυτοῖς γυναῖκας ἀπὸ πασῶν, ὧν ἐξελέξαντο.

22 οὓς ἄλλοι φιλόσοφοι δαίμονας, ἀγγέλους Μωυσῆς εἶωθεν ὀνομάζειν· ψυχαὶ δ’ εἰσι κατὰ τὸν ἀέρα πετόμεναι.

23 The three classes re-appear in *De Somn.* 1.138.1–143.5. Again, it is the highest class, the souls that were never attached to bodies, that Philo says are called “daemons” by philosophers but “angels” in the Old Testament.

24 16.1–3: ψυχὰς οὖν καὶ δαίμονας καὶ ἀγγέλους ὀνόματα μὲν διαφέροντα, ἐν δὲ καὶ ταῦτόν ὑποκείμενον διανοηθεὶς ἄχθος βαρύτατον ἀποθήσῃ δεισιδαιμονίαν.

25 16.7: ἀνιέρους καὶ ἀναξίους τῆς προσρήσεως.

26 17.4–18.1: οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ πονηροὶ τὸ ἀγγέλων ὄνομα ὑποδύμενοι, τὰς μὲν ὀρθοῦ λόγου θυγατέρας, ἐπιστήμας καὶ ἀρετάς, οὐκ εἰδότες, τὰς δὲ τῶν ἀνθρώπων θνητὰς θνητῶν ἀπογόνους ἡδονὰς μετερχόμενοι γνήσιον μὲν οὐδὲν ἐπιφερομένας κάλλος, ὃ διανοίᾳ μόνῃ θεωρεῖται, νόθον δὲ εὐμορφίαν, δι’ ἧς ἡ αἴσθησις ἀπατάται.

Thus these fallen souls falsely take on the name of “angels,” but they are not angels at all. They are evil human souls that have descended from the Intelligible into generation. They have abandoned philosophy, and it is they—not god or daemons/angels—that cause harm in the world.

The “angels of god” in the *Genesis* passage, then, are not Platonic daemons or Old Testament angels. They are impure human souls. It is for this reason that in 16.3 Philo says that we can avoid δεισιδαιμονία, that is “fear of evil daemons.” There are no such beings. Evil is caused not by god or daemons, but by ourselves. Thus, Philo rejects Xenocrates’ claim that there are evil daemons.²⁷

There is more evidence for this position in the *De Somniis*. In 1.133–143, Philo is interpreting *Genesis* 28.12:

“He [Jacob] dreamed,” he [Moses] says, “and behold a ladder stood fast upon the earth, of which the top reached into heaven, and the angels of god were ascending and descending on it, and the lord stood fast on it.”²⁸

Philo writes that the ladder is air, the seat of souls (1.135.1–2).²⁹ Whereas human souls descend to join with bodies, angels (which, Philo tells us, philosophers call “daemons,” 1.141.1) act as mediators between gods and mortals. These are, again, the daemons of the *Symposium*, intermediaries who do the work of god. We note also that the air is their abode.

Philo, therefore, accepts daemons (or angels) into his system, but not of the evil variety. Evil arises from the desires and passions of human beings. He also seems thereby to preserve the distinction between the three classes: god, angels/daemons, human souls. There would be no changing from one to the other.

Apuleius, the Middle-Platonic philosopher of Madaura, lived in the generation after Plutarch. In his *De Deo Socratis*, he gives a detailed account of his demonology, one in which human beings possess a daemon-intellect but do not actually transition into one another.³⁰

²⁷ And so I disagree with Dillon 1977, 173: “Philo also recognizes evil angels or daemons.”

²⁸ *De Somn.* 1.133.3–6: “ἐνυπνιάσθη” φησί “καὶ ἰδοὺ κλίμαξ ἐστηριγμένη ἐν τῇ γῆ, ἣς ἡ κεφαλὴ ἀφικνεῖτο εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ ἀνέβαινον καὶ κατέβαινον ἐπ’ αὐτῆς· ὁ δὲ κύριος ἐπεστήρικτο ἐπ’ αὐτῆς.”

²⁹ In both *De Gig.* 7.2–12.1 and *De Somn.* 1.134.2–138.1, Philo argues that god could not have left any area of the cosmos empty of life. Since there are living creatures in the heavens, in water, and on earth, he would not have left the air bereft of creatures. This in part follows *Timaeus* 41b7–c2, where the Demiurge says that the world would be incomplete without creatures of the air, water, and earth, but for Plato the creatures of the air were, of course, birds. The idea that air is the domain of daemons comes from the P.-Platonic *Epinomis* 984d8–e3; cf. Dillon 1977, 172–173. Apuleius makes a similar argument in *De Deo* 9–11.

³⁰ For a good overview of Apuleius’ demonology, see Dillon 1977, 317–320. Dillon compares Plutarch, but wrongly (in my estimation) thinks that Plutarch and Apuleius agree that souls migrate into daemons and vice versa.

Apuleius places the daemons between gods and mortals, following Plato's *Symposium* (*De Deo* 13). Daemons share immortality with the gods, and passions with us. Apuleius sums it up this way (13): "Indeed, in order to define them, daemons are in class living creatures, in mind rational, in soul susceptible to passions, in body aerial, in time eternal."³¹ Daemons thus occupy the same territory for Apuleius as they did for Plutarch. As in *De Iside et Osiride* 361b1–8, it is daemons and not the gods that crave sacrifices and other offerings from human beings (*De Deo* 14). Starting in section 15, Apuleius begins to divide the class of daemons, and it is here that he departs from Plutarch. Apuleius calls the first type of daemon *Genius*. This is a human mind, situated in a living human being, that verges toward the good.³² Apuleius ties the name *genius* to the Latin for "knee" (*genu*) since the knees are grasped when we supplicate someone. The idea is that the *genius* has both a psychic and a corporeal component (mind and knees), and therefore encapsulates the duality of the human being (mind and body). This mind is, appropriately, immortal.³³

The second class of daemons are also human souls but of those who have died rather than of those who are living. Apuleius calls this type of daemon a *Lemur* (15).³⁴ He then subdivides the category further. The good daemon of this class is called a *Lars*, which calmly and peacefully watches over family and home (15).³⁵ The bad daemon in this class is the *Larva*. These daemons are being punished for past sins and so wander the earth without a home. They present harmless frights to good persons but to the bad they can be positively harmful (15).³⁶ Encompassing both the *Lares* and *Larvae* are the *Di Manes*, although Apuleius is quick to point out that the

I say that human souls do not transition into daemonic souls because of the huge divide between the categories Apuleius discusses. Broadly, Apuleius divides daemons into what I would call (1) "Platonic Daemons," that is daemons that exist without earthly bodies and who act as good intermediaries between gods and mortals, and (2) Human Intellects. These latter do exist in bodies at one time or another, and are clearly differentiated from daemons of the *Symposium* sort. The divide is so great that daemons of the first kind do not transition into daemons of the second. In fact, one is tempted to say that the second kind of daemons are not daemons at all, except in name. They are more akin to ghosts. If so, the human intellects remain intellects and the "Platonic daemons" remain daemons. There is no transitioning between humans and daemons.

31 *Quippe, ut fine comprehendam, daemones sunt genere animalia, ingenio rationabilia, animo passiva, corpore aëria, tempore aeterna.*

32 *De Deo* 15: *Nam quodam significatu et animus humanus etiam nunc in corpore situs daemon nuncupatur ... Igitur et bona cupido animi bonus deus est.*

33 As Dillon 1977, 319 points out, the idea that the intellect is a daemon is found in Plato's *Timaeus* 90c4–6, where Plato puns on the Greek word for happiness εὐδαιμονία. See also A. E. Taylor 1928, 633–634 and F. M. Cornford 1935, 354.

34 The word is not appropriate since *lemures* were normally conceived as vengeful and dangerous. Apuleius is clearly more interested in creating categories than in finding appropriate terminology.

35 *Ex hisce ergo Lemuribus qui posterorum suorum curam sortitus placato et quieto numine domum possidet, Lar dicitur familiaris.*

36 *Qui vero ob adversa vitae merita nullis (bonis) sedibus incerta vagatione ceu quodam exilio punitur, inane terriculamentum bonis hominibus, ceterum malis noxium, id genus plerique Larvas perhibent.*

term “gods” (*di*) is *honoris gratia*, given as a term of honoring them, for they are not strictly speaking gods but daemons. Although Apuleius says that the term includes both kinds of *Lemures*, his explanation of the category shows that the term is not strictly applicable to the evil *Larvae*. The *Di Manes*, Apuleius says, have lived their previous life “justly and prudently” (*iuste ac prudenter*), and this does not jibe with the punishments the *Larvae* are facing for the misdeeds in their former life.³⁷ At any rate, Apuleius says that these daemons are rewarded with temples and rites of their own (15).³⁸ What is clear is that in these twofold or threefold categories of daemons Apuleius places both good and evil daemons, although the evil ones are dangerous only to bad human beings. Good human beings, evidently, need fear no daemon, good or bad. This is an odd contention, unlike what we found in Plutarch or Philo. It presents interesting evidence for an optimistic view of evil daemons. It should also be noted that the *Larvae* are the only class of evil daemons mentioned by Apuleius and that, like Philo, Apuleius sees these “evil daemons” as basically human souls of the dead. They are not the daemons of the *Symposium*. They are, rather, the intellects of those who lived unphilosophically in their immediate past life. They bear some relation to the ghosts that Plato mentioned in the *Phaedo* except that they are not simply haunting graveyards but wander the earth for an unspecified time.

Apuleius does not assign a name to his final category of daemons, but he is speaking of daemons that were never attached to bodies (and thus were never human). These daemons are eternally good, are entrusted with specific functions in the world (as Love cares for our wakefulness and Sleep for our sleeping), and are associated with the guardian daemon assigned to each person at birth (16).³⁹ In this class Apuleius also includes Socrates’ *daemonion*. Our own daemon accompanies us through life, escorts us to Hades, and bears witness for or against us at our underworld judgment. Apuleius argues at length that it is in our best interest to cultivate this daemon by being good ourselves. These daemons, unlike the others, are fully separate from human beings and act as intermediaries in the *Symposium* sense.

37 Perhaps, though, the misdeeds of the *Di Manes* were minor, and their lives were on the whole just. Even so, it’s difficult to imagine such daemons having to wander the earth, terrifying bad mortals.

38 *Cum vero incertum est, quae cuique eorum sortitio evenerit, utrum Lar sit an Larva, nomine Manem deum nuncupant: scilicet et honoris gratia dei vocabulum additum est; quippe tantum eos deos appellant, qui ex eodem numero iuste ac prudenter curriculo vitae gubernato pro numine postea ab hominibus praediti fanis et caerimoniis vulgo advertuntur, ut in Boeotia Amphiaraus, in Africa Mopsus, in Aegypto Osiris, alius alibi gentium, Aesculapius ubique.*

39 *Sunt autem non posteriore numero, praestantiore longe dignitate, superius aliud, augustius genus daemonum, qui semper a corporis conpedibus et nexibus liberi certis potestatibus curant. Quorum e numero Somnus atque Amor diversam inter se vim possident, Amor vigilandi, Somnus soporandi. Ex hac igitur sublimiore daemonum copia Plato autumat (singulis) hominibus in vita agenda testes et custodes singulis additos, qui nemini conspicui semper adsint arbitri omnium non modo actorum verum etiam cogitatorum.*

It should be noted that Apuleius does not consistently use this classification of daemons. Leaving aside the (possibly unphilosophical) uses of the *Lares* in the *Metamorphoses*, the only other time that Apuleius refers to the terminology we have just encountered is at *De Platone* 1.12.25–27, where he is clearly discussing the daemons of the *Symposium*: “They think that daemons, which we can call *Genii* and *Lares*, are ministers of the gods and guardians or interpreters for human beings, if they [i. e., the human beings] should wish anything from the gods.”⁴⁰ These *Genii* and *Lares* are not previously human beings but rather the best class of daemons that have not been in bodies before. There is a disconnect between terminology and philosophy, but what is more important is that there is also a problem in fitting evil daemons into the Platonic conception of daemons. Apuleius does not mention evil daemons in the *De Platone*.

In the *De Deo Socratis*, at least, we see Apuleius trying to fit ordinary notions about daemons into a Platonic setting. This leads him to create a hierarchy of daemons which seems to include what we would call disembodied and embodied human souls. Among the disembodied variety he includes quasi-evil daemons—they do harm but only to evil human beings. As with Plutarch and Philo, there is here again a difficulty bringing evil daemons fully into the Platonic world. Why did this problem arise for Platonists?

There can be no doubt that there was a belief in daemons and ghosts in popular Greek culture. We have already seen that the concept dates back to at least Hesiod. The spells in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* make use of daemons and ghosts and help show the power these beings held in the popular imagination. *PGM* 4.1227–64 offers a spell to drive a daemon out. It is multid denominational, calling on the Hebrew and Christian deities as well as on the Gnostic Yao Saboath. The spell follows, complete with a god’s sacred name:⁴¹

Excellent rite for driving out daemons: *Formula* to be spoken over his head: Place olive branches before him, and stand behind him and say:

“Hail, God of Abraham; Hail, God of Isaac; Hail, God of Jacob; Jesus Chrestos, the Holy Spirit, the Son of the Father, who is above the Seven, who is within the Seven. Bring Iao Saboath; may your power issue forth from him, NN, until you drive away this unclean daemon Satan, who is in him. I conjure you, daemon, whoever you are, by this god Sabarbarbathioth, Sabarbarathiouth Sabarbarbathioneth, Sabarbarbaphai. Come out, daemon, whoever you are, and stay away from NN, now, now, immediately, immediately. Come out, daemon, since I bind you with unbreakable adamantine fetters, and I deliver you into the black chaos in perdition.”

⁴⁰ *Daemonas uero, quos Genios et Lares possumus nuncupare, ministros deorum arbitra[n]tur custodesque hominum et interpretes, si quid a diis uelint.*

⁴¹ Betz 1992, 62 (4.1227–1247).

The spell then indicates how to make a whip from olive branches to use during the exorcism and how to construct an amulet for the possessed to wear afterwards, presumably to keep the demon from re-entering.

For the connection between demons and the souls of the dead, *PGM* 4.2006–2125 describes the reanimation of corpse, which we are instructed to summon using a skull, *nomina barbara*, and the skin of an ass, while saying “I conjure you, demon of a dead man [νεκυδαίμων].”⁴² This instance neatly reverses the cases discussed by interlocutors in Plutarch, where the soul of the deceased is transformed into a good daemon as a reward. Here the soul is imagined as an evil daemon that is conjured to do the bidding of a magician.

These two examples, which could easily be multiplied, show that daemons could be dangerous and possess a victim’s body or helpful if controlled by magical spells to do one’s bidding.

It is true that the evidence of the *PGM* is late (probably fourth century) and is aimed at a magical subgroup of society, but some of the individual spells are certainly earlier and there is ample evidence that magical practices were rife in antiquity. The papyri can be supplemented by Philostratus’ third-century CE biography of Apollonius of Tyana, who lived in the first century CE. In 4.10, Philostratus records the remarkable story of the stoning of a beggar man who turns out to be a daemon causing a plague among the Ephesians. At 3.38–39, we learn that Apollonius at a remote distance successfully exorcised a daemon from a boy by handing the boy’s mother a note filled with threats to take to the daemon. The daemon was formerly a soldier slain in combat.⁴³ To this can be added the evidence of Lucian, who delighted in making fun of sorcerers who conjured or exorcised daemons.⁴⁴

Platonic philosophers were therefore caught in a dilemma whether to remain true to Plato’s vision, keeping daemons as helpful intermediaries and as guardians throughout our lives, or somehow taking into account the common views that daemons were dangerous and indeed even the souls of the troubled dead. Furthermore, the everyday stories of ghosts and daemons were finding their way into aristocratic writings like those of Philostratus and others, including even the satiric Lucian. The more accommodating of the Platonists, like Apuleius, began to find ways to include these evil/irrational daemons in their systems. The fit was not perfect, and special pleading was needed, and in the end it would take a synthesizer with a flair for systemizing to solve the problems.

⁴² Betz 1992, 73–75. For the translation here, see Ogden 2009, 202–203.

⁴³ For another, more traditional exorcism, see 4.20.

⁴⁴ See *Philopseudes* 13 (a Hyperborean evocates daemons from Hades), 16 (Syrian exorcist), 30–31 (a Pythagorean exorcises a ghost from a haunted house).

3. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*

Confronted with the problem of the role of the human soul in the hierarchy of divine beings, Iamblichus laid out his doctrine clearly in his *De Anima* (section 7):

The doctrine opposed to this, however, separates the Soul off, inasmuch as it has come about as following upon Intellect, representing a distinct level of being, and that aspect of it which is endowed with intellect is explained as being connected with the intellect certainly, but also as subsisting independently on its own, and it separates the soul also from all the superior classes of being, and assigns to it as the particular definition of its essence, either the middle term of divisible and indivisible beings <and of corporeal and in> corporeal being, or the totality of the universal reason-principles, or that which, after the ideas, is at the service of the work of creation, or that life which has life of itself, which proceeds from the Intelligible realm, or again the procession of the classes of real Being as a whole to an inferior substance.

For Iamblichus, the human soul is separate not only from Intellect and the gods, but also from all the other superior classes of souls: angels, daemons, and heroes. In this way, Iamblichus rejects the Hesiodic and common notion that daemons transition from re-born human souls. In *De Myst.* 1.8 Iamblichus argues against the view that gods have ethereal bodies, daemons aerial bodies and human souls earthy ones. Among other problems with this conception, Iamblichus says, is the result that the gods and daemons would be permanently separated from humankind in another circumscribed area of the cosmos and so theurgy would be impossible (28.4–10). In 1.9 Iamblichus introduces his doctrine of divine illumination, which allows gods and the superior classes to affect rites on the earth without actually descending or coming into contact with matter. The god or angel shines its ethereal light on the world below and thereby fills it with its power.

Later in 1.20, Iamblichus contrasts the daemons with the gods, bringing out important differences between them. After stating that the visible gods rule the whole of the cosmos whereas the daemons control restricted areas (63.3–9), he says this about the daemons (63.13–64.2 and 64.6–7): “But the attachment to the nature of generation and the division caused by it give a lesser apportionment to the daemons... The gods, therefore, are freed from the powers declining toward generation, but the daemons are not fully purified from them.”⁴⁵

Thus, the daemons not only exercise their authority over only small areas of the earth but they are also to a certain degree contaminated by matter, causing them to be less rational than the gods. This is in keeping with the Middle-Platonic view that daemons are susceptible to passions, but Iamblichus will add a specific theurgic consequence, as we shall see.

45 ἀλλὰ τὸ τῆ γενεσιουργῶ φύσει προσκεῖσθαι καὶ μερίζεσθαι παρ' αὐτὴν ἐξ ἀνάγκης καταδεεστέραν μοῖραν δίδωσι τοῖς δαίμοσιν ... Τοιγαροῦν οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ρεπουσῶν εἰς τὴν γένεσιν δυνάμεών εἰσιν ἀπλλαγμένοι· δαίμονες δὲ τούτων οὐ πάντη καθαρεύουσιν.

Having distinguished daemons from the gods in Book 1 of the *De Mysteriis*, Iamblichus turns in book 2 to the differences between the various superior classes. (He also introduces here archangels and two kinds of archons into the superior kinds.) The differences in 2.1–10 make clear that the archangels and angels tend to the higher, more unified, better sort of activities while the daemons, heroes, and souls tend to be lower and more divided in what they do. Given the lower group's proximity to and association with matter, this is not surprising. It does allow for a delineated hierarchy from gods through souls that proves useful in divine rites.

In 2.7, Iamblichus considers differences among the classes with regard to how they present themselves in divine manifestations in rituals (ἐν ταῖς αὐτοψύχαις ἐπίδειξις, 83.8–9). Gods appear with a host of other gods or archangels, archangels with angels, and angels with their own appropriate works (83.9–13). He then turns to a threefold division of daemons (83.13–84.3):⁴⁶

Good daemons provide for our observation their creations and goods that they give us; punishing daemons show the forms of their punishment; the others being evil in any way whatever are surrounded by certain wild beasts that are harmful, greedy for blood, and savage.

Iamblichus' first group can easily be assimilated to the daemons of Plato's *Symposium*, whose duties include bringing gifts from the gods above. The second group is not Platonic, but is derivable with a little effort from the Platonic underworld myths, where human souls are allotted a guardian daemon and where they are punished for offenses committed on earth.⁴⁷ It is important to notice that these daemons are not evil and should rather be imagined as carrying out justice.⁴⁸ The third group are evil and remind us of the goddess Hecate in magical contexts, where she is often accompanied by savage dogs.⁴⁹ This is Iamblichus' first reference to evil daemons. Their evil, we assume, is caused by their partial nature and proximity to matter.

Iamblichus speaks of these evil daemons again, this time in relation to theurgic rites, in 3.31. Iamblichus prefaces his account by saying that it is what he has heard from Chaldaean prophets (176.1–2).⁵⁰ In theurgic rituals, the gods are the givers of good and by their illumination make what is “evil and daemonic (τὸ κακὸν καὶ δαιμόνιον)” disappear (176.6–7). When the theurgists in charge of the ritual are impure, however, they fail to make contact with the gods and encounter evil daemons instead (176.11–177.6). Thus, these misguided theurgists and evil daemons are respon-

⁴⁶ τῶν δ' ἀγαθῶν δαιμόνων τὰ σφέτερα δημιουργήματα καὶ ἀγαθὰ, ἃ δωροῦνται, συνθεωρεῖσθαι παρεχόντων, τῶν δὲ τιμῶν δαιμόνων τὰ εἶδη τῶν τιμῶν ἐμφαινόντων, τῶν δ' ἄλλων ὄπωσοῦν πονηρῶν θηρία τινὰ βλαβερὰ καὶ αἰμοβόρα καὶ ἄγρια περικεμένων.

⁴⁷ Plutarch acknowledged a category of punishing daemons as well, as we have seen: *De Def. Or.* 417a11-b1, ἄλλους δὲ τῶν ὑπερῆφάνων καὶ μεγάλων τιμῶν ἀδικῶν περιπολεῖν.

⁴⁸ Pace Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell 2003, 101 n.137.

⁴⁹ See for example Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 3.1216–1217; Horace, *Satires* 1.8.34–35.

⁵⁰ For the role of evil daemons in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, see Lewy 2011, 259–309 and Majercik 1989, 13–14.

sible for theurgic rites that have gone wrong. The theurgists aim to bring in a god and bring in instead evil daemons or *antitheoi* (177.13–14).⁵¹

Iamblichus' compromise, then, is to allow for the existence of evil daemons and to give them a role in the cosmos. They are a separate category, not related either to human souls or (it seems) to good or punishing daemons. As in the Greek mainstream, the evil daemons cause trouble for human beings and are a source of evil in the cosmos, but Iamblichus stresses their role in derailing successful theurgy. It is important to notice that they are not alone responsible since an incompetent theurgist is also needed. In Iamblichus' opinion, the well-trained competent theurgist would not accidentally contact an evil daemon. The theurgist knows the art and unerringly contacts the correct superior kinds or deities. Book 2 of the *De Mysteriis* is full of signs that give an indication that the correct divinity has been reached. The theurgist knows these signs as well as others. And once the right divinity has been encountered, the success of the ritual is guaranteed. The gods eradicate any evil daemons in the area, removing them with their illumination.

The main role of evil daemons, therefore, is a negative one. They give an explanation for what one might think is bad theurgy or black magic. The distinction between true theurgy and γοητεία is a central concern of Iamblichus in book 3 of the *De Mysteriis*. The corruption of the would-be theurgist and the meddling of evil daemons helps inform the distinction and at the same time provides a defense of theurgy as the only trustworthy method by which human beings can make contact with the gods.

4. Conclusion

The role of daemons in daily life might seem irrational to many today, but in the ancient world daemons were part of the religious machinery. Any philosopher who had a concern for religion and theology could not avoid them. Plato himself was such a religious figure. In the *Republic* (379b1-c7) he claimed that since god is good, he could do nothing harmful (βλαβερόν). God is the giver of good things to humankind. In the *Symposium*, Plato gave a similar role to daemons, who became the gods' go-betweens with mortals, bringing good things to them. In the *Phaedo*, he showed that ghosts were merely souls weighed down with matter from their previous lives.

In the non-philosophical world, daemons and ghosts were not so helpful. They were evil and caused harm to human beings. The intellectual elite took note of these popular notions, and even Platonists began to consider a role for them in their philosophies.

⁵¹ καὶ ποτὲ μὲν, ὡς δοκεῖ, θεὸν ἄλλον ἀνθ' ἑτέρου ποιοῦντα ἐπικωμάζειν, ποτὲ δ' αὖ δαίμονας πονηροὺς ἀντὶ τῶν θεῶν εἰσκρίνοντα, οὓς δὴ καὶ καλοῦσιν ἀντιθέους. For the term ἀντίθεος, see Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell 2003, 199 n.244.

No philosopher was more concerned about religious matters than Iamblichus. His *De Mysteriis* is a meticulous rebuttal of what he saw as the false argumentation of his fellow Platonists. Iamblichus begins with basic Platonic doctrines: the gods are good, daemons are intermediaries, and the gods do not descend into this world. He then begins to speculate on the underlying rationale for these and other Platonic precepts. The gods kept clear of the material realm themselves, but they could create pure spaces within it by illuminating the area or objects with their ethereal light. This conception allowed sacred objects (stones, statues, etc.) to exist on earth and also provided a means for the gods to raise us to them via their rays, both integral parts of theurgy. As a corollary, the realm of matter itself seemed darker, more dangerous. Plato had already suggested the danger of matter in the *Phaedo* and *Timaeus*, as well as elsewhere. Iamblichus exploited that notion, and argued that matter affected not only human souls but also those of the lower divinities that participated directly with it: daemons and heroes. Iamblichus had already argued that daemons had a jurisdiction over parts of the material realm. It was a natural extension of this concept that some daemons, like many human souls, became contaminated by matter, took on problematic desires. These desires caused them to want what they shouldn't have, and thus they became evil daemons, masquerading as gods and interfering with theurgical rites. Given Iamblichus' concern for religion and religious rites, the progression is natural. It is also rational, carried out with logical aplomb. Furthermore, his resulting doctrine not only solves problems with his contemporaries' and predecessors' views, it also is more coherent and more thorough than theirs. He gives a rational explanation and underpinning for the workings of the religion of his times, including the role of daemons and souls of deceased human beings in it.

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Rhetoric and Platonism in Fifth-Century Athens

There are reasons to believe that relations between Platonism and rhetoric in Athens during the fifth century CE were rather close.¹ Both were major pillars of pagan culture, or *paideia*, and thus essential elements in the defense of paganism against increasingly powerful and repressive Christian opponents. It is easy to imagine that, under these circumstances, paganism was closing ranks and that philosophers and orators united in their efforts to save traditional ways and values. Although there is no doubt some truth to this view, a closer look reveals that the relations between philosophy and rhetoric were rather more complicated. In what follows, I will discuss these relations with a view to the Platonist school of Athens. By “the Platonist school of Athens” I mean the Platonist school founded by Plutarch of Athens in the late fourth century CE, and reaching a famous end under the leadership of Damascius in 529.² I will first survey the evidence for the attitudes towards rhetoric prevailing amongst the most important Athenian Platonists of the time. I will then consider whether rhetoric played any role in the canonical course of study at the Platonist schools of Athens and Alexandria. Finally, I will conclude with some remarks about the philosophical interest that fifth century Platonists had in rhetoric.

1. Platonist Scholarchs and Rhetoric

The major heads of the Platonist school of Athens, its founder Plutarch of Athens, his successor Syrianus, the latter’s successor Proclus and its last head Damascius, who revived the school after a period of decline, have all been considered, for various reasons, as being engaged in rhetoric. In this section I survey the evidence for such rhetorical activity. I will argue that most of the evidence does not stand up under closer scrutiny and that we know next to nothing about the attitudes that Plutarch and Syrianus displayed towards rhetoric. While we know more about Proclus and Damascius, their attitudes towards rhetoric seem to have been rather negative.

Little is known about Plutarch of Athens, the founder of the school; no complete work of his has survived and we are only left with scattered fragments.³ It is possible that he wrote a commentary on Plato’s *Gorgias*. If he did, this would be important for our purposes because Platonists found in the *Gorgias* detailed discussions of rhetoric

1 I would like to thank Erwin Cook, Larry Kim and Peter Turner for very helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

2 This school is also sometimes referred to as the “Academy” even though there was no institutional link to Plato’s school.

3 Fragments and testimonies have been collected in Taormina 1989.

that hugely influenced their thinking about the topic. Three fragments of the commentary have survived.⁴ The most interesting, fragment 73, has come down to us in the anonymous prolegomena to Hermogenes' *On Issues*.⁵ In this fragment, rhetoric is defined as an art that "possesses authority over and is productive of persuasion in political discourse"; it is emphasized that rhetoric deals with persuasion rather than with teaching.⁶ Neither the definition nor the qualification is original and neither displays any specifically philosophical trait; similar definitions can be found in various contemporary technical treatises on rhetoric.⁷ The author of this fragment also claims that rhetoric is the subject matter of the *Gorgias*, a claim that, as we shall see, was not universally accepted by other Platonists. Unfortunately, we cannot be certain that the author of these fragments is Plutarch of Athens.⁸ It is likely that they belong to a time period after the famous Plutarch of Chaironeia but this does not prove, of course, that they were written by the only other famous Platonist of that name.

The other piece of evidence linking Plutarch to rhetoric is a stele with an inscription in which a certain Plutarch is called a sophist.⁹ Wilamowitz was the first to identify the dedicatee of the stele with our Platonist. This identification, if correct, might suggest the interesting claim that Plutarch was not only a teacher of philosophy but also of rhetoric. It does so if we further assume that the word "sophist" on this stele means "teacher of rhetoric" as is often the case. Yet whether it here means "teacher of rhetoric" is not clear. Indeed, it is more likely, as Watts thinks, that Plutarch was called a sophist, not in the sense of *teacher of rhetoric* but rather in the sense of *wise person*. For using the word "*philosophos*" in this inscription would not have been possible for metrical reasons and it might well be, as Watts suggests, that the word "sophist" was employed as the next best designation.¹⁰ If this is so, then the word "sophist" is not referring to rhetoric at all. Hence, our investigation delivers the first negative result: we do not know anything for certain about Plutarch's attitude towards rhetoric.

4 Fr. 73–75 Taormina.

5 *On Issues* was one of late antiquity's most important technical treatises on rhetoric, part of the so-called *corpus Hermogenianum*, a set of technical treatises on rhetoric originating in the second century CE, which, between the second and the fifth centuries, became the foundation of rhetorical education and remained so well into Byzantine times. See Heath 1995.

6 Fr. 73 Taormina = *RG* 7.1.33.28–34.5.

7 For a discussion of the definition and division of rhetoric in late antiquity see Spengel 1863.

8 Beutler 1938 and 1951 defends the view that the commentary was written by Plutarch of Athens but Taormina 1989, 253f. classifies the fragments as *dubia*.

9 The most prominent use of the word "sophist" in late antiquity was to refer to teachers of rhetoric (Kennedy 1983, 133). Yet note that this was not the only sense of the word "sophist." I will not engage in the debate as to whether all or most sophists (in the prominent sense) were exclusively or mostly teachers or whether they also had important political functions (for this discussion see Brown 1992, 30f. and Van Hoof 2010).

10 *IG* II/III² 4224; Kaibel 1878, 910; Sironen 1994, 50–51; Watts 2006, 94.

Plutarch was succeeded by his pupil Syrianus, who is the author of an important commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. At first sight, Syrianus looks more promising because we possess two commentaries on technical rhetorical treatises belonging to the *corpus Hermogenianum*, one on *On Issues* and another on *On Ideas*, attributed by the manuscripts to one Syrianus Sophista. If the sophist is identical with the famous philosopher Syrianus, as many scholars believe, then we might have a first piece of secure evidence for a close connection between philosophy and rhetoric at the Platonist school.¹¹

Rabe, the editor of the two rhetorical treatises by Syrianus Sophista, was the first to discuss the arguments in favor of identification.¹² Rabe did not aim, however, at *proving* their identity; he only wanted to establish that the arguments against identity are not conclusive.¹³ While I agree with Rabe that the evidence allows for the possibility of identity, it seems to me that we have no compelling reason to assume that they were actually identical. First, the Platonist Syrianus is in many ancient sources called "Syrianus, the philosopher" while the author of the rhetorical treatises is called "Syrianus, the sophist." It is true, of course, as Rabe observes, that this does not conclusively prove their non-identity. But it is still remarkable that the Platonist is almost always explicitly called "the philosopher" and that in most cases where the appellation "the philosopher" is missing, the context makes it quite clear that the philosopher is being referred to. If we assume two distinct Syriani, we can easily explain why later authors referred to the famous Platonist as "the philosopher Syrianus"; they wanted to ensure that he would not get confused with the sophist of the same name.¹⁴

11 Proponents of identity are, among many others, Praechter 1932a, col. 1732 and Kennedy 1983, 109–112.

12 For an interesting lexical detail that might be taken to indicate identity, see Heath 2009, 145.

13 Rabe 1893, iv–vii; see also Sandys' review of Rabe where he carefully states that Syrianus "is possibly, though not certainly, the Neo-Platonist of that name" (Sandys 1893, 422).

14 Rabe suggests that Syrianus may first have been a sophist and only later a teacher of philosophy. Now since the commentary on *On Ideas* is dedicated to the author's son and since this fact has led scholars to assume that Syrianus at the time of penning this commentary must have been at least forty years old, we may face a further problem: Syrianus must have remained a sophist into his forties, before becoming a teacher of philosophy. However, Rabe convincingly argues that this was possible since it is also generally agreed that the commentary the philosopher Syrianus wrote on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* was written late in his life. Perhaps Syrianus was a victim of Plutarch's longevity and thus not able to support himself as a philosopher until the latter's death (or at least until Plutarch's retirement). Syrianus would then have given up his job as a sophist and become a teacher of philosophy. Westerink 1964, 176 thus maintains that "Syrianus ... has left rhetorical writings, probably less because of the attraction the subject had for him than because the long life of his predecessor made it necessary for him to find some other occupation." (See also Heath 2004, 74). This is possible. We are ill-informed about the financial situation of individual members of the school. Yet we do not, to my knowledge, possess any evidence to show that members other than the head of the school had to make a living outside the school.

Let us now look at the rhetorical commentaries to see whether Syrianus Sophista displays the knowledge of Platonism that would make an identification with the Platonist likely. To start with, it is evident that the author knew Plato's dialogues well; he often cites, or alludes to them. But his interest in and knowledge of Plato need not have been philosophical, for sophists in late antiquity were deeply impressed by Plato's style. Hermogenes, for example, considered Plato's writings exemplary of the panegyric species of rhetoric.¹⁵ Hence, it is not surprising that a teacher of rhetoric would be intimately familiar with his dialogues.

An example may illustrate this. As Richtsteig long ago demonstrated, the famous fourth century sophist Libanius was well acquainted with Plato's work.¹⁶ He even wrote an *Apology of Socrates*. But many scholars believe that Libanius was not at all interested in philosophy.¹⁷ Accordingly, the point of his *Apology of Socrates* was to defend not a philosophical life in the strict sense but paganism.¹⁸ A significant interest in Plato thus need not imply even a mild interest in philosophy.¹⁹

A second piece of evidence is that the sophist Syrianus not only knew his Plato well but also was familiar with contemporary Platonism. He begins his commentary on *On Issues* with the statement that not only sophists but also many Platonists have written commentaries on Hermogenes.²⁰ Moreover, as Heath points out, Syrianus announces about a quarter of the way through the commentary on *On Issues* that from that point on he would abandon Hermogenes and follow the Platonists Evagoras and Aquila.²¹ This evidence shows his knowledge of contemporary Platonism. However, this need not imply a philosophical education, for we have to distinguish two ways in which the word "Platonism" is used. Its core sense is the philosophical view we are familiar with from writers like Plotinus and Proclus. Yet "Platonism" is also used in a wider sense as the world-view of the pagan elite in late antiquity. Being a Platonist in the latter sense does not necessarily imply being a philosopher or having a philosophical education. Even where Syrianus follows Evagoras and Aquila, his commentary is a rhetorical piece that, as far as references to Platonism are concerned, could have been written by someone without training in philosophy.

Finally, there is a more convincing sign of philosophical erudition in Syrianus' rhetorical commentaries: Syrianus must have been familiar with some of Aristotle's writings. He knew Aristotle's logical writings; he also uses some technical terms that

15 Hermogenes, *Id.* 387. Demosthenes, on the other hand, was considered the master of the judicial and deliberative species. See Rutherford 1992.

16 Richtsteig 1918a.

17 von Christ 1924, 996; Cribiore 2007, 151 n.79.

18 Markowski 1910, 169f.

19 Similar things can be said about further sophists, such as Himerius (see Richtsteig 1918b and Richtsteig 1921). However, other Platonist sophists, such as Sopater, had a thorough education in philosophy (see O'Meara 2003, 209–211).

20 Syrianus, in *Herm.* 2, p.1.6 Rabe.

21 Syrianus, in *Herm.* 2, p.56.16–24; Heath 2004, 72.

have their origin in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (on which the philosopher Syrianus commented). It is thus fair to assume that the sophist Syrianus did indeed have some philosophical background. However, this still falls short of demonstrating that he was identical with the famous philosopher.

For a further reason that we cannot necessarily assume identity of the sophist with the philosopher is that we know of another Syrianus with philosophical interests: Syrianus the younger (as Praechter calls him), who is mentioned once in Damascius' *Life of Isidorus*. Damascius tells us that "Isidorus urged Syrianus and Hegias to restore philosophy which was now wasting away, as was their duty."²² For chronological reasons, we can be certain that the younger Syrianus mentioned by Damascius is not identical with the famous Platonist.²³ Yet he was clearly a philosopher, for otherwise Isidorus would not have urged him to restore philosophy. Unfortunately, we do not know of any official appointment that he might have had—as a philosopher or in any other capacity. Now I am not claiming that the younger Syrianus is in fact identical with the sophist Syrianus; I do not believe that we possess any evidence to prove this. However, I do not see any better evidence to equate the sophist with the elder Syrianus. On the contrary, if I had to place a wager on whether the elder or the younger Syrianus is the sophist (without a third option), then, on present evidence, my money would be on the younger. But in any case, we do not know whether the philosopher Syrianus was ever engaged in teaching rhetoric, nor do we have sufficient evidence to show that he wrote commentaries on rhetorical works.

We are better informed on the relation of Syrianus' successor Proclus to rhetoric. This is mainly due to the biography written by his pupil Marinus.²⁴ After acquiring the moral virtues (as Marinus tells us) and receiving a primary education as well as studying with a grammarian, Proclus moved to Alexandria in order to complete his grammatical education and to study rhetoric with the sophist Leonas.²⁵ Marinus tells us that the young Proclus very much liked rhetoric until he received his first taste of philosophy: on a trip to Byzantium, a fellow traveler introduced him to philosophy, and, as a consequence of this encounter, he said goodbye to rhetoric in order to devote himself to the study of philosophy. This interest brought him to Athens.

It is worthwhile to spend a moment on Proclus' arrival in Athens, masterfully described by Marinus, because this scene provides a fascinating glimpse of everyday

²² Damascius, *Isid.* fr. 151e Athanassiadi; Athanassiadi's translation (except for "Isidorus" where she has "Isidore").

²³ Praechter 1932b col. 1775. Praechter suspects that the great Syrianus might often have been called "the great" in order to distinguish him from the younger. Praechter further conjectures that the younger Syrianus is the son of the great Syrianus.

²⁴ For the following see Marinus, *Procl.* § 8–11.

²⁵ The grammarian is the γραμματικός, the teacher of grammar and literature, who has to be distinguished from the γραμματιστής, the teacher of primary education. Thus, a good upper-class education in late antiquity consisted of a sequence of three stages: primary education-grammar-rhetoric. See Kaster 1983, 323–326; Criboire 2001, 37f.

interaction between sophists and philosophers. When Proclus' ship put into port in Piraeus, Nicolaus, a student of rhetoric and future sophist in Constantinople, met him and brought him to Athens where the Platonist scholarch Syrianus and Nicolaus' teacher Lachares, one of the best known sophists of the fifth century, were awaiting him.²⁶ Although our source does not tell us so explicitly, it is likely that Lachares and Syrianus decided to send Nicolaus to fetch Proclus from Piraeus because both young men hailed from Lycia, so that Nicolaus' company would have eased Proclus' arrival in a foreign city.²⁷ This scene plainly suggests friendly and perhaps even cordial relations between at least some philosophers and sophists. A stronger interpretation, however, namely that they were in their respective functions also working together, should be resisted; for, as Marinus tells us, Lachares was deeply interested in philosophy and himself a student of Syrianus.²⁸ Thus, Lachares was a sophist who was pursuing a second education in philosophy.²⁹ It is likely that this, rather than his status as a sophist, was the reason for his presence when Proclus arrived in Athens.

Whereas the Athenian sophists were keen on winning Proclus as a pupil, he "despised the rhetorical schools there as well."³⁰ The "as well" indicates that he already felt the same way in Alexandria; this in turn indicates that he did not dislike the *Athenian* schools of rhetoric in particular but rather rhetoric itself. Hence, although Proclus did possess a rhetorical education, he was no longer actively interested in rhetoric by the time he had decided to devote his life to philosophy.

We do not know much about Proclus' immediate successor Marinus and the scholarchs between Marinus and Damascius. Yet we know for certain that Damascius was indeed a teacher of rhetoric; like Proclus, however, he decided to give up rhetoric when he converted to philosophy.³¹ Damascius, like nearly every educated person in late antiquity, had received rhetorical training in his youth.³² After spending three years studying rhetoric with the sophist Theon in Alexandria,³³ he started

26 For Lachares see Studemund 1888; Graeven 1895; Radermacher 1921; Kennedy 1983, 167 f.; Puech 2000, 324–26.

27 Marinus, *Procl.* § 14. Proclus was born in Byzantium but both his parents were Lycians. They moved back there after Proclus' birth (Marinus, *Procl.* § 6). Proclus himself is often referred to as a Lycian in our sources, for example, by Simplicius (*in Phys.* 404.16).

28 Proclus was to become his fellow student.

29 Damascius considered Lachares not a particularly gifted sophist and "rather slow in intellectual pursuits." Yet because of his virtuous character (and not because of his intellectual achievements!), Damascius thinks that he is "worthy indeed of being called a philosopher rather than a sophist." See Damascius, *Isid.* fr. 62 Athanassiadi.

30 Marinus, *Procl.* § 11.

31 The *Suda* (s.v.), not always a reliable source, calls Marinus "philosopher and rhetor," but we do not have any further indication that Marinus ever taught rhetoric. Marinus' successor was Hegias or Zenodotus, possibly both. The school declined after Marinus' death until Damascius became its head but we are ill informed about the period between Marinus and Damascius.

32 Heath 1995, 1f. A notable exception was Isidorus who greatly influenced Damascius' intellectual development. See Damascius, *Isid.* fr. 34c, fr. 37d, fr. 48b, fr. 106 Athanassiadi. See O'Meara 2006.

33 This Theon might be the author of extant progymnasmata.

teaching rhetoric, and, if Photius is to be trusted, did so for nine years though it may have been only six.³⁴ Looking back at his days as a sophist, Damascius states in his *Life of Isidorus*:

How pernicious an activity was rhetoric, focusing all my attention to the mouth and the tongue and turning it away from the soul and from blissful and divine lessons which purify it. Realizing this, I was sometimes distracted from my rhetorical exegeses...
fr. 137b (Athanasiasidi)

How precisely Damascius' transition from rhetoric to philosophy came about we do not know. It is likely that it occurred under the influence of Isidorus, whose character is nicely displayed in this fragment: "Leaving to others the graceful display of words, he occupied himself with revealing the things themselves, pronouncing thoughts rather than words; indeed it was not so much thoughts that he brought to light as the very essence of the things themselves."³⁵

What Damascius says about rhetoric in the fragment discussed earlier (fr. 122d Athanasiasidi) displays a similar sentiment. Even as a teacher of rhetoric, he was tired of it and clearly saw the reason for his dissatisfaction: rhetoric is concerned with expression and not with the content of what is expressed. The exercise of rhetoric made it impossible—or at least very difficult—for Damascius to devote his time to what he considered truly important, namely the soul and its purification. The "blissful and divine lessons" that lead to the soul's purification belong, of course, to philosophy. Thus, Damascius, like Proclus before him, felt a sharp contrast between rhetoric and philosophy. He left rhetoric behind and at the Athenian school studied mathematics with Marinus and philosophy with Zenodotus, who had been Proclus' favorite student.³⁶

This brief survey of the attitudes of the major fifth century Athenian Platonists towards rhetoric shows that there is no good reason to assume that relations between rhetoric and philosophy were close. In fact, the few explicit statements about rhetoric that have come down to us reveal a negative attitude. However, we have also seen that most Platonists, just like other educated people at the time, had been thoroughly trained in rhetoric. It seems likely that their rhetorical training preceded their philosophical studies at the school. In order to confirm this impression, our next task will be to investigate the school curriculum. We will have to ask whether or not it includ-

³⁴ Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* 181 (see also fr. 122d Athanasiasidi). Photius might have misread *Isid.* fr. 137b Athanasiasidi where Damascius tells us that he had spent nine years in rhetorical pursuits. It is unclear whether Damascius only refers to his teaching years or his student days as well. So his teaching career in rhetoric spanned either six or nine years.

³⁵ Damascius, *Isid.* fr. 37d Athanasiasidi. Translation slightly modified. The fragment also shows what is evident throughout the *Life of Isidorus*: that the philosopher Damascius had not forgotten his rhetoric and continued to make use of it. See also O'Meara 2006.

³⁶ Damascius, *Isid.* fr. 99b Athanasiasidi.

ed training in rhetoric or, more generally, whether rhetoric played any role in it (and if so, what precisely its role was).

2. Rhetoric and the Curriculum

It is well known that a Platonist education in late antiquity followed a more or less canonical curriculum.³⁷ While there are many open questions, its main outlines seem reasonably clear.³⁸ New students would often study some exhortative reading, possibly an oration by the classical orator Isocrates, the so-called Pythagorean *Golden Verses* or Epictetus' *Encheiridion*. They would then move on the "lesser mysteries" of Aristotle,³⁹ starting with the *Organon* (including Porphyry's *Introduction*) to learn logic, before moving on to ethics, physics and finally theology, i.e. metaphysics.⁴⁰ The study of Aristotle served as preparation for Plato of whom students read twelve dialogues in a fixed order first established by Iamblichus.⁴¹ The order of the reading lists was not necessarily determined by the idea of moving from easier texts to more difficult ones but rather by the aim of the Platonist life, which is the divinization of the soul.⁴² Accordingly, both lists were organized in such a way as to prepare students for the ascent and to guide their souls towards the divine.

Interestingly, questions concerning the role of rhetoric arise at all three levels of the philosophical curriculum: at the introductory level students would often read Isocrates, and we need to consider whether this was for rhetorical purposes. At the next, Aristotelian, stage, we will examine the possibility that Aristotle's *Rhetoric* was one of the "lesser mysteries" assigned. Finally, we know that the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus*, the two Platonic dialogues most concerned with rhetoric, belonged to the Platonic part of the curriculum and we will explore whether they were studied with a view to rhetorical training.

We know that three of Isocrates' orations were read: *To Demonicus*, *To Nicocles*, and *Nicocles*.⁴³ The function of these orations was exhortatory, specifically to encour-

37 Hadot 1979; Hoffmann 2000, 611–614; O'Meara 2003, 61–68.

38 For this discussion I shall assume that what we know about the Platonist school of Alexandria also applies to the Athenian school. It is generally agreed nowadays that there are no crucial dogmatic differences between the two schools (see Hadot 1978 and 1992 against Praechter 1910).

39 For Aristotle as a preparatory reading for Plato and the expression "lesser mysteries" see Marinus, *Procl.* § 13.

40 For the order in which to read Aristotle's work, see also Sorabji 1990, 6. Mathematics will also have had its place. We know that Damascius studied mathematics with Marinus (*Phot. Bibl. Cod.* 181).

41 Westerink 1962, xxxvii–xli; Festugière 1969.

42 O'Meara 1992, in particular 504. It should be mentioned that, after the philosophical curriculum, students would read the holy pagan scriptures: the Orphic Hymns and the Chaldean Oracles. See Hoffmann 2000, 613f.

43 Late ancient Platonists thought all three were authentic. I shall not discuss whether or not they were right.

age young people to live a philosophical life. Unlike the later ethical readings, such as the *Nicomachean Ethics*, they were not primarily used for ethical *reflection*, a point that is nicely illustrated by Damascius' *Life of Isidorus*: Damascius there remarks that Severianus, a Damascene nobleman with philosophical interests had once explained Isocrates' political orations to him in his youth, not, as Damascius emphasizes, in rhetorical terms but with a focus on their philosophical (which here means: moral) content.⁴⁴ Even though Severianus was not teaching at the school and was not even a professional philosopher, it seems reasonable to assume that Isocrates was read at the school in the same spirit. Accordingly, that orations by Isocrates were read does not indicate that the interest in these orations was rhetorical; they were simply read because of their moral content and because of their power to motivate the young to pursue philosophy.

If we bear in mind, as I mentioned earlier, that beginning philosophy students typically entered the school with a completed rhetorical education, it is likely that they had already read other orations by Isocrates as part of their training, since he was one of the orators that sophists wanted their students to imitate. Hermogenes, for example, explicitly acknowledges him as one of the ten canonical orators and, in his discussion of style, applauds him for the way he creates beauty.⁴⁵

While modern scholarly editions of Aristotle's *organon* consist of the six familiar logical works (often with Porphyry's *Introduction*),⁴⁶ the late ancient *organon* also included his *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*.⁴⁷ We do not know the origin of this classification, but it seems to have been well-established by the time of Ammonius, student of Proclus and teacher in Alexandria.⁴⁸ The issue that Platonists faced was to explain what precisely (if any) the role of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in their logic course should be. Ammonius was acutely aware of this issue; he did not see any function for the *Rhetoric* in the study of syllogisms.⁴⁹ He bases this on the claim that Aristotle distinguishes three species of syllogism: apodeictic, dialectical, and sophistical. The first species is covered in the *Posterior Analytics*, the second in the *Topics* and the third in the *Sophistical Refutations*.⁵⁰ There is thus no room for *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*. Ammonius'

44 Damascius, *Isid.* fr. 108 Athanassiadi. For the role of the reading of Isocrates see Hadot 1978, 160–4; Hoffmann 2000, 612; Menchelli 2007 and 2008.

45 Hermog. *Id.* 298f; 395–403. See Rutherford 1992.

46 For influential modern editions of the organon see, for example, Pacius 1597 and Waitz 1844. In modern editions the organon consists of *Categories*, *De Interpretatione*, *Prior Analytics*, *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics*, *Sophistical Refutations*, and often (but not always) Porphyry's *Introduction*.

47 See Walzer 1934; Black 1990, 17–51. For the following considerations I am much indebted to Black 1990.

48 Moraux 1951, 179. Moraux also points out that already the so-called Middle Platonist Alcinous considered the *Rhetoric* a study of *imperfect* syllogisms, based on Aristotle's rhetorical *sullogismos* and thus as part of Aristotle's logic (Moraux 1951, 181–183).

49 For the following, see Ammonius in *APr.* 11.22–38; Black 1990, 31–33.

50 *Categories*, *De Interpretatione*, and *Prior Analytics* were considered preliminary studies for syllogistic.

solution is straightforward. He distinguishes logic (i.e. syllogistic) from λογική (the study of λόγος quite generally), claims that the former is only a part of the latter and concludes that, since *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* are not syllogistic, they must belong to the asyllogistic part of λογική. He divides the asyllogistic part into two species: a metrical one, studied in the *Poetics*, and an ametrical one, studied in the *Rhetoric*. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* thus belongs to the *Organon* but it does not belong to logic (in what we would call the traditional sense). This solves the classificatory problem in an elegant way.⁵¹ Since the *Organon* was used to teach logic, Ammonius had no place for the *Rhetoric* in his teaching. The fact that he kept the *Rhetoric* in the organon simply reveals a conservative attitude.

Olympiodorus, a later Alexandrian Platonist and possibly a student of Ammonius, disagreed with Ammonius and considered the study of the *Rhetoric* necessary because of its utility in detecting unsound syllogisms. In his answer to the question of why students should study *Sophistical Refutations*, *Topics*, *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, he claims that, just as a student of medicine must know not only health but also illnesses, so a student of syllogistic must be able to detect sophistical syllogisms that aim at overturning and concealing the truth.⁵² This account is quite different from Ammonius' in that it presupposes that the *Rhetoric* (just as the other works mentioned above) is concerned with certain kinds of syllogisms, but with kinds of syllogism that are in one way or other deficient.

An attempt at explaining this deficiency in more detail was made by another Alexandrian commentator, Elias, who argues that there are five kinds of syllogism, one of which is called *rhetorical* and is the object of the *Rhetoric*.⁵³ Elias tries to explain the differences between kinds of syllogism with reference to the truth-values of their premises: While the premises of the apodeictic syllogism are true, the premises of the rhetorical syllogism are "equally true and false."⁵⁴ Accordingly, he sees the difference between kinds of syllogism not in their form but in their matter. Thus, rhetorical syllogisms are valid and the deficiency of this type of syllogism is due to their premises being equally true and false. What he means by "equally true and false" is at first sight not clear. It is unlikely that he thinks that, for each rhetorical syllogism, the number of true premises equals the number of false premises (i.e. that each rhetorical syllogism has precisely one true and one false premise). A more likely interpretation is that, while the premises of apodeictic syllogisms are always true, those of rhetorical syllogisms are as often false as they are true.

51 The view that logic is only a part of λογική, to be distinguished from a non-logical part, rhetoric, can already be found in Hellenistic Stoicism. See Barnes 1999, 65–67.

52 Olympiodorus, *Proll.* 8.19–27.

53 Elias, *in Cat.* 116 f.; *in Apr.* 139.10 f. For a discussion see Ebbesen 1981, 102–105. Aristotle talks of a "rhetorical συλλογισμός," and considers it indeed the heart of his rhetorical theory: the enthymeme (*Rhet.* 1356a35 f.). See Burnyeat 1994. Yet it is quite different from Elias' rhetorical syllogism.

54 The other three kinds of syllogism are poetical (all premises false), dialectical (more true and less false), sophistical (more false and less true).

This gives rise to the question of how to distinguish rhetorical syllogisms (which are equally true and false) from dialectical (more true than false) and from sophistical (more false than true) ones. Ebbesen refers to a medieval manual of logic, the Anonymous Heiberg, whose logic might go back to the Alexandrians.⁵⁵ The Anonymous Heiberg names different sources of premises for the five kinds of syllogism. Rhetorical syllogisms have non-rational opinion as their source, which is a better source than imagination (more false than true) but not as good a source as rational opinion (more true than false). Thus the difference between these three kinds of syllogism seems to lie in the degree of epistemic reliability of their corresponding cognitive faculties.⁵⁶

The details of this remain obscure and we cannot be certain whether the explanations of the Anonymous Heiberg were known in Athens and Alexandria. Yet this does not matter for our purposes because in Ammonius' view the *Rhetoric* was not part of the lesser mysteries of the school curriculum precisely because it had nothing to do with syllogistic. According to the view we find in Olympiodorus and Elias, on the other hand, the *Rhetoric* had a function in syllogistic and its inclusion in the curriculum nothing to do with rhetoric per se. Either way, we have no indication that Aristotle's *Rhetoric* was used in the school for rhetorical purposes.

Let us move to the Platonic curriculum and briefly discuss the function of the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus* therein. We are in the fortunate position of possessing commentaries on both works: Olympiodorus commented on the *Gorgias* and Hermias on the *Phaedrus*. The *Gorgias* was the second dialogue to be read (after the *Alcibiades*) and thus belonged to ethical education. More precisely, according to the ancient commentators it was concerned with political virtues.⁵⁷ The *Phaedrus* was number eight on the list, between the *Statesman* and the *Symposium*. The author of the anonymous *Prolegomena* tells us that both the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* deal with theological questions and, in keeping with this, Hermias argues in his commentary on the *Phaedrus* that its topic (*skopos*) is Beauty.⁵⁸

It is interesting to note that both commentators, when discussing the topic of their respective dialogues, consider and reject the view that it is rhetoric. Readers, we are told, who mistakenly think it is, are taking a part for the whole. Olympiodorus reports that these interpreters base their claim on the observation that Socrates talks with Gorgias about rhetoric but do not take into account that this discussion is only part of the dialogue and cannot therefore be the topic of the whole.⁵⁹ In the same vein, Hermias complains that such interpreters only focus on a part of the *Phaedrus*

⁵⁵ Ebbesen 1981, 102f.

⁵⁶ This is presumably the source of the modern idea that the *Topics* deals with probable proofs. The premises of these proofs are more likely to be true than to be false, on this reading. For the modern idea, see, for example, Zeller 1921, 72.

⁵⁷ Olymp. in *Grg.* pr. 4; Anon. *Prol.* ch. 10. Westerink 1962, XL; O'Meara 2003, 67f.

⁵⁸ Anon. *Proll.* ch. 10; Hermias, in *Phdr.* 11.19f.

⁵⁹ Olymp. in *Grg.* pr. 4.

(the beginning and the end of the dialogue) and mistakenly believe they have found the topic of the whole.⁶⁰ Thus, the reading of neither of these dialogues functioned as a form of rhetorical education.

To conclude, we have seen that rhetorical texts, such as some orations by Isocrates, possibly Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, and the two Platonic dialogues just mentioned played, in different ways, a role in the Platonist curriculum. Isocrates' orations were used in order to exhort and morally train students in a preliminary and non-theoretical way. Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, if it was used at all, served as part of training in logic in that it provided the foundation to understanding one kind of (materially) deficient syllogism. Plato's *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus* were read as dialogues about political virtue and beauty respectively. None of these texts were read to educate students in rhetoric. This result is in keeping with the claim made earlier that Platonist freshmen already entered the school with a degree in rhetoric (so to speak).

3. Rhetoric and Philosophy

In the first section of this paper I argued that we do not know much about the views of Athenian Platonists on rhetoric and that the two Platonists whose attitudes we know, Proclus and Damascius, do not seem to have thought very highly of it. Damascius, as we have seen, grew tired of rhetoric because of its focus "on tongue and mouth" and because it prevented him from devoting himself to the "purification of the soul." Yet when turning to the content of the two commentaries on the Platonic dialogues introduced above, we find a different and rather positive picture. Both Hermias and Olympiodorus emphasize, following some Platonic passages, how true (or perfect) rhetoric plays an important and positive role. Our final task is thus to explain what this positive role is and how it can be reconciled with the negative attitudes displayed by Proclus and Damascius.

I wish to rule out one potential solution right from the start, namely that the difference is one between Athens and Alexandria. After all, both commentaries were written by Alexandrians while the negative attitudes were expressed by Athenians. I do not think, however, that this is a satisfactory solution. Many Alexandrian Platonists had studied in Athens before they took on their teaching positions in Alexandria; thus we would need a good reason to assume that the Alexandrians deviated in this respect from what they had learned in Athens.⁶¹ If there is any major difference between the two schools at all, it would seem to be grounded in their differing attitudes towards Christianity. However, it is unclear how this difference would give rise to opposing views on rhetoric. I concede, of course, that this is not conclusive proof. Yet I think we can reconcile the negative attitudes of the Athenians with the positive readings of the Alexandrian commentators without referring to differences between the

⁶⁰ Herm. in *Phdr.* 10.27f.

⁶¹ See Hadot 1978 and Hadot 1992 against Praechter 1910.

two schools. But first let us briefly examine what the two commentators have to say about rhetoric.

Both commentaries follow Plato in distinguishing between true and perfect rhetoric on the one hand and popular and false rhetoric on the other. Olympiodorus, following the *Gorgias*, explains that false rhetoric is the rhetoric of the flatterer. It does not aim at the good, the fine and the useful.⁶² Instead, it only aims at bringing about pleasure and is thus directed towards the lowest of the three Platonic soul parts and its irrational desires. True rhetoric, by contrast, is the servant of the true statesman. The true statesman aims at improving the souls of the citizens and possesses the corresponding knowledge. Thus, he knows what is best for the citizens and the city and, accordingly, the true orator's service consists in persuading the citizens of what the true statesman knows is in their best interest.⁶³

Olympiodorus also mentions a third kind of rhetoric, which he considers intermediate between the true and the flattering type and finds exemplified by such orators as Demosthenes, Pericles, and Themistocles.⁶⁴ Instead of listening to the truth spoken by the true statesman, they were only carrying out the wishes of the citizens and are, for this reason, not true orators. Yet unlike flatterers, these intermediate orators saved the city; thus their persuasive work brought about the right result.⁶⁵ Tarrant suggests that it might have been important to Olympiodorus (and perhaps to other Platonist teachers) to introduce this third kind of rhetoric for pragmatic reasons. As mentioned earlier, many of their students would eventually have to make a living as sophists after their philosophical studies and the intermediate type of rhetoric would give them a justification for doing so.⁶⁶ I shall come back to this below.

Hermias largely agrees with Olympiodorus on the role of rhetoric. He emphasizes the Platonic idea found in the *Phaedrus* that rhetoric is a type of *psuchagogia* that aims at winning souls for the good. Like Olympiodorus, he argues that true rhetoric is thus based on proper understanding of what is good and fine. Yet Hermias gives us a more detailed account of the relationship between philosopher and orator than Olympiodorus. In doing so, he relies on ideas found in the *Republic*, and is concerned with the ascent and descent of the philosophers. By "philosopher," Hermias

⁶² A variation of the three aims that the flatterer misses, can be found in Elias who assumes that the three species of rhetoric (judicial, deliberative, and epideictic) aim at the just, the useful, and the fine, respectively (Elias, in *Porph.* 21.28–34). It was also common to associate each species with a Platonic soul part, respectively (e.g. *RG* 14.58.24–27). See Montefusco 2010, 254 f.

⁶³ See also Hermias, in *Phdr.* 242.11–15 where we learn that true rhetoric is guided by truth and aims at making the citizens good and fine. In persuading the citizens, the true orator should use any means necessary, using different arguments depending on the addressee of his speeches just as the doctor applies a variety of remedies and uses for each particular patient the remedy that heals their particular suffering.

⁶⁴ See also Hermias, in *Phdr.* 221.9–24.

⁶⁵ Olymp. in *Grg.* 1.13, 33.3.

⁶⁶ See Tarrant in Jackson et al. 1998, 17–20.

explains, we primarily mean someone who dwells in the noetic realm and contemplates the intelligible world and God. In other words, the philosopher (in the primary sense) has left the Cave and is spending his time in contemplation. However, these philosophers have to descend and when they turn their attention to the city in order to care for it, they assume a new and practical function.⁶⁷ Instead of using the term “philosopher kings,” Hermias calls them, equally following Plato, statesmen. The statesman, in turn, becomes a true orator when “he persuades the people of the city to do what is necessary.”⁶⁸ The fact that Hermias, by contrast to Olympiodorus, identifies the true orator and the true statesman does not matter, for the major point that both commentators drive home is the same: true rhetoric must be informed by the understanding of how the city ought to be governed. Yet this is only available to someone who has been in the noetic realm, and who possesses the corresponding knowledge. Here’s how Hermias states it: “Because he knows, due to his contemplation, the truth, he persuades them to do the right thing and what is good for them.”⁶⁹ Thus, ideally, rhetoric, for Platonists, possesses an important function in the political sphere: it is necessary for the happiness of the city and of the citizens. But true rhetoric presupposes ascent to the noetic realm and a proper understanding of the truth. Only with this divine knowledge can there be such a thing as a true orator.

This brings me back to Proclus and Damascius. Their negative remarks about rhetoric belong to a time in their lives when they had only just begun to engage in philosophical studies. When Damascius complains that rhetoric prevented him from devoting himself to the purification of his soul, he means that it prevented him from starting his journey out of the Cave. His complaint is thus perfectly compatible with praise of true rhetoric because the latter belongs to the descent back into the Cave. Before one has reached the Platonist aim of purifying and deifying the soul, rhetoric is nothing more than a distraction. For, as Hermias explains, a soul that seeks noetic beauty needs “solitude and quietude.” But orators dwell in the material realm and cannot possibly spend their lives in solitary contemplation.⁷⁰ This not only explains Damascius’ attitude but also why rhetoric does not have a role to play in the Platonist curriculum. For, as we have seen, the curriculum aims at the ascent to the divine realm to which rhetoric has nothing at all to contribute.

To conclude, I wish to come back to those sophists of the fifth and sixth centuries who had a Platonist background and a proper philosophical education. We are able to explain the existence of such sophists by their being many more teaching jobs available in rhetoric than in philosophy. Accordingly, many philosophy graduates embarked on careers as professional sophists. How should a Platonist sophist

⁶⁷ The reasons for the descent in the *Republic* are discussed in Caluori 2011. For later Platonist views on this topic see O’Meara 2003, 73–86; for Plotinus see Caluori 2005.

⁶⁸ Hermias, in *Phdr.* 221.7–16. See also in *Phdr.* 1.6 where Hermias identifies the true orator with the philosopher.

⁶⁹ Hermias, in *Phdr.* 221.17f. See O’Meara 2003, 81f.

⁷⁰ Hermias, in *Phdr.* 19.9–22.

see his position as an orator? Since there were no philosopher kings and thus no true statesmen, they could rightly see neither themselves nor their students as (future) perfect orators. It would be interesting to study in detail whether, and in what way, Olympiodorus' intermediate orator could serve as a model for them. The answer to that question depends on the details of a Platonist political philosophy for a city or a state without factual access to divine knowledge. As O'Meara has shown, Platonists developed such a political philosophy, which was based on the primacy of law.⁷¹ It is possible that this served Platonist sophists as a framework for their rhetorical activity (based on Olympiodorus' intermediate orators or otherwise). Only when we work out the details of this, will we be able to see what it means to be a Platonist sophist in a philosophically interesting sense. It would also help us better understand the relationship between Platonism and rhetoric in late antiquity and perhaps even show that the practice of rhetoric was more deeply pervaded by philosophical concerns than our current knowledge suggests.

71 O'Meara 2003, 87–115.

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“Pliable Platonism?” Olympiodorus and the Profession of Philosophy in Sixth-Century Alexandria¹

By the beginning of the sixth century, no philosopher of the old religion could have any illusions about the world in which he now lived. Plato’s meditations on the role of the philosopher in a “corrupt city” seemed to speak, only too well, of the non-Christian philosopher’s role in his own times.

Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion*²

So too if they accuse me, asking why I am teaching the youth, will they ever be persuaded that I do this in their interests, in order that they may become men of true quality (καλοὶ κάγαθοί)? So under such a constitution, one must create a fortress (τειχίον) for oneself, and live quietly (ἡσυχάζειν) within it all the time.

Olympiodorus, *Lectures on Plato’s Gorgias*, 45.2.32–36 (transl. Jackson et al.)³

Olympiodorus the Younger (c. 500–570 CE),⁴ perhaps the last pagan to profess philosophy from the public chair at Alexandria, offered this autobiographical reflection to his students early in his career, during a series of lectures on Plato’s *Gorgias*.⁵ He caught his own reflection in the character of Socrates, a philosophical educator who risked being haled into court and put to death by a hostile state (*Gorgias* 522c–d; cf. Olymp. in *Grg.* 1.6; 45.2). Socrates was unfazed by this mortal danger, “for no one with even a little reason and courage is afraid to die; doing what’s unjust is what he fears” (522e), and a good man cannot really be harmed by injustice—a Socratic paradox that Olympiodorus himself warmly endorses (45.2). But in his own life, per-

1 I would like to thank Ryan Fowler and Richard Sorabji for valuable comments on this chapter. Its remaining faults are mine alone.

2 Brown 1992, 117.

3 Translations from Olympiodorus’ *Gorgias* commentary here and following are taken from Jackson et al. 1998, sometimes lightly adapted for compatibility with other translations in the essay. Translations from the *Phaedo* commentary are taken from Westerink 1976.

4 On Olympiodorus, see for example Opsomer 2010, Wildberg 2008, Saffrey 2005, and Tarrant 1997. On his environment, see also for example Watts 2008, ch. 5, Westerink 1990 and Jackson et al. 1998, Intro. As “the great philosopher” (ὁ μέγας φιλόσοφος), Olympiodorus’ teaching routine and philosophy were influential on the next generation of Christian Platonists at Alexandria.

5 These particular lectures are often dated relatively early by various features, including reliance on Ammonius and perceived philosophical simplicity. In the remainder of this paper, Olympiodorus will be cited as follows: *Proll. in Cat.* = *Prolegomena to Logic and Aristotle’s Categories* (ed. Busse 1902); *in Alc.* = *On Plato’s Alcibiades* (ed. Westerink 1956), *in Grg.* = *On Plato’s Gorgias* (ed. Westerink 1970, tr. Jackson et al. 1998), *in Phd.* = *On Plato’s Phaedo* (ed. and tr. Westerink 1976), *in Mete.* = *On Aristotle’s Meteorology* (ed. Stüve 1900). The numbering system is page, line (divided by a period) except where a chapter-heading based system is now more standard, as in the *Phaedo* and *Gorgias* commentaries.

haps bearing in mind the violent unrest of the past century,⁶ Olympiodorus does not advocate ideological martyrdom. He elects for the quiet pragmatism of *Republic* 6.496c–e: under a hostile constitution, the philosopher’s only real choice is to build a “fortress” or wall (δεῖ... τεῖχιν ἑαυτῷ ποιεῖν) and to dwell in peace behind it, drawing little attention and causing less trouble.⁷

The context of the *Republic* passage, also uttered by Socrates, draws out the force of Olympiodorus’ allusion (which may not have been caught by many of his students, as the *Republic* was not normally read in the Iamblichean teaching curriculum):⁸

The members of this small group have tasted how sweet and blessed a possession philosophy is, and at the same time they’ve also seen the madness of the majority (τῶν πολλῶν) and realized... that there is no ally with whom they might go to the aid of justice and survive, that instead they’d perish before they could profit either their city or their friends and be useless both to themselves and to others, just like a man who has fallen among wild animals and is neither willing to join them in doing injustice nor sufficiently strong to oppose the general savagery alone.... Taking all this into account, they lead a quiet life (ἡσυχίαν ἔχων) and do their own work. Thus, like someone who takes refuge under a little wall (τεῖχιν) from a storm of dust or hail driven by the wind, the philosopher... is satisfied if he can somehow lead his present life free from injustice and impious acts and depart from it with good hope, blameless and content.⁹

The juxtaposition of Olympiodorus’ unconcealed paganism with his flourishing teaching career marks him out as an interesting figure for study at the intersection of traditional *paideia* and Christianity in the twilight of late antiquity. Who are “they,” the subject of Olympiodorus’ foreboding conditional (ἐμοῦ ἐὰν κατηγορήσωσι, in *Grg.* 45.2.32–33), on account of whose suspicions he saw fit to emulate the philosophers of *Republic* 6 and retreat to a τεῖχιν? The turbulent social and political backdrop of his career offers some context: as a public intellectual committed to the value of Platonic philosophy and traditional Hellenic piety,¹⁰ the young Olympiodorus lived to see the closure of the Platonic Academy in Athens, the exile of his Athenian peers Simplicius and Damascius, and the implementation of “a machinery... to wipe out paganism on a broad scale” across the empire (cf. *Codex Justinianus* 1.11.9–10), including legislation under which pagans could be tried and executed (cf. Wildberg 2005, 332). Olympiodorus’ “fortress,” per-

⁶ See Watts 2008, chs. 8–9; Watts 2010, ch. 1.

⁷ As Brown (1992, 117) puts it, “the fear generated by the murder of Hypatia still hung over the city.”

⁸ On which see for example Jackson et al. 1998, 14–15; Westerink 2010, xxxix; and Mansfeld 1994, 88.

⁹ *Rep.* 6.496c–e.

¹⁰ Olympiodorus’ commitment to the value of Platonic philosophy for the good life is on vivid display in the opening lecture of his course *On Plato’s Alcibiades* (discussed below). He mentions “theurgy” approvingly as a virtue in his lecture on the *Phaedo* (8.2), and while he is careful to explain that “the philosophers” worship not stone images but what they represent (in *Grg.* 47.5), his remark suggests that the practice is still current and, as far as Olympiodorus is concerned, correct as a means of grasping intelligible being and the divine.

haps, rested on the honour of his profession¹¹ and the uneasy foundations of the agreement, whatever it was, that his predecessor Ammonius (c. 435/45–517/26) had struck with the Bishop of Alexandria.¹² Nevertheless, the surviving records from Olympiodorus’ lifetime of lecturing suggest no hostility or frustration.¹³ He neither withdrew from the philosophical positions that typified later ancient Platonism, nor targeted Christian doctrines for refutation. Instead, his (predominantly Christian) students encountered a wholesale defender of the webwork of Hellenic *paideia*,¹⁴ who professed traditionally pagan views about contentious philosophical topics including the eternity of the natural world, the reverence of stone images, the transmigration of souls, the nature of δαίμονες, and even the virtue of theurgy,¹⁵ while carefully making room for the confessional comforts of his classroom.

Olympiodorus’ oeuvre has raised several questions in recent years. Did Olympiodorus adapt his philosophical rhetoric and pedagogy in order to create an atmosphere friendly to Christianity, as many readers have suggested? If so, did that adaptation demand an “extreme pliability” of doctrine, such that Olympiodorus can barely be credited with a coherent “philosophy” at all?¹⁶ More broadly, how did he conceive of his own activity as a philosophical educator in the context of his professional and intellectual environment, especially in the later years of the movement that has been called the “Third Sophistic,”¹⁷ even as men of traditional *paideia* were losing exclusive control over the cities of the East? Did Olympiodorus regard his own time as a moment of profound change or as a theatre in a struggle of reli-

11 See for example Kaster 1988, 201–202.

12 His teacher Ammonius (c. 435/45–517/26), who was followed in the chair by a mathematician called Eutocius and then by the young Olympiodorus himself, had previously instituted an “agreement” of some kind with the Christian authorities in Alexandria (so Damascius *Fragments of the Biography of the Philosophers* 118b Athanassiadi) on account of which he was able to continue teaching at the public expense. Whatever Ammonius’ arrangement might have been, it seems reasonable to suppose that Olympiodorus followed in his footsteps, perhaps restricting the subjects or manner of his teaching or religious practice, and so was able to secure the professorship from Christian or governmental hostilities. It has been hotly debated whether the “agreement” attributed to Ammonius by Damascius came down to a particular doctrinal compromise, or a commitment not to teach theurgy, or even some nominal confession of Christian creed. Sorabji 2003 argues that the agreement stipulated against the advocacy of pagan ritual that caused problems in 486; this would imply only minor restrictions on subject matter. (See also Sorabji 1990, 12).

13 There is an epigram attributed to Olympiodorus in the *Greek Anthology*: “Had the writing of Plato not checked my impulse, / I would have loosened by now the grievous, baneful bond of life” (*Anth. Gr. Appendix* 177). But if genuine, this is likely to reflect Olympiodorus’ characteristic exegesis of the *Phaedo* (see discussion below) rather than an autobiographical remark.

14 See Tarrant 1997, 182–183.

15 δαίμονες; Olymp. *in Alc.* 3.15.3f. Eternity: *in Grg.* 11.2, 65.26, and *in Mete.* 118.10–119.8. Theurgy: *in Phd.* 8.2.1–20.

16 See Westerink 1976, 23; Wildberg 2008.

17 For recent discussion of the “Third Sophistic” as an intellectual and social movement, see for example Schamp and Amato 2006, and the introduction to the present volume; see also Van Hoof 2010, who argues for continuity between the Second and Third Sophistic.

gious world-views,¹⁸ or rather as one link in the long and generally contiguous chain of Hellenism and *paideia*? Did he locate his own identity primarily in the past or in the present?¹⁹

In this essay, I would like to offer some reflections focusing on Olympiodorus' own conception of his philosophy and pedagogy, which I hope may carry some wider interest in the context of his social and intellectual milieu. (I will treat Olympiodorus' lectures as my primary source, and assume that these can be read together as evidence for his own considered views.²⁰)

(I) I begin with several familiar examples of Olympiodorus' "pliable" treatment of pagan doctrines and philosophy for his Christian audience in the classroom, and then suggest that this specific case is symptomatic of Olympiodorus' more general method of self-portrayal for his students, as the master of the syncretic language of Hellenic philosophy which is uniquely able to "translate" between ordinary people, educated people, and different religious traditions.

(II) I will consider (a) Olympiodorus' construction of the "philosopher," his own identity, as a teacher of virtue distinguished both from the public at large and from other intellectuals. In particular, he distinguishes the philosopher from (b) οἱ πολλοί, (c) the γραμματικός and the rhetorician (whose subjects preceded philosophy in the traditional curriculum), and (d) poetic tradition and mythology; the philosopher is especially distinguished by (e) the fact that genuine philosophers agree where others disagree. It is clear, I think, that Olympiodorus strives to construct his own identity within an historically continuous framework of traditional *paideia*, and strives to attract students who are already committed to the goal of achieving traditional ἀρετή [smooth breathing], of becoming καλοὶ κάγαθοί—a goal that Olympiodorus sees as shared by past philosophers and rhetoricians back to Socrates and earlier; Olympiodorus aims to convince these students that the philosopher's classroom is indispensable to that goal.

(III) I suggest in concluding that the guiding principle in Olympiodorus' portrayal of his own identity as a "philosopher" is the distinction between a meaningful symbol²¹ and its meaning, its *referent* (πράγμα, ὄν). The majority of people, including οἱ πολλοί as well as the educated class or πεπαιδευμένοι (such as poets, grammarians,

18 Did he regard the conflict of Christianity and paganism as the decisive struggle of his time, or would that supposition be an overprojection of modern interests? See Van Hoof 2010, 224.

19 Watts 2010, ch. 3.

20 It is worth stressing at the outset that as a commentator in a highly traditional profession, Olympiodorus is indebted to Ammonius, Proclus, Damascius, and other Neoplatonic commentators for many of his ideas and methods; but as we shall see, he picks and chooses consciously from that tradition to construct his philosophical system and self-image.

21 I am using the term "symbol" quite loosely here to mean anything that refers: for example, a name [ὄνομα], an impression in imagination [φαντασία], a sense-impression [αἰσθητόν], a myth [μῦθος], even a piece of empirical evidence in physical research.

and rhetoricians, all of whom share Olympiodorus’ goal of inculcating ἀρετή in the young), manipulate symbols; and since there can be many symbols for one and the same thing, they are prone to disagree or be misunderstood, and their views change over time. Olympiodorus strives to convince his pupils that “philosophers” alone, including himself, do not operate at the level of symbols, but teach their real referents, the real things themselves or πράγματα, which do not change and facilitate “agreement” between differing symbol-systems (enabling Hellenism to serve as a common language of syncretism).²² Therefore “philosophers” rarely disagree. Moreover, since the πράγματα taught by the philosophers are the facts about developing the soul into a state of ἀρετή, philosophers are in a unique position to teach true virtue.

1. Olympiodorus and Christianity: Some Examples

Olympiodorus is careful to strike a conciliatory tone where the “popular doctrine” (συνήθεια) of Christianity is concerned. One often-cited example occurs in his lectures on the *Alcibiades*, which are largely indebted to the magisterial commentary of Proclus of Athens. When Proclus remarks (Proclus, *in Alc.* 264.5–6) that general agreement is not always a guide to truth, since people “in the present time” agree that the gods do not exist (an apparent reference to the prevalence of Christianity), Olympiodorus adopts the remark, but substitutes “Democriteans” for the offending party (Olymp. *in Alc.* 92.4–9). But it was especially Olympiodorus’ *manner* of accommodating Christianity that led Westerink to attribute to him “a pliability so extreme indeed that it might be more correct to speak of a teaching routine than a philosophy.”²³ It looks as if his willingness to accommodate other viewpoints might lead to an impossibly pliant and so incoherent philosophy, a “toothless Platonism.”²⁴

Some passages from the lectures on Plato’s *Gorgias* and *Alcibiades* are often discussed in connection to Olympiodorus’ “pliable” approach to Christianity:

- When Olympiodorus comments on Socrates’ oath “by Hera” at *Gorgias* 449d, he excuses Plato’s reference to the pagan god with the remark that “we should not understand things spoken in mythical mode (τὰ ἐν μύθων σχήματι λεγόμενα) in their surface meaning,” stressing that the name “Hera” really signifies the rational soul (*in Grg.* 4.3). “We too know,” Olympiodorus continues (καὶ γὰρ ἴσμεν καὶ

²² On Hellenism as a common language and framework for “syncretism,” see for example Bowersock 1990, 5; Assmann 2008, 149; and Frankfurter 2000 and 2003.

²³ Westerink 1976, 23. Harold Tarrant has also stressed Olympiodorus’ primary commitment as a teacher of Hellenism, a “classicist” or “champion of some ancient heritage that needed to be kept alive,” while drawing out his views on the common ground of Platonism and Christianity. Indeed, Olympiodorus regarded himself as a teacher first and foremost, an expounder of Hellenic *paideia* (Tarrant 1997, 188–192): the “token of shared assumptions” that made a Mediterranean gentleman (Kaster 1988, 15) and had drawn students to pursue a higher education in Alexandria for centuries.

²⁴ Wildberg 2005, 321.

ἡμεῖς), “that there is the one first cause, namely God, and not many...” Thus the group with which Olympiodorus identifies himself in the first person plural are monotheists.

- The thought is teased out in a later lecture, as Olympiodorus begins to comment on the *Gorgias* myth (in *Grg.* 47.523a1-b4). The poets speak of many gods in a “mythical mode,” concealing the consensus of “the philosophers” that there is a “single starting-point of all things and a single transcendent cause that is first of all” (in *Grg.* 47.1). Thus the subject of the first person plural in 4.3 was presumably also “the philosophers” cited here. Further, Olympiodorus enjoins his students not to be “disturbed by names,” hearing talk of a Power of Cronus or a Power of Zeus (47.2): the mythical use of names for many gods can be said to answer in reality to the powers or capacities of one God. For example, Kronos is really νοῦς-κόπος, the power of pure intellect (47.3; cf. *Cratylus* 395e), and Zen and Zeus can refer to the power of life (47.5).
- Continuing with this general theme, Olympiodorus asks his students not to believe that “philosophers honour representations in stone as divine” (47.5). Much as mythical and poetic names for gods (which may appear to be at odds with Christian doctrine) represent deeper philosophical truths (which turn out to be in keeping with Christian doctrine), representations of gods in stone serve “as a reminder” of bodiless and immaterial “powers,” reflecting Olympiodorus’ earlier comment that different gods could be viewed as “powers” of the one God.
- In commenting on Socrates’ remark on his “daemonic opposition” in *Alcibiades* 1 103a5, Olympiodorus embarks on a detailed excursus into the theory of δαίμονες and their ranks and functions. This may look like thin ice, given the contemporary pejorative view of δαίμονες in Christianity, but he handles it deftly, announcing that the individual’s allotted δαίμων really means an individual’s conscience or συνειδός (23),²⁵ and then explicitly tackling the challenge by stressing that in “the common custom” (συνήθεια)—a familiar way of talking about the prevailing Christian usage²⁶—δαίμονες are spoken of as “angels” and experienced by priests (21): in fact, *Plato* would have called them “angels” if he had adopted the Chaldaean division of the realm in between gods and the sublunar realm, such that once again we are dealing here simply with a superficial difference of names, with agreement on the level of substance.

As Harold Tarrant has pointed out,²⁷ the “pliability” that has been attributed to Olympiodorus in his relationship to Christianity should be viewed in the wider light of his philosophy as a whole. In all these cases, Olympiodorus’ treatment of

²⁵ On this treatment of δαίμονες, see also Renaud 2011.

²⁶ Cf. *Olymp.* in *Cat.* 117.30 and in *Met.* 264.3.

²⁷ Tarrant 1997.

names and myths is not confined to a response to Christianity. In Olympiodorus’ view all myths are falsehoods imaging the truth, as we will see below,²⁸ but his contemporary society “respects only what is apparent, and does not search at all for what is concealed in the depths of the myth” (*in Grg.* 46.4). In general, his entire treatment of the dialogue form is indebted to the exegetical principle that the characters are symbolic (*in Grg.* Proem; *in Alc.*); as he puts it elsewhere (34.4) the “actual truth” which the philosophers pursue in a myth is the ἐπιμύθιον, the moral of the story. It is highly characteristic of Olympiodorus to suggest that superficial disagreement on the level of “names” overlies deeper and genuine agreement on the level of reality.

I argue below that Olympiodorus strives to construct a distinctive identity for himself as a “philosopher” distinguished from the uneducated majority (οἱ πολλοί) and from different craft experts who share his pedagogical and moral goals to improve the young (especially poets, grammarians, and rhetoricians): in particular, he frames all non-philosophers as engaged in the study of “appearances” (φαινόμενα) or myths, and thereby liable to doctrinal disagreement and dispute, while genuine philosophers drill down to the real, psychological meaning of myth and doctrine, and therefore rarely disagree. The opinions of οἱ πολλοί and other craft experts can be reconciled with each other by philosophers, who are mediators *par excellence*. Within this framework, Christian doctrine is generally synonymous with the view of the majority (οἱ πολλοί), and is treated by Olympiodorus as a myth that will agree with Homeric or Platonic myths *as long as it is not taken literally*. It is not because it is Christian doctrine that Olympiodorus “accommodates” Christian language, but because it is the view of οἱ πολλοί; in this sense there is nothing fundamentally *new* in Olympiodorus’ approach to Christianity, in that (on his view) philosophers have *always* needed to adopt this approach to οἱ πολλοί.²⁹ This jibes, I think, with the judgement that Olympiodorus regards himself as operating in a largely timeless tradition of Hellenism.

2. The Olympiodorean Philosopher: A Case Study

Olympiodorus refers to himself as a philosopher (φιλόσοφος) and occasionally as an interpreter or commentator (ἐξηγητής). He begins his lectures by praising the power of philosophy to improve the life of his students:

Since we wish to enjoy the fountain of goods, we hurry to lay hold of Aristotle’s philosophy, which provides the source of goods to life ...

Proll. in Cat. 1.3–4

²⁸ On this point, see also *Rep.* 2.377a; and Jackson et al. 1998, 290 n.876.

²⁹ See below, section 2(b), for further discussion of this point.

... all people desire Plato's philosophy: for everyone wishes to draw upon its benefit, and are eager to come under the influence of its streams ...

in Alc. 1.1.6–7

The philosopher's profession is "to make good people": indeed, the philosopher is the *only* expert who makes this claim, and in this way is set apart from rhetoric, medicine, and other crafts that merely reproduce themselves (*in Alc.* 140.18–22). Philosophy targets the young, who may be "turned" to a happier way of life (*in Grg.* 1.6), as Olympiodorus hopes for his own students to become καλοὶ κάγαθοὶ (*in Grg.* 45.2). To live well, to be σπουδαῖος (*in Alc.* 229.5–6) or χρηστός, just is to live the "philosophic life" (ἐμφιλοσόφως ζώντας, *in Grg.* pr. 1). In general, like ancient rhetoricians and purveyors of *paideia* in general, Olympiodorus promises that individual ἀρετή or excellence will arise from the study of his subject.³⁰

As a philosopher, Olympiodorus envisages himself operating in an environment comprised of two broad groups: ordinary people (οἱ πολλοί) and an educated class of πεπαιδευμένοι including teachers and practitioners of grammar, rhetoric, medicine, and poetry (cf. *in Alc.* 95.17). Following traditional definitions, Olympiodorus envisages philosophy as the master craft (τέχνη τεχνῶν) among these areas of expertise (*in Alc.* 87.10 and 65.8). Here, I will begin by exploring Olympiodorus' construction of "philosophy" as a category, and then look into his methods of differentiating himself, and his discipline, both from οἱ πολλοί and from other arenas of intellectual activity and *paideia*.

(a) The Philosopher

Olympiodorus builds on definitions of philosophy that had become standard by Ammonius' time. Philosophy, like any craft, might be defined by its *subject* and its *goal* (Ammonius, *in Isag.* 2.22–9.7). The subject of philosophy is the soul or ψύχη alone; its goal is the Good (Olympiodorus *Proll.* 1.4–20; *in Alc.* 1.6–7; 2.13), which is "likeness to God" (*Proll.* 16.26, echoing the famous phrase of Plato's *Theaetetus* 176b).

Beginning with the *goal* claimed for philosophy, how does Olympiodorus' craft strive for "likeness to god"? Olympiodorus suggests that the philosopher is an imitator of God (*in Phd.* 1.2.6). First, he is like God as a pure contemplator of the truth (cf. *in Grg.* 25.1), one who knows beings themselves (the Aristotelian ὄντα ἢ ὄντα: *in Alc.* 25.2; 175.17–178.6) or of all nature (φύσις, *in Cat.* 138.15, *in Alc.* 2.94); this knowledge is a godlike form of pleasure (*in Grg.* 26.15). Second, as a πολιτικός or statesman, he acts providentially for the best organization of his inner psychological city (reason, spirit, and appetite, on the model of Plato's *Republic*), and strives for the analogous improvement of his fellow citizens where he can (*in Grg.* 8.1, etc), healing souls or preventing their injury (*in Grg.* 49.6, *in Alc.* 6.5–7). Thus there are two

³⁰ See Watts 2008, 6.

indispensable modes or phases of philosophy, one (in terms shared by Olympiodorus and Damascius) inward-looking or upward-looking, and the other outward-looking or downward-looking:

The contemplative [philosopher’s] gaze always flies toward the divine, whereas the [philosopher-]statesman’s, if he has worthy citizens, remains and shapes them. If they are not worthy, then in truth he retreats and makes a fortress (τείχον) for himself... This is what Plato and Socrates did.³¹

During a lifetime, we might develop from the latter, statesmanly kind of philosopher into the former, contemplative kind:

Understand that we should always pursue philosophy, when we are young for the sake of soothing the passions, and especially when we are old, for then the passions begin to subside, and reason flourishes. We should always have philosophy as our patron, since it is she who performs the task of Homer’s Athena, scattering mist.³²

In fact, Olympiodorus, following a Neoplatonic tradition rooted in Plotinus (Plot. *Enn.* 1.2) and Porphyry, develops a ladder of philosophical virtues that we might climb, coinciding with the reading curriculum. He envisages “pre-philosophical” virtues that belong to us either (1) by our natural constitution (φυσική ἀρετή, over which we have little control, as a lion is bound to be courageous and an ox temperate) and (2) habituation (ῥηθικὴ ἀρετή), which might be fostered by myths and stories and rhetoric (such as the Pythagorean *Golden Verses* or the *Handbook* of Epictetus, although we might also envisage the use of moral myths in rhetorical schools as serving this function). When we embark on philosophy, or become a “philosopher” in training in the Alexandrian school, we come to develop (3) constitutional virtue (πολιτικὴ ἀρετή), which works on the right organization of our own soul and the souls of our fellow citizens, placing reason in charge over spirited emotion and appetite, but still looking primarily to the outer world and our actions in it (cf. *in Phd.* 20.4; here we read works such as Plato’s *Alcibiades* and *Gorgias*), and then (4) get to work on “purifying” or separating the soul from the body so far as possible (reading works such as Plato’s *Phaedo*), culminating in (5) the contemplative philosopher who surveys the intelligible realm (with works such as the *Philebus* or *Parmenides*), and (6) the “theurgist” who is identified with the divine (*in Phd.* 8.2.1–20). Westerink’s helpful diagram sketches this relationship (*Anon. Proll.* 10, cf. Westerink 1976, xxxix):

³¹ *in Grg.* 26.18.

³² *in Grg.* 26.13.

	Natural virtues (innate)	
	Ethical virtues (trained)	'Beneath' philosophy (innate or trained)
	Political virtues	
Aretai	Cathartic virtues	Philosophical
	Theoretic virtues	
	Paradeigmatic	
	Hieratic	'Beyond' philosophy (divine, inspired)

Olympiodorus taught these “philosophical” virtues, in the middle of this hierarchy, advanced according to the dialogues in the Platonic curriculum. Westerink, in his edition of the *Anonymous Prolegomena* (p. xl) tabulates these as follows:

		Introduction:	1. Alcibiades (introd.)
	political		2. Gorgias (political)
Aretai	cathartic		3. Phaedo (purifying)
	on names		4. Cratylus (names)
	theoretic on νοήματα		5. Theaetetus (knowl.)
	on πράγματα	'physical'	6. Sophist (physic.)
		theological	7. Statesman (physic.)
			8. Phaedrus (theol.)
			9. Symposium (theol.)
Culmination:			10. Philebus (Good)
	Two 'complete' dialogues		11. Timaeus (Physics)
			12. Parmenides (Theology)

Thus far the “goal” of philosophy and the means of achieving it. As for its *subject*, philosophy is distinguished by its exclusive focus on the soul (ψυχή), where our true being resides (*in Grg.* 1.1–2, 38.1). Poets and rhetoricians, by contrast, discuss the combination of body and soul, which suffers affections or πάθη: to the philosopher, these are not really “us,” but merely “ours” (*in Alc.* 200.8–9). To improve the psyche involves prevailing over irrational and unpredictable passions, or the “many-headed” part of us (*in Grg.* 34.3, referencing *Republic*), which will facilitate a philosophical life of tranquility and self-sufficiency (*in Grg.* 36.3–5) and benefit to others.

This refers to statesmanly philosophy, which in traditional terms is “practical.” But how does contemplative philosophy and the knowledge of all beings help to create “good people”? At the loftiest level, we might say that philosophy of this kind lifts us above the ocean of uncertainty and becoming. Thus,

The philosophers liken human life to the sea, because it is disturbed and concerned with begetting and salty and full of toil. Note that islands rise above the sea, being higher. So that constitution which rises above life and over becoming is what they call the Isles of the Blessed. The same thing applies to the Elysian plain. And this is also why Heracles performed his final labour in the western regions—he laboured against the dark and earthly life, and finally he lived in the daytime, i.e. in truth and in light.³³

33 *in Grg.* 47.6.

Olympiodorus develops the following argument for the value of theoretical knowledge in life. Anyone who knows ψυχή also knows the λόγοι or principles in it (because knowledge requires such understanding); but psyche contains the reason-principles or λόγοι of all things (a point familiar from Plotinus [4.3.10, 5.7.1, 6.2.5] and Proclus [*Elements* 195], developing earlier ideas from Aristotelian and Stoic psychology); thus the one who knows the λόγοι in the soul also knows all beings and thereby knows justice; and by the principles of Socratic and Platonic rationalism, anyone who *knows* justice is just (*in Alc.* 198.20–199.6).

In general, insight (φρόνησις) is not just a matter of detached investigation, but leads to choice and avoidance in practical spheres of life (*in Phd.* 4.1). Thus too Olympiodorus remarks, following Proclus, that it is the particular individual human being “for whom we care” (*in Alc.* 210.13–16) in our quest for likeness to god. It is this care for our individual self, as well as our community, that drives us to philosophy. It is not sufficient to “know ourselves” in general or abstract terms, for we must really know *us*, the unique person who acts in every particular instance:

... the text says that if we are to ascertain what ‘self itself’ is, we must also learn what ‘each self itself’ is, since it is not enough simply to ascertain the human being, but we must know also what the individual (ἄτομον) is, because the task in hand is to help Alcibiades find out who *he* is—namely, his soul: and actions are concerned with particular circumstances (αἰ...πράξεις περὶ τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστα καταγίνονται).³⁴

The philosopher, then, is a person who achieves the godlike good for himself (by making his inner constitution just and whole, and becoming an accomplished surveyor of the realm of being), while striving to achieve the same good for his community, especially for the young (if the outer constitution permits: *in Grg.* 45.2). His subject is the soul. He works on the soul using the tools of “demonstration,” ἀπόδειξις (*Proll.* 16.9; *in Grg.* 10.7), not persuasiveness or myth or authority (even Plato’s own authority: *in Grg.* 41.9). He is fair-minded (*in Grg.* 11.9), mild in temper (*in Grg.* 18.6), unboastful (*in Phd.* 8.17), adaptable to different situations and modes of argument (*in Grg.* 14.4), and a swift learner, prone to offer a “larger perspective” or more general vantage point on each challenge (*in Grg.* 13.10). Because he has rightly identified his soul alone as the seat of his identity, and has no attachment to wealth or power or comfort (*in Grg.* 36.3–5), his life and his achievements are “unmanifest” and “invisible” (*in Phd.* 8.1), but he is truly happy.

(b) The Philosopher and the Many (οἱ πολλοί)

How is the philosopher set apart from οἱ πολλοί? Olympiodorus treats this distinction as fundamental to our development as human beings; when we ascend the ladder of

³⁴ *in Alc.* 204.3–11.

philosophic virtue and “follow the trail” (ἀτραπὸν, cf. *Phaedo* 66b) to the good, this means that

We should live the life of purification, for the “trail” is the road of purification, which leads to contemplation. The highway that we must avoid is the way of οἱ πολλοί, for there was also a Pythagorean precept to shun the highways, as in the lines [Callim. fr. 1.25–26] “The paths where no wagons pass, / tread those, and do not follow in the tracks of others.”³⁵

What is different about οἱ πολλοί? Olympiodorus does not specifically attempt to frame “the many” by contrast with the *Kulturwelt* of the educated class of the Roman world, but he tries to describe them by situating them on the ladder of virtue outlined above. His comments on the moral benefits of the philosophic life and the “ladder of virtue” suggest that non-philosophers are those who have not surpassed the first two degrees of virtue, (1) natural (φυσικὴ ἀρετὴ) and (2) habituated (ἠθικὴ ἀρετὴ), and begun to climb the ladder of philosophy. Uneducated human beings may have natural (φυσικός) talents, but these have not been realized; and perhaps those who have studied with grammarians or even rhetoricians have developed good “ethical” habits, but they have not learned to actually work on their souls or being the process of “transformation” into a philosopher.

One way of expressing this, in Olympiodorus’ view, is to state that the interests and desires of the many are enmeshed in the “surface” world of sensible things or αἰσθητά, whereas the philosopher’s works, wrought in the soul, are mostly unmanifest or ἀφανές; accordingly, most people can barely even apprehend the philosopher or grasp what he is up to (*in Phd.* 3.8). Another way of expressing the distinction focuses on the “ways of knowing” accessible to the many. While the many are entirely capable of appreciating and grasping rhetorical and persuasive speech—indeed, “all people participate in rhetoric” (*in Alc.* 131.15)—they cannot understand demonstrations or ἀποδείξεις, the tools of philosophy (*in Grg.* 20.2.22); they lack the specific knowledge available to the philosopher (for instance, in matters scientific: *in Grg.* 19.2), but perhaps more importantly, although they “speak Greek” (ἐλληνίζειν), the language of demonstration is not yet available to them. Thus a philosopher writing for the many must teach either through myths or through “exoteric” philosophy (ἐξωτερικά... ἐπιπολαίως, *Proll. in Cat.* 7.16) which uses persuasive accounts but not strict demonstration.

The “language” available to the many is a central point of discussion for Olympiodorus. οἱ πολλοί use and teach ordinary language and names for things (*in Alc.* 91.9–10), but these names belong only to the “surface” of language, imprecise, equivocal and impressionistic, and not “hardened” and deepened by philosophical study and definition. “Ordinary” language, for which Olympiodorus adopts the traditional moniker συνήθεια (*Olymp. in Grg.* 50.10, *in Cat.* 117.30, 264.3; cf. Porphyry, *in Cat.* 1.3), slips and slides with respect to its target of reference: thus the many dis-

³⁵ *in Phd.* 5.4.

gree about the actual *things* or referents of their words. True philosophers (usually) do not disagree (*in Grg.* 44.6–7): for the philosopher grasps the real things themselves, beings as beings, the πράγματα (*in Alc.* 92.1; *in Phd.* 8.8.2) which are internal to the soul. Συνήθεια deals in myth and imagination (φαντασία), in the “pictures” that are drawn in the primary colours of the sensible world, but it fails to “drill down” into the real, psychological meaning of those pictures (*in Grg.* 46.6).

Thus οἱ πολλοί grasp the events portrayed in myths literally, and fail to grasp their intended symbolic meaning (*in Grg.* 44.7; 49.3) or moral (ἐπιμύθιον, 34.4), which belongs to the class of “generally applicable” (καθόλου) principles or intelligible λόγοι studied by the philosopher (e. g. *in Grg.* 13.10; *in Mete.* 2.12–14, 52.18). For instance, οἱ πολλοί might understand the myth of afterlife judgement that wraps up Plato’s *Gorgias* as a literal tale, which describes the descent of souls to the underworld and their return; but the philosophy student will “conceive of these symbolically, for ψυχαί do not get taken up and down in a physical sense” (*in Grg.* 49.3); we should “turn our attention to the best constitution” of the tripartite soul (44.7), which is the real target of the myth. As philosophy students, we will also be able to appreciate the demonstrative content in Plato (*in Grg.* 49.3), which may elude οἱ πολλοί.

When Olympiodorus refers to the customs of the many and συνήθεια, it often appears as if he is speaking specifically of Christian views. Proclus had already used the term οἱ πολλοί to refer to “those of the present time” who “do not believe that gods exist” (Procl. *in Alc.* 263.20–21). Similarly, when Olympiodorus introduces the view of the “philosophers” and the “exegetes” about δαίμονες, he contrasts the philosophers’ position with that adopted in “the common custom” (συνήθεια), where δαίμονες are spoken of as “angels” and experienced by priests (21). There may be two uses of συνήθεια at work here, one the traditional philosophical usage describing “ordinary language” and custom, the other what has been called the Neoplatonists’ “code” for referring to Christianity. But it seems just as plausible that, by the sixth century CE, it came to the same thing to refer to the customary view of the “many” and Christian doctrine. And again, just as in the case of every myth and name employed by οἱ πολλοί, Christian doctrines and ways of speaking (such as speaking of “angels” and even of a single “god”: cf. *in Grg.* 47.2) merely represent a difference at the superficial level of names, not at the underlying level of real beings.

Thus Olympiodorus enjoins his Christian students not to be “disturbed by names,” hearing talk of a Power of Cronus or a Power of Zeus (47.2): the mythical use of names for many gods can be said to answer in reality to the powers or capacities of one God. And granted what we have seen so far about his posture toward οἱ πολλοί, there is no reason to think that Olympiodorus is simply offering this interpretation as a “concession” to political interests; rather, he envisages both pagan and Christian names as belonging to the superficial level of “myth” (see below), representing the same basic philosophical truths. Christianity, as a mythical system, has a place in his philosophical worldview.

(c) The Philosopher, the Grammarian, and the Rhetorician

Before reaching his lecture hall, Olympiodorus' students would have studied poetry as children, grammar as teenagers, and rhetoric as young men. Why should they go on to study philosophy? What distinguishes philosophy from these other traditional spheres of Hellenic *paideia*, which also offer excellence or ἀρετή [smooth breathing]?

In his commentary on Aristotle's *Categories* (*in Cat.* 42.8f.), Olympiodorus develops a contrast with the γραμματικός along the following lines. The γραμματικός deals with words (λέξεις) on the surface level: words as subjects or predicates or verbs, words-as-such. For example, Olympiodorus suggests, if you were to ask a γραμματικός whether Ἄρειος Πᾶγος (Areopagus) is a compound phrase (μετὰ συμπλοκῆς) or a simple term (ἄνευ συμπλοκῆς), the grammarian would say it is a compound phrase, because two nouns are present. But the philosopher deals with words on the deeper level, concerning their real referents or πράγματα, what they *mean*. On this level, Ἄρειος Πᾶγος signifies just one thing, one πράγμα: the Areopagus. Conversely, a γραμματικός would say that the verb τρέχω ("I run") is simple, but a philosopher would say it is complex, because the notion of first-personality (ἐγώ) is suppressed in the verb together with the notion of running (τρέχειν). In brief, philosophy is differentiated from grammar in much the same way as it is differentiated from the ordinary person's use of language: philosophy drills deeper into the nature of things, being not about words alone, but about what they signify (cf. *Proll. in Cat.* 16.23).

A similar line of argument differentiates the rhetorician. Demosthenes, as a paradigmatic orator, is subjected to criticism (silently endorsed by Olympiodorus) for attending only to the surface style or φράσις of what Plato says, not the content or θεωρήματα (*in Grg.* 41.10; compare the criticism of Longinus attributed to Plotinus by Porphyry in *Vita Plotini* 14). But Olympiodorus offers a much more nuanced subdivision of rhetoric. True rhetoric, *philosophical* rhetoric, serves statesmanship, that is, serves the first phase of philosophical virtue or πολιτικὴ ἀρετή [smooth breathing] (*in Grg.* 1.13). True rhetoric achieves this end by persuading spirited emotion (θυμός) and appetite (ἐπιθυμία) in the individual or the state to obey reason (λόγος); thus the genuine rhetorician serves the statesman (πολιτικός), whose business it is to achieve such a just organization. Aside from such true rhetoricians, Olympiodorus discusses the lowest kind, who serve the simply pleasure-loving or appetitive state (where ἐπιθυμία rules), and the much better, intermediate kinds of honour-loving states (where θυμός rules: Olympiodorus speaks in this light of Demosthenes, Pericles and Themistocles).

(d) The Philosopher and the Poet

Perhaps the most space is accorded to the contrast of the philosopher with the poet, drawing inspiration from Plato's *Republic*. First, the similarities: both the poet and the philosopher compose myths (μῦθοι) that educate the young. In both cases the myths have two layers, one mythical and corresponding to imagination; the other

real and corresponding to a deeper layer of moral or allegorical content (the ἐπιμύθιον, in *Grg.* 34.4, or ἡ τοῦ μύθου ἀλληγορία, in *Phd.* 1.4). Thus,

Regarding our soul it was as follows: When children, we live in accordance with imagination, and our imaginative faculty is concerned with shapes and forms and suchlike. So that we may heed the faculty of imagination (φαντασία), we employ myths, since the imagination enjoys myths. After all, a myth is nothing other than a false statement imaging the truth. If, then, myth is an image of truth, and if the soul is also an image of what is before it, it is reasonable that the soul enjoys myths as image to image. Since we grew up with myths from the tender conditions of childhood, we cannot help taking them over.³⁶

Both poets and philosophers also target two audiences, the many (οἱ πολλοί) or the young, on the one hand, and the educated few who access a deeper layer. Homer is a paradigmatic example of a poetic mythologist; Plato is the corresponding exemplar of a philosophical myth-teller.

But several factors differentiate philosophical myths from their poetic counterparts. First, the “surface” layer of a *poetic* myth is sufficiently incredible (or socially inappropriate) that it becomes impossible to take it literally. Olympiodorus, for instance, questions (in *Grg.* 46.4) whether anyone could really believe that Zeus “wanted to lie with Hera on the very ground, without going into the chamber” (as Homer tells the story at *Iliad* 14.331–50). Thus

Poetic myth has the advantage that its content is such that even one who happens not to believe it nevertheless proceeds to a concealed truth... of saying the sort of things that does not allow us to stay with the surface meaning (εἰς τὸ φαινόμενον) but makes us seek a concealed truth... They did not know that there would arise a degenerate human society that respects only what is apparent, and does not search at all for what is concealed in the depths of the myth.³⁷

Here Olympiodorus echoes the view taken by Proclus and other Neoplatonists that Homeric poetry contains a secret and hidden layer for the initiated (Proclus in *R.* 1.81.14), those who had proceeded through the entire course of *paideia* with an instructor and were prepared to use “the intellect (νοῦς) of their ψυχή as a kind of mystic organ” for the study of sacred myths.³⁸ Proclus treats these poetic myths as requiring cautious treatment and protection in secret, especially where the young are concerned (here following Plato in *Republic* 2, e.g. 378a). But Olympiodorus seems to take a different tack. In a different society, poetic myths might have been just fine; the trouble is with our degenerate tendency to “respect only what is apparent” or visible, and disregard the non-literal, deeper layers of myth.

³⁶ in *Grg.* 46.4.

³⁷ in *Grg.* 46.4.

³⁸ Procl. in *R.* 1.79.15–18, cf. 79.18–81.27, with discussion in Chlup 2012, 195–196 and Sheppard 1980, 138–139.

By contrast:

Philosophical myths have the opposite feature, that even if one stays with the surface meaning (ἐπὶ τῶν φαινομένων), one is not harmed. They postulate punishments and rivers under the earth: even if we stay just with these, we will not be harmed. But [philosophical myths] have the disadvantage that since their surface meaning is not harmful, we often stay right there and do not seek the truth... These are also constructed so as not to transmit doctrines indiscriminately... myths are screens for doctrines (δόγματα).³⁹

Philosophical myths also have the advantage, Olympiodorus suggests, that they offer demonstrations or reasoning (ἀποδείξεις) in the midst of their storytelling (*in Grg.* 49.3), a feature that he also finds in the myths of Aesop. The presence of demonstration is an important fact, because on the later Neoplatonist view, the ability to grapple with ἀποδείξεις is indispensable to the good life. Neoplatonists like Simplicius, for example, believe that we should begin our development with simple stories that help us to habituate our characters well, then master logic and demonstration, and using demonstration tackle serious philosophical ethics (such as the *Nicomachean Ethics* of Aristotle); only then will we be able to really understand our character and contemplate beings.

If Aristotle's *Ethics* were only hortatory catechisms (κατηχήσεις) not based on demonstrations, such as the many which were recited among the Pythagoreans [sc. The Golden Verses], it would be right thereby to train our characters, starting from these. But if Aristotle handed down the *Ethics* too with divisions and demonstrations of the most epistemic sort, how shall we be able to accomplish anything more, after coming to them without the demonstrative methods? Perhaps, then, there is every need of an ethical pre-catechism (προκατήχησις), but not supplied through Aristotle's *Ethics*, but through habituation without texts, and through non-technical exhortations, both written and unwritten, to straighten our character and after that the logical and demonstrative method. After those, we shall be able to take in epistemically the epistemic discussions of character and research into reality.⁴⁰

Regardless of whether a myth is poetic or philosophical, it is the philosopher's function to interpret and explain its real meaning, rather than the inspired poet's. Olympiodorus provides many examples of this kind of allegorical interpretation.⁴¹ A mythological reference to Hera really signifies the rational soul (*in Grg.* 4.3) or motion (*in Phd.* 4.2); the myth of Dionysus and the Titans is really about the life of the psyche and her choice of virtues (*in Phd.* 4.2); the moly of Hermes in the *Odyssey* signifies "right opinion," as Calypso signifies imagination (*in Phd.* 6.2); when poets mention lions they mean to indicate the θυμός or spirited emotion in our soul, while snakes or dragons signify our appetitive part (*in Grg.* 44.4); the Minotaur in the Theseus legend signifies our animal affections, the labyrinth the complicated, diverse nature of life, and Ariadne's thread the power that leads us onward and upward (*in Grg.* 44.5),

³⁹ *in Grg.* 46.6.

⁴⁰ Simplicius, *in Cat.* 5.23–6.5, tr. Sorabji.

⁴¹ for which, see also Lamberton 1989.

and so on. Again, the “real” referent of these symbols has to do with the transformation and purification of the individual soul.

Thus at root the philosopher, on Olympiodorus’ view, is differentiated from the poet in much the same way as he is differentiated from the rhetorician or the grammarian or οἱ πολλοί *in general*: whereas they deal on the surface level of imagination and particular, visible things (albeit at different levels of sophistication), the philosopher works deeper down, at the level of the real psychological truths to which myths refer. In fact, Olympiodorus applies the same differentiation from other crafts almost across the board: doctors (ἰατροί), for instance, look to perception (αἴσθησις), while philosophers look to the deeper nature (φύσις) of things (*in Cat.* 138.15). In physics, too, there is an element of myth (ἐν τοῖς φυσικοῖς ἐστὶ τι μυθῶδες), of imagination (φαντασία) (*in Mete.* 164.2). Unlike other experts, the philosopher has just one real story to tell, the story of how the soul can get its internal constitution in order—λόγος, θυμός, and ἐπιθυμία—and develop into a more godlike being (*in Phd.* 1.2); but it turns out that all other areas of expertise reduce to this one. In this sense, philosophy is the craft of crafts and the science of sciences (*in Alc.* 87.10, 65.8), which alone deals with the intelligible realities and not with the objects of imagination; it is uniquely the route to the good life, because only philosophy can truly claim to map out the educational trajectory to the Good, the full ladder of virtues, reaching beyond the outer world into the inner world (*in Phd.* 8.2.1–20).

(f) The Agreement of Philosophers

One outcome of Olympiodorus’ view of philosophy is that genuine philosophers rarely disagree. Disagreements may occur on the “surface,” or at the level of appearances (φαινόμενα). This fact is diagnostic of philosophers and may be used as a heuristic to recognize who is a philosopher rather than a poet or someone who does not really understand what they are saying—those who dispute over words, at the level of imagination (as is the case with myths: *in Grg.* 44.6). For those who share a direct grasp of reality, what is there to disagree about? More specifically, the philosophers agree because “the philosopher... comes as close as possible to the common notions (κοινὰ ἔννοιαι)” (*in Grg.* 27.2), that is, to the shared conceptual framework that is the innate birthright of all human beings,⁴² and is slowly revealed and tested in the course of a philosophical education. The fact of philosopher’s access to the “common notions” follows naturally from Olympiodorus’ view that the human psyche contains the principles of all reality, and philosophical education brings us to an inward-looking grasp of these principles.

⁴² Tarrant 1997, 188–192. The language of “common notions,” while deeply rooted in Stoicism (see for example Todd 1973), is widely used by Aristotelian and Neoplatonic commentators, and for the Neoplatonists coincide with Platonic forms-in-the-soul, the *logoi* innate in the soul that explain our ability to know all beings (see Olympiodorus *in Alc.* 198.20–199.6, discussed above).

Of course, someone might reasonably object that many of the people whom Olympiodorus explicitly calls φιλόσοφοι (a list which includes, in roughly chronological order, Heraclitus, Anaxagoras, Zeno of Elea, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Iamblichus, Proclus, Ammonius, and Damascius),⁴³ appear to take different views on matters of importance. This appears to be the case, for example, with “the leaders of the philosophers,” Plato and Aristotle, with regard to their respective views on the primacy of individual or universal being or οὐσία (*in Cat.* 68.34–69.11). What are we to say about this? The apparent difference is an artifact of viewpoint, language, or choice of words, not a matter of substance or “truth” (ἀλήθεια), where they are naturally in harmony (see also *in Grg.* 41.9; *in Mete.* 266.18–19).⁴⁴ Indeed, following the long tradition of “harmonization” of Plato and Aristotle, Olympiodorus goes on to explain how they are simply coming at the matter from a different perspective.

Indeed, Olympiodorus’ “harmonizing” exegetical approach falls in line with the ideal of a competent commentator or interpreter (ἐξηγητής) maintained by his contemporary Neoplatonists: the ἐξηγητής, while remaining impartial (ἀδέκαστος) and not considering himself “enrolled” in a particular school, should “not convict the philosophers [Plato and Aristotle] of discordance by looking only at the letter (λέξις)...but he must look toward the spirit (νοῦς), and track down (ἀνιχνεύειν) the harmony which reigns between them on the majority of points” (Simplicius, *in Cat.* 7.23–32). Olympiodorus’ treatment of apparent disagreement between Plato and Aristotle (Olymp. *in Cat.* 68.34–40; *in Mete.* 266.19) is an ideal exemplar of the pattern. More broadly, the commentator aims to solve ἀπορία or puzzles arising about the text, and the disagreements of prominent authorities qualify as puzzles to be solved. This project of harmonization is writ large in Olympiodorus; moreover, as Tarrant points out, it is grounded conceptually in Olympiodorus’ position that widespread agreement among differing parties is a good (if not infallible) heuristic marker of the truth, by way of the “common notions” (κοινὰ ἔννοια).

What about more (apparently) substantive disagreements? Olympiodorus puts a rhetorical question after commenting on the disputes of poets, namely, what if someone were to say that “neither ought we to put our trust in the philosophers, since they dispute, some saying the soul is water, others that it is air, some that it is mortal, others that it is immortal...” (*in Grg.* 44.7).

Olympiodorus replies that “in this case we put our trust in those who stay closer to the common notions.” This, then, would appear to require a certain degree of careful case-by-case judgement. Much of the time, as a matter of fact, the resolution of the differences of “the philosophers” is not too difficult; the common notions turn out to coincide with Platonism, and it is quite clear that Olympiodorus’ use of “philosophy” roughly corresponds to “Platonic philosophy.” Those who believe that the

⁴³ The list includes Heraclitus [*in Mete.* 151.30], Anaxagoras [*in Alc.* 135.21], Zeno of Elea [*in Grg.* 7.5], Socrates, Plato, Aristotle [*passim*], Plotinus [*in Grg.* 18.7], Iamblichus [*in Alc.* 59.22], Proclus [*in Alc.* 75.15], Ammonius [*passim*; often “great philosopher”], and Damascius [*in Alc.* 135.10–11].

⁴⁴ On the project of “harmonization” in general, see Karamanolis 2006.

soul is mortal, for example, are not noted as “philosophers” by Olympiodorus, and when they are mentioned (as are the Democriteans at *in Alc.* 92.4–9) they are simply wrong. When Olympiodorus states doctrines of “the philosophers” as matters of fact, they look clearly Platonic: “the philosophers think there is... a single transcendent cause that is first of all... to which they attach no name” (*in Grg.* 47.2); they believe that the source and origin of things is the Good (not only mind) (*in Alc.* 145.6–11); they believe in a “bodiless and immaterial power” that is merely represented by sensible being (*in Grg.* 47.5); and the good life, on the view of “the philosophers,” will rise above life and becoming (*in Grg.* 47.6).

Thus we might distinguish two broad categories of apparent “disagreement” that Olympiodorus has to resolve through different techniques: (1) that between genuine and unimpeachable philosophers (such as Aristotle and Plato), where the disagreement is shown to be immaterial; and (2) that between those who are traditionally called “philosophers” (but are actually wrong) and those who are genuine philosophers, where the latter are vindicated.

As a commentator, Olympiodorus also deals with different solutions to questions or puzzles (ἀπορίαι) raised by his text, where differing views are taken by respected authorities in the authentically philosophical tradition. For example, when the Neoplatonists Proclus and Damascius take alternative views about the target (σκοπός) of the *Alcibiades*, this “must be plausibly explained” (*in Alc.* 4.17–6.1). Often Olympiodorus will present different sides of an argument as a doxographer, without coming down on a particular side. In some of the cases of dispute, Olympiodorus adopts the Plato-Aristotle technique, and shows that the disagreement is only on the surface. That is the case with Proclus and Damascius; under the surface, Proclus really means what Damascius says, from a different point of view: Proclus’ account focuses on the exposition of the text (Olymp. *in Alc.* 205.1) while Damascius’ strives for objective exactness (*in Alc.* 204.15). Olympiodorus describes his own solution to the puzzle as the solution adopted by the “interpreters” or exegetes. But in other cases, he is prepared to suggest that one solution to a given ἀπορία might be more “plausible” than another (for example, Damascius’ solution compared to Proclus’ at *in Phd.* 8.9). Someone’s view might be “strange” and “selective” (like those unnamed interpreters who think that the *Gorgias* is really “about” the Demiurge, *in Grg.* pr. 4—a view perhaps associated with Iamblichus). Rarely does Olympiodorus outright state that another genuine philosopher’s position must be *wrong*, although one might give a “better” explanation of a particular passage or puzzle (as Ammonius explains *Phaedo* 70d7 more effectively, Olympiodorus suggests, than Iamblichus [*in Phd.* 10.7.9]).

A particularly clear example of Olympiodorus’ method of judgement is in the *Phaedo* commentary. The *Phaedo* raises arguments against the validity of suicide, arguments that Olympiodorus presents sympathetically (*in Phd.* 1.2–7); but he is also awake to the philosophical tradition favouring the validity of suicide in certain situations, especially in the Stoic tradition and in Plotinus (1.9), and he presents those ar-

guments with sympathy as well (1.8); and finally, he attempts to strike a balance between both positions (1.9):

What is our own opinion, then, now that the argument (λόγος) has ended in contradictory conclusions? Of course, suicide can hardly be unlawful and justified at the same time. What we say is this: suicide is forbidden with a view to the body, which it harms, but it may be justified because of a greater good gained by the soul for instance when the soul is hampered by the body.

Again, the basic result is that both sides of the argument have sense on their side, but from different points of view, one is more applicable than the other. This kind of reasoning is also applied to the philosophical curriculum as a whole: what constitutes virtue in the *Gorgias*, which deals with the constitution of the embodied soul, is different from the “purificatory” point of view of the *Phaedo*, which deals with the soul freeing itself from the body. In the main, apparent “disagreement” between two parties can be addressed by the expedient of characterizing one party as non-philosophical (which is to say that they are speaking from a purely symbolic vantage point, grossly different from the philosopher’s view), or by showing that the two parties are speaking from much more subtly different points of view (that is, from the vantage point of different “rungs” on the Neoplatonic ladder of virtue). In either case, the philosophers emerge as distinguishable by agreement.

3. Conclusions

Where does this survey leave us with respect to the questions of Olympiodorus’ relationship to Christianity, the educational practices and intellectual current of his time, and his “extreme pliability”? Olympiodorus treats the language of Christian doctrine, when it is mentioned, as if it belongs to the level of myth or φαντασία, and, like any myth, refers to real facts within the psyche. We may speak of Hera or a certain “power” of the Christian God, but in either case the philosopher will recognize that what is meant is the basic capacity of the soul. We may speak of δαίμονες or angels, but in either case we are really referring to conscience or something similar. The language used, whether pagan or Christian, lies at the level of φαινόμενα or appearances. Thus Olympiodorus is able to represent “philosophy” as a higher framework within which other mythological systems and worldviews can be accommodated and made to agree.⁴⁵ Olympiodorus’ treatment raises the interesting question of whether Olympiodorus would regard the Christian “myths” as poetic or philosophical, that is, as acceptable and harmless at the “exoteric” or literal layer (like philosophic myths) or as incredible. Perhaps where Christian morality, at least, is concerned he might have taken the former view: Olympiodorus seems to regard

⁴⁵ What Jan Assmann has called “syncretistic translation” (Assmann 2008, 146–47), building on Glen Bowersock’s assessment of Hellenism (1990, 5).

Christian doctrine as generally harmonious with the “common notions” (as Tarrant 1997, 189–91 points out): that “God is good” and worthy of honour or that parents are worthy of respect (*in Grg.* 41.2), for example, seems like points of common ground between Christianity and traditional Hellenic piety. On the other hand, Olympiodorus clearly rejects some ideas that were popular in contemporary Christianity (such as the idea of eternal punishment, as well as the temporal limitation of the world).

What appears to be “extreme pliability” in Olympiodorus is his way of accommodating almost every area of expertise as operating at the level of imagination, and therefore able to “mean” the same thing in practice as another area of expertise. In a paradoxical way, only genuine philosophers could disagree about the facts, and since they generally have access to the facts, they are unlikely to disagree. When they appear to disagree it is the exegete’s task to determine whether the disagreement is on the level of φαινόμενα or of reality, πράγματα.

Olympiodorus assumes that his students are familiar with the general curriculum of the later Mediterranean educated gentleman, including the oeuvre of Homer and Attic poetry and the schools of the grammarian and the rhetorician; he also assumes the identity of *paideia* with virtue, and regards the purpose of education in the Hellenic tradition as the instillation of such virtue. He regards his project as contiguous with the truly “philosophical” movements of the past, and able to give explanatory continuity to the “sophistics” of the past and the present. He makes special claims for his own discipline of philosophy as able to bestow the fundamentals of the “good life” in a way that other areas of expertise cannot.

Real philosophy is a timeless affair, as Olympiodorus expresses it: only myths have a “was” or a past tense (*in Grg.* 47.8), while the philosophical transformation of the soul is a here-and-now affair. Thus the philosopher, uniquely among educators, teaches neither for the past nor the present nor the future, not for this doctrine nor for that one, but for all time and all creeds. This is a powerful self-presentation which is driven home in every aspect of Olympiodorus’ teaching. This model of exegesis and education, which draws upon the “harmonizing” practices of the Aristotelian and Platonic tradition on which he draws, builds the “wall” from which he is able to teach in safety, without treading on any particular doctrinal preference, while still representing his profession as “above” such preferences; at the same time, it is deeply rooted in the entirety of his philosophical system, and is not an *ad hoc* response to any one system of dogmas. We might suppose that such a self-portrayal would not go far with those who no longer saw the command of traditional *paideia* as the weathervane of power in the city. But it would be highly successful with students who were committed to the traditional value of proven intellectual achievement—and the facility for mediation between different interests demonstrated, for example, by Hypatia—as measures of wisdom and authority. There were clearly enough such students in Alexandria to support Olympiodorus for a long, flourishing and influential career within his τεῖχος.

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Abbreviations

- IG Inscriptioes Graecae
 RG Rhetores Graeci



Section 2: **Platonist Rhetors**

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Sic Traditur a Platone: Plato and the philosophers in Lactantius

In his early fourth-century treatise *De ira Dei*, the Christian apologist Lactantius defends the existence of God's wrath, and in so doing he articulates an argument that runs contrary to long-held tenets of Greek philosophical discourse, including the immutability and impassibility of the *summus deus*. Unlike his Graecophone predecessors and contemporaries, Lactantius ostensibly rejects the option of allegorical reading employed by Plato (among others) and fashions his approach as one superior to those of the philosophers (among whom he targets primarily the Stoics and Epicureans). Lactantius comes at the question of divine wrath from a literal, rather than allegorical or figural, perspective because he was immersed in a Roman rhetorical tradition that stood, or at least saw itself as standing, in contrast and at times in opposition to the tenets of the Greek philosophical tradition broadly construed. The apologist's move is, as an indicator of his education in law and rhetoric, reflexive, and, in light of the degree to which he draws his reader's attention to his method, self-conscious. It is also problematic: setting aside, for the moment, the apparent novelty of his theological claim, Lactantius' dismissal of Plato and the philosophers glosses over a long doxographic tradition in which Lactantius himself is implicated, most obviously by his dependence on Cicero, whose role in the transmission of Greek philosophical ideas to the world of Roman intellectual culture cannot be overlooked in the consideration of any later Latinate author.

In what follows, I explore the moments at which Lactantius appears to engage with Plato or the philosophical traditions he associated with Plato, including Socrates, the Epicureans, and the Stoics. The reason for this grouping is twofold: first, it follows the framing of philosophical doxography that Lactantius himself maintains. Second, it echoes the relationships between philosophers that we find in the treatise itself. That is to say, Lactantius' lumping together of all philosophers from Socrates through Seneca is conceptual and pragmatic, but this way of thinking about philosophy is also mapped onto the structure of the text itself. We shall see, then, that Lactantius engages with Greek philosophy and philosophers in strategic ways: he selectively quotes and paraphrases specific philosophers and philosophical schools in an attempt to establish a philosophical consensus to underscore his own arguments, for example those concerning the existence of only one god and divine providence. He breaks from them, however, when he wants to distinguish his view from those of his predecessors (and, we might add, his contemporaries), most clearly when he argues in favor of divine emotions.

A few words about the content and design of the treatise will help to contextualize this discussion. The text, written in 316CE, is addressed to a certain Donatus and its stated purpose is to correct the philosophers' error in thinking that the su-

preme god does not get angry.¹ As one would expect given Lactantius' education in rhetoric and his professional activity as a *rhetor*, the organization of the text closely follows the standards articulated in Ciceronian treatises (e.g. *De Oratore* and the *Topica*) as well as other handbooks critical to classical and late antique Latin oratory (e.g. the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*).² After a quickly presented *exordium*, *narratio*, and *divisio*, Lactantius moves on to a lengthy *confirmatio* in which he both advances his own arguments and attacks the opinions of others. With elements of *confutatio* worked into the main body of the text, the treatise ends with a three-chapter long *conclusio*, termed a "peroration in the matter of Cicero," which Lactantius uses to recapitulate his previous points, add the testimony of the Sibyls, and give a final warning about the necessity of worshipping God correctly.³

A close reading of the claims asserted in the main body of the text illustrate the degree to which Lactantius closely followed Cicero's *De natura deorum* in constructing his arguments.⁴ Both texts take the Epicureans and the Stoics as their main tar-

1 Lactantius is explicit about the fact that he is providing Donatus ammunition with which to defeat the arguments of those who deny, at their own peril, that God has emotions in *De ira Dei* 22.1–2: *Haec habuit quae de ira dicerem, Donate carissime, ut scires quemadmodum refelleres eos qui deum faciunt immobilem. Restat ut more Ciceronis utamur epilogo ad perorandum. Sicut ille in Tusculanis de morte disserens fecit, ita nos in hoc opere testimonia divina quibus credi possit adhibere debemus, ut illorum persuasionem revincamus qui sine ira deum esse credentes dissolvunt omnem religionem; sine qua, ut ostendimus, aut inmanitate belvis aut stultitia pecudibus adaequamur; in sola enim religione, id est in dei summi notione, sapientia est.* The identification of any specific Donatus as the recipient, while tempting, is impossible. At a most basic level we can say that it was one of the three most popular names among North Africans of the period and that this is likely the same Donatus to whom *De Mortibus Persecutorum* is addressed. For the issues surrounding the dating of the treatise and bibliography, see Ingremeau 1982, 25–36.

2 The technical (and some of the non-technical) treatises of Cicero are particularly helpful for the earlier evidence of rhetoric and rhetorical theory; Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* (especially the earlier books on education) is likewise useful. Handbooks like the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* give a sense of the various kinds of considerations that students would have kept in mind, and our knowledge can be further supplemented by, for example, Augustine's comments in his *Confessions*. The education of students and the work that took place in the Greek rhetorical schools have been subjects of recent scholarly inquiry, aided by the survival of books on declamation and the *hermeneumata*. For some general discussion (and helpful bibliography) see Criboire 2001 and Criboire 2007. Libanius in particular offers us a comparative way of understanding Lactantius' world (although, again, not without a healthy recognition of the significant differences between the two). See also Watts 2006.

3 Structurally, the text runs as follows: *exordium*: address to Donatus, brief introduction (1); *narratio*: the philosophers do not think that God is moved by anger (2.1–8); *divisio*: God does have anger, as well as kindness (2.9–10); *confirmatio* and *confutatio*: various arguments, each given separate weight (3–22); *conclusio*: a "peroration in the manner of Cicero" (*Restat ut more Ciceronis utamur epilogo ad perorandum*, 22–24).

4 References to classical literature abound in *De ira Dei*; of the fifty quotations or paraphrases of Cicero in the treatise, thirty-six are from *De natura deorum*. For an overview of what he may or may not have read, see the somewhat pessimistic Ogilvie 1978 and Cicero-focused Bryce 1990. For his use of classical literature, broadly construed, see Pichon 1902 and Loi 1970. Loi 1965 focuses on Lactantius' use of Roman ethical literature as source material. See also Stevenson 1957.

gets, for example, and both are fundamentally concerned with questions about the divine nature, an umbrella idea under which one also finds discussions about divine providence, divine administration of the world, that there can be only one god, and that this god cares for humankind.⁵ At every turn, Lactantius seeks to disprove his straw men philosophical opponents and to build an argument in favor of a legitimate and necessary divine wrath. The relative singularity of his stance should not be overlooked: in contrast to those who employed figural and allegorical readings to make sense of texts in which the supreme god's anger was articulated or referenced, Lactantius goes to great lengths to prove that this anger was a veritable emotion, a view which directly opposes the long-standing philosophical tenets of divine impassibility and immutability.⁶

I have thus far highlighted Lactantius' affinity for Cicero and for Latin rhetorical discourse more generally. To ignore these classical Roman underpinnings of the fourth century text would be to miss facets of the text critical to its interpretation: unlike his Graecophone counterparts, nearly all of whom were working within the constraints of a hermeneutic initiated, at least most clearly, by Plato, Lactantius engages in a literal reading and understanding of God's wrath.⁷ Crucial elements of his reading were drawn from Ciceronian models, the most influential of which, on this text, was *De natura deorum*. This reliance complicates Lactantius' text in two ways. First, it calls into question the identity of the Stoics and Epicureans to whom Lactantius responds in *De ira Dei*: these are unlikely to be the representatives of those philosophical schools as they existed in the early fourth century, and it remains doubtful that the Stoics and Epicureans of Cicero's own text were accurate spokesmen of the schools in their late first-century BCE iterations.⁸

Second, Cicero himself was engaged in his own seemingly apologetic agenda, namely to make palatable to a Roman audience of the late Republic the ideas, terminology, and differences between the major philosophical schools. We might thus

5 *De ira dei* (hereafter *ID*) chapters nine through eleven; much of the support for this comes from Cotta's rebuttal of Velleius in *De natura deorum* book one and then Balbus' explication of Stoic theology in book two.

6 For example, Arnobius and Novatian took up the question in different ways in their treatises as they tried to defend their faith against pagan critiques, attack the pagan mythology itself, and negotiate the place of the representations of God in the Old Testament. Tertullian and Cyprian both express a conviction that God's wrath is present and palpable; while Tertullian gives space to possible philosophical objections, Cyprian focuses on past incidents from the Old Testament to instruct and to correct his audience.

7 Throughout I will use "Plato" and "Platonism" as shorthand for what is a much older, much more complex, and much more nuanced set of philosophical traditions. In so doing I hope to focus and advance our discussion, but I do mean to suggest that this treatment addresses the intricacies of that tradition, for which there is no space here.

8 See Glucker 1995. It is not nothing that explorations of Lactantius' doxography are couched within Ciceronian studies: see also Barnes 1989, Long 1995, and Powell 1995 for how Cicero negotiated his own sources and the problem of dissecting the philosophical sects in scholarship ancient and contemporary.

view Cicero as a model for Lactantius in yet another way: each sought to translate to his own audience (one Roman, the other Christian, or at least potentially so) the cultural precepts of another intellectual tradition in such a way as to make the adoption of those precepts acceptable and normative.⁹ Yet this transfer, or transmission, was complicated in each case by various factors. For Cicero, this included translation (and at times coinage of new words) from Greek to Latin, a conscious and theorized move on his part. For Lactantius, this included a perhaps less self-aware, or less easily evaluated, set of processes. This is particularly the case when one considers Plato, for we know that Cicero was reading and reacting to Plato and we know that Lactantius was reading and reacting to Cicero. At the risk of over-simplifying a complex, intricate, and quite lengthy doxographical history, we can say that Lactantius was reading (and in some cases agreeing with) Plato, in what was undoubtedly a diluted and muddled way, through his reading of Cicero.

Lactantius was not unaware of Plato's influence on later philosophical thought: as we shall see below, in the ninth chapter of *De ira Dei* he describes the creation of and differentiation between the most popular philosophical schools as having "flowed forth from the school of Plato like rivulets into different directions."¹⁰ It is perhaps because of the association that Lactantius constructs between Plato and, for all intents and purposes, every other philosopher and philosophical school of thought, that he tends to lump the major schools (again, for him, the Stoics and Epicureans) together with Plato in most of his discussions of philosophical consensus. Plato and Socrates are also often linked (the name Socrates appears with Plato's in four out of five chapters in which the latter is mentioned), outstripped only by the invocation of "philosophers" more generally and the Stoics and Epicureans somewhat more specifically.¹¹ The names of individual philosophers and the general term are sprinkled throughout the text, with one or the other appearing in seventeen of the twenty-three chapters. The way in which Lactantius mentions and engages with the philosophers, individually and collectively, varies by the area or chapter of the text in which they appear. We shall evaluate Lactantius' concentrated treatment of Plato, Socrates, and others below (chapters nine through eleven of the text); my present concern is with the ways in which such notes and mentions are scattered throughout the treatise.

From the outset, Lactantius situates his text both within the long-standing philosophical conversation about the place of emotions in the supreme god and at the same time opposed to it. In the opening chapter, he tells Donatus, his addressee, that "some philosophers" have (wrongly) held the opinion that God does not get

⁹ For a succinct summation of Cicero's project, see Ando 2010, especially his comments at 65.

¹⁰ *ID* 9.3: *Post haec Socrates, et auditor eius Plato, et qui de schola Platonis, tanquam rivuli diversas in partes profluxerunt; stoici et peripatetici, in eadem fuere sententia, qua priores.*

¹¹ Curiously, however, Lactantius never invokes the term "Epicurean(s)," preferring instead to shift blame towards their eponymous founder. Epicurus is singled out by name fourteen times in the treatise.

angry.¹² He goes on to use the assertion of Socrates “as related by Plato” that there is no such thing as human wisdom—a compliment, on the face of it—only to underscore the philosophers’ folly in thinking that they can ascertain the divine will, and soon after to place them on the second of three “steps” by which an individual comes to know God.¹³ Epicurus is twice attacked, in chapters four and five, for his belief that the *summus deus* is aloof and unfeeling; similarly the Stoics were wrong, Lactantius says, to attribute only kindness (*gratia*) to God and not anger as well.¹⁴ This introduction leads Lactantius to his own formulation: it is unfathomable that God has no emotions; unfeasible for him to have anger alone; everyone believes that he has kindness; therefore he must also have anger—an idea that the apologist links to the need for a veritable fear of God as part of his worship.¹⁵

Lactantius connects, however weakly, the strong statements of chapter six to longer, more robust chapters in the middle of the treatise. These sections are largely meant to establish a sort of philosophical consensus: everyone, he writes, agrees that humans are different than animals, and although some disagree on the questions of, *inter alia*, divine providence, those who are reasonable would support what Lactantius himself is arguing. He goes on to praise the Stoics for recognizing that all things were made for the benefit of mankind (unlike some other philosophical sects) and to criticize Epicurus for not understanding the difference between human and divine natures (and by extension, emotions).¹⁶ Thus far a tendency has emerged: Lactantius is often willing to follow the Stoics up to a point, but is ve-

12 ID 1.1: *Animaadverti saepe, Donate, plurimos id aestimare, quod etiam nonnulli philosophorum putaverunt, non irasci deum...*

13 ID 2.1–7, but especially 2.5: *De secundo vero gradu eos dicimus cadere, qui cum sentiant, unum esse summum Deum, iidem tamen a philosophis inretiti, et falsis argumentationibus capti, aliter de unica illa maiestate sentiunt, quam veritas habet; qui aut figuram negant habere ullam Deum, aut nullo affectu commoveri putant, quia sit omnis affectus imbecillitatis, quae in Deo nulla est. Cf. Divinae Institutiones 2.5.4–6.2 and Epitome 21.1–5.*

14 ID 4.1–3: *Quod sequitur, de schola Epicuri est; sicut iram in Deo non esse, ita nec gratiam quidem. Nam cum putaret Epicurus, alienum esse a Deo malefacere atque nocere, quod ex affectu iracundiae plerumque nascitur, ademit ei etiam beneficentiam, quoniam videbat consequens esse, ut si habeat iram Deus, habeat et gratiam. Itaque ne illi vitium concederet, etiam virtutis fecit expertem. Ex hoc, inquit, beatus et incorruptus est, quia nihil curat, neque habet ipse negotium, neque alteri exhibet. Deus igitur non est, si nec movetur, quod est proprium viventis: nec facit aliquid impossibile homini, quod est proprium Dei, si omnino nullam habet voluntatem, nullum actum, nullam denique administrationem, quae Deo digna sit. Read with ID 5.2: Favorabilis admodum ac popularis oratio non cadere in deum hanc animi pusillitatem ut ab ullo se laesum putet, qui laedi non potest, ut quieti illa et sancta maiestas concitetur perturbetur insaniat, quod est terranae fragilitatis; iram enim commotionem mentis esse ac perturbationem, quae sit a deo aliena.*

15 ID 6.2: *Nam neque honor ullus deberi potest deo, si nihil praestat colenti, nec ullus metus, si non irascitur non colenti. Cf. ID 8.7b: Quod enim non metuitur, contemnitur: quod contemnitur, utique non colitur. Ita fit, ut religio, et maiestas, et honor metu constet: metus autem non est, ubi nullus irascitur. Sive igitur gratiam Deo, sive iram, sive utrumque detraxeris, religionem tolli necesse est, sine qua vita hominum stultitia, scelere, immanitate completur.*

16 ID 13 and 15, passim.

hemently opposed to nearly all of the arguments put forth by Epicurus.¹⁷ A fuller consideration of the ways in which Lactantius relies upon previous philosophical argument and consensus as he seeks to support and strengthen his own claims will help to elucidate the nuances of his argument.

The philosophical voices of the past are marshaled by Lactantius in three key chapters of the text. It is in these chapters (namely nine, ten, and eleven), that the apologist strives to convince his audience that (1) there is one god, (2) this god created the world, and (3) there exists a divine providence whereby the world is regulated. Perhaps interestingly, Lactantius flips the order in which these are presented: he begins with divine providence, next discusses the creation and creator of the world, then moves on to a consideration of monotheism (although this does allow him to return to providence, his main concern).¹⁸ Often viewed as tangential, overly-long digressions from his central argument, these chapters are, I would suggest, critical to Lactantius' overall purpose in the treatise. If we consider their relevance to the content of his argument alone, it is evident that they are imperative to understanding his view of the divine nature, a position which has definite implications for his framing of divine emotions—how one imagines the divine nature by necessity has bearing on whether or not, and how, one views the possibility of that divine nature possessing emotions. Beyond their importance to the line of argument, however, these three chapters are likewise key to how Lactantius formulates, defends, and structures his claims. At various moments in each chapter, Lactantius targets specific philosophers with whom he finds the multitude of philosophers to be in disagreement. The result is to create the effect of a triangulation: philosophers who held the “wrong” opinion are demonstrated to have done so by those who hold the “correct” opinion (in Lactantius' estimation), and Lactantius provides himself with the opportunity of criticizing or supporting each view.

Epicurus is the principal target of Lactantius' attack, and is identified as such in chapter eight, which we might consider a preamble to the subsequent three chapters (nine through eleven). Indeed, Lactantius' vehement opposition to the views of Epicurus about the nature of religion link the material that follows this chapter with that which preceded it: we have learned thus far that the treatise is concerned with the refutation of the supreme god's impassibility, here the necessity for divine emotions is couched in terms of their connection to religion. If Epicurus, writes Lactantius, thinks that the gods must be removed and withdrawn from humans and all pains, he removes all agency from them. Such a divine nature in turn renders human action without consequence, argues Lactantius, for there would be no point in offering sac-

¹⁷ In this we again see the structure of *De natura deorum* at work, the arrangement of which into three books treating, in order, the Epicureans, the Stoics, and the Academics, following conventional organization suggests that the earliest was thought to be the weakest argument, and the last the most persuasive.

¹⁸ This trio surfaces frequently in Lactantius' corpus, as we find them expressed (in a slightly different way) throughout *De opificio Dei*, and given extensive treatment in *Divinae Institutiones*.

rifice, building temples, and otherwise engaging in various types of religious, pious behavior if no one is paying any attention.¹⁹ Terrible consequences abound: if no god watches over and keeps tracks of (and, importantly, reacts to) human life, there is nothing to prevent people from breaking laws and religion itself is thoroughly destroyed.²⁰ In addition to outlining for us one of the ways in which religion is linked to the preservation of human order, Lactantius' statements about religion highlight the degree to which he sees it as inseparable from divine emotions. He proceeds to lay out a series of connections that link religion to wisdom (which separates humans from animals) and to justice (which regulates public institutions), and to respond to the claims of those who challenge the existence of God.²¹

Lactantius' first sentence sets the tone for the following three chapters: "philosophers of former times had agreed in their opinions... and there was no doubt..."²² By forcing his audience to think back to the distant past (as he understood it), Lactantius establishes a pattern wherein consensus existed, was challenged, but maintained its place as the dominant belief. In chapter nine, the challenge, Lactantius tells us, came from Protagoras, "in the times of Socrates," and had as its object the question of the existence of any divinity.²³ To underscore the novelty and shock value of such claims, Lactantius rehearses the tradition of the Athenians burning Protagoras' books and exiling him from the city and then dismisses him (because "there is no need to speak respecting his opinions, because he pronounced nothing certain").²⁴ Socrates, Plato, the Stoics, and the Peripatetics are said to reinstate the firm belief in a divinity until the usual suspect, Epicurus, intervenes, and threatens the status quo. Here, as in chapter eight and elsewhere, Epicurus is an outsider: he agrees, Lactantius tells us, that there is a God (and so subscribes to the philosophical

19 ID 8.2: *Quae cum dicit, utrum aliquem cultum Deo putat esse tribuendum, an evertit omnem religionem? Si enim Deus nihil cuiquam boni tribuit, si colentis obsequio nullam gratiam refert, quid tam vanum, tam stultum, quam templa aedificare, sacrificia facere, dona conferre, rem familiarem minuere, ut nihil assequamur?*

20 ID 8.5: *Quod si negotium deus nec habet nec exhibet, cur ego non delinquamus, quotiens hominum conscientiam fallere licebit ac leges publicas circumscribere? Ubicumque nobis latendi occasio adriserit, consulamus rei, auferamus aliena vel sine cruore vel etiam cum sanguine, si praeter leges nihil est amplius quod verendum sit!*

21 The connection between chapters eight and nine is, however, tenuous. It is worth noting that Lactantius seems to find fault with those who think that religion was made up only to regulate behavior, but then endorses this view in his own argument about religion, and specifically the fear of punishment, as motivating correct actions.

22 ID 9.1: *Cum sententiae philosophorum prioris temporibus de providentia consensissent, nec ulla esset dubitatio, quin mundus a Deo, et ratione esset instructus, et ratione regeretur...*

23 ID 9.2a: *primus omnium Protagoras exitit temporibus Soratis, qui sibi diceret non liquere, utrum esset aliqua divinitas, necne.*

24 ID 9.2b: *Quae disputatio eius adeo impia, et contra veritatem et religionem iudicata est, ut et ipsum Athenienses expulerint suis finibus, et libros eius in concione, quibus haec continebantur, exusserint. De cuius sententia non est opus disputare, quia nihil certi pronuntiavit.*

consensus), but he denies that there exists a divine providence.²⁵ The removal of divine providence is equivalent to the removal of the divine altogether, and Lactantius requires the world to be one in which its divine ruler has knowledge of the past, present, and future.²⁶

Similarly, Diagoras of Melos and Theodorus of Cyrene are also singled out as philosophers who denied the existence of God, while Plato, Socrates, and those that maintained the tenets of their philosophical arguments are praised for their wisdom. If we are to believe Lactantius, it was these three philosophers (Epicurus, Diagoras, and Theodorus) who attacked the idea of divine providence and every other philosopher who defended it.²⁷ A rhetorical series of questions at the end of chapter nine offers not merely Lactantius' plan for moving ahead, but also a framework for understanding his own approach. Should we, he questions, argue against those "trifling and inactive philosophers by reason, or by the authority of distinguished men, or rather by both?"²⁸ Here Lactantius reveals his own debt to and dependence on the Platonic philosophical tradition, and in so doing admits that his construal of his own perspective as existing in stark opposition to that of the philosophers is not entirely true: the "authority of distinguished men" does, in fact, carry some weight, and when that authority is useful to his argument he has no qualms about drawing our attention to that long-standing history, here providence, which "had been asserted and defended through so many ages by so many intellects."²⁹ Further, Lactantius' overview of such debates, although admittedly brief and superficial, has the effect of suggesting his familiarity with the respective traditions and of aligning his perspective with the Platonic tradition: consensus is important here for the way in which it lends support to Lactantius himself.³⁰

25 ID 9.4: *Postea vero Epicurus Deum quidem esse dixit, quia necesse sit esse aliquid in mundo praestans, et eximum, et beatum; providentiam tamen nullam: itaque mundum ipsum nec ratione ulla, nec arte, nec fabrica instructum, sed naturam rerum quibusdam minutis seminibus et inseparabilibus conglorabatam.*

26 ID 9.5: *Quo quid repugnantibus dici possit, non video. Etenim si est Deus, utique providens est, ut Deus; nec aliter ei potest divinitas attribui, nisi et praeterita teneat, et praesentia sciat, et futura prospiciat. Cum igitur providentiam sustulit, etiam Deum negavit esse.*

27 ID 9.6–7. Lactantius' chronology and/or sense of philosophical doxography seems peculiar here, as he writes that Diagoras and Theodorus were advancing these opinions "when philosophy had now lost its vigor."

28 ID 9.9: *Quid ergo? utrumne istos minutos et inertes philosophos ratione, an vero auctoritate praestantium virorum refellemus? an potius utroque? Ratio is an important idea for Lactantius, as it drives (what he terms) his rhetorical argument and provides reason to a debate in which the philosophers have argued without sense, wisdom, or rationality.*

29 ID 9.8: *Il sunt, qui tot saeculis, tot ingeniiis assertam atque defensam providentiam calumniati sunt.*

30 This is another moment at which it would be helpful to know more about whom and what Lactantius had access to and was reading. If we follow Glucker, "The best one can say so far is that Lactantius is erratic in his ascription of philosophical views; that sometimes he is accurate in ascribing a view to a philosopher or to a speaker in a Ciceronian dialogue, but often he ascribes whatever he has found in the Ciceronian work (or had copied into his commonplace book) to Cicero

Although Lactantius himself eventually deviates from the philosophical consensus about divine wrath, he expresses an antagonism towards Straton, Leucippus, and others throughout the tenth chapter of the treatise because of their need to be different and break from the consensus. Despite his expressed concern that he might seem to rave for refuting such ludicrous ideas, he nonetheless devotes much of this chapter to a mockery-filled discussion concerning how theories about atoms as the constituent building blocks of creation can be nothing but nonsense.³¹ Lactantius' defense of this claim rests predominantly upon his oft-repeated notion that the nature of the world and all things within it offer ample proof that their creation required design, reason, forethought, and intelligence.³² Here too, Lactantius summons the philosophical consensus of the past: whether they attributed it to nature or the supreme god, many agreed that the world itself was set in motion by some entity which possessed the ability to order and to fashion its creation. His strategy here, however, is not to mention individuals who helped to form the consensus (e.g. Plato and Socrates) as previously, but rather to attack Lucretius (or, perhaps, "Lucretius") with an uninterrupted torrent of points to be disputed.

Lucretius' theories about atoms strike Lactantius as particularly offensive and unbelievable. In addition to his consternation regarding the unimaginably small size of these atoms and their different shapes, Lactantius fixates on their invisibility and indivisibility, in each case referring to Lucretius as his source.³³ Although we might be tempted to gloss over his rebuttals to these ideas, many of which are framed as rhetorical questions, to do so would be to overlook two important elements underpinning Lactantius' worldview and reasoning. His discomfort, for example, with the idea that everything is created by and made up of "invisible seeds" suggests that he roots his arguments in what can be seen and proven. Attention to this facet of his reasoning helps to explain his theories of nature, but can be even more valuable when considered as important to his understanding of the divine nature. Lactantius' idea of the Christian God is located in experience and observation; just as he believes the created world to have necessitated the involvement of design and artifice, so too does he believe that such design and artifice can come from no other source but a divine being.

Lactantius culls support for the idea that nature itself is an insufficient creative force for the world by examining human nature; following a quotation from Chrysippus, he reasons that humans' inability to make "heavenly things" demands that something greater exists.³⁴ Those who maintain that nature is the "mother of all

himself, sometimes even conflating things said by different speakers in two very different works." (1995, 69)

31 *ID* 10.5: *et quidem vereor, ne non minus delirare videatur, qui haec putet refellenda.*

32 This is mentioned throughout the treatise, but is woven throughout chapter ten in a focused way.

33 *ID* 10, *passim* but especially concentrated arguments are at 10.13–18 and 10.27–31.

34 *ID* 10.36–37: *'Si quid est, inquit Chrysippus, quod efficiat ea; quae homo, licet ratione sit praeditus, facere non possit, id profecto est maius, et fortius, et sapientius homine.'* *Homo autem non potest facere*

things” do so incorrectly because they fail to recognize that nature lacks mind (*mens*), thereby rendering it incapable of planning, “contriving,” or “effecting” anything. Such an absence of mind means too that the being in question (whether nature or something else) lacks the capacity to reflect, which according to Lactantius means that “there is neither motion nor efficacy.”³⁵ In advocating for an active divinity, Lactantius again mirrors the text of *De natura deorum*, and again relies on it as an articulation of philosophical agreement and argumentation. Further, humans themselves again are seen as evidence for the nature and effect of God; humans were given a portion of the divine wisdom and reason so that they too could create the things which they required.³⁶

Ciceronian echoes continue as Lactantius returns to the idea of divine providence and moves forward in his discussion of the links between the human and divine natures. Using a sort of etymologizing hermeneutic, Lactantius argues that humans—so named because of the ground, from which their bodies were made—have soul too only because it was given to them “from a wise nature.”³⁷ Here the apologist’s use of Cicero is clearly flagged, an unusual occurrence in this text. He names both the *Tusculan Disputations* and *Consolation* as his source text(s) and proceeds to quote a few sentences about the separation of the soul from the earthly elements, including also two statements that echo his preceding arguments about the nature of mind (and the interconnectedness of mind and reflection) as well as the adamant assertion that all such things must come to humans from God.³⁸ We have come full circle in this second to last paragraph, and again the “vain calumniators” are named: Diagoras, Theodorus, Leucippus, Democritus, and Epicurus are all abandoned by the majority in favor of the “authority” of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and others who agreed on the question of providence.³⁹ The degree to which Lactantius has traversed hundreds of years of philosophical thought is notable, as is the way he has done so. Throughout, the opponents remained the same (the usual list of Epicureans, and a handful of supposed ancient atheists), but Lactantius has constructed and defended his own position by appealing to a generalized picture of what every-

coelestia; ergo illud, quod haec efficiet vel effecerit, superat hominem arte, consilio, prudentia, potestate. Quis igitur potest esse, nisi Deus?

35 ID 10.38: *Natura vero, quam veluti matrem esse rerum putant, si mentem non habet, nihil efficiet unquam, nihil molietur. Ubi enim non est cogitatio, nec motus est ullus, nec efficacia. Si autem consilio utitur ad incipiendum aliquid, ratione ad disponendum, arte ad efficiendum, virtute ad consummandum, potestate ad regendum et continendum; cur natura potius quam Deus nominetur?*

36 ID 10.42: *Si enim corpus hominis ex humo fictum est, unde homo nomen accepit; animus ergo qui sapit, qui rector rest corporis, cui membra obsequuntur tanquam regi et imperator, qui nec aspici, nec comprehendere potest, non potuit ad hominem nisi a sapiente natura pervenire. Sed sicut omne corpus mens et animus gubernat ita et mundum Deus.*

37 ID 10.42 (*supra*).

38 ID 10.43.

39 ID 10.50–51.

one has said (he later adds Zeno and Aristotle to this list as well) with attributed quotations from Cicero's philosophical treatises.

The endowment of both humans and the world itself with wisdom and intelligence is, for Lactantius, proof enough of God's creation of the world, and with it, his providence over the world. In chapter eleven, he defends the idea that only one god can exist and govern the world and again both looks to earthly institutions as mirrors of the divine order and also relies on the cumulative voices of specific philosophers to demonstrate long-standing support of his claims. In a list of quick, simple statements, Lactantius rehearses centuries' worth of argument; we might read his rather brief treatment of each item as a signal of the extent to which he viewed these philosophical tenets as shared and indisputable.⁴⁰ To demonstrate that the divine power rests with only one divinity, he takes his reader through the chain of argument beginning with the idea of distribution. Should the "divine energy and power" be spread out among many gods, it by necessity must be lessened, and anything that is lessened must by necessity be mortal. Lest the reader miss the point, Lactantius reminds that the inverse is also true, namely that an immortal being can neither be lessened nor destroyed (here, "divided").⁴¹ Terrestrial exempla round out the discussion: there can be only one ruler, one master, one helmsman of a ship, one leader, one queen bee, and further only one sun in the sky and one soul in the body.⁴² To disprove the possibility of multiple divinities even more clearly, Lactantius offers a quotation from Virgil, notes that one cannot describe in words or fully comprehend the supreme god with the senses, and questions whence the idea of polytheism even arose.⁴³ He locates the idea of multiple deities in the remote past and endorses the view that all gods and goddesses were originally important men and women who were "invested with divine honors" after death, an explanation that he credits to the *theologoi* and then later Roman writers like Euhemerus and Ennius.⁴⁴

It is here that Lactantius makes a curious pivot. He moves from Euhemerus and Ennius and right on to Cicero who, he writes, followed this line of thought and therefore (now explicitly citing the text) in his third book of *De natura deorum* "destroyed the public religions."⁴⁵ Cicero is identified as the clearest example of the philoso-

⁴⁰ Lactantius' tendency to compress and gloss over some important ideas while devoting substantial space to treating others might indicate what he saw as the questions up for dispute; if so we might understand his approach as one that explicates what he believes to be the weaker areas of the argument, or at least those in need of defense.

⁴¹ *ID* 11.2: *Satis (ut opinor) ostendimus in nostris Institutionibus, deos multos esse non posse; quod divina vis ac potestas si distribuatur in plures, diminui eam necesse sit: quod autem minuitur, utique et mortale est; si vero mortalis non est, nec minui, nec dividi potest.*

⁴² *ID* 11.4.

⁴³ *ID* 11.5–6.

⁴⁴ *ID* 11.8–10.

⁴⁵ *ID* 11.12. It should be noted that the third book of *De natura deorum* is deficient in places, and that Lactantius preserves fragments which would otherwise be lost to us, namely *ND* 3.79 and 3.89 (= *De*

pher's problem: he was truly wise, but nonetheless unable "to introduce the true one [religion], of which he was ignorant," and so remained on the second of the three steps that Lactantius believes each person must ascend in order to come to the worship of the Christian God.⁴⁶ The effect is to create a tension between the public religions, as Lactantius calls them, most likely referring to the pluralistic polytheism of pagan antiquity, and the true religion, which is to say, Christianity. He again draws on Plato, this time citing the *Timaeus*, as evidence for the acknowledgement of one, supreme deity from an early date, and in so doing echoes his earlier assertion that Plato too thought the majesty of this god "so great, that it can neither be comprehended by the mind nor expressed by the tongue."⁴⁷ We might add to this that the Ciceronian version of the Platonic idea—or, at least, Lactantius' pairing of the two here—underscores the debt that Lactantius owes to Cicero, and Cicero to Plato. A litany of ancient testimony follows: Hermes Trismegistus (who, Lactantius takes pains to point out, was thought to be Egyptian by Cicero and was older than Plato, Pythagoras, and the seven wise men), Socrates (paraphrasing Xenophon), Plato (now with a direct quotation from the *Laws*), Pythagoras, Antisthenes (*Physics*), Aristotle and the Peripatetics, and Zeno and the Stoics.

Given Lactantius' general tendency to lump all philosophers together and to rely on Ciceronian paraphrases to express opinions on which those philosophers agree, his listing here is striking. Although he writes that it would take too long to go through each individual example, he does flesh out three briefly. Lactantius tells his reader that Pythagoras, for example, admitted that there is one God, "saying

ira Dei 16.9 and 9.7); so too do we have portions of Seneca's *De ira* because of Lactantius' quotation thereof (e.g. Seneca 1.1.3 = *De ira Dei* 5.3).

46 *ID* 11.12b: *sed tamen veram, quam ignorabat, nec ipse, nec alius quidquam potuit inducere. Adeo et ipse testatus est, falsum quidem apparere, veritatem tamen latere.* These criticisms have parallels in the second book of the *Divine Institutes*, where Lactantius writes that Cicero is in the wrong because he did not try to dispel "bad" beliefs (2.3) but that he is useful for recounting what the Stoics think about the question of, for example, monotheism (2.5), and that the errors into which Cicero and other philosophers fell were not their own fault, but due to the blindness of each respective philosophical sect and the knowledge available to them at that time (2.9). Lactantius' lament over Cicero's deficiency is echoed by Jerome in his own lament over Lactantius' apologetic deficiencies: Lactantius writes: *Utinam (inquit) tam facile vera invenire possem, quam falsa convincere!* (*ID* 11.13); Jerome *Epistle* 58.10: *utinam tam nostra adfirmare potuisset quam facile aliena destruxit.* Bowen and Garnsey (2003, 4–5) are likely correct to cast suspicion on Jerome's assessment here. They note that it occurs in the same letter in which Jerome so eagerly praised Lactantius, that it appears in a discussion of Christian writers who wrote in Latin, and that the letter itself was written to Paulinus of Nola at a time in which Jerome and Augustine were vying for Paulinus' approval. See also Doignon 1963 for the theory that Augustine, when he wrote *De Doctrina Christiana*, was responding to Jerome by praising the very apologists and theologians whom the latter criticized.

47 *ID* 11.14: *Unus est igitur princeps, et origo rerum Deus, sicut Plato in Timaeo et sensit et docuit; cuius maiestatem tantam esse declarat, ut nec mente comprehendi, nec lingua exprimi possit.* Plato's *Laws* are referenced a bit later at 11.16: *...et Plato in Legum libris: Quid omnino sit Deus, non esse quae- rendum; quid nec inveniri possit, nec enarrari...*

that there is an incorporeal mind, which, being diffused and stretched through all nature, gives vital perception to all living creatures,” but Antisthenes, however, wrote that “there was but one natural God,” despite the evidence of patron deities of individual peoples and cities.⁴⁸ Perhaps as a way to anticipate any objections based on the differences between each philosopher, Lactantius pauses to point out the key ways in which Pythagoras and Antisthenes were distinct from one another but nevertheless, and importantly, still agreed on the significant point that only one god exists. Indeed, near the end of the chapter Lactantius writes that all of these philosophers, and others, “although they used different names, nevertheless agreed in one power which governed the world,” thereby including divine providence as a matter about which there exists philosophical consensus.⁴⁹ This claim was the goal of the three chapters (nine through eleven) throughout which he took up the questions of the supreme god’s existence, his providence, and his singularity, and also served to cast Lactantius as holding the correct view based on the clout, diversity, and longevity of those who had come before him.

Yet the transition that Lactantius makes between these ideas and the closing sentiment of chapter eleven also casts him as the voice of dissent; he supports and endorses the philosophical consensus about the divine nature up to a point but makes a critical distinction between the philosophers on the one hand and Christian religion on the other hand. He writes, for example, that despite their keen perception of the divine nature, the philosophers (and poets!) “often acknowledge the supreme god, yet no one ever inquired into, no one discussed, the subject of his worship and honors,” and that “always believing him to be bounteous and incorruptible, they think that he is neither angry with anyone, nor stands in need of any worship.”⁵⁰ As we have seen, more often than not, Lactantius casts his vote in favor of the majority. On the face of it, this can be read as disingenuous: of course the author will draw upon the strength of a majority philosophical opinion when he wants to present himself as supported by those traditions. Yet, if we look to the argument of the treatise on a broad scale as well as his claims about religion and divine wrath more specifically, Lactantius has little difficulty breaking from that consensus when he wants to distinguish his own opinion from that of his predecessors and contemporaries. Plato, Socrates, the Stoics, and others are thus transformed from the wise, sage men of the past whose agreement on the questions of monotheism and divine providence were tantamount to Lactantius’ argument, and become instead the senseless and illogical philosophers, more broadly construed, against whom Lactantius directs his own assertions.

⁴⁸ ID 11.7.

⁴⁹ ID 11.17.

⁵⁰ ID 11.18: *Sed tamen summum Deum, cum et philosophi, et poetae, et ipsi denique qui deos colunt, saepe fateantur; de cultu tamen et honoribus eius nemo unquam requisivit nemo disseruit; ea scilicet persuasione, qua semper beneficum incorruptumque credentes, nec irasci eum cuiquam, nec ullo cultu indigere arbitrantur.*

In contrast to his preceding leniency towards the philosophers, when it comes to the definition and true understanding of divine wrath, Lactantius finds that all of the philosophical schools are mistaken: the Epicureans, with their belief in God's *ataraxia*, remove all power from him, and the Stoics do not see the difference between "just and unjust anger."⁵¹ Such distinctions force Lactantius to define anger, a process which he undertakes through a series of rejections:

Moreover it is apparent that the philosophers did not know the *ratio* of anger from their definitions, which Seneca enumerated in the books which he composed about anger. "Anger is," he says, "the desire of avenging an injury." Others, as Posidonius says, describe it as the desire of punishing him by whom you think that you have been unfairly injured. Some have defined it in this way: "Anger is an incitement of the mind to injure him who either has committed an injury, or who has wished to commit an injury." The definition of Aristotle is not very far from ours; for he says that "anger is the desire of requiring pain."⁵²

Even Cicero's definition of anger is tossed aside, as Lactantius finds it to be too similar to those which he has already derided. His own definition seeks to reframe the philosophers' misunderstanding and involves important shifts in vocabulary: for Lactantius, anger is "an emotion of the mind arousing itself for the restraining of faults."⁵³ *De ira Dei* culminates here, as Lactantius lays out the various definitions of the philosophers and then offers his own. The remainder of the treatise expands on this theme and offers various proof-texts to support the understanding of God's wrath as correct and necessary. More to the point for this study, however, this chapter of the text also encapsulates Lactantius' relationship to philosophy and philosophers: he frequently relies on them when seeking out an authoritative opinion, but just as frequently he incorporates specific philosophical viewpoints only to demonstrate their falsity.

The move from philosophical consensus about specific facets of the divine nature to a consideration of philosophers' deficient understanding of anger helps to shift the debate away from divine wrath and to anger itself; we move from theology

51 ID 17.12: *Sed Stoici non viderunt esse discrimen recti et pravi, esse iram iustam, esse et iniustam; et quia medellam rei non inveniebant, voverunt eam penitus excidere. Peripatetici vero non excidendam sed temperandam esse dixerunt; quibus in sexto libro Institutionem satis respondimus.* (See also *Divinae Institutiones* 6.15.2 and 6.16.1.)

52 ID 17.13: *Nescisse autem philosophos, quae ratio esset irae, apparet ex definitionibus eorum, quas Seneca enumeravit in libris, quos de Ira composuit. 'Ira est, inquit, cupiditas ulciscendae iniuriae. Alii, ut ait Posidonius, cupiditas puniendi eius, a quo te iniique putes laesum.' Quidam ita defnierunt: 'Ira est incitatio animi ad nocendum ei qui, aut nocuit, aut nocere voluit.' Aristotelis definitio non multum a nostra abest. Ait enim iram esse cupiditatem doloris rependendi.* Lactantius' definition of anger carries within it not insignificant Aristotelian echoes: Aristotle believed that anger was crucial for maintaining social relationships, for justice, and for the preservation of one's power, honor, and dignity; see *Rhetoric* 2.2 and *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.10. On ancient emotions see generally Konstan 2006 and Sokolon 2006.

53 ID 17.20: *Ergo definire debuerunt: Ira est motus animi ad coercenda peccata insurgentis.*

and musings about the divine, towards an examination of behavioral and ethical philosophical practice. In the immediately subsequent chapter (eighteen), Lactantius continues to discuss the various ways in which the philosophers failed to comprehend the true virtue and application of anger. They claim, he writes, that anger is a vice and must be absent from the punishment of faults; he asserts in response that anger is instead a virtue (or at least that it should be positively understood) and is in fact necessary for the punishment of offenses.⁵⁴ Archytas of Tarentum, that classical paradigm for the role of anger in the response to injustice, is then attacked by Lactantius for his failure to embrace the anger that he rightly felt upon returning home to find his land and property laid waste by his slaves.⁵⁵ Critical for Lactantius is that, in the case of Archytas, the action meriting a reaction supported by anger was committed by someone inferior to him; had the injustice been committed by an equal or a superior, Archytas would have behaved as he did rightly.⁵⁶ In Lactantius' perspective, it is neither correct nor possible to restrain one's anger when confronted by an offense undertaken by someone in a position (social or otherwise) below the person offended.

Lactantius leaves little room for interpretation, and closes this section with an extrapolation to the divine nature, here making his most significant break from the philosophical tradition. It is not without reason that the philosophers have been absent from chapters seventeen and eighteen. Despite invoking them as the representatives of opinions that he must refute, Lactantius at no point seeks to add clout to his arguments by drawing upon any previous philosophers or philosophical opinions. He returns at the end of chapter eighteen to a consideration of god's soul (notably not his *figura*, lest it get him in trouble with the Stoics) as possessing those qualities which he had earlier demonstrated it to possess, and where

54 *ID* 17.17: *Ergo surgimus ad vindictam; non quia laesi sumus, sed ut disciplina servetur, mores corrigantur, licentia comprimatur.*

55 On Archytas' moral character as represented in the literary sources, see Huffman 2005, 283–341 at 288–292 (with specific discussion of Lactantius' reference to the anecdote at 289). Huffman fleshes out the testimonia he gives (283–288) by noting that the “basic point of this anecdote about Archytas and the similar ones about Plato is that one should never punish in anger (D.L. 8.20 has Pythagoras himself make the point). ... Applied to the specific circumstances of punishing when controlled by anger, the point would be that, if we punish in anger, we will punish unjustly. This in turn could be judged morally problematic for two different reasons: (1) the person punished will suffer unjustly, (2) the person punishing will act unjustly and hence harm his own soul. ... The startling fact that the slaves escape all punishment is precisely what makes this version so memorable.” (288) He goes on to discuss the account given by the “dour Lactantius.” See 283–288 for the testimonia for the Archytas version and cf. Ingremeau 1982, 341.

56 *ID* 18.1–2, with Lactantius' response at 18.12: *esset igitur laudandus Archytas si, cum alicui civi et pari facienti sibi iniuriam fuisset iratus, repressisset se tamen et patientia furoris impetum mitigasset.* Lactantius is not alone in thinking that anger has a specific and just use in certain contexts. Aristotle's definition of anger in *Rhetoric* 2.2, for example, stresses the social aspect and utility of the emotion as one properly directed towards those whom we regard as below us in power and status. For an overview of the moral dimensions of anger in antiquity see Harris 2001 (and especially 201–228).

he found others to be in agreement with him. “It if belongs to God,” he writes, “to reflect, to be wise, to understand, to foresee, to excel,” then he by necessity must get angry.⁵⁷ A contrast is drawn, however, between divine anger and human anger, while the one is controlled and appropriate, the other is likely to bleed too easily into uncontrolled fury and violence.⁵⁸ By restructuring the definition of anger along the lines of virtue and vice, Lactantius attempts to make the idea more appealing to philosophers. Their inability to understand anger correctly was due, in this formulation, to their misunderstanding of its true nature, and if it is taken to be a good, virtuous thing when employed by a being about whose nature (as he has already shown) they can all agree, then surely the concept of divine wrath can be more palatable to his opponents.

It is in chapter eighteen, too, that we find the last reference to a named philosopher in the treatise (of which another five chapters remain).⁵⁹ As has already been the case earlier in the text, the names of Plato, Socrates, and others are conspicuously absent when Lactantius is breaking from the traditions which he considered to have been founded by prominent philosophers of antiquity. The final chapters are also those in which Lactantius focuses more on the Christian God, ideas and beliefs related to that god, and the provision of evidence that supports his claims about divine wrath. Two types of such chapters exist, as there are those in which Lactantius’ seeming disengagement with the philosophical tradition is intended as a rebuke of philosophical tenets, and there are others in which his rhetorical strategy is to respond to that tradition in a more robust way. In the first case, most clearly observed in chapters nineteen through twenty-one, Lactantius is concerned with linking divine providence to the divine law and then an infraction of that law as deserving an angry response; second, with proving that God’s mercy is as important as his anger; and third, with further differentiating human and divine anger. At each turn, he seeks to anticipate his (imagined) opponents’ counter-arguments: what could provoke divine wrath? if God has anger, and the world is so full of faults, why has he not destroyed everything? and, finally, how can one ascribe to the supreme god an attribute as base and as vicious as anger?

Viewed in this way, the structure of the treatise reveals the rhetorical and philosophical craft deployed by Lactantius. Similarly, the final two chapters can be read as a response to a perceived need to offer evidence, specifically in the form of proof-texts. Once again, Lactantius shows himself to be concerned with a philosophically-minded audience. Rather than sprinkle these final chapters with verses culled from the scriptures of the Hebrew and Christian Bibles, Lactantius provides

⁵⁷ ID 18.29: *Si Deo subiacet cogitare, sapere, intelligere, providere, praestare, ex omnibus autem animalibus homo solus haec habet...*

⁵⁸ ID 18.30 and 21, *passim*.

⁵⁹ Chapter eighteen is, at least, the last point at which we see Lactantius engaging with the philosophers in a concentrated way, although he mentions Cicero in chapter twenty-two, and “philosophers” in chapter twenty-three.

instead quotations plucked from the Sibylline books. His purpose in doing so is made explicit: although the testimony of the prophets is sufficient for Lactantius and those who share his beliefs, “it is not believed by those who make a display of wisdom by their hair and dress. Let us therefore seek those testimonies which they can either believe, or at any rate not oppose.”⁶⁰ Various testimonies are given, from a handful of different Sibyls (each with its own brief history); similarly in the next and final chapter, Lactantius again draws attention to this method by writing that because most “learned men” agree that there have been many Sibyls, he will include evidence from multiple Sibyls.⁶¹ He proceeds to give evidence in the form of paraphrases and quotations of the Cumaean Sibyl as well as others. In each proof text, the quotation serves to support the idea that the one, supreme God does in fact get angry, and that his anger is instigated by human actions and behaviors. The Sibylline oracles are thus appropriated by Lactantius and reoriented to his purpose, and this refashioning of the prophetic texts positions them as links between, on the one hand, the philosophical consensus that Lactantius had worked so carefully to demonstrate and to endorse, and on the other hand, the more radical view that understood that supreme god as possessing the emotion of anger.

Lactantius’ piecemeal approach to classical philosophy is not entirely novel, at least in comparison to his Latinate contemporaries; across the corpus of apologists writing in Latin throughout the earliest centuries of the common era, we see various tenets of Platonic philosophy, in particular, adopted and upheld by Christian authors. Some, like Tertullian, are more vocal about the evils they see embedded in philosophical discourse (and committed by those who engage in such discourse), but are nonetheless making use of philosophical arguments in the middle of their protestations.⁶² Elsewhere I have argued that Lactantius privileges not necessarily the “Christian,” but rather the rhetorical, as both the structure and argument of the text, and that his own comments on this point are illustrative of the ways in which *De ira Dei* is grounded in classical Roman rhetorical practice and theory.⁶³ By grounding his argument in rhetorical principles, Lactantius is able to claim that his *ratio* is stronger than that of the philosophers; indeed, he often returns to the need for wisdom and reason, together, to demarcate the appropriate perspective on divine wrath.⁶⁴

The influence of Cicero is pervasive and inescapable. We find the classical orator’s effect on Lactantius in the highly rhetorical nature of the treatise, and we see

⁶⁰ ID 22.5: *Quorum testimonia nobis quidem satis sunt: verum iis quoniam non credunt isti, qui sapientiam capillis et habitu iactant, ratione quoque et argumentis fuerant a nobis refellendi...Ea igitur quaeramus testimonia, quibus illi possint aut credere aut certe non repugnare.* On patristic authors’ use of these texts see Thompson 1952.

⁶¹ ID 22.7. For Lactantius’ use of the Sibylline oracles see Freund 2006 and Nicholson 2001.

⁶² See generally Barnes 1971.

⁶³ See Meinking 2013a.

⁶⁴ Passim, but clear examples can be found throughout chapters nine through seventeen.

lengthy fragments of *De natura deorum* paraphrased and sometimes quoted fully at key moments. Lactantius' reliance on Cicero is one of two facets of the text that make it both ordinary and unique as a product of intellectual culture in the early fourth century CE. On the one hand, the invocation of classical models is expected in a text of this period, it would only seem more curious if such models were absent. Yet on the other hand, Lactantius' appropriation of two, quite varied, Ciceronian works brings to the fore a tension between the text as a piece of rhetorical showmanship, targeted against the philosophers, and its simultaneous regurgitation of philosophical principles as encapsulated by Cicero. Lactantius' decision to channel his discussions of the Stoics and Epicureans through *De natura deorum* is itself informative and can only be read as intentional. If these philosophical schools were truly his intended targets, one wonders why he refrained from attacking them as they currently existed, and chose instead to recapitulate Cicero's Stoics and Epicureans (remembering, too, that the philosophers of *De natura deorum* are unlikely to be accurate representations of those schools as they existed in Cicero's own day).⁶⁵

Such a recasting of the classical debate not merely betrays Lactantius' own indebtedness to intellectual traditions, but also helps to underscore the second way in which this treatise is both predictable and peculiar. Classical literature, whether in Greek or Latin, whether poetry or prose, was cited, quoted, and paraphrased by later writers to a sometimes dizzying degree—and used, in tandem, to demonstrate the veracity of an opinion. Quotation was not simply proof of erudition but also evidence of a point; to have the weight of antiquity on one's side was to have excellent support for an argument. The invocation of model and method that we see in Lactantius has parallels in other writers, both Christian and non-Christian of this period, but the use of Cicero to prove a theological point is relatively rare. This is particularly so in comparison to Graecophone authors, who more clearly and consistently make use of Plato, or some iteration of Platonic philosophy, to support their theological claims about the Christian God. Plato is key to the exegetical tradition, for it is through careful allegorical and figural readings of their sacred texts that Christians of the second and third centuries justify and explain their supreme god despite the difficulties posed by the text themselves.⁶⁶ The relationship is somewhat circular: the scriptures of the Hebrew and Christian Bibles represent the Judaeo-Christian God in anthropomorphic and anthropopathic terms, and in order to defend that god against the criticisms of philosophers who view him as another god akin to those of the Greek and Roman pantheons, Christian exegetes (and others) must bring to

⁶⁵ See for example Ingreneau 1998, Kendeffer 2000, Gigon 1979, Maslowski 1974, Casey 1980, Althoff 1999, Bufano 1951, Rapisarda 1946, Timothy 1973. See also Harvey 2003 and Micka 1943. Pohlenz 1909 includes a treatment of *De ira Dei*.

⁶⁶ On allegorical and figural reading across multiple traditions, see Dawson 2002, Dawson 1992, Finkelberg and Stroumsa 2003, Lamberton 2000, Lamberton 1989, Mitchell 2005, Mitchell 2002, Pépin 1958, Young 1997a, and Young 1997b.

those texts a hermeneutic that allows them to claim that this God can be aligned with the supreme god of that philosophical tradition.

Lactantius, as we have seen, has no qualms about adopting a series of such classical philosophical tenets, many of which he ascribes to Plato or the schools that developed out of and in response to Platonism. The areas to which he draws his reader's attention are those which are fundamental to a beginning sketch of the divine nature, and through Lactantius' discourse against atheists and those who, like Epicurus, deny that a divine providence governs the world, the similarities between the Christian God and the supreme god of the philosophers are brought to the fore: both exist, both are superior in every way, and both created and take care of the world and those who inhabit it. Interestingly, Lactantius glosses over some of the important facets of the divine nature relevant to this discussion. The immutability and impassibility of the supreme god are two such topics which one would expect to find explored here, not least because of their connection to his defense of divine anger. Lactantius' conspicuous omission of any mention of either suggests not his ignorance but rather his intentional disregard of the philosophical consensus on these points. Here again, he is instead content to approach the question through a passage from *De natura deorum*; by countering the Stoic claim that God has neither form nor figure, Lactantius discreetly (at least insofar as he does not devote much time or space to discussion) yet pointedly breaks from the classical philosophical tradition.

De ira Dei is surprising then, not just for the relatively rare claim its author makes about the reality of divine wrath, but also for the ways in which he plays with individual representatives of and ideas maintained within classical philosophical thought. For Lactantius, God's wrath does not involve an overturning of all previous philosophy (as one might expect), but rather the reorientation of ethical and practical philosophy based on a re-evaluation of the emotion of anger. Despite his dissatisfaction with philosophers generally and, especially, Epicurus, we find in Lactantius' upholding of key philosophical tenets that Plato and the Platonic tradition survive here in muted and diffused ways. Whether he meant to or not, and although the degree to which he might have been aware of it remains questionable, Lactantius did engage with the traditions against which he positioned himself in the treatise. In this way, he merits consideration alongside other authors of the third and fourth centuries. The particular ways in which Platonism exists in this text and others of his corpus can illuminate, by way of contrast, how the majority of Graecophone authors, Christian and non-Christian, reacted to Platonic philosophy; similarly Lactantius' and his Latinate contemporaries' relationship to Cicero, by way of comparison, can help to elucidate shifts in intellectual culture and doxographic links between Apuleius and Augustine.

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Libanius Versus Plato

Over the work of the sophist Libanius hovers the great shadow of Plato. This presence does not, however, involve any allegiance to Neoplatonism. Plato is invoked in solemn or familiar moments, because his writings are familiar. Sophists call on him not as a spiritual guide, but as an undisputed master of style. To them, Plato is the role philosophy can play in *paideia* conceived as a general rhetoric-dominated culture. The modern reader is overcome by the immense repertoire of formulas borrowed from Plato, many of whose passages are known by heart. Libanius' interests more particularly related to the *Protagoras*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Republic*, and the *Laws*. Two dialogues, however, *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*, are most often called upon, which is hardly surprising, since they deal with rhetoric and could not fail to interest those who were practicing and teaching it. A careful study shows at least 27 imitations of or allusions to the *Phaedrus*.¹ Of those, we have noted two that go beyond the mere reuse of expressions. Both concern mythology—the abduction of Oreithyia by Boreas near Ilissos² and the origin of the cicadas³—, which clearly shows that for Libanius, the philosophical content pales before the charm of Plato's prose. The fame of these mythological anecdotes has moreover made their content almost proverbial.

At a time when Neoplatonism was attracting a large number of philosophers with its religiosity, Libanius remained completely separate from that movement, although he had a close relationship with the emperor Julian, as well as with the philosophers Priscus and Maximus. It is difficult to identify the reasons behind that position. We can only discern what was not at the origin of that distance. One cannot accuse his commitment as a sophist: in his day, many cultured men claimed to be both orators and philosophers, beginning with Julian himself. One also cannot infer any aversion to the religious and deliberately mystical nature of Neoplatonism, since he did not avoid divinatory practices (far from it),⁴ often gave events a religious interpretation,⁵ and demonstrated true piety under painful circumstances.⁶ Libanius is a man of tradition, and his religiousness is only expressed relative to the Hellenic worship inherited from the past. This in no way rules out skepticism with regard to

1 Cf. Schouler 1984, 567–569.

2 Plato, *Phaedr.* 229b; *Or.* 11.223; *Decl.* 9.43; *Ep.* 1489.3. But Libanius, like all those who evoke this mythical intervention by Boreas, may also have been thinking of Herodotus 8.189.

3 Plato, *Phaedr.* 259b; *Or.* 12.95; *Or.* 25.19; *Decl.* 26.41; *Decl.* 32.25; *Ep.* 499.3; *Ep.* 1255.1. The sobriety of the cicadas is proverbial: Aristophanes, *Clouds* 1360.

4 *Or.* 1.173–174 and comments by Petit 1979, 257–258.

5 *Or.* 1.32 (easing of the storm), 66–69 (premonitory dream), 235–238 (attack by a madman); *Or.* 5.44–53 (collapse in the classroom).

6 For example, when his brother lost his sight: *Or.* 1.201.

the many beliefs and legends handed down by the literary texts or local forms of piety.⁷

If one were to add up the number of times authors are explicitly mentioned, Plato would come after Demosthenes and Homer, but just before Thucydides. He is in any case one of the pillars of Hellenic literary culture. One Alexander⁸ encourages young Antiochians to go to Rome to study Latin and law, which made it easier to reach the upper levels of the government. He himself followed that path, but the small profit he earned from those distant studies looked like a windfall for all those who were teaching Attic eloquence. Libanius felt that that assessor gravely insulted the Greek language and “delivered a war against Plato’s empire.”⁹ He offends the Hellenic gods, especially Athena, “the goddess who, thanks to the olive branch, obtained the land that gave birth to Erechtheus.”¹⁰ Plato symbolizes all of the grace of Hellenic literature.

Plato appears to be the philosopher *par excellence*, the model and master to whom all other philosophers refer. Although he is the symbol of philosophy, we must not forget those who devoted themselves to the discipline and refused to become slaves of pleasure, by also following Pythagoras’ recommendations.¹¹ When Libanius mentions the Hellenic training Julian received in his youth, then the influence the grammarian Nicocles had on the prince, he does not list any of the contemporaries who introduced him to rhetoric and philosophy, so as not to enter a delicate area, but he deems it admirable that his mind was shaped “by the infants of the gods, Socrates, Pythagoras, Plato, and all of the currents derived from them.”¹² When he calls on his countrymen to appease the emperor’s anger, he asks them to show that they are faithful followers of the traditional divinities, to whom their grammar tutors introduced them by making them explore the works of Hesiod and Homer, and to return to the teachings of Plato and Pythagoras, instead of allowing themselves to be dominated by the beliefs spread by their mothers, wives and servants—Christianity, of course¹³.

Plato is also associated with Pythagoras, as well as Aristotle, in a letter sent in 365 to the son of Himerius, who bore the prestigious name of Iamblichus and was a devotee of philosophy.¹⁴ This correspondent—related to Libanius, a former student of the sophist—lived in Antioch but was staying at one of his country properties at that time. Libanius congratulated him on this, for by living so far from the tumult of the cities, he was imitating the Muses, who, always residing in mountainous regions,

7 See the case of the myth of Daphne, in Schouler 1984, 759–462.

8 Probably Alexander 13, who was the assessor for the *consularis Syriae*, Severus 14 (numbers from the PLRE 1971).

9 *Or.* 40.6; cf. *Or.* 1.134–135.

10 *Or.* 40.9.

11 *Or.* 14.62.

12 *Or.* 15.28.

13 *Or.* 16.47.

14 *Ep.* 1466.

in no way suffered from the solitude, since they formed a chorus. They inspired Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle and his divine namesake. How could one believe that he lived in solitude, when he had those philosophers as companions and shared their meditations?

In 390, at the age of seventy-six, Libanius entrusted Hilarius 7, a philosopher born in Achaëa who was staying in Antioch and traveled to Greece, with two letters, one of which was sent to the Neoplatonist philosopher Priscus, who was also elderly.¹⁵ The old sophist expressed his regret that he could not, like his friend, once again make the crossing that would take him back to Hellenic soil, where encounters lead to spiritual oratorical discussions. But his letter was intended mainly to praise its recipient, described as the bright star of Greece, with his deep and complete knowledge of Plato and equally of his disciple Aristotle. Students gained wisdom after receiving his teachings. Libanius himself could have benefitted from the educational influence of that master, then in the prime of life. The letter ends with a mention of Julian, whom a divinity filled with wisdom, before making him a Roman emperor capable of pushing back the Persians. For Libanius, the ideas of Plato introduced to Julian by Priscus guided him in exercising power and leading wars, as well as in his final moments. “When, even as he was pushing back the Persians, he received that mortal blow, he felt it crucial that he appear in Priscus’ eyes to be fulfilling his duty.”¹⁶

Plato is associated with Hippocrates several times. The latter shed appropriate light for the educated on the diseases from which they might suffer. Datianus 1, an important figure who was in the highest levels of the government and protected Libanius when the latter feared being recalled to Constantinople, received a missive in 355 carried by Olympius 4, a former student of the sophist, a physician in love with philosophy and grammar: “He is your companion, just as he is that of Hippocrates and Plato.” These specific details could not fail to flatter a high-level government official such as Datianus, a former bath boy, trained as a notary by stenography, who had magnificent estates in Antioch, and what’s more, a Christian.¹⁷ Acacius 7, who lived in Cilicia, received many letters from Libanius, all permeated with friendly sentiments. In 357, his son, Tatianus, entered Libanius’ school, while he himself practiced and taught eloquence, and quite well it seems, since his Antiochian colleague, whom he described as the “height” of eloquence, returned the compliment. He escaped a serious illness, of which he provided a precise and orderly description that reveals both his knowledge of Hippocrates and his familiarity with Plato.¹⁸ One might think that the latter primarily gave a burst of style to that orator, who took an interest in medical texts but was also capable of writing poetry.¹⁹ In writing

¹⁵ *Ep.* 947 and 950.

¹⁶ *Ep.* 947.5.

¹⁷ *Ep.* 409.

¹⁸ *Ep.* 316.

¹⁹ *Ep.* 127.

a letter for Olympius 4 in 364,²⁰ the sophist remembers the dinners they attended and which brought eloquent and amusing guests together in Constantinople. He thinks his friend and former student is attending similar meals and is in particular seeing Themistius, to perfect his knowledge of Plato.

One of Libanius' greatest sources of pride is the resounding cries during his orations that compare him to Plato or Demosthenes. Pretending indignation, he reproaches his audience for daring to place his productions on the same level as those of his great ancestors. He even magnified that indignation by composing a *pro-lalia* on the question. We do not have the text of that *pro-lalia*, which is unfortunate, as it would have shown us what arguments he used as the basis for his admiration of both of those writers of prose.²¹

The philosophical content of Plato's work is not, however, ignored. While he stands out as a model in the art of writing, Plato also gives advice in the art of living. Thus, when his good friend Aristaenetus 1 lost his wife in 355, Libanius' first reaction was to write a consolation speech. He then gave up, fearing, despite his close knowledge of his friend, that he would reveal that he was unaware of certain aspects of the latter's personality. In any case, the citations meant to ease the pain that he intended to include in his speech, from Pindar, Simonides or the tragedians, were ones that he knew his friend knew and used for others. He thought that they had had an impact, and that otherwise, if he himself had not managed to overcome his discouragement, his friend would not be able to either. He preferred to distract him from his pain by sending him the story of his first teaching activities in Antioch.²² Upon learning that his friend was inconsolable, he wrote:

The style of your letters induces me to believe that you are a pupil of Plato, but the continued growth of your despondency within you, your hair let down in sorrow, and the appearance of your household, as though your wife's death occurred but yesterday—all this is certainly not like a devotee of Plato. Indeed it would be far better if you profited more from his teaching than from his eloquence. You believe that your present behavior is in harmony with your attitude towards her while she was alive, and that this is as pleasing to her now as it was then. Yet it seems to me that, though you never gave her cause for pain during her life, you are certainly doing so now after her death; for if she saw how you are ruining yourself, she would deeply lament that she gave occasion for such misfortune.²³

The welcome speech dedicated to the emperor Julian emphatically mentioned his very modest meals, but while receiving dining companions who were disciples of Plato. With the help of those philosophers he governed the Empire, and they, the wisest people on earth, were filled with joy when the sovereign gave them the fruit of his

²⁰ *Ep.* 1198.3 (translation Criore 2007, 301).

²¹ *Or.* 2.24 = fr. 17.

²² *Ep.* 405; letters written at the time of the death of the wife of Aristaenetus: 405, 414, 427, 430, 459, 473.

²³ *Ep.* 430.1–2; translation Norman 1992 (vol. 1), 379.

reflections: they were in the same position as Dike—Justice—who, in heaven, assists Zeus.²⁴ To evoke the moment when the young Julian “turned his attention to the beauty of philosophy and tasted the purest of waters,” and consequently rid himself of Christianity, Libanius returned to the language of Plato, the study of whom would elevate the young prince’s intelligence, study that was undertaken at the impetus of the gods. When, in the funeral eulogy, he again tells the story of Julian’s conversion, he paraphrases that same passage from the *Phaedrus*.²⁵ Athens, where Constantius II allowed him to study, was in his eyes the city that had given Plato and Demosthenes to the world and elevated every aspect of Hellenic culture to the highest level.²⁶ When Julian died, moans were heard throughout the entire universe, those of the Muses, “and also ours, added Libanius, each in relation to his specialty, the philosophers lamenting him who had accompanied them in the elucidation of Plato, and the orators lamenting the expert in their art as well as the art of providing commentary on discourse.”²⁷ Despite the emotion permeating his words, and his desire to illuminate the solidarity that binds the tenants of Hellenic culture, Libanius demonstrated astonishing precision in the description of Julian’s culture, which covered the three forms of literary activity: philosophy on the one hand, and rhetoric and its aide, grammar, on the other. This versatility in Julian and his ability to manage business were shared by several of his contemporaries, including his namesake, Iulianus 15. The latter was a philologist *par excellence*, who spoke both Latin and Greek, and was never absent when conversation turned to Plato or any other specialist in the stars. Libanius also praised his integrity, which was noticed when he was *consularis Phoenices*, Phoenicia being a province capable of enriching those who governed it. He was also an excellent orator and an expert in law.²⁸ Themistius was also praised, as he put the Platonic precepts into practice without distancing himself from business. His many students, who simultaneously learned to understand truth and progressed in the art of speaking, were quite happy. Those are in fact the two benefits he received from his knowledge of Plato: teaching noble ideas and expressing them in magnificent language. Libanius asserts that his own students learned rhetoric from him, but did not leave him without having heard such noble thoughts. Although he did not claim to be a Platonist, he was very keen to introduce them to the teachings of the sublime philosopher.²⁹ In a letter sent to the emperor, the sophist expressed his happiness at receiving a note of congratulations from one who embodied the successful conclusion of Plato’s research by combining power and philosophy.³⁰

24 *Or.* 13.44.

25 *Or.* 13.12–13; *Or.* 18.17–18; cf. Plato, *Phaedr.* 243d.

26 *Or.* 18.28–29: τῆς ἄλλης τῆς πολυειδοῦς σοφίας.

27 *Or.* 17.25–26.

28 *Ep.* 667 and 1296 to Themistius; *Ep.* 668 to Clearchus 1, who ended his career as proconsul.

29 *Ep.* 793.

30 *Ep.* 758.2.

In 357 Libanius wrote to Hierocles 3, former *consularis Syriae*, to give him news about Calicius, registered in his school. The latter carried out the order given to him by his father well: “He has indeed undertaken to study Plato’s works.”³¹ At the same time he was taking his first steps in rhetoric, the young man was also immersing himself in the style of Plato. In 361, Priscianus 1, who was a lawyer until then, no longer had time to read Plato once he was appointed *praeses Euphratensis*. But although his position drove the philosopher’s books out of his hands, Plato continued to inhabit his mind, and that is why he provides “such myths and such discourse” in his letters.³² In 365, Seleukos 1, who had shown himself too zealous regarding Julian, was relegated to one of his Pontus estates at the end of the military campaign in Persia. Libanius reprimanded him for complaining about the solitude:

That is the last thing that could happen to a man of culture. How would Plato, Demosthenes and the rest of that company, who are bound to stay with you wherever you like—how would they desert you? So commune with them, and write the history of the war... This is what made exile a light thing for Thucydides, too...³³

Plato appears as a leader in the chorus of great writers. Although he offered an extremely important philosophical message, it was the beauty of his prose that consoled the man of letters, keenly interested in grammar and rhetoric, then a disgraced civil servant.

In 388, a young man, Epiphanius 3, was encouraged by his father, Artemius, to leave school early to take a job in the *agentes in rebus*:³⁴ he left Homer, Demosthenes and Plato. Those are the three degrees of *paideia*: grammar, rhetoric, philosophy. The last step is clearly of a non-compulsory nature, but it is rare to avoid it, since the masters teaching the other two disciplines in any event quite often refer to the writings of Plato. Libanius reprimands the father, whom he had congratulated for acting as a benefactor to an orator close to the sophist:

Whereas you treat Theotecnus well because he practices eloquence, you do not plan to make your son another Theotecnus, but it annoys you that your son remains, such as he is, a young man. You do not see that moreover you waste money unnecessarily, that for us it would have been a sufficient profit if Epiphanius were of very great benefit for the city and its citizens.³⁵

³¹ *Ep.* 569.2.

³² *Ep.* 643.1.

³³ *Ep.* 1508.5–6; translation (English) Norman 1992 (vol. II), 293; (French) Cabouret, 169. On Seleukos, cf. Schouler 1985, 128–133.

³⁴ The *agentes in rebus*, who reported directly to the Master of the Offices, were government agents who traveled the provinces to carry official mail and conduct investigations. They are often referred to as “the eyes and ears” of the king, expression borrowed from Persian political language. By working in the government, the young man fled curial duty or escaped from the sophist’s profession, which his professor lamented.

³⁵ *Ep.* 910.3.

In 389, when he wrote a pamphlet against the Eastern imperial *comes* Eustathius 6, he accused the latter of feigning admiration for his own speeches, whereas in reality he was interested entirely scenic productions, “for which he had a love exceeding that stirred up by Plato.”³⁶

Cases of identified borrowing from the writings of Plato fall just short of ten:

1. Libanius, ironically commenting on Zenobius’ absence from the first readings he held in Antioch, reused Phaedo’s expression recounting Socrates’ final moments: “Plato, I think, was ill, I mean the good Zenobius.”³⁷
2. In the *Autobiography*, he asserts that he obeyed “one of Plato’s laws” when he resisted the temptation of suicide upon the news of Julian’s death.³⁸
3. To designate his friend Olympius 3, son of Pompeianus, he reiterated the expression used by Alcibiades in the *Symposium* to flatter, fairly pleasantly all things considered, Eryximachus, a doctor who was the son of a doctor: “Excellent man and the son of an excellent man, as Plato would have said.”³⁹
4. Another formula of praise is taken from the *Menexenus*. The remark of Plato is one of the maxims with which ceremonial speeches were readily adorned: “They became good people because they were born good people.”⁴⁰
5. The Egyptian poet-grammarian Eudaemon 3 was accused of having wronged Belus (sophist promoted to *praeses Arabiae* by Julian). Libanius regrets that his correspondent, thus guilty of an iniquity, did not suffer more than his victim, according to the theory developed by Socrates in the *Gorgias* and which Polus judges “strange (ἄτοπὰ γέ).”⁴¹
6. In a letter where he excuses his correspondent, Acacius 7, father of the student Tatianus, for having proffered a lie about his son, Libanius invokes in that epistolary banter the authority of Plato, who allows lies for reasons of State⁴². In the same letter, he uses the expression “a soul of gold,” which he takes from the *Gorgias*.⁴³
7. In endeavoring to reinfuse classical studies with brilliance, Libanius encourages those in power to honor those who study or teach them. He draws support from a perfectly-balanced maxim by Plato, which he quotes in its entirety: “And men

³⁶ *Or.* 54.75. The testimonial is unfortunately imprecise as to the existence of texts corresponding to the plays put on at the theater.

³⁷ *Ep.* 405.4; Plato, *Phaed.* 59b.

³⁸ *Or.* 1.135; Plato, *Phaed.* 62a: “But perhaps it will seem strange to you that this alone of all laws is without exception, and it never happens to mankind, as in other matters, that only at some times and for some persons it is better to die than to live; and it will perhaps seem strange to you that these human beings for whom it is better to die cannot without impiety do good to themselves, but must wait for some other benefactor.” (translation H.N. Fowler 1966).

³⁹ *Ep.* 238; Plato, *Symp.* 214b.

⁴⁰ *Or.* 59.10; Plato, *Menex.* 237a.

⁴¹ *Ep.* 167; Plato, *Gorg.* 472e.

⁴² *Ep.* 121.1; Plato, *Rep.* 3.389a.

⁴³ *Ep.* 121.3; cf. *Ep.* 254; Plato, *Gorg.* 486d.

practice that which they always honor, and they disregard that which is not honored (ἀσκεῖται δὴ τὸ ἀεὶ τιμώμενον, ἀμελεῖται δὲ τὸ ἀτιμαζόμενον).⁴⁴ When he enthusiastically describes how Julian welcomed the philosopher Maximus, he this time paraphrases that same passage from Plato. It is very significant that Libanius interprets Julian's attitude not as an homage to philosophy alone, but rather as encouragement universally addressed to both the young and old to engage in study so as to acquire *paideia*.⁴⁵

8. When Libanius was starting out in Constantinople, he found himself in an awkward position in his friendship with Nicocles, who preferred a Cappadocian to him. Dionysius 11, his protector, then sent him a veritable harangue filled with advice and quotes. Among the latter, there is one that is not explicitly connected to Plato, although he uses it by putting it in Phaedo's mouth: "It is not possible for a single man to defeat two opponents, not even for Heracles." The other, on the other hand, explicitly borrows a saying of Plato according to which "no trophy was ever hoisted by discouraged men."⁴⁶
9. While intransigent moralists were using Plato as a basis to condemn poetic or theatrical depictions giving the gods and heroes attitudes or sentiments deemed unworthy, Libanius came down firmly on the side of the poets. They had the merit of painting emotion and suffering, and glorifying bonds that are not created by blood, but through work done together. To his countrymen who accused his friend Olympius of favoring Libanius in his will at the expense of members of his own family, Libanius offered reproach for ignoring the power of the bonds of friendship:

Ask what the cause was that threw Achilles into tears and deprived him of sleep. It was not the dead man's [Patroclus'] family that came to mind, but the time spent together navigating and fighting, achieving the same successes either on board their ships or in the sacking of a city.⁴⁷

10. Plato is severely criticized for not having admitted that the heroes are furnished by the poets with human feeling: "I commend Achilles for having reacted as Homer shows us to the news that Patroclus was no longer."⁴⁸

Libanius rebelled against Plato, who wanted pictures of the gods and heroes to be painted devoid of any weakness;⁴⁹ Libanius saw nothing scandalous⁵⁰ in the depic-

⁴⁴ *Or.* 62.15; Plato *Rep.* 8.551a; cf. *Or.* 1.214; *Or.* 31.26.

⁴⁵ *Or.* 18.156.

⁴⁶ *Or.* 1.36; Plato, *Crit.* 108c.

⁴⁷ *Or.* 63.28.

⁴⁸ *Or.* 8.15.

⁴⁹ Plato, *Rep.* 3.388a–392a.

⁵⁰ *Or.* 64.73.

tion of Achilles twisted with pain over the body of Patrocles,⁵¹ of Penelope moaning,⁵² of an injured Aphrodite crying out.⁵³

Aelius Aristides, for whom he had much admiration, waged war against Plato.⁵⁴ He nevertheless based himself on the philosopher's arguments to discredit dance performances. Libanius pays homage to this predecessor while defending dancers, and reminds those who might be surprised by his position that Aristides in fact got his reputation from the force with which he was able to engage in controversy against the old authors.⁵⁵ By attacking Aristides on this point, he is targeting Plato. The pantomime, contrary to the assertions of his detractors, does not feminize viewers. And prohibiting performances on the grounds that they use female behavior as a subject for imitation inexorably leads to condemning the many poetic passages that have done the same. There is nothing degrading in showing the tears of Briseis, Penelope or Aphrodite, or the extravagant love of Pasiphaë, or, when the orchestra draws inspiration from comedies, the pains of childbirth.⁵⁶ Plato's judgments regarding the poets are rejected, as they obey requirements of moral purity that have no place in literary criticism.⁵⁷ According to Libanius, one must look for examples, not models, in the poetic misadventures of the myths.

In Libanius' day, the moral maxims borrowed from Plato henceforth belonged to a shared collection which integrated information present in many philosophers. For example, this is the case for immoderate desires and the dissatisfaction they cause becoming a source of unhappiness and enslavement.⁵⁸ This popularized form of philosophy also includes having affection for a person or city, or ardor for studies or a passion for discourse as a true amorous desire, an "eros"⁵⁹ and the pedagogical act as an exchange, the teacher giving and the student receiving.⁶⁰

An orator speaking to an audience calls to that audience by borrowing formulas from Plato from throughout the dialogues. One such example is ἄθρει⁶¹ and, in a more developed manner, "But we must not faint (οὐκ ἀποδειλιατέον)," which, coming from the second book of the *Republic*, appears in the moral discourse *On slavery*,

51 *Il.* 19.282.

52 *Od.* 4.716.

53 *Od.* 5.330.

54 Aelius Aristides *In Defense of Rhetoric, For the Four. Response to Capito*; cf. Pernot 1993, 315–338.

55 *Or.* 64 *For the Dancers* 5.

56 *Or.* 64 *For the Dancers* 72–75.

57 The debate continued in the sixth century with Choricus, who took inspiration from Libanius' *Or.* 64 to defend mime shows; cf. Schouler 2001, 240–280.

58 Cf. Schouler 1973, 128 and 132.

59 Cf. Schouler 1973, 65; for a city, cf. *Or.* 1.77; *Or.* 11.5.105 and 193; *Ep.* 114.2; for study or literary activity *Or.* 3.10; *Or.* 20.51; *Or.* 36.15; *Or.* 54.75–76; *Ep.* 911.3; this is Plato's language: τοῦ τῶν λόγων ἐραστοῦ *Phaedr.* 228c.

60 Cf. Schouler 1973, 111; *Or.* 19.5; *Or.* 51.17; *Or.* 62.6 and 32; *Ep.* 997.1.

61 Cf. Schouler 1973, 60. *Or.* 25.57; Plato, *Gorg.* 497d.

where it is also inserted into a maritime metaphor, “although the reef is difficult to bypass.”⁶²

Two declamations are completely permeated with Plato’s and Xenophon’s writings, since they relate to Socrates, the latter being seen primarily as a teacher (practically a sophist, to top it off!) exposed to the incomprehension of his countrymen. Libanius goes so far as to imitate the infamous Socratic questioning, and breathes life back into the methodical course of the master, which he describes as an *ὁδός*.⁶³ Not ignoring any details of the circumstances that surrounded Socrates’ life or any of the words that were spoken before his disciples, Libanius in fact moved Socrates into his own century. But it would be risky to believe that he was then yielding to any influence from the Neoplatonics, as has often been claimed. One could even say that Libanius makes a separation between Socrates and Plato. Socrates, as he is perceived by Libanius through the testimonials of Plato and Xenophon, taught true life lessons. In a sense, the morals that recommend Socrates to the sophist are relatively close to those taught by the Cynics, albeit with special emphasis on civic duties.

We have tried to discern what Plato could have represented for a man like Libanius, who was surely very cultured, but not very attracted to philosophy. He had intimate knowledge of the main writings of the philosopher, but nearly all of the references to his work concern style, not his philosophical analysis. And if the great shadow of Plato hovers over his writings, it is because the charm emanating from the philosopher’s works intensely seduced the man of letters, and in no way due to the effect of any philosophical allegiance. For Libanius, Plato, alongside Demosthenes and Thucydides, represents the height of Greek prose. Even in moral discourses or declamations related to morals, the references directly concerning Plato are exceptional, despite the imposing presence of Socrates. When Libanius plays the philosopher, one could say “Plato, I am sure, was ill.”

⁶² *Or.* 25.52; *Rep.* 2.374e (translation Shorey 1969); in *Crat.* 411a, Plato borrowed his metaphor from the fable: “however, since I have put on the lion helmet, I must not play the coward” (translation H.N. Fowler 1921).

⁶³ *Decl.* 1.86.

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Platonic Ethics and Politics in Themistius and Julian

After he rose to the position of Emperor in 362 CE, Julian did not include his former teacher,¹ Themistius, in his strategy for political reform, particularly as it was informed by religious principles, despite the fact that Themistius was one of the leading pagan orators and philosophers of the second half of the fourth century CE. Although Julian filled several offices with pagan officials who were philosophically educated, he seemingly overlooked Themistius.² Then again, Themistius didn't fare for the worse either: as Constantius II's former panegyrist, he was appointed in 355 to the senate of Constantinople,³ was its chairman from 357, and from 357 or 358 until the end of 359 was even proconsul of Constantinople,⁴ a position he retained under Julian.

Several reasons account for the distance between the former student and his teacher. It may be very important that Themistius, despite his lifelong avowal of paganism, advocated for tolerance⁵ of Christianity whereas Julian connected the restoration of the old Hellenic cult with increasing restrictions on Christianity.⁶ Beyond that, scholarship has continually emphasized differences in their political theory.⁷ What hasn't been considered however, is that these differences refer back to a difference in their interpretations of Plato. More precisely, that Themistius' political theory is based on the paradigm of *Republic* with a few Hellenistic elements (the king is a philosopher, he is god-like, and his main virtue is φιλανθρωπία), whereas Julian used

1 See *Jul. Or.* 6.5.257d; 259c. Apparently Julian was Themistius' student in 348/49 in Constantinople after Julian, along with his half brother Gallus, returned there from the 6 year long expulsion to Macellum in Cappadocia and shortly before Constantius sent him to Nikomedia. (See Daly 1980, 3; Brauch 1993b, 81f.; Vanderspoel 1995, 118; against the assertion that Julian was Themistius' student, Prato/Fornaro 1984, 47).

2 According to a note in the *Suda* (Adler 2, 690–91) Themistius was named prefect of Constantinople in 362. Generally it is assumed that this is an error and that Themistius only held this office once in 384 under Theodosius. (See Stegemann 1934, 1646; *PLRE* I 892; as well as Brauch 1993a and b). In a speech in which Themistius justified taking this position, he announced that it had been offered to him some time ago by an emperor who was inclined toward philosophy, but that he had declined it. (*Them. Or.* 34.14). Based on this reference, some scholars argue this emperor was Julian (e.g. Méridier 1906, 102–03, Daly 1971, 71, Daly 1983). Others believe that Julian did not make any offer to Themistius. (e.g. Bidez 1930, 388 n.10, Stegemann 1934, 1646, Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981, 56).

3 See *Dem. Const.* 20a2-b2, 23a1-b3.

4 For a general biography see *PLRE* I 889–894; for his role as proconsul see Daly 1983, 171–189.

5 Regarding Themistius' lifelong pleas for religious tolerance and pluralism see Daly 1971, 70–76; Vanderspoel 1995, 23–27; and Stenger 2009, 371–377.

6 For an overview, see Bidez 1930, 225–35, 291–99 and Bowersock 1978, 280–87.

7 See Dvornik 1966, 2, 659–672; Daly 1980; Mazza 1986, 86f.; Curta 1995, 206–208; Vanderspoel 1995, 115–34.

the *Laws* with elements from Iamblichus' philosophy (the king is only a guardian of the godly laws and needs help from gods, demons and philosophers, and his main virtue is piety, or εὐσέβεια).

This thesis will be demonstrated primarily by using Julian's *Letter to Themistius*, supplemented with citations from other works by Themistius and Julian.⁸

1. Themistius and the philosophers' kingdom of Plato's *Republic*

Julian's *Letter to Themistius* ostensibly precedes a letter from Themistius to Julian (Jul. *Or.* 6.1.253c1f.)⁹ after he was appointed as Caesar in Gaul on November 6, 355.¹⁰ In it he supposedly wrote that God had appointed him to this position that Heracles and Dionysos had held before him, both philosophers and kings who had purified the earth and sea from increasing wickedness. Julian should "shake aside every thought of leisure and comfort" and, after he had traded the *vita contemplativa* in for the *vita activa* (Jul. *Ep.* 9.262d), accomplish even bigger things than the lawgivers Solon, Pittacus, and Lycurgus (253c–254a). In the surviving oratories of Themistius,¹¹ Dionysius and Heracles were not mentioned in connection to the Pla-

8 The so-called *Risâlat*, a translated letter into Arabic from Themistius to Julian, has not been taken into consideration. According to Dvornik 1966, 667–69, Themistius modifies his political views here in response to Julian's letter. There are serious doubts, however, as to whether this letter is truly from Julian's time and not from Theodosius' time (see the Teubner edition Schenkl et al., vol. 3, 1974, 75–80; Penella 2000, 5 n.21 thinks these doubts are "probably hypercritical"). Section 1 and 2 of this article are primarily based on Chapter 4.1.1. of my 2012 Leipzig Habilitation, "*Freundschaft im Neuplatonismus. Politisches Denken und Sozialphilosophie von Plotin bis Kaiser Julian.*"

9 There was already a lively letter exchange between Julian and Themistius in the early 350 s (Jul. *Or.* 6.6.260a2f.; 12.266d3). According to Stertz 1976, 352 it is unlikely that Julian reacted to Themistius' panegyric about him with *Letter to Themistius* since Julian refers twice in this to "your letter" or "the most recent letter" (Jul. *Or.* 6.1.253c; Them. *Or.* 10.263b7f.). It is much more likely that it was a response to a congratulatory letter (with inadvertent encomiastic elements).

10 The fact that Themistius praises Julian for exchanging the philosophers' study room with the political stage speaks to this date (postulated for example by Bradbury in 1987) (Jul. *Or.* 6.9.262d). If Julian had already been Caesar for any length of time, this praise would have been inappropriate. Beyond that, if Julian had wanted to defend himself against political inaction at a time later than 355, he would have referenced his successful campaigns and administrative occupation of Gaul, which he accomplished as Caesar, rather than his support to friends and relatives for whom he took on extended travels (Jul. 6.259c–d). The tradition of the letter as being from Emperor Julian is the primary evidence for a date of 361 shortly after Constantius' death (proposed for example by Bidez 1929, 133–141). Nonetheless the fact that this comes from the most important manuscript of *Vossianus Graecus* 77, which is a later compilation and does not refer directly to Julian's edition, could indicate the possibility of error (Bradbury 1987, 242f.).

11 Dionysus as a god of vegetation (Them. *Or.* 16.211b7f.; *Or.* 21.248c5–7; *Or.* 30.349a8) and Heracles as a paradigm of virtue, where he roams the entire earth cleansing it of cruelty and wild animals.

tonic philosopher-kings whereas Solon, Pittacus, and Lycurgus, who were counted among the seven wise men, were praised that they didn't discuss logic, ideas, and astronomy theoretically but rather "enacted laws and taught what must be done and what may not be done, what should be chosen and what should be avoided" and established and stipulated that man as a member of a community is "obligated to care for the laws and the constitution of his native country," something they had demonstrated practically through their work as emissaries, in the army, or as politicians (Them. *Or.* 34.3).

Thus, in his letter, Themistius put forth the higher order of the *vita activa* over the *vita contemplativa* and a theory of kingship in which he legitimized the contemporary empire against the backdrop of the Platonic philosopher-kings of the *Republic*. According to Themistius, both the philosopher and the king, the former as theoretician and the latter as practitioner, have the same goal: do something good for humanity; however, the king has the power that the philosopher lacks (Them. *Or.* 1.9a7-c3). Plato thought that both figures align themselves with same paradigm of the god of the universe, whereby the philosopher has "speech and knowledge" (λόγος καὶ ἐπιστήμη) at his disposal and the king imitates him with "action and deed" (πρᾶγμα καὶ ἔργον) (*Or.* 2.34b5-c4). Contrary to what Plato suggests, however, philosophers should not be kings, but rather—in the Aristotelian sense—they should stand as advisors by the sides of kings, who should follow their advice (*Or.* 8.107c2-d3). With reference to the Platonic comparison of the philosopher with a dog, it is the philosopher's job to differentiate between friend and foe, between the virtuous and the vicious, to curb vice through admonishment and in this way to care for justice and harmony in the state (*Virt.* 459.24–35).¹² This comparison shows the philosopher as a guard, from whose circle, according to Plato the philosopher-king emerges. Therefore, in the end, according to Themistius the philosopher's charge is the same as the emperor's, but through official oration. And conversely, the more the ruler follows philosophical advice, the more he becomes a philosopher. Thus Themistius praises almost every emperor explicitly as a philosopher and as the realization of the Platonic philosopher-king (e. g. Constantius, *Or.* 2.40a4-b2; cf. 34b7–9).¹³

Consequently, one can say that the Aristotelian dichotomy between advisory philosophy and executive politics is determined by the factual political role of philosopher and king. At the heart of this dichotomy lies the implicit focus on the ideal of the philosopher-kings in Plato's *Republic*: In the end, the king should act like a philosopher and the philosopher should think like a king.¹⁴ Often his speeches include the call from the *Republic* (Pl. *R.* 6.486b10–487a5) for a philosophical soul which he applies to the king: he must be young, congenial, have good powers of comprehen-

Humans subsequently deified him and brought him sacrifices as they would a demon or a god. (*Or.* 20.239d6–240a3, cf. *Or.* 22.280a–282c "The Choice of Heracles").

¹² Pagination according to Gildemeister/Bücheler 1872.

¹³ To the appropriate places for Jovian, Valens, Gratian, and Theodosius, cf. Colpi 1987, 113.

¹⁴ See Kabiersch 1960, 7; Blumenthal 1990, 114.

sion, a good memory and be the friend of the cardinal virtues of wisdom, justice, fortitude, and moderation (Them. *Orr.* 8.104d7 f.; 17.215b9-c2; 34.16.223.17–21).

In his philosophy, Themistius argues—following his father and teacher, Eugenius and perhaps referencing Porphyry¹⁵—for a harmonization of Plato and Aristotle and sees the goal of philosophy in political philosophy; for Plato the “primary content, end point and high point” of all λόγοι is the “approximation of god as far as it is humanly possible (ὁμοίωσις θεοῦ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν ἀνθρώπῳ)” (*Or.* 2.32d3–6 with b9-c3).¹⁶ This is in Middle as well as Neoplatonism the standard formulization of the *summum bonum*. Plato pursued mathematics, astronomy and metaphysics in order to “bind the human assets with the godly assets and to allow the human πολιτεία to emulate the πολιτεία of the universe to the greatest extent possible (πρὸς τὴν τοῦ παντός πολιτείαν ὡς οἷόν τε μορφῶσαι τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην)” (*Or.* 34.5.215.12–20). This shows that according to Themistius, the individual’s ὁμοίωσις to god is transferred to politics: The human πολιτεία is the ὁμοίωσις to the cosmic πολιτεία.

According to Themistius, Aristoteles differentiates himself from Plato through a larger diversity of interests and level of detail, but all of his work refers to human goodness and is dependent upon it (Them. *Or.* 34.6.215.26–216.3). According to Aristotle, the goal of virtue is not the knowledge (γνώσις), but rather the practice (πρᾶξις) (*Or.* 2.31b10-c7, d6–32a4).¹⁷ Philosophizing is nothing more than “practicing virtue” (ἐργάζεσθαι ἀρετῆν) (31d5–6). Aristotle taught the subordination of ethics (*Or.* 34.6.216.3–11) and even cosmotheology to politics: The unmoved mover and all the stars would conduct political philosophy in that they “preserve nature as stable and unscathed for all eternity (ῥυομένους τὴν ὅλην φύσιν ἀκλινηὴ καὶ ἀκέραιον δι’ αἰῶνος)” (216.13–16). Thus for Themistius the Aristotelian cosmotheology is the model for human governance. For Themistius both Plato and Aristotle see theology, metaphysics, and general theoretical philosophy not as ends in themselves, but to be conducted for the sake of practical and political philosophy.

In Themistius’ “political theology” the emperor is the “flawless, perfect image of god (ἄγαλμα τοῦ θεοῦ)” in that, like god he is able to do more good than any other humans and imitates god in his domain (Them. *Or.* 1.9b4-c1). The ruler’s ὁμοίωσις to god consists solely in φιλανθρωπία, the virtue to do good for humanity, since he cannot share the other qualities of god such as eternal life and omnipotent powers

15 In terms of his theoretical philosophy see Schramm 2008, 217–19. Ballériaux 1996 took Eugenius to be a student of Iamblichus (referring to a letter from Julian’s corpus of letters from a student of Iamblichus “to the philosopher Eugenius” Jul. *Ep.* 193 Bidez-Cumont). Indeed unlike with Iamblichus, there is no evidence of Themistius concerning himself with Pythagoreanism or mathematics. Beyond that, Themistius reports of a philosopher from Sicyon who was still a student of Iamblichus, but because he valued the “fatherly patriarchal” (πάτριον καὶ ἀρχαίαν) aspects of the Academy and the Lyceum instead of the “new melody” (νέαν ᾠδὴν), went to Constantinople because here these were still taught by Themistius (*Or.* 23.295a8-b5).

16 See Plat. *Tht.* 176b; See also R. 6.500c; 10.613a; *Lg.* 4.716c.

17 See Arist. *NE* 1.1.1095a5; 2.1.1103b27; 3.1105a33-b4, 1105b9–18.

(*Or.* 6.78d7–79b2). The rule of the emperor should be an image of the cosmic order of god, determined by justice, peace, and goodness (*Or.* 15.188b5–189a7). In particular, in the stoic sense the emperor expresses the “law animate” (νόμος ἔμψυχος) and functions on earth as the “emanation” (ἀπορροή) of god and his φιλανθρωπία (*Or.* 5.64b4–8). In particular he mitigates the written law if it leads to undue hardship in individual cases (*Or.* 1.15b3–8). In contrast, the law-abiding subject desires to “live according to the law” and “emulate the king and pay attention to his behavior” (*In Met.* 12.20.8f.; 23).

This “political theology” has Dio Chrysostom as a model. In his first oration *On Kingship*, Chrysostom ascribes the earthly kingship to the rule of Zeus: Both are bound together through the “single statute and the single law” (ὑφ’ ἐνὶ θεσμῶ καὶ νόμῳ) and “partake in the same πολιτεία” (τῆς αὐτῆς μετέχοντας πολιτείας) (*Dio, Or.* 1.42–45). In his *Borysthenitic Discourse*, he appeals to Plato and Homer, calling the cosmos the “best kingship (βασιλεία)” of Zeus, which is governed “in accordance to the law with friendship and unity” and is the “model” (παράδειγμα) for earthly kingship (*Or.* 36.29–32). Even φιλανθρωπία as a central virtue of the king is predetermined by Dio insofar as the king rules over many people and is loved by them (*Or.* 1.15; 17–18). According to Themistius, however, φιλανθρωπία is not determined by the number of the king’s subjects, but rather according to his similarity to god. Dion links the stoic theory of κοσμόπολις in which humans are bound to the gods solely through a law of rationality, to the Platonic idea that the *summum bonum* in ethics and politics is the ὁμοίωσις to god.¹⁸ Themistius takes this Platonic-stoic amalgam but expands it with Aristotelian cosmotheology through which the πολιτεία of the gods can also be interpreted.

2. Julian and the rule of law of the Platonic Laws

In his *Letter to Themistius*, Julian responds to his former teacher beginning with his privileging of the *vita activa* over the *vita contemplativa*. According to Julian, the philosopher could be “through the education of philosophers, even if it’s only three or four, of greater benefit to many people than several kings together” (*Jul. Or.* 6.11.266a5-b1). In this way almost all philosophical schools harken back to Socrates whereas during Alexander’s victories, virtue increased neither in any polity nor in any individual (10.264c3-d8).

In this sense Julian’s letter corrects Themistius’ interpretation of Aristotle’s *Politics* 7.3: According to Themistius, Aristotle praises good action (εὐπραγία), specifically the practical life (πρακτικὸς βίος) and the “architects of good deeds” (καλῶν πράξεων ἀρχιτέκτονας), which he ostensibly identified with kings (*Arist. Pol.* 7.3.1325b14–16, 21–23). Julian wrote out the apparently abbreviated citation: “We most correctly use the word ‘act’ of those who are the architects of public affairs

¹⁸ See Forschner 2003, 128–156, particularly 139–152, and Schofield 1991, 57–64, 84–92.

by virtue of their intelligence” (ἐξωτερικῶν πράξεων τοὺς ταῖς διανοίαις ἀρχιτέκτονας), be it the lawgivers, the political philosophers and “all those who act according to intellect and reason (πάντας ἀπλῶς τοὺς νῶ τε καὶ λόγῳ πράττοντας)” and not “those who do the work themselves and those who transact the business of politics” (αὐτουργοὺς καὶ τῶν πολιτικῶν πράξεων ἐργάτας) (Jul. Or. 6.10.263d1–264a1).

With a detailed citation from Plato’s *Laws*¹⁹ about Cronus’ regime and its interpretation, Julian sums up his Neoplatonic image of kingship (Plat. *Lg.* 713c5–714a8; Jul. Or. 6.5.258a4–d7): Since Cronus recognized that no human can master human affairs without hubris and injustice, he established out of philanthropy that no man should be kings and rulers over people, but rather introduced a “better, god-like race, the demons.” According to Plato, this myth means that there is no relief from evil for any city “if a mortal rules instead of a god,” therefore one must “imitate (μιμῆσθαι) with all means the way of life that existed at the time of Cronus; and insofar as immortality is in us (ὄσον ἐν ἡμῖν ἀθανασίας ἐνεστί) one ought to be guided by it in our management of public and private affairs, of our houses and cities, calling the distribution of intellect (νοῦ διανομήν) law (νόμον).”

Julian interprets this myth with an eye to the king’s nature and virtue: “Even when one is by nature (τῆ φύσει) human, he must in his conduct (τῆ προαίρεσει) be godly and demonic by banning everything mortal and brutish from his soul, except what must remain to safeguard the needs of the body” (Jul. Or. 6.5.259a–b2). Here Julian employs Neoplatonic doctrines, specifically the doctrine of two human natures, the doctrine of *scala virtutum* and of *summum bonum*: man is, as he shows in his *Oration to Helios*, a “dual conflicted nature in which soul and body are compounded into one, the former godly, the latter dark and gloomy” (Jul. Or. 11.20.142d5–7).²⁰ Through his conduct or moral decision, the προαίρεσις, a human can turn toward the rational “godly” part of his soul and come to a ὁμοίωσις to god, if he progresses step by step on the *scale of virtues* to the highest level of virtue that it is possible for him to achieve. According to Porphyry who was the first to systematize Plotinus’ *scale of virtues*, the human who purifies himself in the sense of cathartic virtue, is one who is a “demonic human or also a good demon” and the pu-

19 Julian stated that he had learned the first *Laws* citation (4.709b7-c1) from Themistius (Or. 6.5.257d2–258a2). Presumably he also learned the subsequent citation from Themistius, as well. This can refer to the letter or their correspondence, as well as to the education he enjoyed from Themistius.

20 Iamblichus ascertained something similar for the soul: It possesses the trait to “grow together (συνφυομένην)” with everything and to “assimilate (ὁμοιοσύμνην)” itself to everything or to separate and pull back and this as much with the lowest spheres of becoming as well as the highest spheres of the gods (*Myst.* 2.2.69.1–7). According to Iamblichus’ psychology, in the soul, the “medium” between intellect and body, moments of the intellect and the body are effective at the same time, occupying a dual, changing essence and dual contradictory activities (For a more complete explanation see: Steel 1978, 52–69).

rified human, who occupies the theoretical virtues and whose soul is active in and to the intellect is a “god” (Porph. *Sent.* 32.89–93).²¹

According to Julian, Aristotle agrees with this interpretation of the *Laws* when he argues against the kingship as the best form of government, stating that a king can also have bad progeny and in this case would require “a virtue greater than belongs to human nature (μείζονος ἀρετῆς ἢ κατ’ ἀνθρωπίνην φύσιν)” to not bequeath his kingdom on his children (Jul. *Or.* 6.7.260d4–261a4 with Arist. *Pol.* 3.15.1286b22–27). A kingship requires “more than a man is capable of,” namely a “demonic nature” (Jul. *Or.* 6.7.260c5-d4). Instead of that, one may only cede the kingdom to the law—what Aristotle calls “intellect without ambition (ἄνευ ὀρέξεως νοῦς)”—and not to any man, because even in the best of men the intellect is bound up with appetite (θυμός) and desire (ἐπιθυμία), “the most ferocious animals” (Jul. *Or.* 6.7.261d2–6 with 261b5-c2 and Arist. *Pol.* 3.16.1287a28–32).

According to Julian, laws are only just if the lawgiver has purified his intellect and soul (τὸν νοῦν καθαρθεὶς καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν) and if he theoretically recognizes the “nature of the state (τὴν τῆς πολιτείας φύσιν)” and the “naturally just (τὸ δίκαιον ὄντι) ἐστὶ τῇ φύσει)” and unjust (Jul. *Or.* 6.8.262a1-b3). The perfection of the entire political system derives from the personal perfection of the lawgiver and his theoretical knowledge of ideas. He is in the position to “carry the knowledge of ideas concerning the correctly composed state and justice from there to here (ἐκεῖθεν ἐνταῦθα μεταφέρων)” and to determine common laws for all citizens independent of whether they are friend, foe, neighbor or relative (262b3–6).

It is likely that this idea comes from Iamblichus.²² In a letter to Agrippa, he called law the “king of all” and the “good for all in common (κοινὸν ἀγαθόν)” without which there could be no goodness. The law’s essence dictates what is good and forbids what is bad, extends to all kinds of virtue and pervades the entire public administration and individual way of life (Stob. 4.77.223.14–24).²³ The “official who should oversee the laws (τὸν προϊστάμενον τῶν νόμων ἄρχοντα),” the “preserver and guardian of the laws (σωτῆρα καὶ φύλακα τῶν νόμων)” must be “completely purified regarding the highest correctness of the laws (εἰλικρινῶς ἀποκεκαθαρμένον εἶναι πρὸς αὐτὴν τὴν ἄκραν τῶν νόμων ὀρθότητα)” and as far as it’s humanly possible, must be “immune from corruption (ἀδιάφθορον),” must not allow himself to be misled by ignorance, deceptions of frauds, and may not give in to violent influence or unjust excuse (223.24–224.7).

²¹ See Brisson 2005, 628–30.

²² Julian is the student of Maximus of Ephesos and Priscus, who were themselves students of Aidesios who was a student of Iamblichus. For Julian’s education in this Neoplatonic school see: Bidez 1930, 67–81, Bowersock 1978, 28f., Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981, 30–41, Bouffartigue 1992, 42–45.

²³ For the sources of the individual expressions, particularly the determining pieces see: O’Meara 2003, 99 n.52–54 and Dillon/Polleichtner 2009, 60.

It is likely that by the “preservers and guardians of the laws” Iamblichus was referring to the νομοφύλακες of the *Laws* upon whom the oversight of the laws and also a partial legislative process is incumbent if existing laws need to be expanded or revised.²⁴ The “complete purity regarding the highest correctness of the laws” probably refers to the pure intellectual understanding of intelligible good as it is manifested in the given laws. Proclus, referring to Plato’s explanation of νόμος as νοῦ διανομή, describes the legislative process as becoming a “particular intellect (νοῦς τίς ἐστὶ μερικὸς)” (Procl. *In R.* 1.238.22–25): the intellect through which the transcendental godly intellect is communicated to souls and through which they become “noeric” and perfect (Procl. *In Alc.* 65.20f.; *In Tim.* 2.313.3f.). One could thus say that for the Neoplatonists the laws are the transformation of the intelligible idea of good and just in rationally comprehensible, propositional commandments and prohibitions and that in this way the godly intellect actualizes itself in the intellect of humans and the human community.

This also explains the fundamental difference between Julian and Themistius even though they both call on Plato: Unlike Themistius, Julian does not determine the king to be the “law animate (νόμος ἔμψυχος)” that stands above all other laws, corrects existing laws, and decrees new ones. Rather, in the sense of Plato’s *Laws*, he subordinates the king completely to the law, before which all are equal²⁵ with his legitimacy coming from his rationality.²⁶ While Themistius speaks factually to the ideal of the philosopher-king from the *Republic*, Julian pursues the *Laws*’ second-best constitution²⁷ of the rule of law as the model for his politics. Julian thus rejects the role of philosopher-king that Themistius ascribes to him and places the law as the ideal ruler in the center of politics. He asks the philosophers and, through them, the gods for help, willingly subordinating himself to the philosophers as advisers who by virtue of their “godly, demonic nature” are more suited to be νομοφύλακες, or guardians of the godly laws.

In addition, there is a certain tension between the fact that Julian, due in particular to his factual positional power as Caesar and later as the sole Emperor, is

²⁴ See Plat. *Lg.* 6.752d2–755b6. Regarding the “Guardians of the Law” in detail and their historical models see Schöpsdau 2003, 363–367.

²⁵ See Jul. *Or.* 6.7.261b4f., d1 for the emphasis on the equality of all before the law. In his first, rather conventional panegyric to Constantius, Julian explicitly praises his σωφροσύνη, because he acts toward the people and the officials “like a citizen who obeys the laws, not like a king who controls the laws” (Jul. *Or.* 1.37.45c6–d2).

²⁶ A similar comparison can be found in Mazza 1986, 86f. and Curta 1995, 206–208, admittedly without reference to Plato’s *Laws*.

²⁷ See *Laws* 5.739b8–e7. According to this section, the best constitution is the polis of *Republic*, the third-best is the concrete implementation of the *Laws*’ constitution. In this sense Julian follows the second-best constitution of the *Laws* which was established by the wise forefathers and is the most possible to restore. The Neoplatonists distinguish between three levels of political reform: The first two levels is a reform described in the *Republic* and *Laws*, and the third level is the “reform” of the individual soul according to the model of the Platonic *Letters* (see O’Meara 2003, 91–94).

“ranked above” the philosophers (Jul. 6.267d1) and that in a certain sense, he is the only φύλαξ τῶν νόμων (6.7.261a6) since he, in contrast to the philosophers can politically accomplish the actual observation of the laws. Precisely because of the ruler’s voluntary subordination to the law and his claim of originating from the godly intellect any particular decision achieves a similar validity as that of the Hellenistic god-king since this is not contingent on his birth, but rather is based on the necessity of the godly law and on the advice of philosophers, who interpret the godly law according to their deeper understanding of ideas. In this sense he is the only politically legitimate φύλαξ τῶν νόμων since he preserves the godly law and its reason according to the interpretation of proven experts.

3. Julian and the Platonic “laws” of piety and moderation

Not only the constitutional framework of Julian’s kingship, but also laws he enacted are based on the *Laws*. It’s often pointed out that the most striking characteristic of Julian’s politics is his religious policy. O’Meara²⁸ has already pointed to some of the similarities between Julian’s religious policy and Plato’s *Laws*: old religious traditions take precedence over new ones; local gods are accepted and integrated into the religious system; piety has a political function and is publicly promoted.

Julian’s second *Panegyric in Honour of the Emperor Constantius* (*Or.* 3), presumably given in 359 when he is Caesar, documents this eminent meaning of piety quite well.²⁹ Here, piety (εὐσέβεια) is the emperor’s most important virtue: It is a “sprout of justice (τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἔκγονος)” which belongs to the “more godly form of the soul” therefore one may “not depart from the lawful worship of the gods (ἐννόμου θεραπείας)” nor condemn the worship of “something higher (κρεῖττον)” (Jul. 16.70d2–6).³⁰ Even a commander or king must “serve god like a priest or a prophet with due respect” and not see such a service as unworthy of his person (Jul. 14.68b7-c2). Thus according to Julian, the emperor should not only formally occupy the traditional office of *pontifex maximus* but should be a practicing priest himself through his personal conduct. Julian did this later as Emperor, which brought him the criticism and derision of his contemporaries (Amm. Marc. 22.14.3).

The “Mirror of Princes” of the second *Panegyric in Honour of Constantius* (Jul. 3.23–33.78b–93d) contains a catalog of virtues which refers back to Dio (Dio *Or.* 1.15–32). Like Dio, Julian divides the catalog between duties to the gods (ἐπιμέλεια θεῶν) and duties to men (ἐπιμέλεια ἀνθρώπων). In a more narrow sense this means φιλιανθρωπία such as proper conduct in war toward the city and rural

²⁸ O’Meara 2003, 120–123.

²⁹ For the debates surrounding the date see Curta 1995, 196 and Schorn 2008, 245.

³⁰ According to Lib. *Or.* 18.124 Julian ascribed the same role of piety for human life as the “keel (τρόπος)” is for a ship or the “foundation (θεμέλιος)” for a house.

populations and toward officials and soldiers. The first virtue is piety which means not only piety toward the gods but also piety toward one's parents whether they are living or already deceased, good will toward one's brothers, holy awe (αἰδώς) of the gods of kinship and clemency (πρᾶότης) toward foreigners and suppliants (Jul. 28.86a3–6).

This expanded definition of piety harkens back to a law from Plato's *Laws*. The preface to the legislative part in the *Laws* describes the task of σώφρων, which, through ὁμοίωσις θεῷ (“being like god”) accomplishes εὐδαιμονία. Being σώφρων requires the correct honoring of the gods (θεραπεία θεῶν) in sacrifices and prayers (Lg. 4.716d4–e1)—in a descending order from the Olympic gods and patron gods of cities, to subterranean gods, demons and heroes down to the family gods (717a6–b5)—, then “honoring parents who are still alive” since everything that one has in terms of property, body and soul one has received from them and owes them the oldest and greatest debt, and then the honoring of deceased parents (717d6–718a6). Finally, there is the duty toward offspring, relatives, friends, fellow citizens and the “services to foreigners that the gods demand” (718a7f.; 5.729b–730a). Julian replaces the pious respect of children with the good will amongst brothers, perhaps because neither he nor Constantius had children and their different relationships to their brothers (Constantius to Constans and Julian to Gallus) could be a good starting point for a critique of “impious” emperors. In the end the emphasis is on care for foreigners, the so-called φιλοξενία, a counterpoint to the relief for the poor which Christian rulers traditionally practiced.³¹

In his polemical satire *Misopogon*, in which Emperor Julian engages with the Antiochenes' rejection of his religious restoration policies and the politically controlled economic activities in Antioch in the winter of 362/363,³² Julian justifies his political activities with two laws from Plato's *Laws*: “The great, perfect man in the polis” who has earned the “virtue's victory prize” is the one who not only doesn't commit an injustice himself, but rather who also deters others from committing an injustice by reporting their injustices to the rulers and officials (ἄρχοντες) and, together with them, seeks punishment, or he's the one who not only possesses moderation, prudence and all other virtues, but who can also “share (μεταδιδόναι)” them to others (Jul. 25.353d5–354a6; Plat. Lg. 5.730d2–e3). The latter is the teacher of virtue, the former is a kind of “informer” whose actions are morally praiseworthy because he moves to punish the wrongdoer and morally improve him,³³ or averts further injustice and harm from the community.³⁴

³¹ See Kabiersch 1960, 66–68.

³² See Bidez 1930, 282–90, Bowersock 1978, 94–105, Rosen 2006, 280–344.

³³ For more on this idea of punishment which certainly refers to Protagoras cf. Plat. *Prt.* 324a3–c5 and Saunders 1981, 129–141 (esp. 134) and Manuwald 1999, 181f., 206f.; this theory of punishment is also found in Plato. See *Grg.* 476a–479e; *Lg.* 9.854de; 11.933e–934b.

According to the second law from the *Laws*, the rulers (ἄρχοντες) and the elders must practice “awe (αἰδώς)” and moderation (σωφροσύνη) “so that the masses who look up (ἀποβλέποντα) to them follow (κοσμήται)” (Jul. 354b6-c2; see Plat. *Lg.* 5.729b5-c2). Julian adds to Plato’s named elders the “rulers (ἄρχοντες)” or officials because for him the officials in particular must make their subordinates virtuous through their particular model of virtue. In the Platonic sense, the virtuous individual is the personal model of virtue for those who are not yet virtuous; they have to look to the virtue of the virtuous individual and to imitate him— similar to the way in which particular beautiful things look to the idea of beauty and attain their beauty from there. In a topical manner of speaking “moderation, the σωφροσύνη, is the κόσμος of the soul”, thus its “adornment” or its “organization.” This “organization” refers to the subordination of the non-rational to the rational part of the soul or, as Porphyry stated, “the agreement of the desiring part of the soul in accordance with the deliberation” (Porph. *Sent.* 32.11 f.). Like the catalog of virtues of the second *Panegyric in Honor of Constantius*, Julian’s definition of σωφροσύνη begins with piety and implies being law-abiding.³⁵ This is because σωφροσύνη means “to know that one must be subservient (δουλεύειν) to the gods and the laws” (Jul. *Or.* 12.9.343a3f.).

To summarize, the Platonic *Laws* urge Julian to piety in ways that extend not only to the gods, but also to family, relatives, and all people insofar as they are foreign or in need of protection, and beyond that to the didactic duty of those who are virtuous to educate the less virtuous through punishment, instruction and personal example. The role of the officials as mediators of virtue is stressed so that, according to the cited passage from the *Laws*, a hierarchy of virtuous individuals results: the “perfect man of the polis” at the top, then the officials, and finally the mass of subjects. This trichotomy has a distant resemblance to the *Republic*. To imagine the self-subordination of the ruler to the gods, philosophers and the law in Julian’s *Letter to Themistius* means that the virtue of the “perfect man” at the top of the polis is no higher ranked virtue than that of his officials or subjects. It is merely obedience to the gods, philosophers and laws, something he shares with the officials, and together they have the political authority to lead the subjects to obedience.

³⁴ From a pragmatic context the *agentes in rebus*, whose number and activity Julian limited, could be meant (See Lib. *Or.* 18.135–139). For a general overview of the *agentes in rebus* see Jones 1964, 578–582.

³⁵ Julian’s definition of σωφροσύνη (*Or.* 12.9.343a3-c2) also alludes to the contemporary political conditions in Antioch such as the warning that the poor should not incur any harm from the rich, which refers to the exorbitantly high cost of living that Julian attempted to “mitigate” by controlling the price of grain and financing grain imports (41.368c2–369b6), or abstaining from anger refers particularly to the exposure to negative reactions in Antioch to this policy.

4. Conclusion

Julian, unlike Themistius, does not maintain a formal dependence on the Platonic *Republic* for his image of society which identifies that ideal image with the social and political reality of the actual society in 400 CE. Rather Julian attempts—in alignment with the Neoplatonic reform program—³⁶ to take the “second-best” constitution from the Platonic *Laws* in order to reform the politics and society of his time. This means a no less ambitious project than the *Republic*, which is distinguished by the largest possible community sharing all goods (for example the well-known communities of women and children), attitudes and value judgments, and even sentiments.³⁷ Instead of that, in the polis of the *Laws* both private property and family are allowed. Common laws and education allow a community of many individuals, their attitudes and emotions regarding the common good.

From the point of view of a reform program which is modeled by the *Laws*, Themistius’ assertion of a nearly realized *Republic* seems like propaganda and flattery, as Julian’s first reaction to Themistius’ letter shows. He takes Themistius’ comparison of him to Dionysius, Heracles and the ideal of the philosopher-king—with the necessary politeness of the letter—for mere flattery or even lies (Jul. *Or.* 6.2.254b2f.). At the same time he takes Themistius’ philosophical arguments seriously and attempts to refute them. In the end he asks him, along with all philosophers, for help with his political challenge (Jul. 6.13.266d5–267a2). His stance toward Themistius can be described as ambivalent at best.

Conversely, Themistius may have felt thoroughly misunderstood. Because his theoretical orientation toward the philosophy kingdom of the *Republic*, which he freely avoids in favor of an Aristotelian dichotomy between advice giving philosophy and advice following politics is nothing more than a conventional topos of his panegyric. At the same time it might have been his strategy to show the emperor his real challenge with the exposition of his political ideal, in order to offer him his advice or even his critique. According to Themistius’ self understanding the accomplishments and challenges of philosophers include advice, critique and education of the people, as well as of his ruler, and the politically active creation of peace in war and harmony among the people (*Virt.* 44–47.458–462).³⁸ This is apparently a challenge from the emperor, which the philosopher, even though he has no political power, takes on solely through his speeches and his public example.

In this sense Themistius has the same effect as the “great, perfect man in the polis” cited in Julian’s *Misopogon*. He is not only himself virtuous, but he is also capable of teaching others about virtue even if it is through the conventions of the panegyric and within the confines of his political position. And Themistius fulfills the

³⁶ See n.204, above.

³⁷ See *Lg.* 5.739c6-d3.

³⁸ Cited by Gildemeister/Bücheler 1872.

task of philosophy defined by Julian in his *Letter to Themistius* and when he asks for Themistius' help as a philosopher. However, as we've seen even if one accepts this partial agreement, Themistius still diverges from Julian in the theory of kingship and above all the role that piety plays for the king. Thus it is not surprising that Julian sought philosophical advice more from Maximus of Ephesus and Priscus who, in the tradition of Iamblichus, taught the connection between theurgy and philosophy and who supported his preference for divination, sacrifices and other ritual practices. With his balanced and tolerant paganism, Themistius hardly came into consideration as an advisor and educator, even if Julian still valued him as a former teacher. For these reasons Julian could hardly entrust him with a higher office, even if he didn't revoke the one he already had. Despite their partial agreement the distance between the leading panegyric of the second half of the fourth century CE and the last pagan emperor was seemingly mutual.

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Plato (and Others) in the Orations of Themistius

Themistius was a pagan philosopher and a teacher of philosophy.¹ He was also a man of action who was admitted to the Constantinopolitan senate in 355, played an important role in recruiting new senators for the eastern capital, acted as a spokesman for Constantinople and its aristocracy, and held the office of urban prefect there in the middle 380s. He was prominent at the courts of emperors from Constantius II to Theodosius, though with an eclipse under Julian. Panegyrist of emperors, he was an “imperial propagandist” and “spin doctor.”² Because of both his political activism and his belief that the riches of philosophy should be widely broadcast in society, rhetoric was an important tool for him, and in his orations he proves himself a master rhetorician. Philostratus would have called him a philosopher who had the reputation of a sophist, φιλοσοφήσαντας ἐν δόξῃ τοῦ σοφιστεῦσαι, a designation the chronicler of the Second Sophistic gave to Dio Chrysostom, who influenced Themistius—although Themistius himself would not have been happy with the term “sophist.”³

Themistius’ orations are brimming with his *paideia*, and one manifestation of that is his use in them of a wide range of canonical authors. Among those authors, Plato is a major presence, in both the public and the private orations.⁴ Plato’s only serious competitor for first place in Themistius’ orations is Homer.⁵ While a full and close study of all the Platonic material in the orations would be useful, my own goal here is much more modest. First, I want to differentiate, apparently for the first time, two different levels of use of Platonic material in the orations, what I call a category-one and a category-two use. Secondly, I want to observe how

1 Fundamental for Themistian studies are Stegemann 1934, Dagron 1968, Vanderspoel 1995, and Heather/Moncur 2001. The quotations from Themistius in English are from Penella 2000 and Heather/Moncur 2001, with an occasional alteration; otherwise, they are my own, made for this article. When full textual details are not given in my discussions of Themistius’ sources, they may be found in Schenkl *et al.* 1965–1974, Maisano 1995, and Penella 2000.

2 The quoted terms are those of Heather/Moncur 2001, xiv; 38; for the date of Themistius’ urban prefecture, see Penella 2000, 35.

3 Philostr., *VS* 484–92. For Dio’s influence, see Colpi 1987, 149–63, and note Vanderspoel 1995, 7–9.

4 Most quotations of and allusions to Platonic and other texts in the orations can be found through the combined use of Schenkl *et al.* 1965–1974 and Maisano 1995; see also Colpi 1987. Pohlschmidt 1908 and Brons 1948 were important contributions on Plato in Themistius.

5 See Brons 1948, 141; Colpi 1987, 23, 89; Maisano 1994, 428–9. Brons ranks Plato’s presence in Themistius’ orations first and Homer’s second. Colpi gives Homer first place. Precise calculation will be affected by how many quotations and allusions are known to a given scholar, what is counted, and how the count is made. Already in the second century A.D. Plato “is second only to Homer both in the frequency of allusions to him and in the variety of contexts in which these allusions occur” (De Lacy 1974, 4).

Plato is often presented in the orations in the company of other authorities, not all of them philosophical. This co-presence of authorities with Plato can be understood to reflect a broad *paideia* that Themistius shared with his father Eugenius, also a philosopher.

1. Plato

What I call a category-one use of Plato is found in *Oration* 8, 21, and 23. In his *Oration* 8, Themistius is celebrating the beginning of the emperor Valens' fifth year of rule (March 28, 368). He lauds him by identifying him with the ideal ruler of Plato, *Laws* 4.709e-10c: the Athenian stranger there speaks of a *tyrannos* who would be νέος καὶ μνήμων καὶ εὐμαθὴς καὶ ἀνδρείος καὶ μεγαλοπρεπῆς φύσει, "young and with a good memory and quick to learn and courageous and magnanimous of nature." Plato goes on to add the quality σωφροσύνη, "temperance," and finally that such a ruler may be "fortunate" enough (εὐτυχής) to meet up with a good lawgiver. Themistius' formulation is βασιλέα νέον, σώφρονα, μεγαλοπρεπῆ, μνήμονα, πρᾶον, ἀνδρείον, εὐμαθῆ (8.105b; cf. 8.119d, at the end of the oration, in a different order). Plato could use the term *tyrannos* for his ideal ruler; in Themistius' day, this term had nothing but a negative meaning, so he replaces Plato's *tyrannos* with *basileus*.⁶ Themistius' formulation includes all of the Platonic qualities, minus the postscript "fortunate," and it adds πρᾶον, "mild." Themistius had already applied this description of the ideal ruler to Constantius, in full conformity with the Platonic terms, again minus the postscript (3.46a; 4.62a). And he would apply it twice to Theodosius, in somewhat altered forms, at 17.215c (νέον, σώφρονα, πρᾶον, ἡμερον, μεγαλοπρεπῆ, μεγαλόφρονα) and at 34 [XVI] (νέον, εὐμαθῆ, μεγαλοπρεπῆ, μεγαλόφρονα).

In *Oration* 8, the Platonic definition of the ideal ruler, differently than in the other orations that employ it, serves to give structure to the rest of the panegyric, from 105c to 120a. About 75 % of *Oration* 8 is structured around the adapted Platonic quotation. The quotation provides the heads of argument. The head "quick to learn" is elaborated from 105c through 109a. It is introduced with the words: ἐν τῷ νεανίᾳ τὸ φιλομαθὲς ... καὶ εὐμαθὲς. This quality is also repeatedly referred to as τὸ εὐπειθὲς or εὐπειθεια (106c, etc.). It is τὸ εὐάγωγον (106c) and τὸ εὐήκοον (108d) as well. The quality "young" is naturally associated with "quick to learn" in the phrase ἐν τῷ νεανίᾳ τὸ φιλομαθὲς, but understandably not further commented on: the "young" Valens, after all, was close to forty years old when *Oration* 8 was delivered.⁷ *Oration*

⁶ For *tyrannos* and *basileus* as opposing terms, see Them., *Or.* 2.35c.

⁷ Valens was "quinquagesimo anno contiguus" when he died in 378: Amm. Marc. 31.14.1. For the date of Them., *Or.* 8, March 28, 368, see Vanderspoel 1995, 168. Themistius' application of the Platonic *neos* to Constantius in *Or.* 3 and to Theodosius in *Ors.* 17 (cf. 17.214b; 216a) and 34 is also a stretch. Constantius was forty years old when *Or.* 3 was delivered in 357, and Theodosius approaching forty

8.109b-10c develops the head “with a good memory.” Themistius gives this quality a moral sense: the good ruler should remember those who treated him well and forget those who treated him badly—that is, he should avoid avenging himself on the latter when he comes to power. Next comes the added head “mildness” (110d-12a). *Oration* 8.112a-19b elaborates on the quality “magnanimous of nature”—τὸ μεγαλοπρεπές, to which Themistius adds τὸ ἐλευθέριον (“generous,” 112a). The emphasis here is on the benefits that have come to Valens’ subjects through his fiscal restraint, reduction of taxation, and high standards of administration. The last two Platonic heads, “courageous” and “temperate,” are handled very briefly (119a-20a), the former understood as courage in the face of Rome’s enemies. Although martial courage is ascribed to Valens, *Oration* 8 was not the ideal occasion for descanting on it—and Themistius does not do so—for the emperor appears already at the time of this oration to have been considering withdrawal from the war against the Goths and compromise with them.⁸ Finally, Valens’ temperance is simply said to be obvious (“what need is there of words when we see him subjecting his body with thirst, hunger,” etc.).

We turn now to *Oration* 21. In this piece, perhaps from the winter of 355–356, Themistius, who self-identified throughout his life first and foremost as a philosopher, claims that he does not deserve the title.⁹ He proves this by quoting and elaborating on a series of Platonic texts that define a philosopher. This oration, though, is clearly ironic, a λόγος ἐσηματισμένος; Themistius, defending himself against attacks of enemies who regarded his effective orating to large audiences as sophistical rather than philosophic, actually wants his current auditors to come to the conclusion that he indeed is a philosopher and hopes to equip them with the ability to spot the truly counterfeit philosophers in their midst. Again about seventy-five percent of *Oration* 21—it may be missing its conclusion—consists of a laying out and elaboration of what Themistius calls the Platonic “touchstones” (248a, βασιανιστήριον) that prove that an individual is a genuine philosopher. First, “let philosophers be the fruit of sacred marriages,” that is, “a union and joining of the best man with the best woman.” This criterion, derived from Plato, *Republic* 5.458e, 459d, is discussed from 21.248a to 250c. Next, from *Republic* 6.485a-b, “let it be agreed that the philosophical disposition must have knowledge—not all knowledge, but the kind that can reveal eternal being, being that is not set a-wandering by the process of generation and of decay,” Themistius discusses this criterion from 21.250c to 254b. From 254b to 257c the discussion centers around a Platonic criterion derived from *Republic* 6.486b: “you will observe whether a soul in its dealings with those who have a

when *Ors.* 17 and 34 were delivered in the middle 380s. For birth and oration dates, see *PLRE* I, svv. “Fl. Iul. Constantius 8” and “Flavius Theodosius 4”; Vanderspoele 1995, 250–1; Heather/Moncur 2001, 114, 285, 304.

⁸ Heather/Matthews 1991, 25.

⁹ On *Or.* 21 see Penella 2000, 14–16. On Themistius’ identity as a philosopher, Penella 2000, 4–5. In fact, of course, philosophy was only one of several facets of his identity. For a sophisticated analysis of those facets and their interconnections, see Heather/Moncur 2001.

desire for learning is social and gentle or unsocial and savage.” Fourthly, from *Republic* 6.485c, Themistius elaborates on Plato’s insistence that the true philosopher is marked by “the absence of falsehood, the determination to hate what is false and never under any circumstances to embrace it, and love of the truth” (21.257c-259d). The next head of discussion, from *Republic* 3.390d (with 6.485d and 6.498b), is that “we certainly cannot admit [into the ranks of true philosophers] the man who takes bribes or the lover of gain and money, otherwise all the desires of his soul will be diverted from learning to profit, like a stream diverted downhill. Whatever men rightfully inherit ... they must ... safeguard, thereby acquiring the habit of serving philosophy.” This occupies Themistius from 21.259d to 262a. Then, from 262a to the end of the oration, the discussion centers around the assertion, derived from Plato’s *Theaetetus* 173d, that philosophers must not be meddlesome or slanderers, for “whether anyone in the city is of low birth or has some evil trait that has been inherited from his ancestors, male or female—these are matters of which the true philosopher has no more knowledge than he does of the proverbial number of gallons of water in the ocean.” In *Oration* 21 Themistius refers to Plato as a lawgiver (νομοθέτης), whom he quotes as do lawyers in court (250c, 257c). The metaphor underscores Plato’s normativeness and Themistius’ ironic self-indictment before the court of public opinion. Themistius uses it of Plato (and other philosophers) elsewhere.¹⁰

Oration 23, from the very end of the 350s, is very similar in theme and structure to 21.¹¹ Themistius is again “on trial,” this time for being a sophist, that is, for addressing large audiences in ways and for purposes that do not befit philosophy—part of a larger discomfort about his being involved in public affairs.¹² But rather than ironically rejecting a title, as in 21, in 23 he sincerely defends himself against those who would impose the title “sophist” on him. Plato again provides the heads of argument, this time his definitions of the sophist, derived from *Sophist* 223c-24d, 231d-e, 233b-41b, 268c-d (cf. *Protagoras* 313c-14b), which Themistius cites and elaborates on to show that he does not deserve the opprobrious title. Our text of *Oration* 23 is incomplete, breaking off at 299c. The Platonic heads (all listed at 288a-b) are as follows: the sophist is (1) a “mercenary hunter of rich young men”; (2) “a merchant who sells items of knowledge for the soul”; (3) “a retailer” of such knowledge; (4) a man who is “self-employed and does the actual selling himself”; (5) “a verbal competitor, skilled in eristic”; and (6) a person who “forms opinions about the non-existent, uses appearances to imitate reality, fashions phantasms of the truth, and is a verbal wonderworker.” Themistius discusses Plato’s first definition

¹⁰ *Ors.* 2.31b; 8.104a; 23.287d–88a; 26.314d; cf. 33.366c. “Each philosopher has his own set of laws, which the founder of his philosophical system drafted” (*Or.* 23.287a). For the metaphor, cf. Lucian, *Piscator* 30.

¹¹ On *Or.* 23, see Vanderspoel 1995, 106–11; Penella 2000, 18–22.

¹² For Themistius’ critics, see Roduit 2006. The discomfort about his involvement in public affairs obtains, whether or not he held the Constantinopolitan proconsulship in the late 350s.

from 288c to 297b and Plato's second, third, and fourth definitions from 297b to the end of what survives (299c). The discussion is not finished at 299c. Nothing of Themistius' discussion of Plato's fifth and sixth definitions survives. One can see, though, that, as in *Oration 21*, the Platonic heads dominated and gave structure to the whole of *Oration 23*.

In *Orations 8, 21, and 23*, then, Plato is present in a very pronounced and special way: in these orations Platonic texts defining the ideal ruler, the philosopher, and the sophist respectively are heads of argument that provide the basic structure for most of the discussion in them. In contrast to this category-one use of Plato, the remaining Themistian orations display a category-two use, by which I mean that a range of Platonic material is randomly scattered through them, though without providing any fundamental structure. We typically find short¹³ and loose quotations of, or allusions to, passages of the Platonic dialogues. It is often more precise to speak of paraphrases rather than of quotations, or even of phrases and sentences merely inspired by something in Plato. Often we find only isolated Platonic vocabulary and terminology. Sometimes the debt to Plato is a more general one. Usually material of Platonic origin is not explicitly identified as such. Themistius expected his audience, at least the more learned of them, to recognize the source. This expectation of the literary culture of Themistius' day is expressed with unusual severity in a fragment of Eunapius' *History*: having quoted a line of "the comic writer" (Adesp. 519 Kock), Eunapius comments that "whoever does not recognize the writer is unworthy to read this history" (fr. 72.1 Blockley). While use of material from the Platonic dialogues can genuinely aid Themistius' argument, Platonic vocabulary or short phrases, often shorn from their original Platonic context, can also have a merely stylistic function in the orations, as Riccardo Maisano has noted, producing "*una enfatizzazione del tono, e di conseguenza una sottolineatura del messaggio.*"¹⁴ Themistius' orations contain references to Plato the man as well as to passages of his dialogues. We may also consider references in the orations to Socrates as Platonic material when they cause us to think in the first instance of passages in the Platonic dialogues. *Orations 8, 21, and 23* contain category-two as well as category-one uses of Platonic material. In these three orations the category-two uses of Platonic material assume a special

¹³ *Or.* 26.320d–21d, a passage of twenty-five Teubner lines that closely adapts Plato, *Cleitophon* 407b–8b, is an unusually sustained use of Plato's text. This Platonic passage was well known to imperial Greek writers (Maisano 1994, 423, and 2006, 478–9).

¹⁴ Maisano 1994, 427–8. Maisano 1994, 420–5, and 2006, 478–80, also note the commonness of Platonic textual material in imperial Greek writers and the derivation of much of it from mediating sources (school, other writers, florilegia), which is not to say that Themistius himself did not have direct knowledge of at least some of the Platonic corpus. Some Platonic vocabulary and phraseology had become so naturalized in high-register Greek that it may not have been consciously perceived of or intended as a Platonic import in certain passages of Themistius' orations; cf. Colpi 1987, 90. (Cf. the use of King James Bible or Shakespearean phraseology unawares in English.) But this will not significantly alter the fact of the large presence of consciously intended Platonic material in the orations.

function that they cannot have in the other orations: they keep reminding the audience of the Platonic heads of argument on which these three orations are based.

2. Plato and Aristotle

In what I have written so far, I have told the truth, but not the whole truth. I say this because Platonic material often appears in the Themistian orations in conjunction with other authorities, both philosophical and non-philosophical. These juxtapositions reflect Themistius' openness to a range of philosophers and his general *paideia*. His description of his father Eugenius' *paideia* in *Oration 20*, which is his funeral oration for his father, who died in the autumn of 355¹⁵—a *paideia* that is shared by Themistius himself¹⁶—will help us in our examination of Platonic material associated with other authorities in the orations.

We begin with the association of Plato and Aristotle. The names of the two philosophical masters are often juxtaposed in the *Orationes*, as if two parts of a unified whole. Themistius plucks flowers from the meadows of Plato and Aristotle (*Ors.* 4.54b; 15.185a).¹⁷ In *Oration 32*, the meadows of philosophy are precisely the precincts (τῶν περιβόλων) of Plato and Aristotle (357a). As a center of philosophical study, Constantinople is referred to as the hearth of the Muses of the two philosophers (6.84a). In giving some examples of works to be found in Constantius' Constantinopolitan library, Themistius begins by mentioning those of Plato and Aristotle (4.60a). He repeatedly says that contemporary emperors and their sons follow these two philosophers, or he urges them to do so (7.93b; 9.126d; 11.153d; 18.225a; 19.232d). Addressing the young Valentinian, son of Valens, Themistius remarks that “the famous Plato and the divine Aristotle will teach you along with me, those two philosophers who also taught the great Alexander” (9.124a). Here the two classical philosophers are so closely tied that Plato can be said to have taught Alexander—that is, indirectly, through what Aristotle had learned from him (cf. 18.225a). The philosophical pair are elsewhere cited together as philosophers who wrote for the whole body politic (26.325c). When Themistius wants examples of things philosophical in *Oration 21*, he goes twice to the pair Plato and Aristotle (21.258a; 259c). And in *Oration 31*.354a–b the two are adduced (Plato with his successors) as examples of philosophers whose views are still valued. Themistius mentions the Academy and the Lyceum together for their dislike of sophists (23.287b–c) and contrasts “the ancestral and ancient song of the Academy and the Lyceum” with Neoplatonism (23.295b). Finally, in the oration *On Virtue*, surviving only in Syriac, in which he preaches a sim-

¹⁵ Vanderspoel 1995, 89.

¹⁶ Penella 2000, 13–14; cf. Vanderspoel 1995, 91; Heather/Moncur 2001, 3.

¹⁷ For the metaphor, cf. Lucian, *Piscator* 6. Cf. Dion. Hal., *Dem.* 5: “[a] sweet breeze emanates from [Plato's style], as from the most fragrant of meadows”; 32: “not ... far wrong to compare the style of Plato to a country spot full of flowers” (trans. S. Usher).

ple Cynic sermon on virtue, he remarks that his normal authorities are Plato and Aristotle.¹⁸

In addition to this juxtaposing of the names of Plato and Aristotle in his orations, Themistius sometimes juxtaposes references to their works. The most important exhibit here is *Oration* 2.31a–33b: explaining how philosophy and virtue must be expressed in action and discussing the philosopher-king, Themistius marshals “laws” (that is, texts) of “the great Plato and Aristotle, son of Nicomachus,” beginning, though, with Aristotle and then moving on to Plato. (Is the priority of place here given to Aristotle accidental or significant?¹⁹) Less importantly, in *Oration* 1.15c an anonymous reference to an Aristotelian distinction occurs in the vicinity of anonymous uses of Platonic phraseology. In defending the acceptance of honors in 2.26d–27c, Themistius names Aristotle and quotes his fr. 88 Rose, then refers to the famous Pythian response about Socrates’ unique wisdom, which inevitably evokes Plato *Apology* 21a. An anonymous reference to Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* in *Oration* 21.259a is immediately followed by some words about Socrates that evoke the world of Plato’s dialogues. Such “soft” cases are worth noting, but my most important exhibits here—apart from the extended juxtaposition of Aristotelian and Platonic texts in 2.31a–33b—are the explicit juxtapositions of the names of Plato and Aristotle reviewed in the previous paragraph.

Themistius’ interest in Aristotle doubtless owed much to his father Eugenius. In *Oration* 20, Themistius refers to Aristotle as his father’s favorite (τὰ σὰ παιδικά). His father was Aristotle’s interpreter; and Aristotle, he tells his father’s soul, “now honors you [in the next world] and loves you more than he loves anyone else.” “The visage and image impressed [by Eugenius] upon the sacred mysteries [of philosophy],” writes Themistius, “were almost entirely (ὄλον μονοβού) those of Aristotle. Nevertheless (ὁμῶς), my father helped to open up all the shrines of the sages.” “Nevertheless” means “despite his primary allegiance to Aristotle.” “[Eugenius] always displayed the works of the great Plato right at the door [of Aristotle’s ‘temple’] and in the very temple precinct.” When passing (μεταβαίνων) from the Lyceum to the Academy,²⁰ Eugenius “would often *first* make a sacrifice (προθύσας) to Aristotle and [then] end by worshiping Plato” (*Or.* 20.234d; 235c–d). That is, he admired Plato, but did so from an Aristotelian base. The prefix pro- in προθύσας here hints at priority as much as at preliminary. Inna Kupreeva, in the wake of Omer Ballériaux, both of them students of Themistius’ Aristotelian paraphrases, has recently

¹⁸ I rely on the Latin translation by R. Mach in in Schenkl *et al.* 1965–1974, 3.8–71: *vos ad sapientiam Platonis et Aristotelis iam alias adducebam* (p. 11); *nec Platonem neque Aristotelem testes invoco, sed Antisthenem sapientem* (p. 43).

¹⁹ When Themistius names Plato and Aristotle in juxtaposition, the name Plato always occurs first except at *Ors.* 20.236b and 21.258a, 259c.

²⁰ My translation erroneously has “[w]hen passing from the Academy to the Lyceum” (Penella 2000, 54).

called Eugenius “a Platonist, possibly of Iamblichaeian persuasion.”²¹ This view has emerged in the context of the controversy among students of Themistius’ paraphrases about the nature and extent of Neoplatonic influence in them.²² But branding Eugenius a (Neo)platonist does not seem to me to be in accord with Themistius’ description of his father’s philosophical position in *Oration* 20.

As for Themistius himself, in *Oration* 2.26d, he calls Aristotle “the one whom I made my guide in life and in wisdom (ὄν προῦταξάμην τοῦ βίου τε καὶ τῆς σοφίας).” In *Oration* 32, on the doctrine of μετριοπάθεια, he is happy to be able to give special credit to Aristotle: “all philosophers,” he says, “admit the truth of what I say in practice”—namely, that the philosopher is affected by emotions but knows how to moderate them—“even though it is only adherents of the Lyceum who assent to it in theory” (358a). He goes on to say that “I admire many other things about Aristotle, but I especially admire and esteem the wisdom revealed in the fact that his teachings do not distance themselves from the creature”—he means human beings—“about which they are put forth” (358d–9a). Aristotle, that is, had a balanced view of human nature. In *Oration* 21.255d, Themistius imagines himself in his room studying the works of Aristotle and of his associate Theophrastus. Students come to him, he implies, to study Aristotle (23.293d). He insists (23.291a) that he will not claim that his own pupils are smarter than Aristotle’s; he also insists that they do not pretentiously carry on about συνώνυμα, ὁμώνυμα, and παρόνυμα, that is, technical terms from Aristotle’s *Categories* 1a1f. (cf. 21.256a). He is fond of seeing his counseling and tutoring relationship with emperors and their sons as analogous to the role of Aristotle as tutor to Alexander (3.45d; 8.106d; 8.120a; 10.130b; 16.204c; 18.225a; 34 [VIII]). And, of course, he wrote commentaries—more properly paraphrases—not on Plato, but on Aristotle.²³ If his father’s influence was important in shaping

21 Kupreeva 2010, 397; Ballériaux 1966. Ballériaux identifies the “philosopher Eugenius” who is the addressee of the Iamblichaeian Ps-Julian, *Ep.* 193 Bidez-Cumont (see Barnes 1978), which places the addressee in Iamblichaeian circles, with Themistius’ father. But this identification is far from guaranteed. Furthermore, Ballériaux must resort to what some would call special pleading in an attempt to explain why there is no allusion whatsoever to Iamblichaeian theurgy in Themistius’ description of his father’s philosophical interests (1966, 158–9).

22 One may follow Todd’s comments on the controversy (with bibliographical references) in Schroeder/Todd 1990, 33–4; Todd 1996, 2, 10, 186 n.1; Todd 2008, 6–7 n.23; 2012, 3. Cf. Sorabji in Todd 2003, 118. Todd’s most recent pronouncement (2012, 3) is that one cannot call Themistius “in any sense a Platonist, or Neo-platonist” despite “traces of Platonism in the paraphrases.” Heather and Moncur have branded several passages in the orations Neoplatonic (2001, 85n., 160n., 191n.). Whether or not that is the best way to describe them, the Themistius of the orations is overwhelmingly engaged with Platonic “scripture” (i.e., the text of the dialogues), not with developments in Platonic tradition. I am grateful to my colleague Dana Miller for discussing with me the three passages earmarked as Neoplatonic by Heather and Moncur.

23 Of course, so did many Platonists. Themistius has some remarks on his own paraphrases in *Or.* 23.294d–7a. For the paraphrases, see Kupreeva 2010, 399–400, and the bibliography at Todd 2003, 4, n.1. I do not consider Platonic references in the paraphrases in this study. The context there is

this primary philosophical allegiance of his, Aristotle would also have appealed to Themistius because of his emphasis on praxis, in line with Themistius' own active adult life.²⁴ None of this means, though, that we have to think of Themistius as a strict Peripatetic schoolman. Robert Todd, the student and translator of Themistian paraphrases, has felicitously called him “pro-Aristotelian.” Given his wealth and position in society, Themistius was “under no obligation to represent any particular viewpoint or to pursue his calling in response to social or institutional pressures.”²⁵

Why, then, given a certainly “pro-Aristotelian” Themistius, is there so much more Plato than Aristotle in the *Orations*? The first answer I would give is that the *Orations* are aimed at a broad Hellenic audience, and Plato was a more fundamental and more widely recognized Hellenic authority than Aristotle. Furthermore, Themistius is in high register linguistically and literarily in the *Orations*,²⁶ and Plato's dialogues are far more appropriate in that register than Aristotle's technical treatises would be.²⁷ There is the further advantage that Plato's dialogues bring in the world and the *exemplum* of Socrates, which was highly valued by Themistius and many other Greeks. Themistius could call himself a Socratic (*Or.* 25.310c, τοῖς ἀπὸ Σωκράτους) and could boast that Apollo had delivered the same judgment on him as the god had delivered on Socrates, namely, that there was no one wiser than Themistius (23.296a).²⁸ Peter Heather and David Moncur suggest yet another point. They contend that one reason why the pagan Themistius was so attractive to a number of fourth-century Christian emperors was that he could use his philosophical status “to make the claim that Hellenic values and his emperors' Christian religion were not fundamentally incompatible.” What advocates this compatibility is the fact that “Christian doctrine had evolved in a Mediterranean intellectual context where Platonising philosophical assumptions were generally accepted without question.”²⁹ So constant adverting to Plato would have been a way of alluding to the common ground shared by Christianity and Hellenic values.

Themistius doubtless agreed with his father Eugenius' view of the relation of Plato and Aristotle, which he explains in colorfully metaphorical language in *Oration* 20.235c–d:

καὶ οὐδὲ μετημφιέννυτο τὴν στολὴν μεταβαίνων εἰς τὴν Ἀκαδημίαν ἐκ τοῦ Λυκείου, ἀλλὰ πολ-
λάκις Ἀριστοτέλει προθύσας εἰς τὴν Πλάτωνος ἔληγεν ἱερούργιαν. χαλεπῶς δὲ εἶχεν αἰετὶ τοῖς

very different from that of the *Orations*. The paraphrases' purpose is to explicate Aristotle to his students. The argument is technical, requiring some doxography. They have no stylistic pretensions.

24 Cf. Colpi 1987, 98.

25 Todd 2012, 3.

26 Cf. Colpi 1987, 95–7.

27 For Plato as a major model of Attic prose, see, e.g., De Lacy 1974, *passim*; Rutherford 1998, 47–51. Despite their various criticisms of Plato, Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Pomp.* 1–2; *Comp.* 18, 25) and Aelius Aristides (*Ors.* 2.465; 3.73; 4.26 Lenz-Behr) admire him as a stylist.

28 For Themistius and Socrates, see further Colpi 1987, 91–2.

29 Heather/Moncur 2001, 62.

διοικοδομῆν ἐπιχειροῦσι καὶ διαφράττειν ἀτεχνῶς ταυτὶ τὰ ἐρκία. εἶναι γὰρ δὴ τῆς Πλάτωνος βακχείας τὴν Ἀριστοτέλους φιλοσοφίαν ἅμα μὲν γενναῖον προτέλειον, ἅμα δὲ θριγκόν τε καὶ φυλακτῆριον. ...τειγίσει τε Ἀριστοτέλη καὶ περιφράξασθαι πανταχόθεν καὶ ἀποκλείσει τὰς ἐπιβουλὰς τῶν δογμάτων.

When passing from the Lyceum to the Academy, [Eugenius] did not change his clothes; he would often first make a sacrifice to Aristotle and then end by worshiping Plato. He always got angry at those who actually tried to build a dividing wall between the two [sacred] enclosures and to separate them. For he felt that Aristotle's philosophy is an excellent preliminary rite to Plato's frenzy and, at the same time, a defensive wall and safeguard for it ... Aristotle provided fortifications for [Plato], fenced him in on all sides, and kept his teachings from being assailed by plots.

The “defensive wall” that Aristotle provided for Plato was his logic;³⁰ Eugenius, from his Aristotelian base, propagated this idea among Platonists. This openness to Plato in Eugenius and Themistius, the primary loyalty of both of whom was to Aristotle, is a counterpart to the Neoplatonic openness to Aristotle.³¹ In noting the common focus of Plato and Aristotle on the good, Themistius is happy to exclaim, in *Oration* 34 [VI]: “This is Plato's approach; is Aristotle's any different?” George Karamanolis has commented recently on the reasons for the Peripatetic interest in Plato: Plato was “the starting point of the Peripatetic tradition,” and he was essential to the understanding of Aristotle's thought. And like Platonists, Peripatetics often regard Plato and Aristotle as sharing a doctrine, “as forming one sound philosophical tradition, which they contrast with the other philosophical schools.”³²

Themistius wrote (20.236a) that his father “never quarreled with the wise Plato, nor did he think that Aristotle ever did so lightly (ῥαδίως).” *Oration* 8, addressed to Valens, contains a case in which Themistius himself quarreled with Plato and improved on him through Aristotle. Plato, Themistius says there (107c–d), was “divine and to be revered in everything else” (τὰ ἄλλα πάντα θεῖος καὶ αἰδοῖος), but he taught a “simply risky doctrine” (ἀτεχνῶς ἀποκεκινδυνευμένως προήκατο λόγον) when he affirmed that all would be well when philosophers became kings or kings became philosophers (e.g., R. 5.473c–d). Time refuted this teaching (ἐλήλεγκται), which Aristotle corrected with a small change in Plato's words (μικρὸν τὰ Πλάτωνος ῥήματα μεταθείς): all would be well, not when kings became philosophers, but when they listened to the advice of philosophers (Arist., fr. 647 Rose)—just as Roman emperors listened to Themistius. The only other explicit correction of Plato in the orations that I am aware of is in 1.13d. There he wants to emend Plato's assertion at *Phaedo* 77e that “perhaps there is a child in us” to “there is a noble young man in us.” Like

³⁰ Cf. Ballériaux 1996, 148–9.

³¹ Cf. Kupreeva's description of Themistius' philosophical position in his Aristotelian paraphrases as “an original synthesis within the broad tradition of concordance between Plato and Aristotle” (2010, 416). For Aristotle in Neoplatonism, see Wallis 1972, 23–5; Smith 2010, 344–5; Gerson 2006 with Sorabji 2006; Karamanolis 2006.

³² Karamanolis 2006, 36–7.

the Aristotle envisioned by Eugenius, then, the Themistius of the orations also did not correct Plato lightly.

3. Plato and Other Philosophers

Themistius' Aristotelian father Eugenius was open not just to Plato. Eugenius had regarded Socrates, who, according to Themistius, was sitting near him in the next world along with Plato and Aristotle, as "one who exemplified all [the] qualities of the true philosopher." In *Oration 20* Themistius praises the life of Socrates and says that "my father showed the world actions of his own that were very similar to those of Socrates" (20.234c, 239a–d). In addition to his appreciation of Socrates (largely known, of course, from Plato), Eugenius was "fully initiated in the sacred knowledge that Pythagoras of Samos brought back to Greece from Egypt and in what Zeno of Citium later taught in the Painted Stoa" (20.235c).³³ Eugenius "would often haul [even] Epicurus in" (20.235c) despite his ambivalence about him.³⁴

The comment Themistius makes on the oneness of philosophy in his description of Eugenius' philosophical interests is important:

τοῦτο μὲν δὴ οὐχ οὕτως ἄγασθαι ἦν. οὐδεμία γὰρ φιλοσοφία πόρρω ἀπώκισται καὶ μακρὰν ἀποσκηνοῖ τῆς ἐτέρας, ἀλλ' οἷον εὐρείας ὁδοῦ καὶ μεγάλης μικραὶ διασχίσεις τε καὶ ἀπονεύσεις, αἱ μὲν πλεῖον, αἱ δὲ ἔλαττον περιελθοῦσαι, εἰς ταῦτόν ὅμως πέρασιν συνθέουσιν.

This [hauling in of Epicurus] was not something to wonder at. For no philosophical school has settled far off from the others or keeps a great distance between itself and another school. The schools of philosophy are like side roads that, though they break away and deviate from a wide and long highway, nonetheless all reach the same point in the end, however much they wind about. (20.236a–b)

Themistius himself is affirming here that all philosophical rivers flow into the same ocean, as he does in *On Virtue*, where he again uses the roads metaphor.³⁵ Had he wanted to keep some distance from the affirmation, he could have said "For my fa-

³³ Ballériaux notes that "[d]'Aristote à Longin en passant par Numénios, on n'a cessé de rapprocher Pythagore et Platon" and also remarks on the past "*convergences stoïco-platoniciennes*" (1996, 151–2). But the only "convergences" explicitly alluded to by Themistius in *Or. 20* are the Aristotelian-Platonic ones.

³⁴ Consider Themistius' remarks more fully: "[Eugenius] considered [Epicurus] to be a clever fellow ... He would often haul Epicurus in, at least to show him to people who were unacquainted with him; but then he would very quickly strike him off of his list, having poured perfume on his head since he was a lover of pleasure." Eugenius' view could perhaps better be called ambivalence verging towards rejection. Ballériaux 1996, n.153, identified "having poured perfume on his head" as an echo of *Pl., R. 3.398a*.

³⁵ *Quibus rebus discere poteritis, quare philosophia, quamvis homines unum tantum—prosperitatem ac beatitudinem—sequi atque expetere doceat, tamen non unam sed multas vias patefecerit* (Mach's translation of the Syriac in Schenkl *et al.* 1965–1974, 3.21).

ther believed that no philosophical school has settled far off from the others” etc. and still fulfilled his encomiastic goals. His orations have indications of an interest in and an appreciation of the whole of Greek philosophy similar to those of his father. A reference at *Oration* 23.285a to Pythagoras and “his descendants” (τοῖς ἀπ’ ἐκείνου ἐγγόνους)—meaning all subsequent philosophers—suggests that the story of philosophy is, in some sense, the story of a single whole, although Themistius does also acknowledge that there are distinct schools with some one of which a philosopher normally associates himself (23.287a). His interest is in both philosophical teachings and philosophers as *exempla*. For him, as for his father, Epicurus was a special case: he could not approve of that philosopher’s maxim “live unnoticed” (26.324a) or of his positive view of bodily pleasure (34 [XXX]).

References in the orations to Socrates may be to nothing more than the Platonic Socrates. Plato is what Themistius has in mind at *Oration* 21.246c in the words “Socrates’ and Plato’s remarks” and at 26.321c in the words “pronouncements of Socrates and Plato.” When at 26.318b he writes “as [Socrates] himself says somewhere,” he means Plato at *Euthyphro* 3d. But, although inextricably connected to Plato, Socrates is also a distinct figure in the history of Greek philosophy. Thus Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato are cited by Themistius as three distinct figures who could lay claim to wisdom (21.256a). Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle are all representatives of the common philosophical experience of being envied and discredited (23.285b–c); compare 23.286b, where the list is Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Theophrastus. At 17.214d Plato and Pythagoras are mentioned together as supporters of the idea of the philosopher-king; compare 23.293b, where it is said that Plato and Pythagoras wrote on the tablet [of philosophy]. Themistius praises a teaching of Pythagoras on how to become an image of God (15.192b). He tells us that the people of the city of Rome wanted him to teach Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle there (23.298d). At 17.215b–c he mentions, among others, the Socratic Xenophon, Socrates himself, Plato, and the Pythagorean Archytas among advocates of bringing philosophy into the world of action; at 34 [X] the examples are Xenophon, Socrates, and Parmenides. Anaxagoras, the Academic Xenocrates, and the Cynic Diogenes are cited at 2.30c–d along with Plato as examples of tested virtue. In his oration *On Virtue*, Themistius preaches on the subject in Cynic style. The Cynic view is easier and more direct than that of Plato and Aristotle; and philosophy, like medicine, does not apply one remedy to all.³⁶ Themistius goes to Heraclitus as a source of wisdom (5.69b). And at 34 [XXVIII] the Skeptical Academic Carneades and the Peripatetic Critolaus are mentioned approvingly along with Plato and Aristotle as examples of philosophers who got involved in public life. For Themistius, the Stoics Chrysippus, Zeno, and Cleanthes as well as “all the choruses of the Lyceum and the Academy” are part of ancient wisdom (4.60c; cf. 2.27c).³⁷ He else-

³⁶ Schenkl *et al.* 1965–1974, 3.11, 23.

³⁷ This does not mean that Themistius cannot play a game of one-upmanship with Chrysippus (*Or.* 8.101d–102a).

where approvingly cites Zeno (8.108c, 13.171d) and names him, along with Aristotle and Socrates, in defense of the acceptance of honors (2.26d–27c). At 21.252a–b he mentions him as an admirable *exemplum* along with Xenocrates, Socrates, and Theophrastus. At 27.337b–c Zeno is said to evoke as much admiration as Plato and Aristotle. And Themistius, regarding the early Seven Wise Men as philosophers, follows the example of “Socrates and Aristotle and their predecessors the celebrated Seven Wise Men” in pursuing “a kind of philosophy” that is action-oriented (31.352c; cf. 34 [III–IV]).

Themistius’ orations contain two short surveys of the history of Greek philosophy, one at *Oration* 26.315d–20a and the other at 34 [I–VI]. Each has a rhetorical purpose in its own context. In 26, Themistius argues that he is not innovating in pushing eloquence out into the public arena; but even if he were innovating, this would not be inherently bad because sequential innovations have characterized the history of the arts and of philosophy. In 34, he wants to exalt the ethico-political and practical strand in Greek philosophy. Both of these short surveys show an appreciation of the trans-sectarian forward movement of the whole of philosophy. Philosophy can mean a school of philosophy; but it can also mean the whole of philosophy, in the course of which various schools contribute to desirable developments.

The emperor Julian, Themistius’ contemporary, puts forth in his *Oration* 9 [6].184c–188c Rochefort of the year 362, directed at “the uneducated Cynics,” a view of philosophy identical to that asserted by Themistius and ascribed to his father in *Oration* 20.236a–b.³⁸ Julian advises against dividing philosophy up into parts, because it is one. He uses the same metaphor that Themistius does in *Oration* 20: philosophers, at least those of the highest rank, travel towards a single endpoint (186a, ἐνός τινοῦ ἐφιέμενοι), but by different roads. In his letter written around January of 363³⁹ to a pagan priest (*Epp.* 89b.300d–301c Bidez), Julian specifies that the philosophers he has in mind are only those who have believed in the gods, in their concern with this world, and in their goodness. Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and the school of Chrysippus and Zeno are good; Epicurus and the Skeptic Pyrrho are bad. In the letter to the uneducated Cynics, Heraclitus, Pythagoras “and his school down to Theophrastus,” as well as Aristotle are mentioned with approval; so, too, the old Cynics Antisthenes, Diogenes, and Crates as well as Plato, Pythagoras, Socrates, the Peripatetics, and Zeno. One might compare the philosophical breadth of the fourth-century proconsul of Greece Hermogenes, extolled by Himerius in his *Oration* 48.22–4 Colonia: Hermogenes mastered logic and argument (presumably through Aristotle), gave a special place to Plato and Aristotle, knew the Stoics, the “views held in common” by Epicurus and Democritus, all the Academies, and the Cyrenaic school. He even gave some limited attention to Pyrrho. Finally, Themistius’ openness to the various schools of philosophy may be compared to his openness to the various religions

³⁸ For the date, Rochefort 1963, 1.143 in Bidez/Rochefort/Lacombrade 1932–1964.

³⁹ Bidez 1960, 102.

of the Empire, at least as it appears in *Oration* 5.68d–69a, delivered on January 1, 364, in which he encourages the Christian emperor Jovian’s religious toleration:⁴⁰

ὡσπερ δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν αὐτὸν ἀθλοθέτην ἴενται μὲν ἅπαντες οἱ σταδιεῖς, οὐ μὴν ἅπαντες τὸν αὐτὸν δρόμον ... οὕτως ἓνα μὲν ὑπολαμβάνεις τὸν μέγαν καὶ ἀληθινὸν ἀγωνοθέτην, ὁδὸν δ’ ἐπ’ αὐτὸν οὐ μίαν φέρειν ... συντετάσθαι δὲ ὅμως ἀπάσας πρὸς τὴν μίαν ἐκείνην καταγωγὴν, καὶ τὴν ἄμιλλαν ἡμῖν καὶ προθυμίαν οὐκ ἀλλαχόθεν ὑπάρχειν, ἀλλ’ ἐκ τοῦ μὴ τὴν αὐτὴν πάντας βαδίζειν. εἰ δὲ μίαν μὲν ἀτραπὸν ἐάσεις, ἀποικοδομήσεις δὲ τὰς λοιπὰς, ἐμφράξεις τὴν εὐρυχωρίαν τοῦ ἀγωνίσματος.

It is as if all the competitors in a race are hastening towards the same Judge but not all on the same course ... thus you realize that, while there exists only one Judge, mighty and true, there is no one road leading to him ... All, however, tend alike towards that one goal and our competition and our zealotry arise from no other reason than that we do not all travel by the same route. If you allow only one path, closing off the rest, you will fence off the broad field of competition.⁴¹

4. Plato and the Literary Canon

In *Oration* 20.236b–d Themistius remarks, not only on his father’s interest in philosophers, but also on his interest in the non-philosophical literary canon. Not surprisingly, Homer is mentioned first. Next, “the ancient stage” and “the theater.” Themistius mentions specifically Eugenius’ attraction to Menander, Euripides, and Sophocles. His father also valued Sappho and Pindar. These literary interests broadened Eugenius out. “He was not,” says Themistius, “a man of only one tongue. He was not made just for an audience of philosophers and unintelligible to rhetors or schoolteachers.” Engagement with the literary canon—which does not necessarily mean first-hand or deep knowledge of every canonical text alluded to—is something we would expect of any ancient writer who was a *παιδευμένος*; and we do indeed find many references to the canonical authors in Themistius’ orations. I am interested here, though, not in all such references, but only in those that are closely juxtaposed to Platonic material. When poetic texts are made directly to support Plato in Themistius, he is in line with Plutarch, who, in his treatise on how to study poetry, advocated the “conjuncting and reconciling [of] ... [poetic] sentiments with the doctrines of philosophers”; “our faith gains an added strength and dignity,” Plutarch re-

⁴⁰ See Heather/Moncur 2001, 154–8. They note that “[i]n *Oration* 5 ... [Themistius] came much closer to implying the broad equivalence between all ... cults as different approaches to the same God,” although “[o]n this topic, at other moments when it appeared in his speeches, Themistius was much more guarded.” Furthermore, in *Or.* 5.69a itself, there is an indication that not every approach to God is equally effective (“there is no one road leading to him, but one is more difficult to travel, another more direct, one steep and another level”).

⁴¹ Cf. Symmachus, *Relat.* 3.10 (A.D. 384), “*aequum est, quidquid omnes colunt, unum putari . . . uno itinere non potest perveniri ad tam grande secretum* [i.e., *verum*].” Here, too, the context is religious tolerance. Cracco Ruggini 1972, 179–80, n.8, and 1987, 202–3, has suggested that Themistius directly influenced Symmachus. Cameron 2011, 541, is cautious.

marked, “whenever the doctrines of Pythagoras and of Plato are in agreement with what is spoken on the stage or sung to the lyre or studied at school” (*Mor.* 35f, 36d, trans. F. C. Babbitt).

It is the juxtaposition of Homeric and Platonic material that is by far the most common in Themistius’ orations. Explicit evaluative statements about Homer set the tone. In *Oration* 33.366c, Themistius represents himself as “keeping company with the divine Plato, ... consorting with Aristotle, ... [and] being stubbornly bound to my Homer (Ὀμήρου δὲ ἔχων δυσπαλλάκτως).” Homer is “most wise,” σοφώτατος (6.77d). Themistius tells us at *Oration* 27.334d that he prefers Homer to the Athenian poets (or to the Athenian writers in general).⁴² He would want to read Homer at any cost, he says. Elsewhere (15.189a), after quoting Homer, *Odyssey* 19.109; 111–14, on the God-fearing king, he surmises that Plato is likely to have learned from Homer that resemblance to the divine derives from justice (Pl., *Tht.* 176b; cf. *R.* 6.501b). In a similar representation of Homer as source or at least as reinforcement, Themistius asserts at 34 [V] that Socrates praised Homer above everyone else because, in effect, Homer prioritized ethics (*Od.* 4.392), just as Socrates did. These affirmations in the orations remind us of the assertion about his father in *Oration* 20.236b: that the latter believed Homer to be the origin and source (προπάτορα καὶ ἀρχέγονον) of Plato’s and Aristotle’s teachings. And in fact at 6.79c Themistius calls the *Odyssey* “the philosophical poem” (ἡ φιλοσοφοῦσα ποίησις). Porphyry, too, thought of Homer as a philosopher.⁴³ And the Ps.-Plutarchan *On Homer*, written no earlier than the end of the second century A.D.,⁴⁴ derives Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines from Homer, along with much else. A less friendly description of Plato’s dependence on Homer, whom Plato criticized, may be found in Heraclitus’ *Homeric Problems* 17–18, perhaps from the late first or early second century:⁴⁵ here it is said that Plato stole ideas from Homer (17, νοσφισάμενος). If Themistius, like his father, believed Homer to be the source of Plato’s and Aristotle’s teachings, then the juxtaposition of Homer to Plato in the orations is of a different order from that of the juxtaposition of other canonical writers to Plato.

In advising on war, peace, and the treatment of barbarians in *Oration* 10.131a–32c, Themistius begins by drawing on Plato’s *Laws* and then turns to the *Iliad* to continue to develop his argument. In 13.173b he tells Gratian that “all that I say I do not say only on

⁴² The former understanding is Maisano’s (1995, 899), the latter mine (2000, 167). The Greek is: ἐγὼ οὖν τὰ ἐκείνου ἔπη ... τῶν Ἀθήνησι γενομένων ἀπάντων προτιμῶ. I understand τῶν Ἀθήνησι γενομένων ἀπάντων as what Smyth 1966, 281, calls a “compendious comparison.” We should keep in mind here the argumentative context in which this statement is made, that one does not have to go to Athens to learn rhetoric.

⁴³ The title of a lost work of his is Περὶ τῆς Ὀμήρου φιλοσοφίας (*Suda* Π 2098 Adler). He could write that Homer is more philosophical than Hesiod ([εἴρηκεν] φιλοσοφώτερον), that Homer philosophizes (φιλοσοφεῖ): Schrader 1880, 195, 200. Porphyry’s teacher Longinus wrote a treatise titled Εἰ φιλόσοφος Ὀμηρος (*Suda* Λ 645).

⁴⁴ Keaney/Lamberton 1996, 7–10, 29.

⁴⁵ Russell/Konstan 2005, xi–xiii.

my own. You see that I say my words are those of Socrates, of Plato, of Homer; and when you listen to me, you listen to them.” *Oration 21*, we have seen, is structured around Platonic heads of argument. But in the course of it, Themistius frequently uses Homeric texts to help him develop his argument and discourse.⁴⁶ The intermittent turn to Homer in this oration is, as it were, hinted at just before the introduction of the first Platonic head of argument, when Themistius urges “us all ... [to] ask the wise Plato ... to disperse the mist from our eyes” (τὴν ἀγλὺν ἀποσκεδάσαι ἡμῖν τῶν ὀμμάτων, 21.247d). Dispersing mist from a person’s eyes is a Homeric metaphor.⁴⁷ Themistius calls directly on Plato here while obliquely alerting his audience through the Homeric metaphor to the upcoming Homeric undertones. And one can find other places in the orations where Platonic and Homeric quotes and allusions are juxtaposed, sometimes with their authors named, sometimes anonymously.⁴⁸

We may move now beyond Homer. Themistius opens *Oration 30*, a short encomium of farming, by appealing to Hesiod and calling himself a follower of Hesiod and the Muses (30.348c, ἡμᾶς Ἡσιόδῳ καὶ Μούσαις ἀκολουθοῦντας), Hesiod being the poet of peace and agriculture. Hesiod and Plato are quoted together at 4.62a. In 13.168c–70b and 28.341c–d, Themistius draws on Homer, Hesiod, and Plato together. In 30.351a, the three authors are brought together in a different way. Here Themistius says that Homer and Hesiod attest to how the gods favor the agricultural labors of good men, alluding to *Odyssey* 19.109–14 and to *Works and Days* 225–37. Many in his audience will have recognized the link to Plato, who discusses the two passages in *Republic* 2.363b–c. Themistius quotes Aeschylus after referring to Plato and quoting Homer (4.51b–52b). In a short section of 6 (namely, 77d–78b) there are allusions to Plato with a reference to Homer, a quotation of Pindar, and a negative example, the sons of Oedipus, drawn from tragedy (ἐν ταῖς τραγωδίαις). In 13.162c–65b quotations of Euripides and Homer are preceded and followed by Platonic quotations and allusions; and further down, at 13.170d–71a, a reference to an affirmation of the Platonic Socrates is followed by references to Sappho and Anacreon. Themistius tells us in 21.246b that “Hesiod, Pindar, and [the Platonic] Socrates tell the truth”; and in the same oration the elaboration of the Platonic heads of argument is aided by Theognis and Aristophanes (248d), by “the poets” (258c–d, in an epic quotation from an unknown writer), and by Aesop and Menander (262b–c). The opening of 22 draws on Homer and Theognis, accompanying a reference to the Platonic Socrates (264c–65c). *Oration 24*.307a–309c draws on the wisdom of Plato and the Platonic Socrates, Sophocles, Phocylides, Euripides, and Homer. In advice given to Theodosius and Gratian in 15.197d–199b, Themistius appeals to Homer, Tyrtaeus, and “philosophy” (15.198a, 199a), a term that would surely bring Plato to mind. At the beginning of 15 (184b–85b), addressed to the emperor Theodosius, Themistius ac-

⁴⁶ *Or.* 21.250a, 255a, 257a–b, 260d, 261d–62a, 263c–64b.

⁴⁷ *Il.* 5.127; 15.668; 20.341 (ἀπ’ ὀφθαλμῶν σκέδασ’ ἀγλύν).

⁴⁸ *Ors.* 1.6b–7a, 17a; 2.34c–35a; 4.62c–d; 5.64b–c, 66c–d; 7.91b–c; 11.142d–43a; 20.233d–34c, 237b–c; 26.330c.

knowledges Homer and Thucydides as archetypal narrators of war and Hesiod as an archetypal writer on peaceful activities. He nonetheless feels that he can successfully rival all of them with the enrichment provided by Plato and Aristotle. He speaks here of “the meadows of Plato and Aristotle” as consisting of “virgin blooms which no blade has touched,” alluding to Euripides, *Hippolytus* 73, to describe those meadows. He concludes by complimenting the emperor through the use of a quotation from Archilochus. In 4.49a–50b, Themistius uses material from Herodotus along with allusions to Homer and Plato. He can even transcend the Hellenic canon and conjoin a passage from the Old Testament with Platonic and Homeric material (11.147c–49a; cf. 7.89c–90a), reminding us of the plural religious paths he acknowledges in 5.68d–69a.

In discussing the Constantinopolitan library built up by Constantius (4.60a–c), Themistius first mentions, as examples of its holdings, Plato, Aristotle, Demosthenes, Isocrates, and Thucydides. He then gives a second sample of its holdings: commentators on Homer and Hesiod and also the works of Chrysippus, Zeno, Cleanthes, and “the full choruses” of the Lyceum and the Academy. One notes in both lists the juxtaposition of philosophical and non-philosophical authorities. After giving his two sample lists of the holdings of the library, Themistius names all these riches as, “in a word, an uncountable array of ancient wisdom” (ἐν βραχεῖ τε εἰπεῖν στίφος ἀνάριθμον ἀρχαίας σοφίας). The word is *sophia*, broader than *philosophia sensu stricto*. Στίφος ἀνάριθμον is a good way to describe a broad, open-ended canon, which included sub-canons,⁴⁹ and the commentaries and other aids that were of assistance in the reading of canonical texts. Canonical texts can reinforce one another; but they are not always in agreement, nor were they regarded as inerrant.⁵⁰ Plato is a special case: he can be thought of as belonging to a philosophical canon, like the one approved by his father, but also, because of his extraordinary linguistic and stylistic credentials, to a literary canon. So in my examples above, the philosophical Plato juxtaposed to literary figures may also be thought of as the literary Plato amongst his own.

To conclude: if we regard Themistius’ orations as a series of buildings, three of them (8, 21, and 23) have Platonic beams that provide the basic supports for their structures. All of them have Platonic fixtures that can be found randomly attached to any of the buildings’ surfaces. The Platonic material is sometimes clustered with other philosophical or literary authorities. We can find patterns in this clustering that reflect the broad *paideia* Themistius shared with his father.

⁴⁹ I have profited from Hägg 2010. Examples of sub-canons are the Ten Attic Orators and the Nine Lyric Poets.

⁵⁰ Thus Themistius can criticize Homer (*Or.* 6.79c, following Pl., *R.* 2.379c–d; 24.308b); possibly Hesiod (32.363a); Hesiod (22.276a–b, perhaps inspired by Pl., *Lys.* 215c f.); Euripides or “whoever in fact it is [viz., Sophocles] who wrote ‘Tyrants are wise through communion with wise men’” (6.72c and cf. 73a; cf. also Pl., *R.* 8.568a, *Theag.* 125b); and Plato himself (1.13d, 8.107c–d).

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Abbreviation

PLRE = *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, Volume 1, A.D. 260–395*, Arnold H. M. Jones / John Robert Martindale / John Morris (eds.), Cambridge, 1971.

Section 3: **Eusebius and the Cappadocian Fathers**

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The Platonism of Eusebius of Caesarea

To Averil Cameron

1. Introduction¹

Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 260/4–340) lived in an age of transition. To begin with, in Eusebius' lifetime the Roman Empire changes dramatically. The foundation of Constantinople by Constantine in 324 and its quick development thereafter as a cultural, political, and religious center is one well-known important change. More importantly, in Eusebius' lifetime Christianity ceases to be an outlaw religion that experiences persecution from the Roman authorities and becomes a state religion.² It is noteworthy that one of his two longest apologetic works, the *Preparation of the Gospel*, which must have been completed by 320, does not allude to persecution, while the other, earlier, work of his, the *Demonstration of the Gospel*, clearly does.³ There is, however, another sense of transition that is relevant in the case of Eusebius. He is an example of a Christian intellectual who also turns to embrace Platonist philosophy to the extent that he, as I will try to show in this paper, qualifies as a Platonist philosopher in a certain sense; that is, in a sense that the two designations, Christian intellectual and Platonist philosopher, do not make a double identity, but, as is also the case with Eusebius' mentor, Origen, rather a unity of a sort. This unity is what I would like to investigate in this paper.

One important feature that permeates Eusebius' apologetic work is that he, like all early Christian thinkers, accepts Scripture as the primary authority that constitutes the yardstick by which the value and truth of anything else is to be judged.⁴ Like Justin, Clement, and Origen, to just name the most noteworthy early Christian thinkers, Eusebius employs precisely this criterion in his judgment of pagan culture,

1 The research involved in this paper goes back to the time of my doctoral thesis in Oxford under Michael Frede and to my Master's dissertation at King's College London under Averil Cameron. I am grateful to Averil for introducing me to the world of Christianity. To her is this paper dedicated. An earlier ancestor of this paper was commented by M. Edwards, who supplied me with written comments, which I used in the revision of the paper. I would like to thank the editor of the volume, Ryan Fowler, for his patience, for his encouragement, and his helpful remarks on a penultimate draft. The paper in its present form was written while I was holding a senior research fellowship at the Excellence Cluster "Topoi" in Berlin.

2 The relation between Constantine and Eusebius and the establishment of Christianity as a state religion has been the subject of several studies, most importantly, Barnes 1981 and Cameron 1999, 34–50.

3 See Barnes 1981, 71–72 with references to *Demonstratio* (3.5.78ff, 5.3.11 etc.).

4 On Eusebius' apologetic works as a whole, see Frede 1999. On the priority of Scripture as an authority against which pagan philosophy is judged, see Karamanolis 2013, 29–53.

which also includes philosophy; he critically reviews this inclusive pagan culture in his two complementary works, the *Preparation for the Gospel* and the *Demonstration of the Gospel*.⁵ This critical review is part of Eusebius' attempt to justify Christianity against pagan criticisms. One of them, recast at the beginning of the *Praeparatio* (1.2.1–3), shapes the work's overall perspective.⁶ According to this criticism that Eusebius now addresses, Christians abandoned their own tradition of Greek culture to instead espouse the Jewish tradition.⁷ This criticism was not first issued at the time of Eusebius; rather, it had been voiced earlier by pagans like Celsus and had been addressed already by Clement and Origen.⁸ Apparently the same criticism was still a threat at the time of Eusebius, presumably because it was repeated with new emphasis by a formidable pagan critic like Porphyry, one of Eusebius' main targets, if not the main one, as we shall see below.⁹ Eusebius sets out to address this renewed challenge by arguing first that Christianity is superior to pagan culture and philosophy and also by attempting to demonstrate that the best part of Greek culture is in agreement with Christianity and has anticipated some of its elements because it used to draw on Hebrew wisdom.

Eusebius carries out his argument in stages in the *Praeparatio*. In books 1 to 10 he sets out to argue first the irrational character of popular Greek beliefs and customs (books 1–6) and the superiority of the Jewish views and of Jewish theology most especially (books 7–10). In books 11 to 15, though, Eusebius proceeds to show that the philosophy of Plato is quite unlike the rest of the Greek culture and philosophy, which is why in these books Eusebius criticizes philosophers other than Plato, such as Aristotle, the Stoics, the Sceptics, or the Epicureans.

Eusebius' appeal to Plato marks a juncture point in the *Praeparatio*. While he thoroughly criticizes Greek culture and philosophy in books 1 to 10 and also 13 to 15, yet in books 11 to 13 Eusebius openly praises Plato's philosophy. The keynote is voiced at the beginning of book 11 of the *Praeparatio*: Plato is said to be the most superior philosopher (κορυφαῖον πάντων, *P.E.* 11.proem 3). This, of course, is a relative rather than an absolute statement. Plato is not said to be simply the best of all

5 Abbreviated in this article as *P.E.* and *D.E.*; Eusebius himself tells us that the two works are complementary (*P.E.* 15.1.8, 15.62.16–18). From the two works the *P.E.* is extant in its entirety (15 books), while from the *D.E.* only the first ten books and part of the fifteenth out of the original twenty have come down to us. See the general introduction to the French edition in *Sources Chrétienne* (SC) by J. Sirinelli 1974, Frede 1999, 223–250, and (specifically about the *P.E.*) also Johnson 2006.

6 The other criticism mentioned in the *Praeparatio*, which is, however, addressed in the *Demonstratio* is the irrational and undemonstrated character of Christianity. See the title of *P.E.* 1.3: "That we did not choose without examination to follow the doctrines of the word of salvation."

7 On this criticism, which features at the beginning of the *Praeparatio*, and the way Eusebius sets out to address it, see Frede 1999, 241–243 and also Opitz 1935, 5–6, Berkhof 1939, 41–46.

8 Clement, *Stromata* 2.28–9, *Protrepticus* 10.89, Origen, *C. Celsum* 1.9, 3.39.

9 See *P.E.* 1.2.1, *D.E.* 1.1.12 and especially Eusebius' reply in *Ecclesiastical History* 6.19.4 (= Porphyry, *Against the Christians* fr. 39 Harnack), 6.19.10f. See further Johnson 2013, 277–279 and below section 3.

philosophers, but the best *pagan* philosopher and the best case of Greek intellectual, which makes him distinct in Greek culture as a whole. We need to remember here that Eusebius considers Christianity to be a philosophy, namely the philosophy of Christ, which, in his view, surpasses all others.¹⁰ On this matter, Eusebius continues a tradition that goes back to Justin, to Clement, to Tertullian, and of course, to his mentor, Origen.¹¹ Eusebius also continues a Christian tradition of appreciation of Platonic philosophy. His eloquent praise of Plato, however, is quite striking even within the Greek tradition.¹² Two questions are to be addressed here, first how Eusebius' pronouncement of Plato as the best of all pagan philosophers should be understood, and second, on what grounds Eusebius contrasts Plato's philosophy with the rest of Greek culture and philosophy.

The two questions are complementary. To begin with the former, the way Eusebius speaks, makes clear that the philosophy of Plato is the kind of philosophy that came closest to the truth as is articulated in Scripture; and for that reason, in his view, Plato can serve as a criterion for the alleged agreement between Greek Philosophy and Scripture. This assessment becomes clear quite early in the *Praeparatio*. Already in book 2, in a chapter with the title "How Plato thought of the Theology of the Ancients" (*P.E.* 2.7.1), Eusebius quotes Plato's statements in the *Republic* to the effect that one needs to have beliefs about divine beings for which there is no proof and also that the stories about gods, such as those about Cronus and Zeus which are told by the Greek poets, are awful and should not be believed (*Republic* 377e–379d). As the title of this chapter makes clear, Eusebius considers Plato as an ally in his criticism of Greek popular beliefs, which allegedly justifies the Christian rejection of them. Eusebius repeats this point throughout the *Praeparatio* (e.g. *P.E.* 13.1–2). In the beginning of book 11 of the *P.E.* Eusebius goes a step further; he appeals to Plato as a philosopher who both differs from Greek culture and who is also profoundly indebted to Hebrew wisdom. This view about Plato makes him assume the role of a second authority in Eusebius, as can be seen from what comes next in the *Praeparatio*, and this suggests, I submit, that Eusebius is a Platonist of a sort.

It is one of my objectives in this paper to investigate what this judgement of Eusebius about Plato precisely means. I would like to specify the sense in which Euse-

10 Eusebius speaks of the philosophy according to Christ (ἡ κατὰ Χριστὸν φιλοσοφία; *P.E.* 14.22.17; cf. *P.E.* 12.32.7), which he contrasts with the pagan understanding of philosophy. And he often points out that the latter is of little use (e.g. *P.E.* 15.10.7). In both respects Eusebius operates like the Christian thinkers of the second and the third century. See Karamanolis 2013, ch. 1, esp. 69–53.

11 Clement, *Strom.* 6.8.67.1; Justin speaks of Christianity as the perfection of philosophy, *Dial.* 8.1–2. Elsewhere Eusebius describes Christianity similarly, as the "highest philosophy" (*D.E.* 1.6.56); cf. Basil, *Letter* 8 (Loeb, vol. 1, p. 48 Deferrari), Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Mosis* 305b.

12 On the appreciation of Plato by early Christians see the classic work of Ivanka 1964. Clement, for instance, praises Plato as a reliable guide to the search of God (*Protrepticus* 6.68–69.1) and as a "friend of truth" (*Stromata* 5.10.66.3), but he is more modest in his praise than Eusebius. Also Lactantius calls Plato "the wisest of philosophers" (*Div. Inst.* 1.5.23). See my comments on Karamanolis 2013, 34–5, 43–44.

bius conceives Plato as an authority and determine the manner in which he appeals to Plato (section 2). I will claim that Eusebius does this first by means of defending the truthfulness of Plato's philosophy against all other philosophical schools, and second by taking sides within the discussion about the interpretation of Plato's philosophy that takes place among contemporary Platonists (section 3). Eusebius is particularly interested in Plato's views on first principles, which he construes, I will argue, in a way that Plato's doctrine squares with Eusebius' own views on Christian God (section 4).

2. Eusebius on Plato: Praise and Criticism

In his eleventh book of the *Praeparatio Evangelica* Eusebius sets out to make the case that Greek philosophers had taken over or, as he puts it, had stolen their doctrines from Hebrew wisdom. Eusebius had already announced that in book 10 (*P.E.* 10.1.3) and now moves to demonstrate this in the case of the best pagan philosopher, Plato (*P.E.* 11.proem).¹³ The heading of the second chapter of book 11 makes clear Eusebius' aim, namely "That the philosophy in accordance with Plato in its most important details follows (ἐπακολουθεῖν) the philosophy of Hebrews" (cf. *P.E.* 11.proem 2, 11.8.1).¹⁴ Eusebius goes on to substantiate this claim with reference to what he takes as the most important philosophical doctrines: these concern what qualifies as "being" and the existence of the intelligible realm (*P.E.* 11.9–12), the status of the highest God and the other divine entities (*P.E.* 11.13–23), the Forms (*P.E.* 11.24–25), the soul and its immortal nature (11.26–28), the conception of cosmogony (11.29–34), and the final judgment (11.35–38).

Eusebius' method of illustrating the alleged concord between Plato and Hebrew wisdom is to quote either Plato,¹⁵ or, as he says, an eminent Platonist interpreter such as Plutarch, Numenius, Atticus, Plotinus, or Porphyry on the one hand, and Scripture or its interpreters, such as Philo or Clement, on the other. Eusebius himself announces that method with regard to Plato in *P.E.* 11.pr. 4. This is, of course, in line with Eusebius' overall strategy in the *Praeparatio* and in the *Demonstratio*, which was to support his claims by extensive quotes from pagan and Hebrew sources. This is a well-known argumentative strategy in antiquity and becomes particularly widespread in late antiquity. Philosophers like Plutarch and Galen make abundant use of it; in their criticism against the Stoics, both Plutarch and Galen quote extensively from them.¹⁶ The same strategy was used by Christians like Clement (in his *Stromata*)

¹³ For the nature and the structure of the *P.E.* see J. Sirinelli 1974 and Frede 1999, 240 f.

¹⁴ As Frede 1999, 247 rightly suggests, the verb ἐπακολουθεῖν is ambiguous, as it can mean both "come after chronologically" and "follow someone's views." Eusebius' claim is right if the former is meant, but he clearly wants to suggest also the latter.

¹⁵ The most frequently cited Platonic dialogues are the *Timaeus*, the *Phaedo*, the *Republic*, and the *Laws*.

¹⁶ Earlier on, Philodemus (first c. BCE), follows the same strategy.

and Origen (in his *Contra Celsus*). The point of this strategy is, in the case of the views of opponents, to expose their mistakes and contradictions, or, in the case of an author they favor, to let this author speak directly without the mediation of interpretation. In either case the aim of this strategy is to impart a sense of objectivity to the reader.¹⁷

This sense of objectivity is corroborated by another means of conviction, Eusebius' display of learning. His knowledge of contemporary Platonism is quite striking. He knows not only a number of Platonists of the past, but also many who were more or less contemporaries of his, like Plotinus, Longinus, Amelius, and Porphyry. Eusebius calls them "new philosophers" (νέοι, *P.E.* 3.6.7, 11.18.26) or "contemporary ones" (καθ'ἑμᾶς, *P.E.* 15.20.8).¹⁸ Eusebius must have been at pains to get access to works as new as theirs and excerpt them. His knowledge of Plotinus in particular is unusual, since, from what we know, Plotinus was relatively unknown outside his circle in the early fourth century.¹⁹ This evidence is indicative of Eusebius' strong interest in Platonism. In fact Eusebius is not only interested in Platonism; as we will see in the following (sections 3–4), his selective use of Platonist works suggests a personal involvement in contemporary Platonist debates and a personal preference for some interpretations of Plato and the dislike of others.

Let me now focus on Eusebius' judgement of Plato. Eusebius praises Plato in various places within the eleventh book of the *P.E.* as an admirable philosopher (θαυμάσιος; *P.E.* 11.8.1, 11.9.5), one expressing himself in an admirable way (*P.E.* 11.21.7). Eusebius' formulation of praise shows that he appreciates two aspects of Plato: his philosophical views on the one hand, and his style on the other, being typical of his age in this regard.²⁰ For Eusebius, however, it is Plato's philosophy that counts most, and like most contemporary philosophers, especially Platonists, he maintains that Plato's philosophy amounts to a set of doctrines, such as the world's creation by a divine intellect (outlined in the *Timaeus*), the immortality of the soul (in the *Phaedo* and the *Timaeus*), the role of Forms in perceiving and in thinking, or the judgment of the souls in afterlife (both discussed in the *Republic*).²¹ Eusebius is similar with Platonists like Numenius, Alcinoüs, or Plotinus not only in conceiving of Plato's philosophy as a system of doctrines, but also in considering as his task to elucidate, de-

¹⁷ On the method of quotations in the *Praeparatio*, see Berkhof 1939, 52–53.

¹⁸ On the issue of philosophical works available to Eusebius in the library of Caesarea, see Grafton-Williams 2006, and concerning Platonist works, also Kalligas 2001, 584–598.

¹⁹ See Rist 1981, 159–163. Eusebius preserves a part of Plotinus' *Enneads* that is missing from all manuscripts of the *Enneads*, namely *Enn.* 4.7.8.28–4.7.8⁵.49, that is quoted in *P.E.* 15.10.

²⁰ As we know, Plato's works attracted much attention in late antiquity specifically for his literary merits, and indeed some of the students in Platonist schools were motivated by their desire to imitate Plato's style. See Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 19.20.4.

²¹ On the dominance of the dogmatic interpretation of Plato in late antiquity, see Karamanolis 2006, Introduction, 6–36.

find, and make the best possible sense of these doctrines.²² Eusebius, however, also differs from these Platonists, because he admires Plato for his doctrines on the grounds that he finds in them traces of truth that are fully fleshed out in the Scriptures, which is why, Eusebius claims, Plato can be used by Christians with profit (*P.E.* 12.5, 12.31, 14.10.7); for Eusebius it is in this sense that Plato is judged superior to all other pagan philosophers (*P.E.* 11.1.3) and his philosophy emerges as the only true philosophy of Hellenism.²³ Eusebius, however, comes also to argue that, when Plato departs from the views of Hebrew wisdom and follows alternative paths of inspiration for the construction of his doctrines, he cannot be trusted.²⁴

These two claims about Plato form a unity, as they make part of the same idea in Eusebius as well as in earlier Christian thinkers, according to which pagan wisdom draws its best elements from the ancient Hebrew one. The theme of dependency is a recurrent topic among early Christian thinkers.²⁵ We find it already in Justin, in Clement, in Origen, and also in Eusebius' contemporary Lactantius. There are two main versions of it. On the first version the Hebrew culture is considered more ancient and also superior to the Greek one, on the grounds that the former succeeded in arriving at the truth expressed in the Scriptures while the latter had a limited grasp of the truth, that is to the extent that Greek thinkers had drawn on the Hebrew Scriptures. On the second version, that we find mainly in Clement and perhaps also in Justin, there is a simultaneous dispensation of the Logos or the divine wisdom to both Hebrew and Greek culture, yet the former followed this wisdom more closely than the latter.²⁶ The difference between the two versions is not negligible. On the second version Greek philosophy and Hebrew tradition are taken to stand on the same footing, while on the first version the former is taken to be derivative from the latter. Both versions, however, converge in the view that Christianity is the fulfillment and perfection of the Logos and both are motivated by the view that Greek philosophy is inferior on the grounds that it fails to express the truth of the Logos in a number of philosophical issues, such as on cosmogony and especially on God.

Quite interestingly, in Eusebius we find both versions of the dependency theme. He accuses the Greeks of plagiarizing the wisdom of the so-called barbarians, which include the Hebrews (*P.E.* 10.4.28–29, 11. proem), and this, he claims, applies to Plato as well. If this accusation is true, Eusebius argues, Christians should no longer be

²² Platonist works with titles like *Didaskalikos tōn Platōnos dogmatōn*, of Alcinoos, or *De Platone et eius dogmate*, of Apuleius, reflect this attitude.

²³ ἀληθῆς φιλοσοφία; *Against Hierocles* 45.4, τὸν δὴ μόνον πάντων Ἑλλήνων ἀληθείας προθύρων ψαύσαντα; *P.E.* 13.14.3.

²⁴ Ὅτι μὴ πάντα ἐπιτυχῶς εἴρηται τῷ Πλάτωνι, διὸ οὐκ ἀλόγως τὴν κατ' αὐτὸν παρήτημεθα φιλοσοφίαν; *P.E.* 13.14.

²⁵ On this theme see Ridings 1995 and Boys-Stones 2001, 176–202. The use of this theme by Eusebius is extensively discussed by Johnson 2006, 55–93.

²⁶ See Clement, *Stromata* 5.41.5–44.1, cf. 1.12.57.6, 1.17.87.1–2. Justin's point of view on this issue has been long debated. See Andersen 1952–3, 157–198; Holte 1958, 110–168; and Edwards 1995, 262–280.

criticized for preferring the Hebrew tradition, since this is also what Plato did. This claim transpires one of the reasons why Christians adhered to the dependence view, namely because it enabled them to counter the pagan argument to the effect that Christians had abandoned an old tradition for a new; through their dependency claim Christians used to fend off the charge of novelty, that was a widespread pagan criticism against Christianity.²⁷ Christians did that by showing their appreciation of, and loyalty to, the best of the pagan tradition, which in their view was following the Jewish one.

Such a claim suggests that Christians took the Hebrew Scriptures to be the norm, and in this sense they were still exposed to the pagan criticism why this has to be so. Eusebius realized this, and this is why, I think, he, with regard to Plato, opted for the second, non-hierarchical version of the dependency claim. When Eusebius comes to discuss Plato's doctrine of intelligible entities, he claims that "the admirable Plato followed [the Hebrew prophets], as is clear from his own words, either as a result of hearing himself their doctrines...or because he himself discovered the nature of these things, being considered by God worthy of such knowledge" (*P.E.* 11.8.1).²⁸ Quite remarkably, Plato is credited here with independent access to Logos or the wisdom, which informs also the Scriptures. This attribution, of course, does not change the fact that Plato's philosophy is in agreement (συνδρομή) with Hebrew wisdom, but it does change the fact that the value of Plato, according to Eusebius, does not lie on that, since Plato is presented as also divinely inspired and in this sense he is put on the same footing with Hebrew wisdom.

This, however, needs to be qualified, because Plato, Eusebius suggests, is not as infallible as his pagan followers were claiming;²⁹ rather, he claims that some of Plato's claims are false, which makes Plato's philosophy only partly true. In book 13 of the *Praeparatio* Eusebius claims in chapter 14 "That Plato has not stated all things correctly: therefore is it not without reason that we have declines his philosophy and accepted the Hebrew prophecies." In Eusebius' view, one instance of Plato's mistaken view concerns the transmigration of the souls and also the view about the division of the soul (*P.E.* 13.16). Besides, Plato, Eusebius adds, accommodates views about love and the women that are at odds with the Mosaic views (*P.E.* 13.19–20). A clear indication of Plato's failure is the fact that he fell into contradictions (*P.E.* 13.14.6).

Eusebius applies this criticism much stronger to philosophers other than Plato, but, as I said, Plato is not exempt from it either. Here Eusebius follows a well-known

²⁷ Celsus, for instance, criticized Christianity for being a novelty (καινοτομία, Origen, *C. Celsum* 3.15). Similarly speaks also Plotinus, *Enn.* 2.9.711.

²⁸ Πλάτων ὁ θαυμάσιος ἐπηκολουθηκέναι διὰ τῶν οἰκειῶν φωνῶν ἐστι δῆλος, εἴτ' ἐξ ἀκοῆς εἰς αὐτὸν ἠκούσης μαθῶν... εἴτε καὶ παρ' ἑαυτοῦ τῆ τῶν πραγμάτων ἐπιβαλῶν φύσει εἴθ' ὅπως οὖν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ καταξίωθεις τῆς γνώσεως. On this passage see Frede 1999, 247–8.

²⁹ Origen noticeably claims that Celsus cannot accuse Christians of relying on faith when he treats Plato's texts as sacred (*C. Celsum* 6.1, 17).

motive in philosophical invective, namely the idea that contradictions are a mark of failure in philosophy. We find this in various ancient sources. For example, the Pyrrhonian sceptics quite systematically point to the contradictions among dogmatic philosophers in order to strengthen their view that the truth is unattainable.³⁰ For the Christians now the contradiction among pagan philosophers is taken as a sign of the dissatisfaction of pagans with the views of their tradition, which according to the Christians testifies to Hellenic philosophy's partial knowledge of the Logos.³¹ We find the same claim in Plutarch, who in his *De stoicorum repugnantiis* makes the case that the Stoics fall into contradictions to the extent that they depart from Plato, on whose philosophy they generally draw.³² Similar, I think, is Eusebius' claim in the *P.E.* that Plato is right to the extent that he follows the Logos that informs also the Hebrew Scriptures, while he falls into contradictions whenever he diverges from what the Logos dictates. When this occurs, he writes, Christians can dispense with Plato and prefer the Scriptures that preserve the entire truth (*P.E.* 13.13.66).

If we reflect on Eusebius' argument outlined above, which in its basic form we can find also in Origen,³³ we can see that Eusebius' effort to integrate Plato's philosophy in the framework of Christianity has a polemical aim, which is twofold: one is to articulate a response to those accusing Christian Platonists of deserting Plato for Christianity, the other is to address the claim that Christians who espoused Plato misconstrued his philosophy. We know that Celsus criticized Origen for misunderstanding Plato, and the latter fired back arguing that Celsus is unable to move from the letter to the spirit of Plato's works.³⁴ Porphyry on the other hand criticized Origen for deserting Plato for Hebrew myths (*Eusebius, Hist. Eccl.* 6.19), and he was generally critical of those who rated Plato below Christian treatises (*V. Plot.* 16). From Eusebius' point of view, both criticisms were misplaced. Christians like Origen and Eusebius appreciated Plato's philosophy on the grounds that this contains true doctrines, as that regarding the intelligible realm, which they also found in Scripture. On the other hand, however, they did not consider Plato infallible, but rather stressed his limitations and failures, and in such a way they justified why they followed Plato only partly.

One possible reaction to this point is that neither Eusebius nor Origen qualifies then as a Platonist, since ancient Platonists as a rule hardly ever abandon let alone criticize Plato. Rather, ancient Platonists from the times of the old Academy and until

³⁰ See e.g. Sextus, *P.H.* 3.6–7

³¹ Clement, *Strom.* 1.16.80.5–6, 1.17.87.2.

³² On Plutarch's argument against the Stoics in that work, see Boys-Stones 1997, 41–58.

³³ Origen himself takes the qualified view of Hellenic philosophy that we find in Clement and later in Eusebius, according to which Hellenic philosophy is a manifestation of Logos, whose perfection is Christianity, and that has as a result an agreement between Christianity and most Hellenic schools of philosophy on topics like the divine providence (*C. Celsum* 1.10). See further Karamanolis, 2013 ch. 1, esp. 34–48.

³⁴ See Origen, *C. Celsum.* 4.39.47–51; 6.1, 17.

Plotinus and Eusebius' contemporary, Porphyry, set out to defend what they take to be Plato's point of view or Plato's doctrine, although they differ considerably both in their perceptions of Plato's philosophy in general and on specific issues in particular.

This last claim, however, does not seem to me to be entirely true. Aristotle, for instance, did criticize Plato, as we know, and he was still considered a Platonist—at least by Platonists like Antiochus.³⁵ Another relevant case in this regard is that of Numenius, who flourishes in the mid second century CE.³⁶ Numenius did not hesitate to claim that Plato had been partly responsible for the derailment of the Academics from Arcesilaus to Philo, because, he suggested, Plato had not made sufficiently clear his dependency on, and commitment to, the doctrines of Pythagoras, as he should have done—especially given Plato's dependence on Pythagorean philosophy (fr. 24 Des Places). Of course, Eusebius' criticism is more severe than that, as he rejects as false certain Platonic doctrines. What is important here, though, is that Eusebius' critical attitude to Plato does not automatically annihilate the value ascribed to Plato's philosophy; the criticism rather aims to point out what is the right measure of value that should be credited to Plato. In that respect Eusebius is similar to Numenius, in that the latter ascribes more value to Pythagoras than to Plato, as Eusebius does to the Scriptures; both Eusebius and Numenius share the belief that Plato followed Logos and preserved the truth, albeit partly. Despite the fragmentary status of the evidence we have of Numenius, it becomes quite clear that, in his view, all other philosophers in antiquity, including Aristotle, the Stoics, and the Academics themselves, erred and should not be trusted; Eusebius maintains this view as well.

It is no accident, of course, that Eusebius preserves most of the extant fragments of Numenius, including the fragments of the latter's work *On the dissension of the Academics from Plato* (Περὶ τῆς τῶν ἀκαδημαϊκῶν πρὸς Πλάτωνα διαστάσεως; *P.E.* 14.5–9; Numenius frs. 24–29 Des Places). We need to constantly remember, that Eusebius' excerpts always serve an argument, which is, as we are told in *P.E.* 14.2, in the present example, that Greek philosophers are contradicting each other (περὶ τῆς τῶν φιλοσόφων πρὸς ἀλλήλους φιλοσοφίας καὶ μάχης). I have said above that evidence of contradiction is typically brought up in philosophical polemics to support the claim of falsity. Eusebius, however, speaks of contradiction in a special sense. He divides pagan philosophers into those earlier and later than Plato (*P.E.* 14.3.6, 14.4.12–15), and he argues that, with regard to the former, Plato was critical, but was, Eusebius implies, right in his criticism, since his predecessors failed to arrive at the views found in the Scriptures that Plato for the most part advocated, that is, mainly the doctrine of the world creation by God and of the immortality of the soul. As for the philosophers after Plato, especially his successors in the Academy, they also

³⁵ On Aristotle's criticisms of Plato, the standard work is that of Cherniss 1944, but he greatly overstates Aristotle's criticism of Plato compared to his debt to him. On Antiochus and later Platonists who treat Aristotle as a means of understanding Plato, see Karamanolis 2006.

³⁶ On Numenius see Karamanolis 2006, ch. 3, 127–149 and *idem*, "Numenius," Karamanolis, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, online.

failed to the extent that they departed from Plato's views as they introduced new doctrines to the Academy. It is at this point that Eusebius introduces the excerpts from Numenius. For both Eusebius and Numenius, the contradiction of the Academics to Plato marks their departure from the truth. It is noticeable that they describe this departure in terms of a rebellion (στασιάζειν, *P.E.* 14.3.6, στάσις, *P.E.* 14.4.14, διάστασις Numenius at *P.E.* 14.4.16), which implies both arrogance and strife. This is confirmed by the vocabulary that both Eusebius and Numenius choose (ζηλοῦν, *P.E.* 14.4.14, ἐφιλοτιμήθησαν Numenius at *P.E.* 14.5.12).

The important point here is that for both Numenius and Eusebius, Plato is the measure against which all other philosophers are to be judged, which also explains why Plato is the most quoted author in the *Praeparatio*; this is a typical feature of the Platonist in late antiquity. Antiochus and Plutarch also took Plato as the standard against which all other philosophers must be judged, including Aristotle, the Peripatetics, and the Stoics.³⁷ To the extent that Eusebius exhibits this feature, he emerges as a Platonist of a sort in my view. Before I will elaborate further on that, I would like to move to another feature that points to Eusebius' Platonist identity.

3. Eusebius' anti-Aristotelianism

The shared critical aim of books 14 and 15 of Eusebius' *Praeparatio* make up a unity: they aim to show that, except for Plato, all pagan philosophers are erring. As I have already said, Eusebius has a specific way of going about this: he sets out to show that pagan philosophers contradict each other, and also Plato. As I have implied above, these are not two ways in which contradiction occurs in pagan philosophers, but rather one, since, as Eusebius argues, they fell into contradictions to the extent that they departed from Plato, the measure of truth in pagan philosophy according to Eusebius. Book 14 of the *Praeparatio* criticizes, among others, Presocratic philosophers, Cyrenaics, Epicureans, and Pyrrhoneans, while book 15 sets out to target Aristotle and the Peripatetics as well as the Stoics. For his criticism, Eusebius drew mainly on the same Platonist sources that he used in order to expound Plato, namely Numenius, Atticus, Plotinus, Longinus, and Porphyry. Now, however, he also uses a Peripatetic source, namely Aristocles of Messene. Already the appeal to a Peripatetic is surprising, given Eusebius' intense criticism on Aristotelian philosophy in *P.E.* 15. And we wonder what purpose this choice of Eusebius serves. Let us look into that more closely.

The details of Aristocles' profile make the whole matter even more interesting. Although little is known of him and even his date is still quite uncertain,³⁸ he is at-

³⁷ On Antiochus see Cicero, *Academica* 1.33–4, *De finibus* 5.13, on Plutarch, see for instance his *Against Colotes* 1114f–1115c, and his *On moral virtue* (esp. 442b–c, 450f).

³⁸ For a long time Aristocles was thought to be the teacher of Alexander of Aphrodisias on the basis of a conjecture according to which the name "Aristotle" preserved in four ancient testimonies,

tested to have written a work on *Whether Homer or Plato was better* (Πότερον σπουδαιότερος Ὅμηρος ἢ Πλάτων; Suda s.v. Aristocles). We do not know in what subject Plato or Homer was better, but the mere comparison of the two is indicative of Aristocles' favorable attitude to Plato. This is suggested also by evidence to the effect that Aristocles wrote on Plato's *Timaeus*.³⁹ We are, of course, not entirely certain about the truth of that report, let alone whether it concerns the Peripatetic Aristocles, yet it should not come as a surprise that a Peripatetic wrote on the *Timaeus*. We know with some certainty that Adrastus wrote a commentary on this dialogue of Plato, which was much discussed at the time.⁴⁰ We have, however, some better evidence to come by, and this comes from Eusebius himself. Aristocles, we are told, wrote a work *On Philosophy* (Περὶ φιλοσοφίας), which is known only from the quotations in the *Praeparatio Evangelica*. In this work Aristocles traced the development of Greek philosophy from its early stages to Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, while he also criticized the Pyrrhonian Sceptics, the Cyrenaics, Protagoras and Metrodorus, the Eleatics, and the Epicureans.⁴¹ It is on these critical sections of Aristocles that Eusebius relies for his criticism of these philosophers.

Once again, Eusebius' excerpts, this time from Aristocles' work, are motivated by his polemical aim of demonstrating the falsity of most part of Greek philosophy, and for that reason they fail to give us a fair picture of it. If we read these parts carefully, though, it emerges that a more constructive exposition preceded them. Aristocles criticizes philosophers like the Pyrrhoneans and the Epicureans for deviating from the sound tradition of philosophy (ὀρθῶς φιλοσοφεῖν; *P.E.* 14.17.9; fr. 7 Chiesara/fr. 5 Heiland), and he speaks of the principles of philosophy (ἀρχὰς τοῦ φιλοσοφεῖν; *P.E.* 14.18.30; fr. 4 Chiesara/fr. 6 Heiland), whose violation ruin philosophy (*ibid.*). In the excerpts preserved by Eusebius, Aristocles does not explain which these principles are, yet his criticisms suggest that these principles concern mainly epistemology and ethics. The distrust of sensory perception and the suspension of judgment that the Pyrrhonian sceptics advocate, for instance, are seen as a violation of these principles (fr. 4 Chiesara/fr. 6 Heiland), which is why Aristocles excludes the Pyrrhoneans from the sound tradition of Greek philosophy. The Eleatic philosophers also violate these epis-

including Ps.-Alexander's *De intellect* needs to be changed to "Aristocles" (thus Zeller 1923⁵, 814 n.1). Moraux was the first to argue against this conjecture, pointing out that there is a Peripatetic with the name "Aristotle" other than the founder of the Peripatos, namely Aristotle of Mytilene. See Moraux 1967, 169–182 and Moraux 1984, 82f., 399f. Yet there is no solid basis for dating Aristocles. There is a new collection of his fragments by Chiesara 2001, which I reviewed in Karamanolis 2004, 57–59. ³⁹ Proclus, in *Timaeum* 1.20.2 (vestigium V Heiland). There is disagreement among scholars as to whether this is Aristocles of Messene or Aristocles of Rhodes, who is mentioned earlier by Proclus. The discussion is reviewed by Chiesara 2001, 52–3.

⁴⁰ See Gottschalk 1987, 1155–6.

⁴¹ On the nature of Aristocles' work *On Philosophy* see Chiesara 2001, xxiv–xxxviii and Karamanolis 2006, 37–41. The testimony to the effect that Aristocles discussed the development of Greek philosophy comes not by Eusebius but by Philoponus in his *On Nicomachus' Introduction to Arithmetic* 1a, test. 5 Chiesara (Test. 7 and vestigium 1 Heiland). On this topic see below.

temological principles, Aristotles suggests, although their argument is different (fr. 7 Chiesara/fr. 5 Heiland). A similar attitude towards sceptic epistemology can be found in Clement's *Stromata* book 8, where Clement draws on Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics in order to construct an argument against the sceptical suspension of judgment, especially in its Pyrrhonian form (*Stromata* 8.4.15.2).⁴² As with Clement, similarly with regard to Aristocles, we find a clear assumption in operation regarding the existence of a healthy tradition of pagan philosophy, against which some philosophical schools are judged and criticized as deviations. In the case of Aristocles it is not clear who made up this tradition of sound philosophy. From what we can gather from Eusebius' excerpts of Aristocles' critical discussions, this tradition was basically established by Plato and also Aristotle.

This possibility is suggested because Aristocles' criticisms show clear dependence on the work of Plato and Aristotle. He refers, for instance, to the *Theaetetus* while criticizing Protagoras' theory of knowledge (*P.E.* 14.19.23; fr. 6 Chiesara/fr. 4 Heiland), and he also relies on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (*P.E.* 14.18.2; fr. 4 Chiesara/fr. 6 Heiland) and the *De anima* (*P.E.* 14.21.6–7; fr. 8 Chiesara/Heiland) in his criticism of the Pyrrhonian and the Epicureans respectively. As I said above, however, Aristocles speaks of the development of Greek philosophy, which allegedly reached a peak with Plato's philosophy, and he also speaks of the principles of sound philosophy that some philosophers betrayed. A short fragment that we have from Aristocles about the Stoics advances the claim that they took over Plato's principles of reality, matter and God, and yet modified them.⁴³ This evidence suggests that Aristocles spoke first in his work of what he calls the sound tradition of Greek philosophy, turning next to the philosophers who in different degrees diverged from it and especially from their principles. The same fragment shows that, according to Aristocles, it was Plato and Aristotle who set up these principles, which the Stoics followed to some degree. Presumably Aristocles considered the Stoics to fall within the sound tradition of philosophy, at least to some extent, because of their dogmatic epistemology, as also Antiochus of Ascalon (130–68 BCE) had done.⁴⁴ If this is so, then Aristocles perhaps had also a positive point in his work, namely to show what the nature of philosophy is, what its principles are, who had set them, and who had followed them. This was clearly the project of Antiochus, given Cicero's evidence in the *Academica* and the *De finibus*. And given that Aristocles was a Peripatetic who thought highly of Plato, he must have implied or maintained the essential agreement of Plato and Aristotle.

I say "essential" because, from what we know through Eusebius, Aristocles singled out epistemology and ethics as the two most important areas of philosophy, and it is with reference to these that he criticized later philosophers.⁴⁵ Similar again was

⁴² On Clement's argument in *Stromata* 8, see Havrda 2011, 343–375 and Karamanolis 2013, 125–128.

⁴³ In *P.E.* 15.3.14 (fr. 3 Chiesara and Heiland.)

⁴⁴ On Antiochus' attitude to the Stoics, see Karamanolis 2006, ch. 1, esp. 64–80.

⁴⁵ This becomes clear especially in Aristocles' criticism of the Pyrrhonian and the Epicureans (fr. 4 and 8 Chiesara/fr. 6, 8 Heiland).

the position of Antiochus of Ascalon, who also considered epistemology and ethics as the two most important philosophical areas, and he, as we know, argued for the essential agreement of Aristotle with Plato.⁴⁶ In the case of Aristocles, we lack the supply of evidence that we have about Antiochus, but Aristocles' overall philosophical profile and the claims he makes in the surviving fragments, most of which preserved by Eusebius, speak in favor of a thesis similar to that of Antiochus. There should be no doubt that Eusebius left out such evidence because it was at odds with his own aims, namely to single out Plato as the only pagan philosopher who hit upon the truth and discard the rest of pagan philosophy, while Aristocles probably highlighted the agreement of Plato and Aristotle on most important philosophical issues and he may have considered the Stoics as being close to them too. Aristocles' point of view strongly conflicts with the one that Eusebius takes in book 15 of the *Praeparatio*, where he strongly criticizes Aristotle's philosophy, by relying on the Platonist Atticus, who castigates specifically the partisans of the view that there is common ground between the Platonic and the Aristotelian philosophy.

There is in fact one piece of evidence that testifies to Eusebius' exclusion of Aristocles' argument to the effect that Aristotle was essentially in agreement with Plato. In the beginning of his anti-Aristotelian section in book 15 of the *Praeparatio*, Eusebius announces that he will disregard all hostile critics of Aristotle and that he will resist their malicious invectives. Eusebius sets out to establish his impartiality towards Aristotle by applying the same method that he also did with Plato, namely to rely on the philosopher's most illustrious interpreters. Thus Eusebius chooses to rely on Aristocles, who, as Eusebius tells us, in his seventh book of his *On Philosophy*, is concerned to discharge Aristotle from various false accusations levied against him (*P.E.* 15.1.13). Aristocles focuses eventually on two such accusations: those he considers to be the most widely believed (*P.E.* 15.2.12). The first is slanderous concerning Aristotle's private life, namely that he married Pythias, his own sister, while the other is that Aristotle was ungrateful to Plato (ὅτι ἠχαρίστησε Πλάτωνι; *P.E.* 15.2.13).

Aristotle's ungratefulness to Plato is mentioned by several ancient sources, yet not always with the intention of criticizing Aristotle. Aristoxenus, the music theorist and one of Aristotle's early pupils in the Peripatos, reportedly argued that Aristotle had founded his school while Plato was still teaching in the Academy (Aristocles at *P.E.* 15.2.3; fr. 64 Wehrli). As our source, Aristocles, reports, Aristoxenus' purpose was to praise Aristotle and criticize Plato. Aristoxenus made this claim in his *Life of Plato*, which was critical of and even hostile to Plato, and Aristocles was concerned to restore the truth, apparently because he had argued earlier in his work that Aristotle shares some of Plato's fundamental doctrines and principles of philosophy. Eusebius, however, breaks off immediately after Aristocles addresses the first charge, forgetting that he earlier let his source, Aristocles, announce also the second criticism against Aristotle that he was planning to address, namely that of Aristotle's ungrate-

⁴⁶ See Karamanolis 2006, 55–64.

fulness to Plato. This instance is indicative of the way Eusebius composed his *Praeparatio*. Presumably, he used assistants to search for and recite ancient sources, and he was responsible for the cut and paste. When Aristocles' text came to the treatment of Aristotle's charge for ungratefulness to Plato, Eusebius asked his assistant to stop the recitation.

There should be no doubt that Aristocles also addressed the second charge against Aristotle. What is missing is, of course, a matter of speculation. Otto Immisch conjectured that in this part Aristocles cited Aristotle's famous elegy for Plato that is addressed to Eudemus of Rhodos and which is preserved by Olympiodorus (*In Gorgiam*. pr. 41.9 Ross).⁴⁷ We have no way to prove or disprove this conjecture. The main issue here is that Eusebius did not want to discharge Aristotle from this criticism.

Yet the question is why. The reason, in my view, is that Eusebius closely associates Aristotle's divergence from Plato's philosophical doctrines with the alleged personal tension between Aristotle and Plato. This explanation is actually maintained by Atticus, whose polemical work against Aristotle's philosophy Eusebius favorably cites. Not only does Atticus affirm in the strongest possible terms Aristotle's departure from Plato's most important doctrines, but he also emphasizes that there was an underlying personal motive for that departure. Aristotle, Atticus argues, showed a spirit of quarrel and opposition against Plato⁴⁸ and he goes as far as to suggest that Aristotle's criticisms of Plato were motivated by the former's eristic nature, merely by his wish to contradict Plato.⁴⁹ The implication of this evidence, which Eusebius cites at length, is that Aristotle was not motivated only by philosophical concerns in his divergence from Plato but also by personal enmity. The association of doctrinal divergence and personal motives is not uncommon in the doxography of ancient philosophy. Antiochus, for instance, criticizes the Stoics as thieves who merely cloth Plato's theories in new terms and differ from Plato only in order to justify their new school.⁵⁰ The same claim features also in Numenius' work about the dissension of the Academics from Plato, which Eusebius again cites favorably in the *Praeparatio*. As we have seen earlier (p. 179–180), in this work Numenius suggested that the departure of Plato's students from Plato's doctrines amounts to a rebellion that is not motivated by philosophical reasons, but by personal motives.

The tendency to associate doctrinal disagreement with personal tension is not a feature of late antiquity; rather, it goes back to Aristotle's lifetime. As I have already said, Aristoxenus claimed precisely this point, and it is this line that was revived by the Christians. Clement claims that Aristotle departed from Plato while the latter was still alive to found his own school (*Strom.* 1.14.63.5). And later Origen endorses the view of Aristoxenus that Aristotle was ungrateful to his teacher and claims, like

⁴⁷ Ross 1955, 146.

⁴⁸ φιλονικῶν, ἐφιλονίκησε *P.E.* 15.7.2; Atticus fr. 5.15–30, 15.8.11; fr. 6.72–73, 15.9.7; fr. 7.37–39 *Des Places*.

⁴⁹ *P.E.* 15.8.6.10–12; Atticus fr. 6.45–48, 72–73, 83–85, 15.9.14; fr. 7.87–89 *Des Places*.

⁵⁰ See Cicero, *De finibus* 4.60, 5.22, 5.88–9.

Clement, that Aristotle left Plato in order to innovate (*Contra Celsum* 3.13.15). This is precisely the line that Eusebius takes up, and the one which later Theodoretus of Cyrillus continues (*Cur. Aff. Gr.* 12.50–51; cf. 8.34). Immediately after breaking with Aristocles, Eusebius moves on to illustrate Aristotle's doctrinal differences from Plato in the strong polemical terms of Atticus, starting, quite conspicuously, with their differences in ethics (*P.E.* 15.3–4; fr. 2 Atticus Des Places), the field of philosophy that was considered most important by Antiochus and Aristocles, among others. This choice of source, namely Atticus, best serves Eusebius' overall aim of exposing the contradiction among pagan philosophers, which testifies to the overall failure of the pagan philosophical tradition.

Eusebius' polemical attitude to Aristotle has, I think, one specific target, namely Porphyry. The latter is targeted by Eusebius also for his anti-Christian stance, since Porphyry is the author of a work *Against the Christians*. Porphyry is one of Eusebius' main targets in the *P.E.*, and it is no accident that Porphyry is the most frequently quoted author in this work after Plato. Eusebius addresses almost all issues regarding pagan religion with reference to Porphyry and he does that by drawing on a large number of Porphyry's works, mainly his religious and historical ones. With this strategy Eusebius means to show to the reader that Porphyry's allegations against Christianity are self-refuted by his own evidence about pagan religion.⁵¹ Yet Porphyry was also someone who much appreciated Aristotle and wrote a number of commentaries on Aristotle's works.⁵² Porphyry was one of those Platonists who argued for the fundamental agreement between Aristotle and Plato on most essential philosophical issues.⁵³ The details of Porphyry's relevant argument escape us, but we can understand that Eusebius disliked it, given the emphasis he put on the opposite claim. There is actually evidence to suggest that Eusebius is so selective of Porphyry's work that he eventually misrepresents its main thesis regarding Aristotle's philosophy.

As I have shown elsewhere, this is the case with Porphyry's work *Against Boethus*, which Eusebius excerpts in *P.E.* 15. This is the only purely metaphysical treatise of Porphyry that Eusebius excerpts, and apparently, as we shall see, he did this for a reason.⁵⁴ In this work Porphyry argued against the Peripatetic Boethus (first c. CE), a pupil of Andronicus, criticizing him for departing from Aristotle's doctrine of the soul, which, as Porphyry appears to suggest, is similar with Plato's.⁵⁵ Eusebius obscures this point in the way he quotes from Porphyry's work in question. Not only

51 On the excerption of Porphyry's work in the *P.E.* see Grant (1973), 184–187.

52 Porphyry wrote two commentaries on the *Categories*, a commentary on the *On Interpretation*, and one on the *Physics* (i.e. the first five books; fragments in Smith 1993). Several other commentaries are attributed to him (i.e. on Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*, the *Sophistical Refutations*, the *Metaphysics*, and the *Nicomachean Ethics*) but with much less certainty.

53 I examine this issue in some detail in Karamanolis 2006, ch. 7.

54 Eusebius cites from the following works of Porphyry: *On the Philosophy from Oracles*, *Literary Discourse*, *On the cult of idols*, *On Abstinence*, *Epistle to Anebo*, *Against Christians*, *Against Boethus*.

55 See Karamanolis 2006, 290–298.

does he exclude evidence that establishes that Boethus' view is Porphyry's target but he also cites a passage from *Against Boethus* that criticizes Aristotle's theory of the soul in very strong terms (*P.E.* 15.11.4; Porphyry fr. 249 Smith). We have good reasons to believe, though, that this is not a passage from Porphyry's work. As I argued elsewhere, both the language and the content of the passage are quite unlike Porphyry's *Against Boethus*. Besides, the fact that the passage makes a reference to the *Laws* (891d–e), while Porphyry in *Against Boethus* elaborates on the arguments of the *Phaedo*, also suggests a different point of view.⁵⁶ The fragment must come from Atticus, the well-known and Eusebius' favorite critic of Aristotle. The editor of Atticus' fragments, Eduard Des Places, includes this text in his collection (fr. 7 bis), though with some doubt.⁵⁷

One might say that this misattribution can be an accident. There is, however, another piece of evidence suggesting that Eusebius tried to obscure here the point of Porphyry's work in *Against Boethus*. This is the fact that Eusebius cites the allegedly Porphyrian text (*P.E.* 15.11) after a quotation from Atticus' anti-Aristotelian treatise (*P.E.* 15.9; fr. 7 Des Places) and before a text from Plotinus (*P.E.* 15.10; *Enn.* 4.78⁵), and with the heading "From Porphyry on the same matter," which refers the reader back to the heading on Plotinus, which is "On the immortality of the soul against Aristotle claiming that the soul is actuality" (*P.E.* 15.10). Also after this presumed text of Porphyry Eusebius quotes again from Atticus without naming him or referring to his work, which is quite atypical of Eusebius, while the heading of this new text of Atticus suggests that it has the same target as Porphyry, namely Aristotle,⁵⁸ which, however, is not the case. From all we know, in *Against Boethus* Porphyry was criticizing Boethus for departing from Aristotle on the soul. A fragment from Ps.-Simplicius' *De anima* (247.23–6) that mentions Boethus as contradicting the common view of Aristotle and Plato on the immortality of the soul appears to confirm that.⁵⁹ Most probably Porphyry criticized Boethus for assuming that the soul is a quality of the living body, while according to Porphyry the soul is rather identical with the intellect and as such is ontologically different from the living body. If this is so, then Eusebius assimilates Porphyry's position to that of Atticus and Plotinus, which is critical of Aristotle. Presumably Eusebius makes an effort to show that this critical view of Aristotle was quite established among Platonists, while in fact this was far from being the case.

The question now is why Eusebius was so critical of Aristotle and so favorable to Plato's philosophy. It is true that earlier Christian thinkers, like Clement and Origen, do not particularly sympathize with Aristotle. Yet Clement is inspired by Aristotle's

⁵⁶ For more detail see Karamanolis 2006, 296–298. See also Sharples 2007 and Sharples 2010, 244–251.

⁵⁷ Des Places prints a question mark next to the number of the fragment.

⁵⁸ The heading is "Πρὸς τὸν αὐτὸν [sc. Aristotle] διενεχθέντα τῷ Πλάτῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ περὶ τῆς καθόλου ψυχῆς" (Against him [Aristotle] who disagrees with Plato also on the world soul)."

⁵⁹ On that passage see Karamanolis 2006, 294–296 and Sharples 2010, 241.

ethics when he comes to the issue of the human final end. For instance, he defines virtue as the middle state (*Strom.* 2.13.59.6), which corresponds to the Aristotelian mean.⁶⁰ Origen does not approve of Aristotle's doctrine of the immortality of the intellect in *De anima* 3.5 and *De generatione animalium* 2.3 (*Contra Celsum* 3.80), yet neither Clement nor Origen is openly polemical against Aristotle, as is Eusebius. The latter's attitude is rather a novelty among Christians. By doing so Eusebius takes sides in a debate among Platonists that was going for centuries as to whether Aristotle should be considered a member of the Platonist tradition or not.⁶¹ In the rest of the paper I will go into Eusebius' motivation for that attitude; I will claim that this has to do at least partly with Eusebius' views on the status of God.

4. Eusebius on Plato's Theology

Being a Christian, Eusebius was particularly interested in the status of God and in God's relation to the world. This kind of interest was common among philosophers in late antiquity, Platonists and Peripatetics alike. One relevant question here is about the nature of highest God. Platonists were much concerned with this question since they were confronted with a plurality of candidates in this regard: the Form of the Good in the *Republic* (508e), the source of all being (509b7–8), the divine craftsman of the *Timaeus*, or the One of the *Parmenides*. Some Platonists identified the craftsman of the *Timaeus* with the Form of the Good on the grounds that the former is essentially good, as is his product, the world (*Timaeus* 29a3, e1, 37a1). There were, however, also other Platonists who resisted this tendency on the grounds that the divine craftsman is constrained by necessity, that is, matter, and also because he is not absolutely simple and unified since he has thoughts. These reasons guided Platonists, like Moderatus and Numenius for instance, to postulate a God higher than the demiurge, whom they identified with the one of the *Parmenides* and the Form of the Good of the *Republic*.⁶²

Similar concerns can be traced also behind the Christian justification of the distinction of God, the Father, and his Logos, the Son. Christians wanted to safeguard the transcendence of God, the Father, and to distance him from the sensible realm, the realm of matter and vice. The crucial question, however, was how strong this distinction should be. For if it is too strong, then God the father is not the main cause of the creation, and if it is too weak, God would not be sufficiently distanced from his product, the world, and the evil occurring in it. Both tendencies are attested among early Christians.⁶³

⁶⁰ Cf. also *Paed.* 2.1.16.4, *Strom.* 2.13.59.6. See Clark 1977.

⁶¹ The debate extends from Antiochus of Ascalon to Porphyry and goes on even afterwards. For a study of this Platonist debate, see Karamanolis 2006.

⁶² Numenius fr. 11, 16, 17, 20 Des Places.

⁶³ For a brief survey of Christian positions on this issue, see Karamanolis 2013, 107–116.

Eusebius has a particular view on this issue, which is similar to that of Origen. Eusebius distinguishes between Plato's Form of the Good, which is said to be beyond being in *Republic* 6, 509b,⁶⁴ and what derives its being from it (*P.E.* 11.21.6), that is, in Christian terms, between God-the-Father and God-the-Son, whom he identifies as the Logos. The former is responsible for all being, the creator of intelligible reasons, as Origen says, and only secondarily the creator of the sensible world, namely to the extent that he operates through the latter, while the latter is responsible for creation.⁶⁵ It is because Eusebius takes this view about God that he quotes Numenius on this topic, who distinguishes between a first and a second god in similar terms. The former is said to be "good per se" (αὐτοάγαθον), the source of being and being in itself (δημιουργός τῆς οὐσίας, *P.E.* 11.22.3–5; fr. 16 Des Places, αὐτοὸν *P.E.* 11.18.22–23; fr. 17 Des Places), while the latter is said to be "good" (ἀγαθόν) to the extent that he participates in the first God (frs. 19.8–13, 20.7–12) and the source of all generation (δημιουργός τῆς γενέσεως; fr. 16.9). The latter is identical with the divine craftsman of the *Timaeus*, who thinks the Forms and creates and maintains the world, while the former is identical with the Form of the Good in *Republic* 6 (509b), and perhaps also with the first, superior, God of the *Seventh Letter* (323d). Eusebius and Origen agree with Numenius that God brings about eternally God-the creator, the Logos.⁶⁶ The latter has a cosmological role to play; he permeates the entire universe and is thus responsible for upholding the order of the world according to the Father's wish (*In Praise of Constantine* 11.12, 12.8).⁶⁷ Eusebius probably targets here the view of Platonists like Celsus, who claimed that "from the beginning the different parts of the world were distributed to different overseers," that is, different demons of Gods (*Contra Celsum* 5.25).⁶⁸

Of course, Eusebius, like almost all contemporary Christians, understands creation in a temporal sense, which means that they assume that God at some point brought the world about.⁶⁹ Among Platonists this was a disputed issue, yet by the time Eusebius writes, most Platonists including Porphyry had sided with a non-literal interpretation of the cosmogony of the *Timaeus*. According to this interpretation, the world has never come about but always existed, but still God is its cause and

⁶⁴ Later in the *Republic* the Good is described as "the brightest part of being" though (*Rep.* 518c9). Ancient Platonists, including Origen (*C. Celsum* 6.64.14–28) were puzzled as to whether the Good is beyond or part of being.

⁶⁵ *In Joh* 1.19.114, *Princ.* 1.2.2, 2.2.2, *C. Celsum* 5.37. See also Kritikos 2007, 403–417.

⁶⁶ Origen maintained that God's wisdom, the Son, was created by God (*creata esse*; *Princ.* 1.2.3; ἐγενήθη *C. Celsum* 5.39). The term "created" is not to be taken literally here, since, as Origen says, this is an eternal and everlasting generation (*Princ.* 1.2.4). A similar view can be detected already in Clement, who claims that God is invisible and ineffable, the highest of intelligibles (*Strom.* 5.12.78.2–3, 81.3–6). See further Karamanolis 2013, 87–97.

⁶⁷ On Eusebius' conception of Logos, see especially Ricken 1967, 341–359, and Ricken 1978, 318–352.

⁶⁸ On this point see the discussion in Ehrhard 1979, 42–43.

⁶⁹ On the understanding of creation among early Christian thinkers, see Karamanolis 2013, 60–107.

principle in the sense that God accounts for the world's existence, and temporal priority is needed to support that. Eusebius, however, suggests instead that the world is created (γενητός) for both Plato and Moses (*P.E.* 11.29). This view guides him in his selection of a suitable Platonist interpreter in this regard. It is no wonder that Eusebius cites Atticus who targets specifically the partisans of the view that the world is uncreated (οἷς ἀρέσκει καὶ κατὰ Πλάτωνα τὸν κόσμον ἀγέννητον εἶναι; *P.E.* 15.6.3). As Atticus suggests, these are Platonists who had been convinced by Aristotle (*ibid.* 15.6.6; fr. 4.3 Des Places). Platonists indeed were concerned with Aristotle's criticism in *De caelo* to the effect that the world of the *Timaeus* cannot be everlasting if created (*De caelo* 283a11–23), and instead suggested from very early on that the world is said to be created only for pedagogical reason, while in fact is uncreated that is ungenerated but still has a main principle that accounts for its existence, namely the divine craftsman. This is what Xenocrates (fourth BCE) apparently argued.⁷⁰ This non-literal interpretation of the *Timaeus* revives in late antiquity with Platonists such as Calvenus Taurus (second CE) and especially Porphyry. The latter wrote a (no longer extant) commentary on the *Timaeus*, where he apparently argued for such a position.⁷¹ This is exactly the position that Eusebius dislikes; he sympathizes with the literal interpretation of Plato's cosmogony (according to which, God created the world at some point), which he finds in Atticus, since a similar view on the same issue is the one that he assents to as a Christian. On this interpretation, Plato appears to be in agreement with the Scriptures.⁷² By discrediting Porphyry's non-literal interpretation of the *Timaeus*, Eusebius achieves two goals, first to support his claim of Plato's drawing on Hebrew wisdom, and second, to further support his thesis that Greek philosophers such as Aristotle disagree with Plato and thus also with Scripture.

The above discussion, however, may suggest that Eusebius sympathizes with Plato because the latter, in some interpretations, turns out to agree with Christianity, not because Eusebius has some specific philosophical reasons for such a predilection. Here we need to remember that Eusebius belongs to a tradition of thought that goes back to Origen, one that does not distinguish between the two options. Christian thinkers needed to take a stance on a number of important philosophical issues, and this was not an easy task. In their eyes Plato turns out to be in agreement with Christianity on several of these issues, but this was the case given a certain interpretation of Plato. Plato's philosophy could not be approached without any mediation given the wealth of conflicting interpretations by the time Christian thinkers appear. This means that the Christians had to choose among the available interpretations of Plato if they wanted to rely on his philosophy and if they wanted to claim Plato as an ally. For that reason they had to delve into the debates of ancient Platon-

⁷⁰ On Xenocrates' interpretation of the *Timaeus* and his views on principles, see Dillon 2003, 98–136.

⁷¹ The fragments are collected by Sodano 1964. For a discussion, see Karamanolis 2006, 277–284.

⁷² On this issue, see Lyman 1993, 91f., who makes some interesting remarks about Eusebius.

ists and choose the interpreters who suited them best. This could be done in many ways. Some Christians did that in a detached way. Some others, however, assumed the Platonist point of view because it helped them conceptualize their own issues and also fight against some detractors of Christianity, such as the Platonist Celsus and Porphyry, with their own weapons.

One might still argue here that the Christian sympathy for Plato is merely an apologetic move. It may look even more so if we remember that the Christians wanted to fend off the charge that Christianity is a novelty by means of showing their similarities with Plato. This may well be so. It is perfectly conceivable that Eusebius wanted to demonstrate that Plato's main doctrines are found already in Scripture. But again it was on certain interpretations that this could be shown to be the case, and such interpretations were dictated by a number of criteria. One of them was philosophical plausibility and charitability; Christians had to opt for what was philosophically defensible and plausible. The alleged truth of Scripture or Plato is not a given but a quality that the interpreter should be in a position to demonstrate. The Christians could not carry out this task of interpretation of Scripture and also of Plato unassisted, but neither was it possible, given the number of interpretations available of both. With regard to Plato, Eusebius sided with certain interpretations, mainly those of Origen, which supported theological positions on issues like that of the relationship of the divine persons, which the Christians needed to address. It is this fact that motivated Eusebius' selection of Platonists and his treatment of them. Similar was the motivation of his criticism of Aristotelian philosophy, which was viewed in a favorable light by some Platonists who interpreted either Plato or Aristotle (or both) in ways different from those approved by Eusebius.

5. Conclusion

The discussion above has shown that Eusebius is not a Platonist whose drive was to interpret Plato alone, as was the case for contemporary pagan Platonists. His motivation rather was to interpret Plato for the sake of Christianity. But his motivation is due to a certain understanding of Plato's philosophy, according to which the main doctrines of Plato's philosophy are very similar to Christianity. To the extent that this is the case, he considers Plato's philosophy as being essentially true as such. In this capacity Eusebius shows features of a brand of Platonist identity. There is a number of other features which point to this philosophical identity. He distinguishes between an intelligible and a sensible realm in ways similar to those of Platonist interpreters like Numenius and he endorses a hierarchical ontology that is again quite similar to that of Numenius and Plotinus. Besides, Eusebius favors a literal interpretation of the *Timaeus*, which he finds in Platonists like Atticus. Furthermore, he sides quite strongly with Plato against Aristotle, and by doing this he again takes sides in an ongoing debate among Platonists. On the last two issues he opposes Porphyry, the

author of *Against Christians* and one of his main adversary. Porphyry's position on these two issues may have provided additional reasons for Eusebius' hostility to him.

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Plato in the Cappadocian Fathers

In many ways, the work of the Cappadocian Fathers represents the finest fruit of the encounter between Christianity and Hellenism in late antiquity. Its exhibits a breadth and sense of creative freedom that would, for various reasons, rarely again be achieved within the Greek-speaking Christian world. Its richness and fecundity were in large measure a result of the Cappadocians' Janus-faced attitude toward pagan culture. On the one hand, they were beneficiaries of fine classical educations—including, in the case of Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, long periods of study in Athens—and they drew freely upon pagan models in matters of both philosophical content and literary style.¹ On the other hand, they were keenly aware that with Christianity something new had entered the world, and that their use of pagan learning would always be in some sense a foray into foreign territory—a matter of “acquiring the Egyptian wealth,” as Gregory of Nyssa put it, “for the adornment of the Church, the true tabernacle.”²

Their attitude toward Plato is of a piece with their attitude toward pagan culture in general. They occasionally mention him with respect, as Basil does twice in his famous address on the Christian use of pagan literature, *To the Youth*.³ And of course there are many unacknowledged borrowings that (as I will attempt to show) run pervasively throughout their work. But the Cappadocians' evident appreciation for Plato does not prevent them from also being sharply critical. Gregory Nazianzen lists his errors succinctly: “the Ideas of Plato, and the transmigrations and courses of our souls, and the recollections, and the unlovely loves passing through lovely bodies to the soul.”⁴ Basil and Gregory of Nyssa likewise attack various ideas found in Plato, such as the necessary uniqueness of the cosmos and the pre-existence and transmigration of souls.⁵ However, they do not mention Plato in doing so, and such views were sufficiently widespread that the Cappadocians probably did not associate them with Plato more than with a half dozen other possible sources—including, in the case of the pre-existence of the soul, their own master, Origen.

1 For details of their education see Rousseau 1994, 27–60 (Basil), McGuckin 2001, 35–83 (Gregory Nazianzen), and Silvas 2007, 1–15 (Gregory of Nyssa). We know little about the educational curriculum in Athens at this period, although it undoubtedly included wide reading in Plato; cf. Ruether 1969, 18–28 and Rist 1981, 182–85.

2 Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses* 2.116; trans. Malherbe and Ferguson 1978, 81.

3 Basil, *To the Youth* 6.5 and 9.12. Both passages cite Plato approvingly for his teaching on the pursuit of virtue.

4 Gregory Nazianzen, *Orations* 27.10, ed. Gallay 1978, 94; trans. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 2 (= NPNF) vol. 7, 288. Citations from NPNF have been modified for the sake of accuracy and stylistic consistency.

5 Basil, *Hexaemeron* 3.3, 8.2; Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man* 28.

I will not attempt here to catalog every instance of possible Platonic influence or Platonic criticism in the Cappadocians' work, a task that has been adequately performed by others.⁶ Instead I will focus on what seem to me the most important thematic resonances between Plato and the Cappadocians, including the ways in which the Cappadocians, by adopting and reworking Platonic ideas, subtly transformed them. First a point of clarification: in speaking of an idea as Platonic, I do not mean to claim that it was held by Plato (a question that is notoriously difficult to settle), but only that it can be found fairly prominently within his work and seems to be presented there in a favorable light. Likewise, I do not mean to suggest that this idea could have reached the Cappadocians only directly via their reading of Plato. In general, in any case of apparent Platonic influence there are three possibilities: (1) it is a result of direct reading of Plato's works, (2) it has been mediated by Platonically influenced authors (e.g., for the Cappadocians, Philo of Alexandria, the Greek Apologists, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, or Plotinus), or (3) it is a result of an independent line of thought. Although a few of the ideas mentioned here may belong in category (3), it is unlikely that many do so, if only because of their sophistication and complexity. That leaves (1) and (2). Unfortunately we generally cannot tell in which of these ways an idea might have reached the Cappadocians, except in those rare cases where the author mentions his source or there is some other telltale sign, such as a distinctive cast left upon the idea by an intermediary author. I will therefore speak broadly of apparent Platonic influence without attempting to identify whether it is direct or indirect, or even claiming with certainty that it is an actual case of influence rather than merely a convergence of ideas, although I believe that this is typically the case.

It will be helpful to begin by summarizing some of the major themes in Plato that would have been likely to appeal to the Cappadocians. Such a review will enable us to recognize not only points of influence, but also the ways in which the influence involved adaptation and revision.

Although one naturally thinks first here of Plato's theology and theory of the soul, it is important to recognize that both of these are rooted in a certain understanding of human motivation. In *Republic* 6 Socrates posits that "every soul pursues the good and does whatever it does for its sake" (505d).⁷ A similar point is made in the *Symposium*, where Diotima observes that people love the good and want it to be theirs forever (206a). Taken alone such statements might seem to say merely that whatever a person seeks is seen by that person as in some sense good. However, both occur within a context that quickly turns to the Forms. In the *Republic* Socrates observes blithely (encountering no resistance) that the many good things, beautiful

⁶ See Gronau 1908, Pinault 1925, Cherniss 1930, Courtonne 1934, and Daniélou 1953. Much can also be gleaned from the annotations to the Sources Chrétiennes editions of their works.

⁷ Translations of Plato are from Cooper 1997.

things, and so on, “we set down according to a single form of each, believing that there is but one, and calling it the being (ὁ ἕστιν) of each” (507b). From this point it is assumed that what all seek is ultimately—although perhaps unknown to them—the Form of the Good. The *Symposium* shifts the focus instead to beauty (τὸ καλόν), as Diotima observes that, because of their desire to possess the good forever, all seek in some way to “give birth in beauty” and thereby achieve a kind of immortality (206b–207a). This time the formal unity of the beautiful is introduced step by step, as the lover is envisioned as first recognizing that “the beauty of all bodies is one and the same,” then ascending similarly through the beauty of souls, activities, laws, ideas, and knowledge, to the vision of Beauty Itself (210b–211a).

Already in this fundamental line of thought there are present at least four elements that profoundly affected a wide range of subsequent thinkers, the Cappadocians among them. First is the reality of a transcendent principle (or principles), labeled in the *Republic* the Form of the Good and in the *Symposium* Beauty Itself. Second is the presence of this principle (or principles) within lesser beings, constituting them *as* good or beautiful, and thereby providing an intimation of their transcendent source. Third is the innate desire and affinity of the human soul for this transcendent source, a desire so deeply rooted that it motivates all that we do. And fourth is the possibility, in view of the foregoing, of ascending via the sensible world to a more direct apprehension of its source, an apprehension that will also be a satisfaction of our deepest longings.

One immediate question that arises within this context is whether the Form of the Good and Beauty Itself are the same. There are a few hints to that effect in the *Republic*, for Socrates mentions that the Good is “the cause of all that is correct and beautiful in anything” (508c), and later he seems to refer to “the beautiful and the good” as a single entity (531c). On the other hand, the types of pursuit envisioned by the two dialogues are sharply different. In the *Republic* this pursuit takes the form of the education of the Guardians, a long and carefully structured process that culminates—after successive stages of training in gymnastics, music, poetry, mathematics, and dialectic, followed by engagement in military and political affairs—in the vision of the Good (540a). In the *Symposium*, as has been mentioned, it takes the form of the ascent of the “ladder of love.” Although this ascent is not without its own kind of discipline, it is far more passionate, personal, and intuitive than the education of the Guardians. Whether the objects apprehended in two such different ways might ultimately be the same is a question that Plato leaves tantalizingly open. However that may be, both dialogues make it clear that, although the initial desire for the good and the beautiful is itself something good, training and guidance are needed for it to attain fruition.⁸

⁸ Although this is more obvious in the *Republic* than the *Symposium*, even in the latter the “leader”—that is, Eros himself—has to lead aright (210a). The necessity that the soul love in the right way in order to “regrow its wings” is a major theme of the Charioteer speech in the *Phaedrus*.

A further important point is that for Plato the apprehension of the Good is not just the final satisfaction of desire, but the attainment of true knowledge. This is perhaps most obvious in the Myth of the Cave in the *Republic*, where one who has ascended from the cave sees both the intelligible realm and the Good (represented, respectively, by visible objects and the sun) (517b). Likewise in the Myth of the Sun a few pages earlier, the Form of the Good is the source of truth for the objects of knowledge and of the power to know in the soul (508d). Why should there be this connection between value, as represented by the Good, and knowledge? The *Republic* offers a sketchy answer in that the Form of the Good is the source of being as well as truth (509b), and plainly real knowledge must be of that which is (477a). In what sense the Good is the source of being, however, is left unclear. At least part of the answer may lie in an assumed connection between goodness and being: presumably being is something good, so that the Good, as the source of all that is good, must be the source of being as well.⁹

A somewhat fuller answer emerges in the discussion of the relationship between goodness and knowledge in the *Phaedo*. There Socrates recounts his youthful disappointment with Anaxagoras, who, after proclaiming that Mind (*voũç*) is the cause of all things, went on to give only materialistic explanations. Socrates argues that a truly adequate explanation must address not only the material preconditions for things to be as they are, but why it is *best* that they be so (97b–99d). To fulfill this desideratum is the goal of the *Timaeus*, a work devoted to explaining—in terms not less suggestive for being mythical—how the physical cosmos is ordered for the best. Whatever the details of this account, it is plain that for Plato knowledge can be attained only by seeing things in relation to the Good, which is both their ordering principle and the cause of their being.

The comprehensive role assigned to the Good naturally raises the question of the place of the Good within Plato's theism. Without entering into all the complexities of this question, it is plain that the concepts of the Good and the Beautiful, however rich, were not sufficient to capture the active role that Plato attributed to the divine. For this purpose Plato instead invoked *voũç*, Mind or Reason. In a series of dialogues—beginning with the discussion of Anaxagoras in the *Phaedo*, continuing through the *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Philebus*, and culminating in the *Timaeus*—Plato argues that there must be a divine principle capable of actively ordering things for the best.¹⁰ He refers to this principle sometimes simply as *voũç*, sometimes more anthropomorphically as “the god,” the Demiurge, or Father. Precisely how these terms are

⁹ Alexander Mourelatos has observed (in a lecture I attended) how such a view appears to be reflected within ordinary language. We speak of an especially good beer as a *real* beer, an especially good catch as a *real* catch, and so on. Such statements suggest that our recognition of things as belonging to kinds is intrinsically evaluative. Since for Plato, to be is always to be a member of a kind (Kahn 1982), it is not hard to see why Plato regards being as in a sense deriving from the Good. ¹⁰ See *Phaed.* 97b–99d; *Soph.* 265b–266c; *Stat.* 268e–275a; *Phil.* 26e–31a; *Tim.* 27d–30c, 39e, 41a–d, 47e–48a. For a comprehensive study of this theme in Plato see Menn 1995.

to be understood is unclear, as Plato probably intends that it should be. As he famously remarks in the *Timaeus*, “to find the maker and father of this universe is hard enough, and even if I succeeded, to declare him to everyone is impossible” (28c)—words that Gregory Nazianzen would later cite with approval.¹¹ In general it seems that Plato sees the divine as shrouded in mystery in a way that he is loath to seek to penetrate. This is hardly surprising when we recall that for Plato real knowledge requires a personal transformation that culminates in seeing all things in light of the Good. Mystery is on such a view not exclusively an attribute of the divine, but simply that of reality itself as viewed from our own perspective as creatures largely driven by passion and appetite.

Despite such pious reticence, Plato does offer hints that raise some intriguing possibilities regarding the relationship between his two divine principles, the Good and $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$. He emphasizes that it is because the Demiurge is good that he creates the world, seeking to make it as good as possible (*Timaeus* 29e–30a). This in turn leads the Demiurge to take as his model the Absolute Living Creature, which contains within itself all the “intelligible living creatures” ($\nu\omicron\eta\tau\acute{\alpha}$ $\zeta\psi\alpha$, 30c). Inasmuch as it serves as the model for the sensible world, the Living Creature plays here the role of the Forms in the middle dialogues. (This identification is confirmed later when the Forms, but not the Living Creature, are listed among the things that “existed even before the universe came to be,” 52d). But why is it regarded as a unity, and, in particular, as a *living* unity? The *Timaeus* does not explain further. Nor is there any explanation of why the Good—ostensibly the source of the Forms—is not mentioned, save perhaps indirectly in the reference to the goodness of the Demiurge.

One can of course simply shrug off these perplexing details. If an answer is available that makes them fall into place, however, it surely should be assigned at least *prima facie* plausibility. The answer widely favored in antiquity was that (a) the Demiurge and the Living Creature represent two aspects—the active and the archetypal—of a single divine reality, which can be known equally as God, the Beautiful, or the Good, and (b) the Living Creature is *living* because it is simply a reification of the contents of the divine mind. This is the form of theism characteristic of Middle Platonism.¹² Such a reading obviously draws Plato quite close to the outlook of Christian authors such as the Cappadocians, and the fact that it had already achieved wide currency among pagan readers would have made it all the more appealing.

Finally let us note the implications that Plato draws from these various interlocking themes for his view of human nature. Plato is, of course, a dualist as regards the soul and body, one who believes that the soul both pre-exists its current bodily existence and survives for all eternity. He defends this position, or aspects of it, at

¹¹ Gregory Nazianzen, *Orations* 28.4; cf. *Orations* 32.14.

¹² For the development of this theology in antiquity see Dillon 1996 24–29, 91–96, 126–29, 137–39, 157–61, etc. and Kenney 1991 *passim*, and for a contemporary defense of this way of reading the *Timaeus* see Perl 1998.

length in the *Phaedo* and more briefly in the *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, and *Laws*.¹³ Not all of his arguments are of equal value, and those in the *Phaedo*, in particular, are often best seen as gambits within a larger rhetorical strategy. Still, it is plain that for Plato the soul has a fundamental affinity for reality, and above all for the Good (a point already noted above in connection with the Myth of the Sun), and that this is particularly true of the soul's rational part, τὸ λογιστικόν. The Charioteer Myth in the *Phaedrus* makes particularly vivid Plato's conviction that the soul's present state, imprisoned in the body and beset by unruly passions and appetites, is in some sense a fall from its true home among the gods.

It is not surprising that the Church Fathers generally had little use for Plato's belief in the pre-existence of the soul (a view which, as I have mentioned, by the time of the Cappadocians was particularly associated with Origen). More surprising is that they also had little use for his arguments for immortality. The reason was that they thought it important that immortality be recognized as a gift from God rather than a natural attribute of the soul.¹⁴ Even so, they readily endorsed Plato's teaching regarding the soul's innate affinity for the Good—that is, as they saw it, for God—a view that they not unnaturally associated with the biblical teaching that man is made in the image of God.¹⁵ In this connection they also found two other recurrent Platonic themes of great interest. One was the need for purification from bodily attachments, passions, and desires in order for the soul to realize its true end.¹⁶ This idea found particular resonance within the monastic movement, for purification from the baser passions and desires is of course a central aim of the monastic life. Another was Plato's teaching (often neglected within modern scholarship) that the goal of human life is assimilation to God, ὁμοίωσις θεῷ.¹⁷ Although for Plato such assimilation is primarily to be achieved through the pursuit of wisdom and virtue, Christians tended to see it within a broader context that included repentance, prayer, worship, charity to the poor, and participation in the sacraments.¹⁸

In these respects, as in so many others, Plato provided a vocabulary and a basic framework that Christian authors found both sufficiently insightful and sufficiently

13 See *Rep.* 10.608c–611a, *Phaedr.* 245c–e, *Laws* 10.892a–896c.

14 See, e.g., Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 5–6 and Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2.34, with further references and discussion in Wolfson 1956. (However, in *Tim.* 41a–b, Plato speaks of the continued existence of even the gods as due to the divine will, so the difference here should not be exaggerated.)

15 For example, Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.4.3, 37.4, 38.4; Clement, *Stromata* 5.14; Origen, *On First Principles* 3.6.1, 4.4.10, *Commentary on John* 2.3; Athanasius, *Against the Heathen* 2; *Orations against the Arians* 2.78. Although Plato does not call the soul an “image” of God, the *First Alcibiades* (which was assumed in antiquity to be by Plato) does say that the rational part of the soul “resembles” (ἔοικεν) God (133c).

16 For example, *Phaed.* 66b–67a, 80d–84b; *Rep.* 9.588b–590c; *Phaedr.* 253d–256e.

17 See *Apology* 40e–41d; *Phaedo* 81a; *Symp.* 212a; *Republic* 6.500c–d; *Theat.* 176a–c; *Tim.* 47b–c, 90a–d, and *Laws* 4.715e–717a, with discussion in Sedley 1999 and Annas 1999, 52–71.

18 Major studies on this subject include Gross 1938, Merki 1952, and Russell 2004.

flexible to serve their purposes. No doubt few, if any, ever consciously formulated the goal of constructing a systematic Platonic philosophy. But while pursuing their own (generally theological) agendas, they found Plato's thought an invaluable resource.

Let us turn now to the Cappadocians. One of the most influential works of St. Basil is the *Long Rules* devoted to the monastic life.¹⁹ Here we find him articulating a view of human motivation similar to that of Plato, although now placed within a Christian context. Near the beginning of the treatise Basil's anonymous interlocutor poses the question, "Speak to us first, therefore, of the love of God; for we have heard that we must love Him, but we would learn how this may be rightly accomplished."²⁰ Basil replies:

The love of God is not something that is taught, for we do not learn from another to rejoice in the light or to desire life, nor has anyone taught us to love our parents or nurses. In the same way and even to a far greater degree it is true that instruction in divine law is not from without, but, simultaneously with the formation of the creature—man, I mean—a kind of rational force is implanted in us like a seed, which, by an inherent tendency, impels us toward love. This germ is then received into account in the school of God's commandments, where it is wont to be carefully cultivated and skillfully nurtured and thus, by the grace of God, brought to its full perfection.²¹

The commandments of Scripture are for Basil a kind of "school" that directs our innate love of beauty and goodness, and our innate sense of gratitude for the goods we have received, toward their proper end. It is not hard to recognize here echoes of Plato's supposition of the innate human desire for the good, coupled with his emphasis upon how that desire must be cultivated and directed in order to achieve its proper end.

In line with the Christian identification of God with the Good, Basil goes on to find in all beings an innate orientation toward God:

Men are by nature ... desirous of the beautiful. But that which is truly beautiful and desirable is the good. Now, the good is God, and since all creatures desire good, therefore, all creatures desire God.²²

Basil here compresses the Good of the *Republic* and the Beautiful of the *Symposium* into a single highest object of desire, which he further identifies as God. One is reminded of Augustine's famous declaration in the *Confessions*, "Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee."²³ Basil, however,

¹⁹ This work in its current form may reflect hands other than Basil's, although it is undoubtedly based on his teaching; see Rousseau 1994, 354–59.

²⁰ Basil, *Long Rules*, Q. 2, PG 31 908b; trans. Wagner 1962, 233.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 908b–c.

²² *Ibid.* 912a; trans. Wagner, 235.

²³ Augustine, *Confessions* 1.1; trans. Sheed 1992, 3.

gives this idea a cosmic rather than personal cast: *all* creatures desire the good, and therefore all desire God. Although such a cosmic teleology is more commonly associated with Aristotle than with Plato, the very universality of the Form of the Good implies that all things, insofar as they seek that which is good in some sense, also seek (often unknowingly) the Good Itself. This is a legitimately Platonic insight that Aristotle brought to central prominence, and Basil here merely articulates the common understanding of it shared in his time by the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions.²⁴

It was Basil's younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa, who offered the Cappadocians' most thorough adaptation of these themes. Chapters 10–11 of Gregory's early work *On Virginity* (c. 371) constitute a virtual reprise of the Ladder of Love passage in the *Symposium*. Gregory begins by observing the great difficulty of describing the divine beauty to one who has not experienced it. The capacity to understand depends not so much on the words employed as on the moral and spiritual state of the hearer:

On the one hand, if someone has purified the eye of his heart so that he can to some degree behold that which is promised by the Lord in the Beatitudes, he will condemn all human utterance as powerless to represent that which he has apprehended. On the other hand if someone who is still immersed in material passions has covered over the visual faculty of his soul with a passionate disposition as with a kind of film, all force of expression will be wasted upon him; for it is all one whether you understate or whether you magnify wondrous things to those who have no power of perceiving them.²⁵

There is here the typically Platonic association of the capacity to understand with moral transformation, and particularly with purification from the passions. Gregory, however, gives this point a distinctively Christian twist by reference to the Beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). For Gregory, only purity of heart enables one to see God to the extent that it is possible in this life. As we will see below, such vision is possible precisely because man is made in the image of God, so that purifying the heart reveals the divine image within.²⁶

After expanding upon the ineffability of the divine beauty and the extent to which it exceeds our powers of thought and imagination, Gregory concludes, "it is necessary, therefore, owing to this weakness of the thinking faculty, to lead it through sensible perceptions toward the Unseen."²⁷ The ineffability of God thus becomes the

²⁴ The desire of at least all living things for the good is prominent in the *Symposium*, where it is seen as expressed through the impulse for reproduction (207a–d), a passage echoed in Aristotle, *De Anima* 2.4.415b3–7. For discussion of the place of God in Aristotle's teleology see Kahn 1985, Menn 1992, and Bradshaw 2004, 26–27, 38–39, and for some examples of the persistence of a theocentric teleology within later philosophy see Bradshaw 2004, 64–67 (Numenius and Alcinous), 71–72 (Alexander of Aphrodisias), 81–84 (Plotinus).

²⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity* 10.1, ed. Aubineau 1966, 370; trans. NPNF vol. 5, 354.

²⁶ See Gregory's *Homilies on the Beatitudes* 6, discussed below.

²⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity* 11.1, ed. Aubineau, 380; trans. NPNF vol. 5, 355.

motive for a kind of intelligible ascent similar to that in the *Symposium*, although Gregory seems to have in mind a more active role for human guidance than does Plato. He also differs from Plato in giving no particular role to ἔρωρ, and indeed in urging that “passionate longings after what is seeming” must be set aside. In this respect his approach resembles that of Plotinus, who had already offered his own adaptation of the Ladder of Love in a way that quietly ignored the role given by Plato to sexual attraction.²⁸ This is not to say that Gregory urges the simple extinction of the passions and appetites; on the contrary, we are not to “lock up the appetitive power idle and motionless within us,” but to purify it from the baser desires and lead it upward to “that height which sense can never reach.”²⁹ So, for example, indignation and anger “must be as watch-dogs to be roused only against attacking sins,” the love of gain must be directed toward gaining the kingdom of God, and so on.³⁰ As for concrete steps directing how this is to be done, “each may gather in abundance for himself commandments towards this end out of either Covenant in the divinely inspired writing; the Prophets and the Law are full of them, as are also the Gospels and the traditions of the Apostles.”³¹ In other words, the entirety of the Christian life, rightly understood, is devoted toward such a transformation.

It is noteworthy that Gregory also endorses, at least briefly, much of the terminology associated with the theory of Forms. One who has purified the eye of his soul, he says, “having set aside the matter that is subordinate to the Form (ἰδέα) of Beauty, will use that which he sees like a stepping stool for the contemplation of the Intelligible Beauty, by participation (μετουσία) in which other things become and are called beautiful.”³² Gregory also refers to God as the Prototype (πρωτότυπος) of beauty, and describes Him in terms plainly drawn from Platonic descriptions of the Forms.³³ It is rare to find a patristic author saying so directly that all things participate in God (as opposed to, say, the divine power or energy), much less referring to God as a Form. Clement of Alexandria had argued that because God has no limit (πέρας) He is “without form or name,” and in later works we find Gregory himself

28 See Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6, particularly 1.6.8. The annotations to the Aubineau edition of Gregory’s *On Virginty* note numerous verbal parallels to both Plato and Plotinus.

29 Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginty* 11.3, ed. Aubineau, 384; trans. NPNF vol. 5, 356.

30 *Ibid.*, 18.3, ed. Aubineau, 470; trans. NPNF vol. 5, 363. See also the more elaborate treatment of this subject in *On the Soul and Resurrection* PG 46.48c–68a, 88c–93c (= NPNF vol. 5, 438–43, 449–50), with discussion in Williams 1993 and Sorabji 2000, 391–93

31 *Ibid.*, 12.1, ed. Aubineau, 398; trans. NPNF vol. 5, 357.

32 *Ibid.*, 11.1, ed. Aubineau, 383; trans. NPNF vol. 5, 355.

33 “That which does not have its being beautiful from another, nor is such only at some time or in some respect, but is beautiful from and through and in itself, always being and never becoming beautiful, nor is there any time when it will not be beautiful, but always the same, above all addition and augmentation, unreceptive of any change or alteration,” *ibid.*, 11.5, ed. Aubineau, 394–96; trans. NPNF vol. 5, 356.

adopting a similar view.³⁴ It is plain that even in *On Virginity* Gregory does not wish to identify God with *a* Form, as if He were one among others; the identification is rather with the Good and the Beautiful, understood as the transcendent source of all form. In his later works Gregory more typically identifies divine perfections such as beauty as “energies” (ἐνέργεια), and it was this terminology, rather than the more strictly Platonic language of participation, that became definitive for the later tradition.³⁵

Besides the identification of God as the Good there remains the other strand in Plato’s thought about the divine, the identification of God as νοῦς. As we saw earlier, on the Middle Platonist reading these are different but complementary ways of describing the First Principle. The fact that Plato presents them in various ways within different works, never offering a single comprehensive synthesis, is from this standpoint simply a reflection of the need for multiple descriptions in order to come to anything like an adequate concept of God. By the same token, it is a way of pointing to the inadequacy of each description when taken alone. The mere fact that the Cappadocians describe God as νοῦς is not in itself a sign of Platonic influence, for the description is obvious enough for anyone who thinks of God in personal terms, and has in any case Scriptural warrant.³⁶ However, there does seem to be a legitimately Platonic dimension to the reserve with which they treat this and all other descriptions of God. They explicitly thematize a point that remains largely implicit (although it is certainly present) in Plato—that is, the inadequacy of human concepts and language in attempting to portray the divine, and the need for multiple descriptions in order to come to anything like an adequate presentation of the truth.

To take one example among many, we find Gregory Nazianzen reflecting upon the multiplicity of the ways that God is described in Scripture, mind (νοῦς) among them:

Are not Spirit, and Fire, and Light, and Love, and Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Mind, and Reason (λόγος), and the like, the names of the First Nature? What then? Can you conceive of Spirit apart from motion and diffusion, or of Fire apart from fuel and upward motion and its proper color and form? ... And you conceive of God as Mind, but which? That which is in something other than itself, and whose thoughts are movements, whether they are kept silently or uttered? ... Thus our mind labors to transcend corporeal things, and to consort with naked incorporeals, as long as it considers with its own weakness the things that are beyond its power. For

³⁴ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 5.12 (PG 9 121b); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* 1.360–69, 2.69–70; *Homilies on Ecclesiastes* 7 (ed. McDonough and Alexander 1962, 411–14); *Homilies on the Song of Songs* 5 (ed. Langerbeck 1960, 157–58).

³⁵ One exception is *Life of Moses* 2.25, where Gregory speaks of the participation (μετουσία) of all things in God, the real Being (τὸ ὄντως ὄν). See discussion in Balas 1966, 100–120, and for the development of the terminology of *energeia* see Bradshaw 2004 passim.

³⁶ “Who has known the mind (νοῦς) of the Lord?” (Isaiah 40:13, LXX), quoted twice by St. Paul (Rom. 11:34, 1 Cor. 2:16). Admittedly this presents God as *possessing* mind rather than simply *being* mind, but given divine simplicity the latter also follows.

every rational nature longs for God and for the First Cause, but is unable to grasp Him, for the reasons I have mentioned.³⁷

It might seem here that the description of God as *voũç* is simply one among others, the main point being that each must be properly purified in order not to be misleading. However, the identification of God as *voũç* does have a special status for the Cappadocians, one deriving not so much from natural theology as from their understanding of the divine image in man. After describing the errors into which one can be led by using corporeal concepts to think about God, Gregory continues:

What God is in nature and essence, no man ever yet has discovered or can discover. Whether it will ever be discovered is a question which he who will may examine and decide. In my opinion it will be discovered when that within us which is godlike and divine, I mean our mind and reason, shall have mingled with its like, and the image shall have ascended to the Archetype, of which it has now the desire. And this seems to me to be the meaning of that great dictum, “we shall know then even as we are known” (1 Cor. 13:12).³⁸

It is our own identity as *voũç* which gives us the capacity, not so much to understand God conceptually, as to come to know Him personally, to “know even as we are known.”³⁹ This in turn is possible because our *voũç* is an image of the divine *voũç*, to which we can come to be conformed as our Archetype.

Gregory of Nyssa develops a similar understanding of the relationship between human and divine *voũç*, but within the context of a systematic philosophical psychology. His *On the Soul and Resurrection* defines the soul in quasi-Platonic fashion as “a substance that is created, living, and intellectual, transmitting from itself to an organized and sentient body the power of living and of grasping objects of sense.”⁴⁰ Although this definition might seem to make the soul’s powers of sensation and organic activity intrinsic to it, Gregory goes on to argue that the passions, at least, are “accretions from without,” since they are alien to God in whose image the soul is made.⁴¹ Elsewhere he states more comprehensively that “since the soul finds its perfection in that which is intellectual and rational, everything that is not so may indeed share the name of soul, but is not really soul, but a certain vital energy associated

³⁷ Gregory Nazianzen, *Orations* 28.13, ed. Gallay 1978, 127–28; trans. NPNF vol. 7, 293.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.17, ed. Gallay 134–36; trans. NPNF vol. 7, 294.

³⁹ Despite the reference in this passage to knowing God’s “essence or nature,” Gregory very probably has in mind not something like the knowledge of an Aristotelian definition, but the intimate personal knowledge spoken of in Scripture as face to face vision. Elsewhere he denies that the divine nature can be known to any creature, including the angels and the blessed, although he recognizes that the full extent of the knowledge possessed by these groups is unknown to us (*Orations* 2.76, 6.22, 28.3–4, 38.7).

⁴⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and Resurrection* PG 46.29b; trans. NPNF vol. 5, 433.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 57c; trans. NPNF vol. 5, 441.

with the appellation of soul.”⁴² Gregory holds that our body in its present state was created by God in prevision of the Fall, and that otherwise we would have had bodies of a perfect (and, presumably, fully rational) nature.⁴³ This view bears an obvious affinity to Plato’s understanding of the soul as consisting in its essence in the rational soul, to which the passions and appetites have been added as a foreign accretion.⁴⁴ Gregory also echoes Plato (or whoever was the author of *Alcibiades I*) in speaking of the soul as using the body as an “instrument,” and he emphasizes that the manner in which the soul is joined to the body is inscrutable.⁴⁵

Not surprisingly, then, Gregory regards the rational soul as the aspect of humanity that is most decisively made in the image of God.⁴⁶ This leads him to ask whether, given that the Deity and the mind of man are both *voũs*, one must conclude that they are identical. In reply he offers a careful description of the relationship between image and original:

That which is “made in the image” necessarily possesses a likeness to its archetype in every respect: it resembles its archetype in being intellectual, immaterial, unbound by any weight, and in eluding any measurement of its dimensions. Yet as regards its own peculiar nature it is something different from that other; indeed, it would be no longer an image if it were altogether identical. But where we have *A* in that uncreated prototype we have *a* in the image. It is just as in a minute particle of glass, when it happens to face the light, the complete disc of the sun is often to be seen, not represented thereon in proportion to its proper size, but so far as the minuteness of the particle admits of its being represented at all.⁴⁷

Gregory’s attempt to clarify the relationship of image and original here is reminiscent of similar discussions in Plato.⁴⁸ Crucially, however, for Gregory the image of God in man is not static, but dynamic. Because God is the Good, in one who turns away from the good the divine image is obscured, and perhaps finally lost.⁴⁹ Indeed, in the broadest sense the divine image is not simply the possession of *voũs*—although that is its central aspect—but the participation in all that is good, including not only rationality but also self-determination and free will.⁵⁰

⁴² Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man* 15.2 PG 44.176d–177a; trans. NPNF vol. 5, 403; cf. *ibid.*, 14.2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 2.2, 16.8–9, 17.2–5, 22.4, 30.30. Gregory’s precise views on this subject are far from clear and have provoked considerable discussion; see Ladner 1958 and Behr 1999, with the works there cited.

⁴⁴ See Plato, *Rep.* 10.611b–612a, *Tim.* 41c–42e, 69c–e; cf. the simplicity of the soul at *Phaedo* 79b–80b.

⁴⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man* 8.8, 12.6–8, 15.3; cf. (Ps.–?) Plato, *Alc.* I 129b–130c. This is not to say, however, that Gregory would agree with the author of *Alcibiades I* that “the soul is the man” (130c), for Gregory sees the body as integral to human identity.

⁴⁶ See Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and Resurrection* PG 46.41a–c, 57a.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 41c; trans. NPNF vol. 5, 436–37.

⁴⁸ See Plato, *Cratylus* 432a–d, *Sophist* 240a–b.

⁴⁹ See Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man* 5.2, 12.9–10, 16.2–3.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.10; cf. *Great Catechism* 5. In yet another sense, Gregory holds that the image of God is not manifest in any single human being alone, but in “the whole plenitude (*πλήρωμα*) of humanity” (*On*

Gregory deploys his understanding of the likeness between human and divine νοῦς in a number of different ways. One is in his argument for the Trinitarian nature of God in the *Great Catechism*. Having argued for the existence of God based on the “skillful and wise economy of the universe,” Gregory next adds that “not even by those who are external to our doctrine is the Deity held to be without Logos (ἄλογον)” — a Logos that must in piety be deemed, not transitory like our own speech, but eternal, substantial, and living.⁵¹ He then argues that this Logos is neither wholly different from, nor wholly the same as, the one of whom He is the Logos, invoking for this purpose an analogy with the human mind:

As in our own case we say that the word is from the mind, and no more entirely the same as the mind than altogether other than it—for in virtue of being *from* it, it is something else and not it, whereas in virtue of its bringing the mind in evidence it can no longer be considered as something other than it, but as one in nature although different as a subject—so, too, the Word of God, in virtue of its subsisting by itself is distinct from Him from whom it has its subsistence, and yet by exhibiting in itself those qualities which are recognized in God, it is the same in nature with Him who is recognizable by the same distinctive marks.⁵²

The key point here for our purposes is the freedom with which Gregory draws an analogy between God and the human mind. More specifically, it is God the Father who stands in the place of νοῦς, whereas the Son and the Holy Spirit are, respectively, the λόγος which manifests the νοῦς and the πνεῦμα by which that λόγος is accompanied.⁵³ Yet we should also note that Gregory signals repeatedly the limitations of this analogy. He does so partly by emphasizing the differences between the human and divine case (such as the self-subsistence of the Logos), and partly by stating that the entire discussion is undertaken “anagogically” (ἀναγωγικῶς), in order to lead the mind upward from “the things concerning us” to the divine.⁵⁴ In other words, it is not so much a matter of analogical reasoning as an attempt to awaken, within the very partial image of the divine present within us, a realization of its divine source. Gregory Nazianzen states the same analogy more succinctly while also voicing the same sense of critical distance. The distinctive features of the three Persons, he says, “correspond to mind, word, and spirit in us, insofar as intelligible things can be likened to those that are sensible, and great things to those that are small, since no image (εἰκών) ever fully penetrates to the truth.”⁵⁵

the Making of Man 16.17). By this he would seem to mean the totality of the human race taken collectively, rather than something like the Form of Man; cf. discussion in Zachhuber 2000, 155–160.

51 Gregory of Nyssa, *Great Catechism* 1, ed. Winling 2000, 144; trans. NPNF vol. 5, 474–75.

52 *Ibid.*, ed. Winling, 150–52; trans. NPNF vol. 5, 476.

53 Gregory is careful not to say “by which that λόγος is uttered,” since in the case of the deity there is no physical process accompanying speech; cf. *Great Catechism* 2.

54 *Ibid.*, 2, ed. Winling, 152; trans. NPNF vol. 5, 476–477.

55 Gregory Nazianzen, *Orations* 23.11, PG 35 1161c–1164a (my trans.).

Returning again to Gregory of Nyssa, another context in which he draws upon the identification of God as *νοῦς* is his discussion of matter. Gregory is in this respect the inheritor of a long tradition going back to the *Timaeus*. There Plato famously argues that individual material entities are not “this” but only “such,” and that they are best understood as images of the Forms that come to be within the Receptacle of Becoming (49c–53b). Later Platonists such as Alcinous, Plotinus, and Porphyry developed on this basis a view of the sensible individual as a composite (ἄθροισμα) or congress (σύννοδος) of perceptible qualities, presumably (although they were not always clear about this) one that comes to be within an imperceptible substratum that corresponds to the Receptacle.⁵⁶ Origen was plainly aware of this view, but he also considers another possibility on which matter consists in *nothing but* qualities. The latter, he observes, would have the advantage of making even plainer than the former that all is created by God.⁵⁷ Although Origen ultimately decides in favor of a substratum, Basil in the *Hexaemeron* adopts the more radical view. Taking earth as a paradigm for all material entities, he writes: “take away black, cold, weight, density, the qualities which concern taste, and any other qualities that we see in it, and that which underlies them will be nothing.”⁵⁸

Gregory clearly had an interest in this subject, for on three separate occasions he puts forward the view that sensible bodies are nothing but a combination of qualities. What is most interesting, however, is that he further sees the qualities as thoughts (λόγοι) or concepts (νοήματα) within the mind of God. For him this is crucial to understanding how the material creation can come to be from the immaterial and unlimited Creator. As he writes in *On the Soul and Resurrection*:

The corporeal creation is thought of in terms of properties that have nothing in common with the divine, and it presents this great difficulty to Reason—namely, that Reason cannot see how the visible comes out of the invisible, the hard and resistant out of the intangible, the limited out of the unlimited ... But we can say this much on the subject: that not one of those things which we attribute to body is itself body, neither figure, nor color, nor weight, nor extension, nor quantity, nor any other of the things classed as qualities. Each of these is a thought (λόγος), but their combination and union with each other becomes a body. So, since the qualities which complete the body are grasped by the mind and not by sense perception, and the divine is intelligent (νοερός), what trouble is it for the intelligible (νοητός) to fashion the concepts (νοήματα) whose mutual combination (συνδρομή) produces corporeal nature for us?⁵⁹

⁵⁶ See Alcinous, *A Handbook of Platonism* 4.7 (and cf. 8 on the Receptacle); Plotinus, *Enneads* 2.4.11–12, 6.3.8–10; Porphyry, *Isagoge* 2 (ed. Busse 1887, 7.19–27). The use of the term ἄθροισμα in this context is probably drawn from *Theaetetus* 157b–c.

⁵⁷ See Origen, *On First Principles* 4.4.7–8.

⁵⁸ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 1.8, ed. Giet 1968, 120–122; trans. NPNF vol. 8, 56. (Admittedly, this passage is also reminiscent of Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 7.3, but there is little reason to think that the Cappadocians read the *Metaphysics*.)

⁵⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and Resurrection* PG 46.124b–d (reading τῶ νοητῶ for τῶν νοητῶν); trans. NPNF vol. 5, 458. See also *Hexaemeron* (ed. Drobner 2009, 15–16) and *On the Making of Man* 24, with a convenient translation of all three passages in Sorabji 1983, 290–291.

Although there is plainly some affinity between Gregory's view here and the Middle Platonic view of the Forms as thoughts in the mind of God, Gregory is speaking not of the Forms but of sensible qualities. The closest analogue to his position would in fact seem to lie much later in the history of philosophy, with Berkeleyan idealism.⁶⁰ Gregory, however, is not seeking to eliminate matter systematically from his ontology so as to leave only minds and their thoughts, for he regularly presupposes the reality of material bodies. Indeed, even in the passage quoted he speaks of God as "fashioning" (κατεργάσασθαι), rather than merely thinking, the thoughts that constitute material bodies. This would seem to introduce a certain degree of autonomous reality into that which is made, so as to underscore that God does not merely "think" material objects, but creates them. Gregory is also quite traditional in emphasizing (just before the passage quoted) that creation takes place by a deliberate act of the divine will.⁶¹

In general, the Cappadocians freely drew on the Platonic descriptions of God as the Good (or the Beautiful) and as νοῦς, while remaining wary of their limitations—the first, in that it might seem to present God as a Form or fundamentally like the Forms, the second in that it might seem to present God as like the human mind. Both descriptions are for the Cappadocians only "images" that aim to illuminate that which remains fundamentally a mystery. Their recommendation for approaching this mystery lay not in ever closer and more minute philosophical analysis, but in the transformation that can only be achieved by entering into (as Basil called it) the "school" of the divine commandments.

It is in this light that one must understand the last of the major Platonic themes we will examine, that of ὁμοίωσις θεῷ or deification. The connection emerges in a famous passage of Gregory Nazianzen describing the mystery of God:

In Himself [God] sums up and contains all being, having neither beginning nor end, like some great sea of being, limitless and unbounded, transcending all conception of time and nature, only adumbrated by the mind, and that very dimly and scantily—not from the things directly concerning Him, but from the things around Him; one image (φαντασία) being got from one source and another from another, and combined into some sort of presentation of the truth, which escapes us when we have caught it, and takes to flight when we have conceived it, blazing forth upon our master-part [i.e., the mind], even when that is cleansed, as the lightning flash which will not stay its course does upon our sight. This is, I think, in order by that part of it which we can comprehend to draw us to itself ... and by that part of it which we cannot comprehend to move our wonder, and as an object of wonder to become more an object of desire, and being desired to purify, and by purifying to make us like God (θεοειδὲς ἐργάζηται). With those who have thus become like Himself, He—to use a bold expression—holds converse as

⁶⁰ See Sorabji 1983, 290–294, with further discussion in Hibbs 2005 and Hill 2009.

⁶¹ Creation occurs by "the impulse of divine choice," ἡ ὁρμή τῆς θείας προαιρέσεως (*On the Soul and Resurrection* 46.124b; NPNF vol. 5, 458); cf. further texts and discussion in Bradshaw 2011.

with intimates, God being united with and known by gods, and that perhaps to the same extent as He already knows those who are known by Him.⁶²

For Gregory it is because God is unlimited, “like some great sea of being,” that only by the play of images can anything like an adequate conception of Him be formed. The tension between that of Him which is known and that which is unknown is essential to the movement forward: “by that part of it which we can comprehend to draw us to itself ... and by that part of it which we cannot comprehend to move our wonder” Wonder, in turn, leads to desire, which leads to purification, which leads finally to deification. Part of this sequence echoes a theme we saw earlier in connection with Gregory of Nyssa’s *On Virginity*, the association of the purification of the passions and appetites with the recovery of one’s true identity. Even so, it is surprising that it is by the growth of the *desire* for God that one is purified—for, after all, the desire for God is innate to human nature. Evidently such desire becomes particularly effective, and ultimately deifying, as it is spurred by wonder and the eagerness to learn more.

We can again turn to the other Gregory (of Nyssa) for a fuller explication of these themes. The sixth of his *Homilies on the Beatitudes* deals with the verse, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). Gregory first explains that Scripture uses “to see” synonymously with “to have” or “to share in,” so that “the man who sees God possesses in this act of seeing all there is of the things that are good.”⁶³ Yet Scripture also teaches that God cannot be seen, for “no man has seen God at any time” (John 1:18). The Beatitude thus raises the question of how becoming pure in heart could make possible that which otherwise is impossible. As so often, Gregory turns for an answer to his understanding of man as made in the image of God. Citing the verse, “the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21), he explains:

I think that in this short saying the Word expresses some such counsel as this: there is in you, human beings, a desire to contemplate the true Good. But when you hear that the divine majesty is exalted above the heavens, that its glory is inexpressible, its beauty ineffable, and its nature inaccessible, do not despair of beholding what you desire. It is indeed within your reach; you have within yourselves the standard by which to apprehend the divine. For He who made you did at the same time endow your nature with this wonderful quality. For God imprinted on it the likeness of the glories of His own nature, as if molding the form of carving into wax. But the evil that has been poured all around the nature bearing the divine image has rendered useless to you this wonderful thing that lies hidden under vile coverings. If, therefore, you wash off by a good life the filth that has been stuck on your heart like plaster, the divine beauty (τὸ θεοειδὲς κάλλος) will again shine forth in you ... Hence, if a man who is pure of heart sees himself, he sees in himself what he desires; and thus he becomes blessed, because when he looks at his own purity, he sees the archetype in the image.⁶⁴

⁶² Gregory Nazianzen, *Orations* 38.7, ed. Moreschini and Gallay 1990, 114–16; trans. NPNF, vol. 7, 346–47.

⁶³ Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Beatitudes* 6, ed. Callahan 1992, 138; trans. Graef 1954, 144.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, ed. Callahan, 142–143; trans. Graef, 148–149.

The divine image within plays here two roles, as object of contemplation and as that which enables the contemplation. In being cleansed of the evil that encompasses it the divine image is set free to perform its innate function, that of manifesting its divine archetype. Although Gregory does not here use the term, to “see God” in this sense is effectively to be deified, for it is to achieve a state in which the very core of one’s being consists in the manifestation of the divine beauty.

To speak of contemplating the divine beauty within can perhaps have a somewhat narcissistic ring. The rest of the homily makes plain that what Gregory has in mind is, on the contrary, a life centered on others, for it is only in this way that purity of heart can be realized. Gregory’s teaching on this point is worth quoting at length, for it clarifies how what Basil called the “school of God’s commandments” works to purify and redirect the soul’s innate desire for the good:

Now how you can become pure, you may learn through almost the whole teaching of the Gospel. You need only peruse the precepts one by one to find clearly what it is that purifies the heart. For one can divide wickedness under two headings, the one connected with works, the other with thoughts. The former, that is, the iniquity that shows itself in works, He has punished through the Old Law. Now, however, He has given the Law regarding the other form of sin, which punishes not so much the evil deed itself, as guards against even the beginning of it. For to remove evil from the very choice of the will is to free life perfectly from bad works ... The disease of wrath is present everywhere all through life, so He begins the cure from what is most prominent, and first lays down the law to refrain from anger. “You have learned,” He says, from the Old Law, “thou shalt not kill.” Learn now to keep your soul from wrath against your neighbor ... He then passes on to the healing of the sins committed for the sake of pleasure, and, by His commandment, frees the heart from the vile desire of adultery. Thus you will find in what follows how the Lord corrects them all one by one, opposing by His Law each of the forms of evil.⁶⁵

In obeying such commandments one’s attention is on God first, and then one’s neighbor—or, to put it another way, it is on God as He is known in and through obedience to the commandments which enjoin love for the neighbor. The contemplation of the divine beauty within is thus not so much an act of focused attention, as a pervasive awareness of God as the motive and ground of one’s own action.⁶⁶

Much more could be said about the Cappadocians’ adaptation of Platonic themes.⁶⁷ But already we have enough to recognize the fundamental character of this adaptation, as well as the revision that invariably accompanied it. One way to tie together the various themes we have examined is that the view of life held by the Cappadocians is *iconic*; that is, it sees the beauty and goodness of this world as images or “icons” of the divine beauty, and it understands human destiny similarly in terms of the realization of the divine image. Such a view of life is capacious, in that it allows for a broad recognition and proper ordering of the immense variety of

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, ed. Callahan, 146–147; trans. Graef, 151–152.

⁶⁶ See further Bradshaw 2004, 172–177.

⁶⁷ I have discussed further aspects of the Cappadocians’ adaptation of Plato in Bradshaw 2006a and 2006b.

goods within human life. At the same time it has a certain humility, in that it sees God as a mystery and theoretical discourse about the divine as fundamentally a matter of the play of images. (This is not to say that such discourse is not important, of course, but only that it has to be conducted with one eye continually upon the limitations of our own position.) Its goal is not to attain a comprehensive theoretical vision, but to motivate and help enable the personal transformation that is necessary for an actual *experience* of the divine.

Much the same could be said of Plato's own philosophy. Indeed, Plato is perhaps the most capacious and the most modest of all philosophers, and it is for this reason that the Cappadocians found in him a reliable ally and guide.

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Plato in Origen’s and Gregory of Nyssa’s Conception of the Ἀρχή and the Τέλος

1. Origen

Plato’s ideas found their way into the thought of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, the greatest Patristic philosophers, both Platonists—and both well steeped in rhetoric. In particular I shall analyse Plato’s impact on their protology and eschatology. As for Origen, I set out to demonstrate the role of Plato’s myths in his conception of the ἀρχή and the τέλος, and his correction of some aspects in Plato’s creation doctrine and eschatology. I shall point out a remarkable convergence between Plato and Origen: both only admitted of a mythical-allegorical discourse on the ἀρχή and the τέλος.

Origen—an exegete and a theorist of Scriptural exegesis no less than a philosopher—thought that the Bible has a literal-historical meaning, besides a spiritual one, in almost all cases. His twofold Scriptural exegesis reflects the Platonic pattern of two levels of reality, which he highlights even in a Scriptural commentary such as *Comm. in Cant.* 2.8.17.¹ Only few Biblical passages are deprived of literal meaning (*Princ.* 4.2.5; 9), due to logical absurdities, paradoxes, or material impossibilities (*Princ.* 4.3.1–4). There are many more passages provided with a literal meaning than those that are deprived of it and only have a spiritual sense (*ap.* Pamph. *Apol.* 123). Thus, the story of the Patriarchs is historical, and the miracle of Joshua really happened (*ibid.* 125). But God’s anthropomorphisms, contradictions, incongruities (*Princ.* 4.3.1), and legal prescriptions impossible to fulfil have “bare spiritual meanings,” not wrapped in a literal sense, to indicate that it is necessary to search for deeper meanings (*Princ.* 4.2.9): “Sometimes even impossible things are prescribed by the Law, for the sake of those who are more expert and particularly fond of *investigation*, that, applying themselves to the toil of the *examination* of Scriptures, they may be *persuaded by reason* that in Scriptures it is necessary to look for a meaning *worthy of God*.” Here and elsewhere, Origen applies the terminology of philosophical investigation to exegesis, because for him Scriptural allegoresis is an important part of philosophy (as was the allegoresis of myth for the Stoics²); this is why he included his theorisation of Scriptural allegoresis in his *philosophical* masterpiece, Περὶ Ἀρχῶν, and not in an exegetical work such as a commentary. While Origen main-

1 *Aurum verum in illis quae incorporea sunt et invisibilia ac spiritalia intelligatur; similitudo vero auri, in quo, non est ipsa veritas, sed umbra veritatis, ista corporea et visibilia accipiantur.*

2 See Ramelli 2004; 2006; 2011a.

tained the full historicity of the Biblical narrative, the text he interpreted allegorically, Stoic and Middle-Neoplatonic allegorists of myth did not maintain the historicity of myth, as well as “Gnostic” allegorists in Origen’s day tended to discard the historical plane of Scripture. Thus, for instance, Origen’s exegesis of John opposed that of the Valentinian Heracleon, which nullified the Gospel’s historical level.

But the accounts of the origin of the world and eschatology are subject to special hermeneutical rules, both in Plato and in Origen. The Biblical narratives concerning the ἀρχή and the τέλος—the first sections of Genesis and Revelation—escape the two-fold model of interpretation, literal and allegorical. In the prologue to his *Commentary on the Song of Songs* Origen ascribes a special status to the beginning of Genesis: this must be studied only after the rest of the Bible, like the Song of Songs; these constitute the δευτερώσεις, since they must come after all the rest in one’s studies. For the Genesis account of creation, just as the Song of Songs and Revelation, cannot be interpreted literally but must only be understood allegorically: *eas quas δευτερώσεις appellant ad ultimum quattuor ista reservari, id est principium Genesis, in quo mundi creatura describitur, et Ezechiel prophetae principia, in quibus de Cherubin refertur, et finem, in quo Templi aedificatio continetur, et hunc Cantici Cantorum librum* (*Comm. Cant. prol. 1.7*). It is not accidental that Origen uses *principium*, *principia*, and *finem* (ἀρχή, ἀρχαί, τέλος); for he refers to the beginning with the creation of the world in Genesis, the first principles with the vision of the Glory of the Divinity in Ezechiel (Ez. 10), and the end with the heavenly temple of Ezechiel 40 and Revelation (with the edification of the Temple of spiritual stones, i.e. the λογικά), and the path that culminates into θέωσις and union with God (*Cant.*). Indeed, the Song of Songs is deprived of a literal-historical meaning to the point that at its literal level, in Origen’s view, it is a theatrical piece, and not a historical account of real facts.³

Besides the influence of Philo,⁴ another Platonising exegete, the influence of Plato himself on Origen must be taken into account with regard to the exclusively allegorical interpretation of the ἀρχή and τέλος narratives. I think particularly of Plato’s myths, which Origen praised, being well aware that Plato could only use a mythical language, and not a theoretical exposition, to convey something about protology and eschatology. The former was tackled by Plato in his *Timaeus* myth⁵ and the latter in his eschatological myths. Origen reflected on the epistemological status of Plato’s

³ *Drama, fabula* (*in Cant. prol. 1.3*); *libellus hic in modum dramatis textur* (*in Cant. 3.11.1*); *ordo dramatis* (3.11.9); *dramatis speciem libellus hic continet* (3.11.15); *drama, historiae species* (1.1.1–3). In his refusal to allow for a literal meaning in the Song of Songs Origen agrees with Rabbinic exegetes, who allegorised it. Origen knew contemporary Rabbinic exegesis: e.g. *audivi quondam a quodam Hebraeo hunc [sc. Biblicum] locum exponente atque dicente...* (*Hom. in Ez. 4.8*). On exegetical convergences between Origen and the Rabbis see e.g. Tzvetkova 2010; Grypeou/Spurling 2009.

⁴ See at least Ramelli 2008a, 55–99.

⁵ Origen was profoundly familiar with it, like the Middle Platonists. See, e.g., Boys-Stones 2011, 319–337; Ramelli 2011b.

myths, as is confirmed by his praise of Plato in that he had recourse to myths to hide the truth from “the majority,” revealing it only to “those who know” (*Cels.* 4.39). Origen here quotes Plato's myth of Poros and Penia (*Symp.* 203b–e) and remarks that its readers will either understand it literally and deride it, which he does not want Christians to do since Plato is great, or else allegorise it, knowing that Plato veiled his thought behind a myth to reveal it only to the philosophers who can understand it allegorically:

if they investigate philosophically the contents expressed in a mythical form, and are thereby able to discover what Plato meant, they will see how he could hide under the appearance of the myth those doctrines which seemed to him especially sublime, due to the majority, and at the same time revealed them, as is fit, to those who know how to discover from myths what the author meant concerning the truth.

Origen presents again allegoresis as a *philosophical* exercise, be it applied to Scripture or to Plato's myths. Indeed, in the continuation of this passage, Origen assimilates Plato's myth of Penia to the Paradise story in Genesis: “I have reported this myth, found in Plato, because Zeus' garden therein seems to have *something very similar* to God's garden, Penia can be *assimilated* to the serpent in the garden, and Poros, the victim of Penia's plot, can be *assimilated* to the human being, the victim of the serpent's plot.”

This assimilation was found not only in Origen's debate with the Middle Platonist Celsus, but also in his *Commentary on Genesis*, which primarily addressed a Christian learned public, and here it was far more developed: “Now it was not the right occasion for *going through both Plato's myth* and the story of the serpent and God's garden and what happened in it according to Scripture. For *I have already treated all this in depth, and as the main subject, in my commentary on Genesis*, insofar as I could” (*Cels.* 4.39). Origen in that commentary extensively compared Plato's myth and the Genesis story. The short comparison in *contra Celsum* 4.39 is but a summary of what was discussed at length in the commentary. In another commentary of his, that on the Song of Songs, where the main topic is mystical love, Origen praises Plato's *Symposium*, where the Poros myth is encapsulated, as the work in which the true nature of love, as a force that raises souls from earth to heaven, is pointed out:

Apud Graecos quidem plurimi eruditorum virorum, volentes investigare veritatis indaginem, de amoris natura multa ac diversa etiam dialogorum stilo scripta protulerunt, conantes ostendere non aliud esse amoris vim nisi quae animam de terris ad fastigia caeli celsa perducatur, nec ad summam posse beatitudinem perveniri nisi amoris desiderio provocante. Sed et quaestiones de hoc quasi in convivii propositae referuntur, inter eos, puto, inter quos non ciborum, se verborum convivium gerebatur.

Comm. Cant. prol. 2.1

Origen likewise assimilates Hesiod's myth of Pandora to that of the creation of the woman in Genesis: both must be interpreted symbolically; the Genesis account can-

not be taken literally, but has been expressed allegorically: οὐδὲ τὴν λέξιν ἐκθέμενος ... μετὰ τροπολογίας εἴρηται (*Cels.* 4.38).

Moreover, in *contra Celsum* 6 Origen declares that the Genesis story of the human beings' receiving the "skin tunics," i.e. mortal, heavy corporeality,⁶ has no literal meaning, but a symbolic one, which he assimilates again to the symbolic meaning of Plato's myth of the soul's descent: "That the human being was expelled from Paradise, the man with the woman, and enfolded in the 'skin tunics,' which God made for those who had sinned because of the transgression of the human beings, well, all this has a kind of *secret and mystical meaning*, even more than *Plato's myth of the soul's descent* has, when it loses its wings and falls down here, 'until it becomes attached to something solid.'" Thus, Origen compared the Genesis myth to Plato's myths of Poros and the soul's fall, because they expressed the same content. Origen maintained that both myths, Biblical and Platonic, are untenable on the historical plane and must be allegorised, so to find there a philosophical truth. Interestingly, Porphyry, who knew Origen's work, used the same notion of "skin tunic."⁷

His *Commentary on Genesis* is lost, but *contra Celsum* 4.39 indicates not only that Origen extensively assimilated the Bible's and Plato's myths on the ἀρχή, as I have pointed out, but also how Origen accounted for such similarities between Plato's and the Bible's myths: "It is not quite clear whether this story [*sc.* the myth of Poros] occurred to Plato's mind by chance or, as some believe, during his sojourn in Egypt Plato also came across *people who adhered to the philosophy of the Jews*; he learnt from them, and then retained some things and altered others, being careful to avoid offending the Greeks by sticking to *the Jews' wisdom* entirely and in every respect, since the Jews were calumniated by most people for the oddity of their customs and the peculiarity of their way of life." Clement of Alexandria was one of these "some."⁸ Origen speaks of a Jewish "philosophy," and not of a Jewish "religion," both because from there originated what he presented as Christian philosophy, and because he considered Scriptural allegoresis to be a *philosophical* task, which had been tackled by Jewish exegetes. In *contra Celsum* 4.51, after reporting Celsus' attack on Biblical allegoresis, Origen remarks that this is not only an attack on *Christian*, but also on *Jewish* allegorists, such as Philo, Aristobulus, and others within Hellenistic Judaism: "Celsus gives the impression of saying so with regard to the treatises of Philo or those even more ancient exegetes, such as Aristobulus." Origen claims

6 Parvan 2012, 77, thinks that Origen interpreted the skin tunics as the body tout court. But see Dechow 1988, 318–326, and Ramelli 2013a.

7 "Thus, we must remove these many garments, both this visible garment of flesh and those inside, which are close to those of skin" (*Abst.* 1.31); "In the Father's temple, i.e. this world, is it not prudent to keep pure our last garment, the skin tunic? And thus, with this tunic made pure, to live in the Father's temple?" (2.46).

8 He defined Plato "the philosopher taught by the Hebrews" in *Strom.* 1.1.10.2; then in ch. 21 he offered a chronological explanation of this assertion, similar to Tatian's in his *Oratio ad Graecos*, and in chs. 22–29 showed the indebtedness of Greek philosophy, and above all of Plato, to Moses.

that his scriptural philosophical allegoresis rests on pre-Christian antecedents, which were ignored by Middle and Neoplatonists who opposed Biblical allegoresis.

Both Plato and Scripture spoke mythically of protology and eschatology,⁹ which are before and after human historical experience. These myths, having no historical import, call for allegoresis. Indeed, Origen declares that protology and eschatology have been left undefined by ecclesiastical doctrine (*Princ.* prol. 7). Not even angels “can fully know the beginning of all beings and the end of all things” (*ap. Pamph. Apol.* 82; cf. *Princ.* 4.3.14); a fortiori the beginning and the end transcend human knowledge and experience: thus, Scripture speaks of them only allegorically. Consistently, Origen describes heaven in Gen 1:1 as “spiritual” and identifies it with “our mind, which is also spiritual, i.e. our spiritual human being, which sees and grasps God” (*Hom. in Gen.* 1.2). All of Origen's reading of the creation narrative is allegorical. Adam is a metaphor for all humanity: “In what seems to concern Adam, Moses in fact treats the nature of the human being” (*Cels.* 4.40). The Genesis account “concerns not so much a single human being as the whole of humanity” (οὐχ οὕτως περὶ ἑνός τινος ὡς περὶ ὅλου τοῦ γένους). The Genesis story of creation is only apparently historical, but in fact it never happened “corporeally” or “literally”: διὰ δοκούσης ἱστορίας καὶ οὐ σωματικῶς γεγενημένης ... ἀναγεγραμμένα μὲν ὡς γεγονότα, οὐ γεγενημένα δὲ κατὰ λέξιν (*Princ.* 4.3.1). Many other examples of allegorical exegesis of the Paradise account are scattered throughout Origen's exegetical production, from the mention of “intelligible trees” (*Hom. in Gen.* 2.4) to that of “intelligible rivers” and “intelligible woody valleys” in Paradise (*Sel. in Num.* PG 12.581b), up to the etymology of “Eden” as ἦδη, “once upon a time,” to signify a primeval state (*Fr. in Gen.* 236; D15 Metzler). The whole of the first Homily on Genesis teems with passages from the creation story of which only allegorical explanations are given. The same claim that the creation account must be allegorised emerges from Origen's first homily on Psalm 36 (60 Prinzivalli).

Origen interpreted the Scriptural protological and eschatological accounts allegorically, thus not only Genesis, but also Revelation. He and his followers would always be suspicious of literal interpretations of Revelation, which produced Millenarianism. Origen, however, unlike many Origenians, accepted Revelation as biblical and cited it, but he interpreted it *only* allegorically.¹⁰ His exegesis of Revelation survives both, very partially, in scholia¹¹ and scattered throughout other works of his, such as his Com-

⁹ Guinot 2009, 179–193 suspects that Origen “reduced” the Genesis account to a myth.

¹⁰ Sometimes this interpretation entailed a spiritual but not eschatological understanding, e.g. in *Rev* 3:20, which Origen cited several times and interpreted in reference to Christ's entrance into the soul of each one. See Maraval 1999, 57–64.

¹¹ Ed. Dyobouniotes / von Hamack 1911, 21–44, also with discussion of the paternity; Skard 1936, 204–208; Robinson 1911, 295–297. Origen's paternity is partially confirmed by Wojciechowski 2005, with an introduction, a Polish translation, and notes. He proposes that the scholia come from three commentaries, A (7, 11?, 14, 15, 17, 18, 21, 22b, 23?, 25, 27, 28, 31b+32, 33, 34?, 35?, 36b?), probably by Origen, or Hippolytus; B (1, 10, 16?, 19?, 29, 31a, 37), non-Alexandrian; C (3, 6, 11?, 12, 13, 16?, 23?, 35?), by Dionysius of Alexandria or

mentaries on John and Matthew, Homilies on Jeremiah, and Περὶ Ἀρχῶν. A look at *Biblia Patristica* and *BiblindeX* is instructive, although several passages are lacking from there, including the following. For I think it is first of all of the scenes of violence and destruction in Revelation, in which ἔθνη and “kings” are repeatedly said to be exterminated, that Origen was thinking in *Homiliae in Ieremiam* 1.16, where he explains that destruction of peoples and kings should be understood exclusively allegorically. Likewise, I suspect that Didymus in his commentary on Psalm 23.72 had not only Revelation, but also Origen’s exegesis of it, in mind when he interpreted the Lord’s destruction of the kings of the earth as a symbol of the eventual defeat of the devil and the powers of death.¹² In *Princ.* 2.11.2–3 Origen criticises a literal interpretation of Revelation against those who held that the eschatological beatitude will consist in eating, drinking, and worldly pleasures, and that the heavenly Jerusalem will be an earthly city, made of precious stones, according to a literal interpretation of Revelation 21. Origen explains that the Jerusalem depicted in Revelation will be made, not of stones and gems, but of saints (*civitas sanctorum*), where everyone will be instructed to become a living precious stone, in an ἀποκατάστασις of rational creatures to the original plan of God.¹³ In the same way, Dionysius of Alexandria, a follower of Origen, after stating that some ascribed Revelation to Cerinthus, a “Gnostic,” attributed it to a John, different from the author of the Gospel and Letters, and claimed that it must be interpreted *only* allegorically (*ap. Eus. HE* 7.24.3–25.26). Centuries later, Oecumenius, like Origen, defended Revelation as inspired, but read it only allegorically and mystically, against chiliastic interpretations.

Sometimes Origen also “corrected” Plato’s protological and eschatological myths. As for the latter, he corrected the notion of “incurable” souls, which contradicted his ἀποκατάστασις doctrine. According to Plato, some who have committed too much evil are ἀνίατοι; therefore, they cannot be healed through suffering and restored to the contemplation of the Ideas, but are tormented in Tartarus forever. In *Phaedo* 113e2 Plato claims that those who are incurable due to the seriousness of their sins will never be released from Tartarus. In *Gorgias* 525c2, Plato, after noting that only suffering removes evil, observes that those who committed extremely seri-

Hippolytus; plus other works, D (9, 24b, 30a, 36a) perhaps by Didymus; E (20, 22a, 26), from the fourth century; F (4, 8, 24a); others are single (a gloss in 2; 30b; 5 [Clement], 38 with 39 [Irenaeus]). Some scholia seem to me of Origenian paternity or inspiration, for their close correspondence with Origen’s thought. Precise parallels with Origen’s works can indeed be indicated. Tzamalikos 2013 suggests that these scholia were compiled by sixth-century Cassian the Sabaite on the basis of a commentary on Revelation by Didymus. Even in this case, the ideas would mostly go back to Origen, on whose exegesis Didymus drew. Moreover, an early Medieval prologue to an anonymous Irish commentary on the Apocalypse, preserved in a ninth-century ms. (Bamberg, Staatliche Bibliothek Patr. 102 [B.V. 18] fols. 101–110), attests to the existence of twelve homilies on Revelation by Origen, preserved at that time. According to Kelly 1985, they may have been authentic.

¹² For a translation and commentary of Didymus’ commentary on this Psalm (but with no reference to Revelation or Origen’s interpretation) see Geljon 2011, 50–73.

¹³ See Ramelli 2011c, 649–670; and 2013b, chapter on Origen.

ous sins have become incurable. Consequently, their torments are eternal and not cathartic, but simply retributive and useful for others, as an example. In *Republic* 615e3 Plato repeats that tyrants and private citizens who have committed terrible sins are incurable and therefore never allowed to quit their place of punishment. Those who finish paying their debt with justice can exit at a certain point, but those who are incurable will never finish paying. Plato deemed some sinners incurable, but Origen corrects him on this point: no being is incurable for its Creator, not even the devil. Because he created all creatures, Christ-Logos will be able to heal them all from the illness of evil: *Nihil enim omnipotenti impossibile est, nec insanabile est aliquid factori suo* (*Princ.* 3.6.5). Origen uses the argument of God's omnipotence, which comes, not from Plato, but from the New Testament (esp. Matth 19:25–26; Mark 10:26–27).

Origen also “corrected” the doctrine of μετενσωμάτωσης, which Plato presented in a mythical form, and his successors in a theoretical form. Origen, like Gregory of Nyssa in *De anima et resurrectione*, rejected the transmigration of souls (*metempsychosis*) as a doctrine.¹⁴ He could accept it only as a myth, as an allegory of how vicious people can become *like* animals—not that their souls can actually enter animal bodies or any others. He is taking into consideration the Platonic doctrine of the soul in his *Commentary on John* 6.85, where he declares it necessary to investigate “the question of the essence of the soul, of the principle of its existence, of its joining this earthly body ... whether it is possible that it enters a body for a second time, whether this will happen during the same cycle [περίοδος] and the same arrangement [διακόσμησις], in the same body or in another, and, if it is in the same, whether it will remain identical to itself in its substance only acquiring different qualities, or it will remain the same in both its substance and its qualities, and whether the soul will always use the same body or it will change.”¹⁵ Likewise it must be researched whether the soul is incorporeal, whether it is simple or composed of two, three, or more parts, and whether it is created: *utrum nuper creata [anima] veniat et tunc primum facta cum corpus videtur esse formatum, ut causa facturae eius animandi corporis necessitas exstitisse credatur*; Origen finds this solution ridiculous¹⁶ and passes on to the second alternative: *an prius et olim facta ob aliquam causam ad corpus sumendum venire aestimetur. Etsi ex causa aliqua in hoc deduci creditur, quae illa sit causa* (*Comm. Cant.* 2.5.21–23). Rational creatures exist before the καταβολή of the cosmos: *ab initio humani generis et ab ipsa constitutione mundi, immo ut Paulo duce altius mysterii huius originem repetam, ante etiam constitutionem mundi* (*ibid.* 2.8.4). Ori-

¹⁴ And yet he was accused of supporting it e.g. by Justinian and Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* 8.3b–4a Bekker: μετεμψυχώσεις τε γὰρ ληρωδεῖ. See also Bianchi 1986, 33–50; Lies 1999.

¹⁵ One must investigate this because Scripture and the apostolic teaching have left the origin of souls in darkness (*Princ.* 1 pref. 5).

¹⁶ In his exegesis of Titus preserved by Barsanuphius (*C. opin. Orig.* PG 86.891–3) Origen expressly said that “the doctrine that souls exist before bodies is justified neither by the apostles nor by the ecclesiastical tradition”; Origen “characterised whoever maintains this doctrine as a heretic.”

gen indicates that matter was created by God at the same time as the λογικά in *Princ.* 2.9.1: “When Scripture states that God created all ‘by number and measure,’ we shall be correct to apply the noun ‘number’ to rational creatures or minds ... and ‘measure’ to bodily matter ... These are the things we must believe were created by God in the beginning, before anything else.” Bodies are not posterior to the λογικά, but were created along with them: not mortal, but spiritual bodies. Later, with sin and the expulsion from Paradise, spiritual bodies became mortal and heavy, apt to dwelling on earth. For bodies change qualities according to the place they are in;¹⁷ on earth they must necessarily be thick and heavy.¹⁸ Origen expressly speaks of two kinds of bodies, earthly bodies and others that are not earthly, still in 248, in *Exhortatio ad martyrium* 3: ὅλη τῆ ψυχῆ νομίζω ἀγαπᾶσθαι τὸν Θεὸν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποσπώντων καὶ διῆστάντων αὐτὴν διὰ πολλὴν τὴν πρὸς τὸ κοινωνῆσαι τῷ Θεῷ προθυμίαν οὐ μόνον ἀπὸ τοῦ γηίνου σώματος ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπὸ παντὸς σώματος. Very Platonically, in order to love God and have communion with God, the soul must detach itself from its body, be this an earthly or a spiritual body. The subtle body at the beginning parallels that of the resurrection, after the deposition of the “skin tunic” that was added to the original immortal body: *cum corpus humanum, crassitudinis huius indumento deposito, uelut nudum coeperit sustinere tormenta* (*Comm. in Ps. 6 ap. Pamphilus Apol.* 157).

Origen also “corrected” Plato’s creation myth, which he continually used in reading the Genesis story in the light of Plato’s *Timaeus*,¹⁹ just as Philo, the Middle Platonists, and the Christian Middle Platonist Bardaisan²⁰ did. Nevertheless, Origen corrected Plato in one respect: he did not admit of the preexistence of matter. Or rather he corrected the Platonists who taught the preexistence of matter in a dogmatic form, unlike Plato. Origen underlines this difference between his own thought and Greek philosophy on this score in *Homiliae in Genesis* 14.3. Even in his philosophical masterpiece, Origen engages in a *reductio ad absurdum* of the hypothesis that matter is uncreated and coeternal with God (*Princ.* 2.4.3). He likely treated this question extensively in his *Commentary on Genesis*.

There was a reaction from the Christian side against Origen’s allegorisation of the Genesis narrative in his *Commentary*, which also explains the loss of this monumental masterpiece. These polemics are echoed in Epiphanius *Panarion* 55.1–2; 58.6–8 and the Antiochenes. Indeed, charges were often levelled against Origen

17 *Sane qualis fuerit unius cuiusque praeparatio in hac uita, talis erit et resurrectio eius: qui beatius hic uixerit, corpus eius in resurrectione diuiniore splendore fulgebit, et apta ei mansio beatorum tribuetur locorum; hic uero qui in malitia consumpsit tempus sibi uitae praesentis indultum, tale dabitur corpus quod sufferre et perdurare tantum modo possit in poenis* (*De res. ap. Pamph. Apol.* 134).

18 *Comm. Cant.* 3.5.16: *Sed et Iob omnem hominum vitam umbram dicit esse super terram* [Job 8:9] *credo pro eo quod omnis anima in hac uita uelamento crassi huius corporis obumbratur.*

19 On Origen’s exegesis of Genesis: Köckert 2009 and my review 2012b, 550–552; Tzvetkova 2010 and my review 2011d.

20 See, also with further literature, Ramelli 2009a.

for his biblical allegoresis, not only by “pagans” such as Porphyry, but also by Christians.²¹ Already during his life he was criticised for his allegorical method, and defended himself even in homilies, the less scholarly of his works: e.g., *Dicitur mihi: Noli allegorizare, noli per figuram exponere*. Respondeant, *quaeso: Hierusalem mammas habet ... Quomodo possunt ista sine allegorica expositione intelligi?* (*Hom. in Ez.* 6.8). At the same time, in his allegorisation of the Old Testament Origen countered “Gnostic” and Marcionite claims that the Old Testament had to be separated from the New Testament as a product of an inferior God or evil demiurge, and could not contain philosophical truths to be discovered through allegoresis. In his fifth homily on Psalm 36, section 5, Origen is clearly thinking of the Marcionites and at least some “Gnostics”:

When the heretics imagine a certain other God superior to God the Creator and deny that the God who created all is the good God, in their impious preaching they exalt themselves ‘beyond the cedars of Lebanon,’ clearly leaning on the hostile powers. For they are inspired by the latter in their claims against God, the Creator of all, and if they are so mistaken in their thoughts it is because they interpret the Law *exclusively in a literal sense*, and ignore that *the Law is spiritual*.

Interestingly, Origen points to the reason why, in his view, Marcionites and Gnostics were so deceived: because they did not read the Old Testament allegorically.

In the eyes of Origen, Philo the Jew was a much better exegete, and consequently a better theologian, than these Christian “heretics” were. Though, Origen, like Philo,²² blamed extreme Biblical allegorists, who annihilated the historical plane of Scripture by exclusively adhering to an allegorical reading throughout. In this way, they transformed all the events narrated by Scripture into myths. Origen, instead, as I have argued, drawing inspiration from Plato's use of myths, distinguished the Biblical protological and eschatological accounts from the rest of Scripture: only these accounts are susceptible of an exclusively allegorical interpretation. Precisely because Origen attached the same epistemological status to both Plato's myths on protology and eschatology and the Biblical protological and eschatological accounts, for the latter he abandoned his general rule of keeping the historical plane along with the allegorical, just as Plato abandoned his theoretical exposition to hint mythically at truths that could not be expressed otherwise.

²¹ Cf. Ramelli 2009b.

²² Origen opposed radical allegorists such as Gnostics (Heracleon), who annihilated the historical plane of Scripture. Philo had already polemicised in the very same sense, especially in *Migr. Abr.* 89: εἰσὶ γὰρ τινες οἱ τοὺς ῥητοὺς νόμους σύμβολα νοητῶν πραγμάτων ὑπολαμβάνοντες τὰ μὲν ἄγαν ἠκριβώσαν, τῶν δὲ ῥαθυμῶς ὀλιγόρησαν. οὗς μημψαίμην ἂν ἔγωγε τῆς εὐχερείας. ἔδει γὰρ ἀφορτέρων ἐπιμεληθῆναι, ζητήσεώς τε τῶν ἀφανῶν ἀκριβεστέρας καὶ ταμείας τῶν φανερῶν ἀνεπιλήπτου.

2. Gregory of Nyssa

Gregory Nyssen, one of the utmost Patristic Platonists, who provided a Christianisation of Plato's *Phaedo*,²³ was the most insightful heir of Origen and closely followed him in his protology and eschatology, drawing on his notions of *creatio ex nihilo* and universal ἀποκατάστασις.²⁴ On the protological plane, Gregory claimed that matter, an aggregate of qualities, was created by God (e.g. in *Illud* 11.4–9 Downing).²⁵ This was a solution to the problem, so pressing for Christian Platonists, of how God, who is immaterial—for Origen, the only absolutely immaterial being—could have created matter. In Gregory's view, God created intelligible qualities, whose concurrence is identified with matter. Gregory's all-Platonic distinction between intelligible and sense-perceptible underpins this conception.²⁶ Again at the protological level, Gregory embraced Origen's idea of the Paradise as intelligible and the Genesis account as allegorical (δι' αἰνίγματα: *Beat.* 92); the goods that were enjoyed in it were not material (*Or. cat.* 18). There were no animals in Paradise (*Or. cat.* 30). In *De opificio hominis* 8 (see *An.* 60) Gregory even finds in the Genesis creation narrative support to the tripartition of the soul into vegetative, sense-perceptive, and rational, which is superimposed to the body-soul-spirit tripartition, with the following equation: "body" = vegetative soul; "soul" = sense-perceptive soul; "spirit" = intellectual soul. In this equation the actual body disappears.

On the eschatological plane, unlike "pagan" Platonists, but like Origen, Gregory supported the mortal body's resurrection and transformation into spiritual; this will initiate a process culminating in the ἀποκατάστασις of all rational creatures. Like Origen, Gregory affirms that the risen body is the same as the earthly (e.g. *An.* 76 and 137b–145a), but spiritual and immortal. Origen quoted 1 Corinthians 15:42–44 to support the identity of the mortal and the risen body (*Princ.* 3.6.6) and the same does Gregory, who refers to 1 Corinthians 15:35–52 in a set of comparisons with the earthly body: each soul will be given back its body, but the latter will then have a "more magnificent complexion" (*An.* 153c; cf. 108; *De mort.* GNO 9.62–63). In *Op.* 27 Gregory details that the mortal body changes continuously, but its εἶδος remains ἀμετάβλητον, which is Origen's teaching.²⁷ Gregory builds on Origen's distinc-

²³ Ramelli 2007b with the reviews of Tzamalikos 2008 and Edwards 2009.

²⁴ See Ramelli 2013b, the section on Gregory Nyssen.

²⁵ "God's will became matter and the substance of creatures." See also *Apol. Hex.* 69a–c; Hibbs 2005; Hill 2009; Köckert 2009, 400–526; Arruzza 2007, 215–223; Karamanolis 2013, Ch. 2; Marmodoro forthcoming.

²⁶ The distinction between αἰσθητόν/σωματικόν and νοητόν/νοερόν is presented by Gregory as "the supreme partition of all beings" (*C. Eun.* 1.105.9; in *Cant.* 6.173.7–8); "it is impossible to conceive of anything outside this division in the nature of beings" (*Or. cat.* 21.9–10). This division is clear in *in Cant.* 6.174, where the material substance is said to be finite, diastematic, and sense-perceptible, while the intellectual substance is described as infinite and unlimited, and is further divided into God and the intellects.

²⁷ Analysis of Origen's theory in Ramelli 2008b, 59–78.

tion to affirm that the intellectual soul, which only is in the image of God (θεοειδής), is not joined by nature to the material ὑποκείμενον, which is always in flux,²⁸ but to the εἶδος, which is “stable and always identical to itself.” Gregory qualifies the union of soul and body in the human being as the union of the *intellectual* soul, the only bearer of the divine image, and the *substantial form* of the body, as opposed to its material ever-changeable substratum. Gregory is adopting Origen's concepts and terminology.

Gregory and Origen also agree that the soul will be identified in the eschaton only with the *intellect* and not the vital or impulsive soul, nor the irascible or desiring soul, as the soul's inferior faculties—whose designation Gregory drew from Plato—are accessory and will disappear. Gregory insists on this in *De anima*. Here, Gregory treats the intellectual soul as the true human being, an idea that goes back to Plato (*Alcib.* 1, 129e–130c; *Resp.* 4.441e–442b287, *Phaedr.* 246b). It is the human being's true nature, the image of God. In *De Principiis* 2.8.2–3 Origen observed that in 1 Cor 15:44, on the death of a psychic body and the resurrection of a spiritual body, Paul “associates with the Holy Spirit more the νοῦς than the soul.” If 1 Peter 1:9 promises the salvation of “souls,” and not of intellects or spirits, this is because the soul in the end will return to being νοῦς (*Princ.* 2.8.4). This will be a restoration to its original status. This idea of Origen would be developed not only by Gregory, but to an even greater extent by Evagrius and later Eriugena. While the true human being, in the image of God, is the rational-intellectual soul, in Gregory's view as well, passions and sins are subsequent accretions that must be wiped out (*An.* 52–56; 64); the intellect after purification can recover the intelligence of the truth which is natural to it (*in Illud* 3).

In Gregory's view, the risen will not be bare souls, but will have *spiritual* bodies, and since this state is their ἀποκατάστασις πρὸς τὸ ἀρχαῖον, this suggests that at the beginning, too, they had spiritual bodies, when “human nature was something divine,” in a “*state of impassible beatitude*,” without “the accidents that have come about for us as a consequence of passion” (*An.* 148).²⁹ What is accidental and consequent upon the fall will not be part of the risen body, which will return to being what it was “in the beginning.” This suggests that in the beginning, according to Gregory, it was a *spiritual* body. Indeed, according to Anastasius of Sinai (*Sermo 2 in const. hom.* 3) Gregory believed that “Adam had an incorruptible, immortal, and more immaterial body”; after the fall, this “was turned by God into one liable to passion and denser.”³⁰

²⁸ Gregory brings forth this question also in *An.* 141 exactly in the discussion of the resurrection.

²⁹ See *An.* 153c, 156.

³⁰ This doctrine was misrepresented by Barsanuphius (*C. opin. Orig.* PG 86.891–902), who ascribes the theory of the preexistence of souls to both Nazianzen and Nyssen.

This is why Gregory, like Plotinus,³¹ wholeheartedly embraced Plato's exhortations in the *Phaedo* to detach one's soul from the body as much as possible; Gregory means, not the body tout court, but the postlapsarian *earthly* body, liable to passions (*An.* 88). The "remnants of the carnal glue," the "material load," the "ruins of materiality," and the "material and earthly passions" will have to be purified with a painful process in the next world, if one has been unable to eliminate them in this. Gregory uses similar terms in *An.* 105: "Our rush toward that realm cannot take place, unless what oppresses us is finally shaken away from our soul, I mean this *heavy, annoying and earthly load*, and we, purified and liberated from the *bond of passion* we had with that load in our life down here, can *join in purity what is similar and familiar to us.*" In *An.* 88a–89c the soul, to contemplate the intelligible realm, is said to have to detach itself from the body as much as possible, as in Plato (*Phaed.* 65cd, 67a, 79d, 80e, 83b). In his tenth Homily on the Song of Songs likewise Nyssen insists that the intellect can turn to upper realities and its activity can be pure only when detached from sense-perception. When the intellectual soul "rejoices in the contemplation of what really exists," it can "receive the vision of God with pure and bare mind" (cf. *Origen Comm. in Rom.* 3.2.13). In his fifteenth Homily on the Song of Songs, one of his last works, Gregory—as in *De mortuis* many years earlier³²—still hammers home that the soul "must *purify itself from everything and every material thought*, transporting itself in its wholeness to the *intellectual and immaterial realm*, and become a most luminous image of the archetypal Beauty." Plato's image of the body as the soul's tomb is expressly used by Gregory (*V. Macr.* 54), who, too, deems philosophy a preparation for death.

The soul's purification from the "earthly load" will make it possible for God to achieve his purpose: universal restoration and union with God (*An.* 152). All rational creatures will experience restoration to the Good (*in Illud* 13), and in fact all creation: all rational creatures and even all creation³³ will join in ἀποκατάστασις, having become Christ's body (*in Illud* 20.8–24). In *An.* 101–104 and *in Illud* 17.13–21, Gregory relates 1 Corinthians 15:28 to the final vanishing of evil with an argument that comes directly from Origen: if God must be "all in all" in the *telos*, then evil will be no more, lest God be found in evil. Gregory also draws from Origen (*Princ.* 1.6.1; 3.5.6) the identification of the eventual universal submission to Christ with universal salvation. And he derives the interpretation of Philippians 2:10–11 as a proof of the universal salvific submission to Christ again from Origen *de Principiis* 4.6.2 (e.g. *An.* 72b; 136a; *in Illud*

31 Plotinus in *Enn.* 1.2.5 speaks of "separating from the body insofar as possible," and in 1.4.14 hopes for the "separation from the body." In 3.6.6.71–72, true resurrection is "from the body, and not with the body," being a *κάθαρσις* from the sense-perceptible. Both Gregory and Origen insist that the risen body will be, not sense-perceptible, but spiritual.

32 "The soul can adhere to the intellectual and immaterial only when it gets rid of the *weight of matter* that surrounds it ... when, thanks to death, we attain incorporeality, we get close to that nature which is free from every physical *heaviness*" (*De mort.* 50–52 Lozza).

33 See *in Illud* 27: Christ will unite *all beings*, τὰ πάντα, to himself.

20.8–24).³⁴ Still in his last Homily on the Song of Songs, he hammers home the idea of the final ἔνωσις in God, basing himself on John 17 and viewing this unity as a unity of will, like Origen:³⁵ “The race toward beatitude is common to *all souls of every order* ... until they become *one and the same thing with all those who look at the same object of their desire*, and *no evilness is left in anyone*. Then God will really be ‘*all in all*.’” The image on which Gregory concluded his last work is that of the ἀποκατάστασις of all rational creatures as unity in God.

Universal ἀποκατάστασις³⁶ is the restoration of all λογικά to their initial condition and an even better condition and infinite growth in God. Gregory, drawing on Origen, claims that the end will be a return to the initial state: “The object of our hope is nothing but *what was at the beginning*” (An. 156); in the τέλος we shall “become *what we were before falling onto the earth*.” This again suggests that the original state of humanity contemplated a rational soul with its spiritual body, as the τέλος also will. For Gregory states that the τέλος will mirror the situation that existed in the ἀρχή before the fall. Since the τέλος will entail *rational souls endowed with spiritual bodies*, this suggests that Gregory conceived of intellects endowed with spiritual bodies in the ἀρχή,³⁷ just like Origen. Indeed, Gregory, in accord with all Platonists, pagan and Christian, stresses that the soul is adiaesthetic. Therefore, it transcends not only the spatial, but also the temporal dimension; it cannot be created *in time*. For the soul transcends time and belongs to the order of eternity, like all spiritual realities. This argument will prove paramount in connection with Gregory's use of the perishability axiom. Gregory, like Origen, considers each soul to be originated together with its body; the Idea or λόγος of each intellectual creature with its body is present in God from eternity; then came their creation as substances, as Origen also maintained. If Gregory means that each intellectual creature was created with its *spiritual* body, this is the same solution as Origen's. For Gregory never states that a rational soul is created along with a *mortal* body. And I suspect that Gregory never says so because he is keenly aware of the philosophical inconsistency this would cause with respect to the perishability axiom. He rather maintains that the human being was created with a project that was anterior to the world and with an anticipated preparation of a “matter” that is unlikely to be the matter of the post-lapsarian mortal body and points again to an *immortal* body, since the preparation of this matter is mentioned together with the delineation of the human being's form as the image

³⁴ See Ramelli 2007a; Ludlow 2007 with my review 2008c.

³⁵ See Ramelli 2013c.

³⁶ On this point see Ludlow 2007 and Ramelli 2013b, also with demonstration of the Christological foundation of ἀποκατάστασις in Gregory and precise dependences on Origen, and refutation of recent claims that Gregory did not support universal salvation.

³⁷ Although he does not avail himself of either this or the following argument, Parmentier 2002, 556–557 also seems to think that both the pre-lapsarian and the post-lapsarian states of humans are corporeal; only, that of the former was an asexual and immortal corporeality, and that of the latter a gendered and mortal one.

of the beauty of God the Logos (*Op.* 3). This indicates the prelapsarian state, *before* the assumption of mortal bodies. Gregory declares that what is in the image of God in humans is their intellect, which is immaterial and adiatematic, beyond any place *or time* (*Op.* 11). The intellect is not found in any bodily part and its movements are distinct from those of the body (*Op.* 14). Through the soul, the *voûç* vivifies and adorns matter, *per se* shapeless. Like in *De anima*, in *De opificio hominis* 15 as well the soul proper is identified with the *rational* soul.

In the human being when it was created there was neither male nor female (*Op.* 16); this division is “a departure from the prototype,” since “in Christ there is neither male nor female” (Gal. 3:28). Gregory repeats here that what is in the image of God is the intellect, and not the mortal body. Gregory, like the two Platonic exegetes who inspired him, Philo and Origen, expressly speaks of double creation: “*Double* is the creation of our nature, one which is assimilated to the divinity, and the other which is divided according to this division,” that into genders, which is proper, not to God, but to brutes.³⁸ Thus the human being proper, which is the *voûç*, very Platonically, is like the Creator of the cosmos, but in the part that is divided into genders it is like beasts: “The *priority* belongs to the *intellectual* component” (προτερεῦει τὸ νοερόν), whereas the association with irrationality and mortal corporeality came afterwards. Like Origen, Gregory warns that in his interpretation he is not speaking dogmatically, but “by exercise,” a philosophical exercise.³⁹ God “made [ἐποίησε] the human being,” with an aorist, means that God made all humanity “once and for all” (ἅπαξ), “in the first creation.” Each human, intellectual soul and spiritual body, was created then. The intellect is present in all humans; gender difference “was created afterwards, as the last thing, in the moulded human being,” due to the fall (*Op.* 17). Gregory cites Jesus’ words that in the next life humans will be *ἰσάγγελοι* rather than gendered. For in the resurrection there will be “the restoration of those who have fallen to their *original condition* [εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον].” Without the fall, humans would have multiplied like angels, with angelic bodies. In the resurrection they will have again angelic bodies. Gregory therefore seems to have thought of an initial union of intellectual soul and spiritual body, like Origen. Indeed, in *Homiliae in Ecclesiastes* 1 Gregory states that the risen body is the same as that of the first creation, i. e. the spiritual body: “just as you will see the body after the resurrection, so was it created at the beginning.”⁴⁰

38 Passions arose in humans after these assumed the irrational life of beasts after the fall (*Op.* 18), which in *Op.* 20 is described as choosing good and evil rather than good alone, as in *An.* 81.

39 Gregory is among the last Fathers who kept Origen’s philosophical “zetetic” method alive. On this a specific study is in preparation.

40 The intellect cannot dwell in a body unless joined with sense-perception (*An.* 60b). This holds true if the body at stake is a *mortal* body, but not if it is *spiritual*. This is why the intellectual soul will no longer need its inferior parts to be united to the spiritual body in the end, as Gregory argues in *De anima* and his first Homily on the Song of Songs. Therefore, this should be the case for the beginning as well.

In *De anima* and *De opificio hominis* Gregory criticises *metensomatosis*—what Origen also did—and not Origen's doctrine of the λογικά. In *Op.* 28 Gregory maintains that the soul does not exist before the body, nor the body before the soul; the same appears in *An.* 121. But *which* soul and *which* body? In *Op.* 28 the context, like in *An.* 108,⁴¹ is a refutation of *metensomatosis*, and *not* of Origen (as is instead assumed⁴²). In *An.* 108 the preexistence of souls is explicitly ascribed to the same philosophers who support *metensomatosis*, and the reiterated reference to the loss of the soul's wings points to Plato and Neoplatonism. The mention of the incarnation of human souls into plants excludes any connection with Origen. In *An.* 116–117 the soul's fall, due the loss of its wings, into a material body as a combination of the soul's sin and the coupling of two humans or animals or the sowing of a plant cannot refer to Origen either. The mention of “those who have treated of the ἀρχαί” (*Op.* 28) is a generic designation of metaphysics and does not indicate Origen.⁴³ Even if περὶ ἀρχῶν is a title, it can easily refer to many other works Περί ἀρχῶν besides Origen's, e.g. Longinus' or Porphyry's.⁴⁴ Porphyry's Περί ἀρχῶν dealt with the eternity of the intellect and *metensomatosis*. This, and other Middle and Neoplatonic such writings, correspond to Gregory's criticism; Origen's work does not. Gregory says, “those *before* us,” and not “one *of* us” Christians; that τις πρὸ ἡμῶν does not necessarily refer to a Christian such as Origen is proved by Origen's own three references to Philo in the selfsame terms in *Comm. Matt.* 17.17 (τῶν μὲν πρὸ ἡμῶν ... τις), *Hom. Num.* 9.5 (*quidam ex his ante nos*), and *Cels.* 7.20: τῶν πρὸ ἡμῶν τινες. What is more, in Gregory's very works the expression τῶν πρὸ ἡμῶν τινες indicates a non-Christian such as Philo, notably in a passage in which Gregory *disagrees* with Philo (*V. Mos.* 2.191). Likewise, οἱ τῶν πρὸ ἡμῶν in *Op.* 28 can well indicate non Christians such as Porphyry, in a passage in which Gregory *disagrees* with him. For Gregory is attacking someone who supported *metensomatosis* and wrote on the ἀρχαί: it may be Plotinus, who believed in *metensomatosis* of human souls even into animal bodies (*Enn.* 3.4.2.16–24), and wrote on the ἀρχαί in his *Enneads* (περὶ τῶν τριῶν ἀρχικῶν ὑποστάσεων),⁴⁵

41 Here Macrina also emphasises the identity between the mortal and the risen body: “For our part, we maintain that around the soul there comes to be constituted *the same body as before*, formed by the harmonic union of *the same elements*; those people [*sc.* certainly not Origen], on the contrary, think that the soul passes on to *other bodies*, of both rational and irrational beings, and even beings deprived of sense-perception.”

42 Pamphilus *Apol.* 159 attests that Origen in his day was accused of maintaining the preexistence of souls to their own bodies: *ei de anima obiciunt quod ante corpus eam factam dicat existere*. This charge dies hard (just an example: Origen imposed “a mind-body dualism upon the human organism in which the intellectual part of the soul both preexisted and was severed from the body in which it was provisionally contained” [Wessel 2009, 25]). But it is ungrounded: see Ramelli 2013a.

43 So in Just. *Apol.* 2.78 on the Stoics; *Dial.* 7.2 on Thales; Clem. *Strom.* 4.1.2.1; 5.14.140.3; *Div.* 26.8: a mystery concerning the Saviour is concealed in the Greeks' exposition περὶ ἀρχῶν καὶ θεολογίας, “in metaphysics and theology.”

44 See Ramelli 2009c.

45 See Ramelli 2012a.

or Porphyry, who believed in *metempsychosis*, perhaps extended to animals,⁴⁶ and precisely wrote a Περὶ Ἀρχῶν. The position refuted by Gregory, including the transmigration of human souls into animal bodies, was already rejected by Origen himself in his *Commentary on Matthew* 11.17, which is preserved both in Greek and in Rufinus' translation of Pamphilus' *Apology*, 180.⁴⁷ In *Comm. in Matth.* 13.1–2, also reported by Pamphilus' *Apology* 182–183, Origen rejected even the transmigration of souls through human bodies, on the grounds that this would entail the eternity of the world, a “pagan” tenet denied by Scripture.⁴⁸ Rather, Origen maintains, after the end of the world sinners will be punished, but not by entering new bodies: *uindicta non ex transmutatione animarum (non enim iam ad peccandum locus erit), sed alia genera erunt poenae*.⁴⁹ The same motivation for the rejection of *metempsychosis*, i.e., because it entails the eternity of the world, is given in the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 2.5.24.⁵⁰

Origen himself in his *Commentary on Proverbs* (ap. Pamph. *Apol.* 186) attests that some Christians, too, believed in *metempsychosis*, including reincarnation of human souls in animals.⁵¹ Gregory may have had in mind these people as well, though the mention of a work on the ἀρχαί rather points to Porphyry, or perhaps Plotinus. Anyway, it is not Origen that Gregory targets. The doctrine of the “preexistence of souls as a people in a State of their own,” joined to a body only on account of their demerits, which Gregory criticises, is not Origen's. Besides “pagan” Neoplatonism, it can be “Gnostic” or, more easily, Manichaean. All the more so in that a critique of Manichaeism is probable in *An.* 108, where *metempsychosis* is attacked because it prohibits the consumption of vegetables and fruit, and again in 121, exactly in a discussion of the anteriority of soul or body (*An.* 121–124). To this position Gregory opposes that of some who thought that bodies exist prior to souls, which he, like Origen and Pamphilus, execrates because it makes “flesh worthier than the soul.” He calls the

46 Smith 1984; Eusebius *D.E.* 1.10.7 ascribes to Porphyry the view that there is no difference between the souls of irrational beings and human rational souls.

47 *Hi quidem qui alieni sunt a catholica fide transferri animas ex humanis corporibus in corpora animalium putant ... nos uero dicimus quia per multam uitae neglegentiam humana prudentia cum fuerit inculta atque neglecta efficitur uelut irrationabile pecus, per imperitiam uel per neglegentiam, non per naturam.*

48 *Dogma alienum ab ecclesia Dei de transmutatione animarum, quod nec ab apostolis traditum est nec usquam in Scripturis cautum est ... quod utique superfluum fiet si finis nullus emendationis occurrat, nec erit umquam quando non anima transferatur. Et si semper pro delictis animabus ad corpora diuersa redeundum est, qui umquam mundo dabitur finis?*

49 The same was maintained by Origen in his *Commentary on Proverbs*, reported by Pamphilus *Apol.* 188.

50 *Si quidem secundum auctoritatem Scripturarum consummatio imminet mundi et corruptibilis status hic in incorruptibilem commutabitur, ambiguum non uideri quod in praesentis uitae statum secundo aut tertio in corpus venire non possit. Nam si recipiatur hoc, necessario sequitur ut huiusmodi successionibus consequentibus finem nesciat mundus.*

51 *Uidetur autem mihi et illa adsertio quae transferri animas de corporibus in alia corpora adseuerat peruenisse etiam in aliquos eorum qui Christo credere uidentur ... putauerunt transmutari humanam animam in pecudum corpora.*

theory of the preexistence of souls and the creation of bodies only afterwards a “myth,” which fits Gnostic and Manichaean mythology, besides Plato's and the Neoplatonists' myths. Gregory, far from refuting Origen's positions, appropriates *Origen's* zetetic method to refute this “myth.” He disproves *metempsychosis* as the wandering of a soul through disparate bodies, including animals and plants, just as Origen confuted it.

In the subsequent chapter, *De hominis opificio* 29, Gregory notes that the cause of the constitution of each human's soul and body is one and the same. He probably means the intellectual soul, because he emphasises the accessorial nature of the soul's lower faculties. As for the body, he likely means the fine, incorruptible, prelapsarian body. He repeats that the totality of humanity “began to exist first” (προϋφειστάναυ). What preexisted is not bare souls, but humanity as a whole. The creation of humanity “at the beginning” differs from the earthly existence of each human in a given historical time, when the soul manifests itself gradually along with the growth of the body.

Gregory defines the soul, meaning the intellectual soul, οὐσία γενητή, ζῶσα, νοερά (*An.* 29b).⁵² This definition has parallels especially in Middle and Neoplatonism,⁵³ and is tenable if the soul is regarded as created *before time*. This dissolves a contradiction that arises if the body together with which the soul is said by Gregory to be originated is understood as the *mortal* body: the contradiction raised by the perishability axiom, well known to all Platonists and considered to be rooted in Plato.⁵⁴ Gregory is sharply aware of that axiom. His brother Basil cited it: “the beings that had a *beginning in time* will necessarily have an *end in time* as well” (*Hom. Hex.* 1.3).⁵⁵ Gregory, like Origen, applied it to the world: if it is created in time, it will have an end (*Op.* 23). He deems it grounded in Scripture, too (*Wis* 7:1–18; *PG* 45.796bc). But when he states that the soul is created at the same time as the body, if he means the *mortal* body, this would imply that the soul is created in time and thus is not immortal. This is the conclusion to which Norris (1963, 28) came, understanding that “body” as mortal. If Gregory meant that the intellectual soul is created at the same time as the mortal body, this would engender a contradiction. But he does not say that the body at stake is mortal, because he is aware of the perishability axiom and knows Origen's and Pamphilus' position on that score. After rejecting the simultaneous creation of intellectual soul and mortal body (*Apol.* 167), Pamphilus rejects traducianism as well and invokes precisely the

⁵² Γενητός was used by Plato in *Tim.* 28bc—well known to Gregory—, in order to indicate the cosmos, created by the Demiurge.

⁵³ Alcin. *Didasc.* 117 H. = 49 Whittaker; Plot. *Enn.* 4.7, on the soul, which is described as generated and of intellectual nature; the authentic human being, αὐτός ὁ ἄνθρωπος, coincides with the (rational) soul; lambl. *An. ap. Stob. Anth.* 1.362 Wachsmuth.

⁵⁴ Philoponus (*Aet. mund.* 17) refers to Plato *Resp.* 546a and *Phaedr.* 245d.

⁵⁵ See Krausmüller 2009, 48.

perishability axiom against both theories: *necesse est eam*⁵⁶ *simul cum corpore emori et esse mortalem si simul cum corpore uel seminata uel formata uel nata est* (168); *necessario simul cum corporibus corrumpentur si eandem cum corporibus etiam originem sumunt secundum ipsorum rationem* (170). Thus, if Gregory is speaking of a spiritual body, the contradiction vanishes and the perishability axiom stands. Rational creatures' bodies are transformed as a consequence of their moral choices; they had luminous, spiritual bodies before the fall, but these were transformed into mortal or demonic on account of sin; however, after the elimination of sin, these bodies will return to be angelic. The λογικά's bodies, in the end, will be as they were in the beginning. Indeed, the human being was immortal from the beginning, lost its immortality after its sin, and will recover it in the end. It could not be restored to immortality if it had not been immortal from the beginning: *reddi enim videbitur posse quod amissum est, non tamen conferri id quod ex initio conditor non dedit* (*Comm. Cant.* 2.5.26).

Still in his fifteenth Homily on the Song of Songs, Gregory offers a reworking of Plato's myth of the fall of the soul's wings, without traces of *metempsychosis*, just as Origen did. The human being was made in the image of God; "therefore, the one who was created according to the image also had the likeness to the Archetype in every respect," i.e. the first creation of the human being; "but, according to Scripture, the Archetype of human nature has wings: as a consequence, *our nature, too, was created winged*, so to have its likeness to God also in its wings ... 'Wings' means *power, beatitude, incorruptibility*, and the like.⁵⁷ Thus, the human being, too, *possessed these qualities, as long as it was completely similar to God*, while *subsequently the inclination toward evil deprived us of those wings*. When we left the protection of God's wings, we were *despoiled of our own wings*. For this reason God's grace was revealed and enlightened us, that we could *reject impiety and worldly desires*, and could *put on our wings again* by virtue of holiness and justice." Not a bare soul, but the human being, νοῦς and immortal body, existed before the fall. The wings of the intellectual soul were virtues and the incorruptibility and beatitude that derive from them.

While Gregory's approach to protology and the beginning of Genesis is in line with Origen's, and while his eschatology, with ἀποκατάστασις, is the same as Origen's, his approach to Revelation is different. He does not deem it canonical (*Deit.* GNO 9.337), nor does he comment on it, unlike Origen, because he is aware of the danger of taking it literally (i.e. Millenarianism). Origen too was; this is why he interpreted Revelation exclusively allegorically. Indeed, especially on account of Millenarian exegesis, the canonicity of Revelation remained problematic for a long time, and, remarkably, this was the case for many authors belonging to the Origenian

⁵⁶ Pamphilus means "intellectual soul" here, as is clear from 171: Origen *fatetur unius substantiae omnes esse animas et immortales et rationabiles ... factas a Deo. Quando autem factae sint, olim simul aut nunc per singulos nascentium, quid periculi est alterum e duobus opinari?*

⁵⁷ Compare the closing sentence of Gregory's *De anima*, which is taken over by him after many years almost *ad verbum*.

tradition. Origen could include Revelation in Scripture by interpreting it only allegorically; others denied its authority outright, or questioned its paternity. Marcion rejected this book, like the Roman presbyter Caius, who ascribed it to a Gnostic, Cerinthus. Eusebius, an admirer of Origen, hesitantly lists it among the spurious books of the New Testament, observing that some rejected it (*HE* 3.25.4). Eusebius too abhorred Millenarianism: this is why he deemed Papias, the initiator of the literal interpretation of Revelation, a man of “extremely small intelligence” (*HE* 3.39). Another Father who valued Origen's thought, Cyril of Jerusalem, did not deem Revelation canonical (*Catech.* 4.36). Its canonicity was considered doubtful for many centuries, especially where the Origenian tradition was strong (Cappadocia, Syria), due to the Millenarian ideas its literal exegesis had produced.

3. Conclusion

I have thus investigated the reception of Plato's ideas in Origen's and Gregory of Nyssa's protology and eschatology. In particular, I have analysed the role of Plato's myths in Origen's conception of the ἀρχή and the τέλος, also pointing out how Origen “corrected” Plato on both scores in some respects. I have also studied an important point of convergence between Plato and Origen: both Origen and Plato only admitted of a mythical-allegorical discourse concerning the ἀρχή and the τέλος. Plato treated the ἀρχή in the *Timaeus* myth and the τέλος in his eschatological myths; Origen in fact admitted only of an allegorical sense for the first chapters of Genesis and Revelation, whereas for the rest of Scripture he insisted on the necessity of keeping the literal meaning as a basis everywhere.

As a parallel, I have examined the reception of Plato in Gregory's protology and eschatology (in turn deeply inspired by Origen), with special focus on *De hominis officio* and *De anima et resurrectione*. I have illustrated Gregory's own conception of the ἀρχή and the τέλος and his critique of Platonic *metempsychosis*, which in fact reflects Origen's criticisms (far from countering Origen, as is often maintained), and his own approach to Plato's protological and eschatological myths and to the parts of Scripture (Genesis 1 and Apocalypse) that deal with protology and eschatology. I have argued that, while his approach to the beginning of Genesis is in line with Origen's, his approach to Revelation is different. I have endeavoured to explain the reasons for such a surprising difference.

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Section 4: **Christian Platonism and Rhetoric in Gaza**

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Choricus on Literature: A study of Platonic vocabulary referring to literary creation in Choricus of Gaza¹

The Platonic influence on the style and contents of Choricus' prose has long been recognized and has been well documented by scholars. Furthermore, even a cursory glance at the Teubner edition's index of *loci similes*, as limited and incomplete as it is, gives a good sense of Plato's presence in the *corpus*. This is not surprising if we consider that Plato was constantly referred to by Choricus' literary models, too.² Nonetheless, our author's selection of lexical material and his conceptual elaboration of cited passages display an extensive knowledge of the dialogues on which he drew, as well as independent reflection on the questions about poetic creativity that Plato discussed, questions that Choricus himself dealt with from the viewpoint of public declamation and the school. Just as has been pointed out with reference to the presence of philosophical themes in John of Gaza, elaborated from a more distinctly literary point of view,³ so too in the case of Choricus a rhetorical standpoint prevails; still, although he is not a philosopher or a theologian, and despite an affected lightness of tone, he in fact shows himself quite aware of the profundity of the texts he handles.

An investigation of Platonic terminology that bears on literary inspiration and creation must therefore take account, first of all, of the evolution of that lexicon in late antiquity and then of the whole of the Gazan's works and their addressees. It is not accidental that reflections on the dynamics of inspiration, on the talents necessary for literary creation, and on the importance of study are frequent in the *Dialexeis*,⁴ the contents of which are generally theoretical and deal with well-defined issues, and in those orations that celebrate individuals of intellectual distinction or are concerned in some way with the school. The declamations pose different problems because of the distinctiveness of their literary genre and would have to be discussed separately. In general, theory is never dissociated from life. We shall review

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² Cf., e.g., Richtsteig 1918; Trapp 1990.

³ Cf. Ciccolella 2006, 94, on the primarily literary and pedagogical, rather than philosophical, interests of John of Gaza throughout the *Anacreontea*.

⁴ In this study in order to differentiate between the two *Dialexeis*, Choricus' work is cited as *Dialexeis (Dial.)*, and Maximus of Tyre's work is cited as *Dissertationes (Diss.)*.

The numbering for Choricus follows that of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*.

here first the many allusions to theoretical principles found in the *Dialexeis*, then their concrete literary realization and conceptual foundation in significant passages of the orations.

1. The *Dialexeis*

Inspiration

A first question in the Chorician concept of literature concerns the nature of inspiration: whether the beauty of artistic creation is in some way infused into the author by the divine, or is rather the product of a technique learned by study and perfected through practice. This is certainly not a new debate, and it has a central place in the Platonic reflection on poetry: the philosopher repeatedly reflects on the nature of poetry and on its usefulness, and especially in the *Ion* the question of the comparison of τέχνη and inspiration is taken up,⁵ with a discussion of knowledge of the various arts. The difficult interpretation of the Platonic conception of poetry in the various phases of the philosopher's thought has given rise to a range of scholarly positions, which there is no need to review here.⁶ It is clear that the constant point of reference is Homer, seen by Plato as the poet *par excellence*; the other poets who are compared to him are declared inferior. Among them, in *Ion* 531a–b and 532b, Hesiod stands out, the other poet traditionally celebrated because he was both inspired and instructed by the Muses.⁷ What the role of practice and that of inspiration should be is a question that closely engages Choricus, the son of a technical culture and, at the same time, a teacher. It is precisely to the figure of Hesiod, exemplary because apparently contradictory, that the Gazan refers:

1. Λέγει που ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ Ἀσκραῖος, οὐχ ὅτε ὑπῆρχε ποιμὴν, ἀλλ' ὅτε ποιητὴς ἐγεγόνη, ὡς γυμνασίας ἄτερ καὶ πόνων οὐ βούλεται θάλλειν ἀνθρώποις τὰ ἔργα. καίτοι σύ γε, ὦ βέλτιστε, οὐ μείρακιον ὦν ἐφοίτας εἰς διδασκάλου, ἀλλὰ νέμων τὰς οἷς δάφνην εἴληφας ἐκ Μουσῶν καὶ ἅμα λαβῶν ἦδες τὰ ἔπη. 2. τί οὖν ἑτέροις πονεῖν παραινεῖς αὐτὸς ἀπόνως φανεῖς ποιητὴς ἐκ νομέως; ἢ δῆλον ὅτι τοῦτο ἡμῖν ἐθέλων ἐνδείξασθαι, ὡς οὐδὲ Μουσῶν διδαχὴ βέβαιος ἄνευ μελέτης; 3. ἄγαμαι σφόδρα τὸ ἔπος καὶ ἐπαινῶ· ὅθεν ἐπαινῶν διηγῆσομαι.

18.1.1–3

5 E.g., Pl. *Ion* 533d ἔστι γὰρ τοῦτο τέχνη μὲν οὐκ ὄν παρὰ σοὶ περὶ Ὀμήρου εὖ λέγειν, ὃ νυνδὴ ἔλεγον, θεία δὲ δύναμις ἢ σε κινεῖ. On the distinction between τέχνη and ἐπιστήμη, cf. Capuccino 2005, 172–4 and 186–8. The fundamental problem of the difference between technical knowledge and divine inspiration also appears in *Phdr.* 244b–d with reference to prophecy, on which cf. Murray 1998, 105, regarding *Ion* 531b.

6 Cf. Murray 1998, 1–32; Capuccino 2005, 234–49, for bibliographical references as well.

7 See Hes. *Th.* 22 αἶ νύ ποθ' Ἡσίοδον καλὴν ἐδίδαξαν ἀοιδῆν. Cf. Capuccino 2005, 221, on the compatibility of inspiration and knowledge.

Hesiod is drawing here on *Theogony* 286–92 and 410–13. The importance of hard work is affirmed there (cf. Penella 2009, 43, n.27), which contrasts with the sudden transition from shepherd to poet that occurred because of the intervention of the Muses on Helicon, and so without work and without effort.⁸ This *Dialexis* is addressed to young men, as the title says, to show that without constant practice (ἀνευ πυκνοτέρας μελέτης) technical abilities are insecure (ἐπισφαλεῖς αἱ τέχναι) and that even famous examples of corruption due to laziness go back to the environment of the school. This is the context to which Choricus adapts the traditional image of Hesiod as poet τεχνίτης, who creates not only through the Muses' inspiration, but also thanks to the means proper to his own art.⁹ The articulation of this concept is traced back by Koning (2010, 326–8), to the influence of Plato: it is starting with Plato that Hesiod is contrasted to Homer, the latter being connected with μανία and therefore the divinely inspired poet *par excellence*.¹⁰ This is at odds with the earlier view of Hesiod (in Pindar and Bacchylides), according to which he was “the prototype of the inspired poet.”¹¹ According to Plato, Homer is able to give pleasure (ψυχαγωγεῖν), to enchant (θέλγειν, κηλεῖν), and thus to deceive the public.¹² It appears that the transformation of Hesiod from inspired poet to poet τεχνίτης, traceable from the fifth century, was heightened by Plato's introduction of the notion of μανία, applied in the first instance to Homer. In contrast, Hesiod's inspiration turns out to be more a transmission of knowledge than the fruit of μανία, and it is progressively characterized as bound to moral utility, whereas the pleasure that delights the masses is associated with Homer's poetry.¹³ In addition to the question of inspiration and the manner of artistic composition, the difference between the two poets also involves content: Homer, who has no knowledge of truth¹⁴, delights the public with false myths and deceives them, whereas Hesiod, especially in *Works and Days*, passes on useful teachings that have been sweetened by the beauty of his verses.¹⁵ In a word, Homer is the poet of the beautiful, Hesiod the poet of truth. Myth holds a central place in Platonic and Neoplatonic reflection on poetry, on the one hand as an unreliable and misleading account, on the other hand as

8 On Hesiod suddenly transformed from shepherd to poet, cf., e. g., Himer. *Or.* 66.5, in which Helicon personified transforms shepherds into poets, and Penella 2007, 101, n.89.

9 Hesiod also inspires an exhortation to work in Himer. *Or.* 74.1, where Hes. *Op.* 412 is cited (μελέτη δέ τοι ἔργον ὀφέλλει): only with continuous practice does one reach excellence in oratorical practice (3–4). Cf. Penella 2007, 105, n.99, for parallels and bibliography.

10 Plato's interest in Hesiod has recently been re-evaluated: cf. Boys-Stones/Haubold 2010.

11 Koning 2010, 326.

12 These verbs occur often in Choricus' prose, not only with reference to the delight and enchantment caused by poetry and declamation, but in all their usages: cf. Greco 2011, 104–5.

13 Thus in Isoc. *Nic.* 42 and 48–9, cited by Koning 2010, 329–32.

14 *Phdr.* 278c. Vicaire 1960, 103–11, notes Plato's special interest in the moral teaching of Hesiod, especially in *Op.*

15 A survey of the debate on the skill of discernment of the true from the false in Hesiod in Arrighetti 1996.

an essential element of artistic beauty and a necessary intermediary for reaching knowledge of the highest realities. Not even Choricus evades the discussion.

“La nostalgie du mythe”

With these words Pépin (1976, 189–90), defines Maximus of Tyre’s feeling about myths: the primal simplicity of the soul is charmed by the music of the myths, which lead it by the hand to the knowledge of the truth.¹⁶ According to the philosopher we are dealing with stories aimed at a soul that still has to grow, just like stories wet-nurses tell to babies:¹⁷ pleasure is joined to utility. This seems to be the tradition Choricus goes back to; he cites Hesiod as a model of behavior¹⁸ (involvement in work) rather than as a model of style in the Alexandrian conception,¹⁹ and this is consistent with the image, which keeps occurring in rhetorical manuals, of a didactic and sententious poet whose style is terse and unadorned.²⁰ Choricus’ adherence to Hesiodic moral utility and truth, in contrast to the vanity of myths, surfaces from remarks made now and again in an almost incidental way. They express the rhetor’s detachment from “fairy tales” (μῦθοι).²¹ For example:

Ἀλέξανδρον, τοῦ Φιλίππου μειράκιον–Φιλίππου γὰρ ἦν, εἰ καὶ τοῦ Διὸς δοκεῖν ἐβούλετο εἶναι.
34.1.1

Again with reference to Alexander and his presumed divine origin, Choricus is more explicit in *Brumalia Iustiniani*:

7. ἀλλὰ καὶ Ἀλέξανδρον τὸν Φιλίππου, οὐ γὰρ ἐπέρχεται μοι πιστεύειν τοῖς μύθοις Διὸς εἶναι παῖδα τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ἐπειδὴ Πέρσας καθεῖλε, τοῦτο γὰρ πείθομαι, δαῖτ’ αἰσῶν ποιῆσαι βασιλικὴν καὶ τοῖς δαιτυμόσι προπίνειν φιλοτησίας. 8. ἀλλ’ ὁ μὲν Μακεδῶν νεανίας ὀξύς τε ἄρα καὶ φιλοπόλεμος ἦν καὶ οὐποτε μάλλον ἐσπένδeto πρὸς ἡσυχίαν· οὐκουν εἰρηναῖόν τι παρὰ τὴν θοίνην ἐφρόνει, ἀλλὰ κελεύει τὸν αὐλητὴν μάχην αὐλῆσαι παρὰ τὴν εὐωχίαν· Ῥωμαῖοι δὲ τῆς καλῆς Ἡροδότου νοουθεσίας οὐ δέονται, εὐ δὲ ἴσασιν, ὅτι μὴ πάντα <χρόνον> πονητέον ἀνθρώποις.
13.1.7–8

16 *Diss.* 4.6, 33.104–6 Trapp, καὶ χειραγωγούντας τὴν ψυχὴν ἐπὶ τὸ ζητεῖν τὰ ὄντα, καὶ διερευνᾶσθαι περαιτέρω.

17 *Diss.* 4.3, 31.51–5 Trapp. Cf. Buffière 2010, 41–4: philosophers speak of the gods openly, poets figuratively.

18 Choricus cites Hesiod as a model of moral values also in 5.1.14 and 36.1.3.

19 Cf. Koning 2010, 333–41.

20 Cf. Koning 2010, 347–9.

21 There is a sarcastic reference to the ancient poets, inspired by the Muses, in Greg. Naz. *Carm.* 2.1.41.15–20 *Adversus Maximum* (PG 37.1340a) Μὴ καὶ σὺ μουσόπνευστος ἡμῖν ἀθρόως, / Ὡσπερ λέγονται τῶν πάλαι σοφῶν τινες; / Μὴ καὶ σὲ δάφνης ἐξέμηνέ τις κλάδος; / Ἡ μαντικῶν πέπωκας ὑδάτων ἄφρω, / Ἐπειτα μέτρων ἔβλυσας, ἄμετρος ὤν; / Ὡ τῶν ἀπίστων καὶ νέων ἀκουσμάτων.

In the first place, the rhetor affirms that the stories about Alexander's divine origin are not credible, then he criticizes his implacably bellicose character, which he contrasts to the wisdom of his own contemporaries, who are able also to enjoy peace. This is a case of different values and of a different vision of life, which is directly reflected in the content of the song that is referred to here.²² The reference to the example that follows, reported by Foerster/Richtsteig (1929) in their apparatus, is to Herodotus 2.173 and concerns the customs of the Egyptians. Significantly, Choricus describes the Herodotean *νουθεσία* as *καλή*: stories have a beauty, but they cannot be reliable references. The word *νουθεσία* takes us back to Plato, in whom the verb *νουθετέω* and its cognates recur very often.²³ It acquires even greater relief in light of the traditional description of Herodotus, surely known to Choricus, as "Homer in prose."²⁴ Herodotus is one of the authors from whom he loves to draw stories, exemplary episodes, or the idea for whole discourses; but he feels free to modify them, both in form and in content, in accordance with the message he intends to convey.²⁵ And in fact Homer and Herodotus are often associated in Choricus, and sometimes one is cited in support of the other.²⁶

22 Elsewhere, too, Choricus insists on maintaining that peace and harmony must be the starting points and ideal conditions for literary inspiration: for Justinian's *Brumalia* he keeps his distance from Homer, who began his poem with Achilles' wrath, and he looks to the festival that is going on for a pleasing topic that may serve to launch his oration, 13.1.3: *μη τοῦτο οὖν, εἰ δοκεῖ, τὰς Μούσας αἰτήσωμεν ἄδειν, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἑορτῆς διηγήσασθαι τὴν αἰτίαν*. A person who has a bellicose mentality does not practice rhetoric, cf. 4.1.1.3: *πολεμικὴ γὰρ φροντίς ἐν λόγοις πονεῖν οὐ φιλεῖ*. With regard to the Spartans' mode of celebrating a feast with the flute rather than with declamations, Choricus observes in 1.1.4: *λόγοις γὰρ οὐ σφόδρα ἴσασιν ἑορτάζειν οἷς ἐν ὄπλοις ὁ βίος*. On the other hand, in *Laudatio Summi Or.* 4.1.25, Choricus mentions the relations between the general Summus and his own school, whether to underscore his acquaintance with the *laudandus* or to add cultural interests to his praise of the military man: cf. Greco 2011, 115–6. On the differences in *Orr.* 3 and 4 with regard to the traditional values of peace and war, cf. Westberg 2010, 71–6. In a word, peace is the necessary condition for *Λόγοι*.

23 Cf., e.g., Pl. *Phdr.* 249d; *Grg.* 525c (*νουθέτημα*); *Lg.* 740e. The substantive *νουθεσία* is attested in Porph. *Abst.* 38.23.

24 On which, see Penella 2007, 63 n.71, with reference to Himer. 41.10 (To Constantinople) on the Muse of the Carian Herodotus, superior to poetry.

25 On Choricus' free use of Herodotus as a source, see Lupi 2010, 53–67.

26 Choricus cites Herodotus in *Laudatio Marciani 2* (*Or.* 2 with 2.1.1): *καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τις πάλα σοφός, γένος Ἀλικαρνασεύς, Ἡρόδοτος ὄνομα, ὃς πολλῶν ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω*, with an obvious reference to Hom. *Od.* 1.3; a little later, 2.1.2, he describes him as *φιλόμυθος* with reference to the description of the Temple of Babylon in Hdt. 1.181. Choricus, too, has to describe sacred edifices, whose construction was seen to by Marcianus, so he wishes to specify that the style, but not the contents, of Herodotus' tales is useful: 2.1.2 ...*τῆς δὲ Ἡροδότου γλώττης δεόμεθα, οὐ τι μυθολογίας γε εἶνεκα...*, τοῦ δὲ πρὸς ἀξίαν ἔσαι τὸν ἱερέα αὐτόν τε ἅμα καὶ ὅσα δημιουργεῖ. Choricus refers to Herodotean accounts in *Laudatio Aratii et Stephani* 20 (*Or.* 3.2): *Ἀλικαρνασεύς τινὸς μῦθοί φασι*, citing Hdt. 1.84. Herodotus (8.3) and Homer are in agreement in maintaining that war against foreigners is less distressful than an internal conflict in *Laudatio Summi Or.* 4.1.18: *ταύτην ἐγὼ τὴν διάλυσιν παντὸς εἶναι φημι τροπαιοῦ τιμιωτέραν Ἡροδότῳ χρώμενος δικαστῆ· ὅσῳ γὰρ εἰρήνη, φησί,*

With regard to the question of judging Homer, Choricus, like Plato, takes him as a reference point to describe the activity of poets. Poetry in general has a prominent position in Choricus' work, both because it was a part of rhetorical formation and also because of its importance in the cultural world of Gaza in the sixth century.²⁷ As for Hesiod, so too for Homer the rhetor raises the problem of inspiration: specifically, he asks, with regard to the orator's capability in mimesis or his adaptability to various characters, whether the Muses had inspired him or whether he possessed natural talents:

εἴτε οὖν αἱ Μοῦσαι αὐτῷ τοῦτο ἐνέπνευσαν εἴτε καὶ μῦθος αἱ Μοῦσαι, φύσεως δὲ τὸ πλεονέκτημα ἦν.

21.1.2

His own preference is to benefit from the intervention of Athena, who can change Odysseus' appearance.²⁸ To Homer, and to poetry in general, is attributed a special capability of delighting and even of enchanting the listener. Myth is the privileged object of poetry; and when he has to turn to it, he specifies that it is subject matter treated in verse by poets, as in the case of the story about Ares and Aphrodite:

2. Δότε οὖν, ὦ φιλότης, βραχὺ μυθολογήσαι καὶ παραμίξει τοῖς ὄψοις ἡδυσμά τι ποιητικόν, τὴν Ἀφροδίτην· τὰ ῥόδα γὰρ ἀναμινήσκει με τῆς θεοῦ. 3. ἄδουσι ποιηταὶ ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐ πιθανά, ὅμως δὲ ἄδουσι καὶ πείθουσι φιλομύθους ἀκροατὰς Ἀδώνιδος αὐτὴν ἐρασηθῆναι.

16.1.2–3

The mythological theme is introduced into the discourse as a “pleasantry” (ἡδυσμά τι), called to mind by its association with the rose. But the usual skepticism about the truth of poetry recurs; it convinces only those who believe in myths (φιλομύθους ἀκροατὰς). Then, a little further on, he adds, from a technical point of view:

πρῶτέρα πολέμου, τοσούτω πόλεμος ἔφθ στάσεως ἡμερώτερος, ἔοικε δὲ τοῦτο καὶ Ὅμηρος μαρτυρεῖν· ποιήσας γὰρ πόλεμον Τρώων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν τὸν πόλεμον παριδὼν τὴν Ἀχιλλέως ἤτησε μῆνιν ἄδειν τὴν Μοῦσαν. In *Miltiades* (17.1.2–3), Homer and Herodotus are associated, even though by way of contrast. Choricus draws on the myths of Herodotus in 27.1.4: εἰ δὲ δεῖ καὶ μυθολογεῖν, Ἡρόδοτου Ἀλικαρνασσεῶς διηγήσομαι λόγον: he introduces the myth of Arion, translated into Attic, from Hdt. 1.24, but adds, 27.1.5: ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν εὖ μάλα Ἡρόδοτος ἄδει, ἐγὼ δὲ ἐκεῖνο ὑμῖν ἔρχομαι φράσων. Herodotus “sings,” like the poets. The relationship between Herodotus and the Muses, to each of whom is dedicated one of his books, is underlined in *Apologia Mimonum* 32.2.148: ὡς πού φησιν ὁ τὰς Μοῦσας ὑποδεξάμενος, ὃ φιλοξενίας μισθὸν ἐκάστη βίβλον ἔδωκε μίαν. *Ibid.*, 156, reports on Hdt. 1.71.

27 On the presence of poetry in school, Litsas 1980, 23–4. The production of poetry at Gaza and the social role ascribed to it are discussed by Ciccolella 2000, 118–26; Renaut 2005; Gigli 2005.

28 21.1.3: ἀλλ' Ὀμήρῳ μὲν εὐτράπελός τε καὶ εὐχάρις καὶ πρὸς ἅπαν ἦθος εὐκόλος ἐστὶν ἢ γλώττα, ἐμοὶ δέ, ὡς ἔοικεν, Ἀθηναῖα τε ἐπιζητητέα καὶ ἡ τῆς θεοῦ ῥάβδος, ἣ τὴν Ὀδυσσεῶς ἰδέαν τρέπει πολλακίς ἐκείνη. Cf. Buffière 2010, 279–89, on the figure of Athena, whom Neoplatonic exegesis of the *Odyssey* associates with φρόνησις; and also 353, Odysseus is πολῦτροπος like Demosthenes, who is compared to Proteus by D.H. *Dem.* 8.

5. ἔφη ἂν οὕτω πως Ὅμηρος προσθεῖς τὸ μέτρον τοῖς εἰρημένοις.
16.1.5

So if mythology is the common material on which both poets and those who also wish to delight the public in prose draw, Choricus displays a sharp attention to the technical difference between the two types of composition. He seems to have present the definition of the nature of poetry articulated by Gorgias *Helen* 9 τὴν ποιησιν ἅπασαν καὶ νομίζω καὶ ὀνομάζω λόγον ἔχοντα μέτρον, in which meter is what distinguishes poetry from discourse in prose.²⁹ He often asserts that he is not a poet, recalling Plato *Republic* 393d.³⁰ This is understandable given his rhetorical and scholastic formation as well as the high level of his technical knowledge of literary structures and genres. One notes, however, the difference between his position and that of Gorgias: for Choricus, the point to be noted is not merely the presence of meter, but also the theme; so it is a question of content as well as of form.³¹ With regard to Choricus' relationship to poetry, one seems to pick up a kind of feeling of inferiority in the face of verse composition, and not only because of lack of adequate technical competency:

1. Ἄρα ὑμῖν, ὦ φιλότης, οὕτω δοκῶ τις ἀνήκοος εἶναι μυθολογίας Ὀμηρικῆς, ὡς ἀγνοεῖν ὅτι τὸν Θάμυριν ἐψίλωσε τῆς ὠδῆς ἢ πρὸς τὰς Μούσας ὑπεροψία; ἵνα οὖν μὴ δοκῶ τις ἀνήκοος εἶναι, φέρε λύσας τὸ μέτρον, οὐ γὰρ εἰμι ποιητικός, τὴν ἔννοιαν ἐν βραχεῖ διηγήσομαι τῶν ἐπῶν.
15.1.1

This text, full of Platonic references, is also marked by a sense of personal inadequacy *vis à vis* Homer and Pindar, who were inspired by the Muses and the Sirens: 15.1.6 Choricus has appropriated the traditional distinction between prose, represented as a walk on the ground, and the elevation on high that is typical of poetry. The same contrast is drawn by John of Gaza, with fear and anxiety over his declamatory performance, in the prologue to his cosmological poem (*Ekphr.* 9–15).³² An example:

Ποῖ δὴ με θράσους μετεωρίζεις, ὦ πρόλογε, θεὸν εἰς παράδειγμα φέρων καὶ τοῦτον χοροῦ τῶν Μουσῶν ἡγεμόνα; ἀλλ' ἄγε δὴ, κατὰβηθι καὶ μοι ἐτέραν εἰκόνα που ζῆτει χαμαὶ ἐρχομένων ἀνθρώπων.
24.1.4

One can sing of the divine if taken up on high (μετεωρίζεις), as poets are; but prose must limit itself to treating terrestrial themes (χαμαὶ ἐρχομένων ἀνθρώπων). Thus,

²⁹ Cf. Hermann 2011, 29.

³⁰ Cf. *Oratio funebris in Mariam* 71.35, and Greco 2010, 133–4.

³¹ Cf. Aristotle *Poetics* 51b.1–3 εἴη γὰρ ἂν τὰ Ἡροδότου εἰς μέτρα τεθῆναι καὶ οὐδὲν ἦττον ἂν εἴη ἱστορία τις μετὰ μέτρον ἢ ἄνευ μέτρων, on the difference between the poet and the historian.

³² Cf. Gigli 2005, 186–7; and Greco 2010, 97–8.

after introducing a story about Marsyas, Choricus ends by exhorting the Λόγοι to take a different path:³³

Ἄγετε οὖν, ὦ Λόγοι, ἑτέραν τινὰ καὶ ἡμεῖς βαδίσωμεν ἄσμάτων ὁδόν, μὴ ποτε χεῖρους δόξωμεν εἶναι τοῦ αὐλητοῦ.
24.15

Nonetheless, in other passages, one senses the result of a synthesis of the inspiration of the Muses, literary pleasure, and the activity of the rhetor, so that both poet and orator may invoke the other's tutelary deity. In 11.1.4, with reference to the observation made to the elderly Procopius that he has limited his activities, Choricus emphasizes that he himself is not a poet like Homer and Hesiod, but that he writes ἄνευ μέτρου λόγους and therefore does not have the right, according to common opinion, to invoke the Muses:

4. ἄγετε οὖν, ὦ Μοῦσαι, ξύν μοι λάβεσθε τοῦ λόγου, ὃν οἶδε με ποιῆσαι προσέταξαν οἱ σοφοί. οὐ γάρ ἔχω μαθεῖν, ὦ φιλότις, τί ποτε ἄρα ποιηταῖς μὲν ἔθος αὐτὰς κατὰ πολλὴν ἐξουσίαν αἰτεῖν, εἴτε τις ἐνὸς Θεσσαλοῦ μῆνιν ἄδειν ἐθέλοι εἴτε διδάξαι τὸν ἀδελφὸν ὡς δύο εἰσὶν Ἴεριδες ἐν ἀνθρώποις, αἱ δὲ δοκοῦσιν ἥκειν ὀξέως νῦν μὲν ἐκ Πιερίας, νῦν δὲ ἐξ Ἑλικῶνος, κἂν τύχῃσι περὶ κρήνην ἰοιδέα ποσὶν ἀπαλοῖσιν ὀρχοῦμεναι· εἰ δὲ τις ἄνευ μέτρου λόγους ἐργάζοιτο, λόγους δὲ ὄμως, καὶ τοῦτο εἴη τὸ ἔργον αὐτοῦ, τούτῳ γε οὐ πάνυ τι προσήκειν οἴονται οἱ πολλοὶ τὰς Μοῦσας αἰτεῖν.
11.1.4

The invocation of divinities by someone who is getting ready to face a challenge takes us back to the world of the declamatory performances of Gaza. We might make a direct comparison with John of Gaza *Anacreontea* 1.12–14, in which Hermes is associated with the Muses.³⁴ But, unlike John, Choricus resolves the difficulty in a strictly rhetorical context, adducing the example of Socrates, who, even though not a poet, still asked for the help of the Muses:³⁵

καίτοι Σωκράτης ὁ Ἀθηναῖος ποιητικὸς μὲν οὐκ ἦν, ἐδεήθη δὲ τῶν Μουσῶν παρεῖναι τέ οἱ καὶ φράζειν, ἄττα δὴ ἔμελλε πρὸς Φαῖδρον ἐρεῖν, τὰ Λυσίου τε καὶ αὐτοῦ παιδικά.
11.1.5

The fact that Socrates is called ὁ Ἀθηναῖος indicates, in my opinion, that the perfect synthesis of art, understood as a combination of inspiration and technique, is found in the great Athenian tradition. Thus Choricus can conclude:

³³ On the Choric love of personifications, and for the personification of Λόγοι in particular, cf. Greco 2010, 136.

³⁴ *Anacr.* 1.12–14 ὁ δ' ἄναξ λόγων Ἀπόλλων / Ἑλικωνίδες τε Μοῦσαι / τροχαλὸν λαβόντες Ἑρμῆν / κρίσιν εἰσφέρουσι τόλμη, and Ciccolella 2000, 130–1, who notes the allusions to the prooemium of the Hesiodic *Theogony* and raises the possibility that this poem was the prooemium of a collection.

³⁵ Cf. Pl. *Phdr.* 237a; Pl. *Grg.* 482a.

Ἄγετε οὖν, ὦ Πιερίδες, ἴσως γὰρ ὑμῖν ἥδιον ὀνόματι καλεῖσθαι ποιητικῶν, ζῆν μοι λάβεσθε τοῦ ἀγῶνος· οὐ γὰρ ἀνιάσει τοῦτο τοὺς ποιητάς, ἐπεὶ κἂν τις ἐκείνων αἰτήσῃ τι τὸν Ἑρμῆν, οὐ φθονήσομεν.

11.1.6

The Homeric *exemplum* of Nestor as a paradigm of φιλοπονία in advanced age, brought in earlier in this *Dialexeis*, is also applied to Procopius, with quotation of the same Homeric verse (*Il.* 10.164), in the funeral oration dedicated to him,³⁶ where the sweetness of his eloquence is also recalled.³⁷ In fact, it is precisely in the figure of Choricus' beloved teacher that this synthesis of the loftiness of poetic inspiration and the excellence of oratorical technique takes place, and the decision to recall him in this *Dialexis* in a prose riddled with poetic references should not surprise us.

Elsewhere, Choricus takes this identification of the inspired poet with the rhetor for granted, as when, on the occasion of his annual discourse,³⁸ he maintains that, for those who cultivate the fields of the Muses, the exercise of Λόγοι must know no seasons:

2. εἰ οὖν ἀγροίκων εὐθύνονται παῖδες, ἥνικα ὀφείλουσιν, ἧ̄ που ὅσοι μουσικούς ὑμῖν γεωργοῦσι λειμῶνας, οὐ γὰρ χειμέριον τῶν Μουσῶν ἔφν τοῦ ὕδαρ οὐδὲ θέρους μὲν ἀναβαίνει, χειμῶνος δὲ ὥρα συστέλλεται, οἷά φασιν ὑπομένειν τὸν ποταμὸν τὸν Αἰγύπτιον, ἀλλὰ κἂν ἀρύσωνται πάντες αὐτοῦ καὶ θαμὰ τοῦτο ποιῶσιν, οὔποτε ἐπιλείψει· μὴ γὰρ ἐπιλείποιεν ἄρδοντες λόγοι ἀνθρώπους.

36.1.2

3....ὅτῳ δὲ λόγοι ἐπιτήδευμα, ἅπας ὑπάρχει καιρὸς ὥριος ἐς λόγου δημιουργίαν, καὶ οὔτε ὀρνίθων κλαγγὴν οὔτε Πλειάδας ἀνιούσας ἢ δυομένας αὐτῶ περισκοπήσαι δεήσει.

36.1.3

The Hesiodic references to agriculture contribute here to a σύγκρισις of τέχνηαι: rhetoric is not tied to a season like agriculture, because the Muses' flow of water is continuous and plentiful. The association of the water of the Muses with Hesiodic poetry is a *topos*, in contrast to the wine that inebriates, which is associated with Homer's poetry.³⁹ Choricus seems to understand that he who dedicates himself to λόγοι needs the support both of Homer's Muse, that is, of the beautiful, and of Hesiod's Muse, that is, of the useful. The Nile is elsewhere, too, the plentiful river *par excellence*; but, above all, it is connected to rhetoric through its association with Alexandria and its school, where Gazans (and perhaps also Choricus himself) would commonly

³⁶ *Oratio funebris in Procopium* 8.1.17.

³⁷ *Oratio funebris in Procopium* 8.1.20 φαίην ἂν αὐτοῦ τὴν ψυχὴν πηγὴν εἶναι τινα παντοίους βρύουσαν νάμασιν ὠφελεία τε καὶ τέρψει συγκεκραμένους. Cf. Greco 2010, 166.

³⁸ Cf. Penella 2009, 55 n.66, in reference to an analogous discourse of Libanius *Or.* 3.9.32.

³⁹ Cf. Koning 2010, 338–41.

complete their education.⁴⁰ But besides referring the listener to a common experience, this element leads back to an image dear to our author and to Plato: that of the flow of words, of an eloquence that streams forth abundantly and continuously like a river. Its precedent is the famous passage that represents the poet seated on the Muse's tripod:

ὅτι ποιητής, ὁπότεν ἐν τῷ τρίποδι τῆς Μούσης καθίζηται, τότε οὐκ ἔμφρων ἐστίν, οἶον δὲ κρήνη τις τὸ ἐπιὸν ῥεῖν ἐτοίμως ἔῃ, καὶ τῆς τέχνης οὔσης μιμήσεως ἀναγκάζεται, ἐναντίως ἀλλήλοις ἀνθρώπους ποιῶν διατιθεμένους, ἐναντία λέγειν αὐτῷ πολλάκις, οἶδεν δὲ οὔτ'εἰ ταῦτα οὔτ'εἰ θάτερα ἀληθῆ τῶν λεγομένων.

Plato *Laws* 719c

Choricus takes up only the Platonic image, fixed by a long tradition, and completely eliminates from it the theme of unawareness of the truth: as we have seen, the insistence on discriminating the beautiful from the true is a recurring motif for him.

The word and the other arts

This last *Dialexeis* also shows an example of the Choric habit of establishing comparisons with various τέχνη: he makes use in it of Hesiodic verses to define the difference between a seasonal and a continuous activity, naturally to the advantage of the latter. This inclination leads him to appropriate yet another Platonic image applied to eloquence, that of the “banquet of λόγοι,” e.g., Plato *Timaeus* 27b τῶν λόγων ἐστίασις, which recurs in various passages.⁴¹ See, for example:

τοσαύτην ὑμῖν, ᾧ φιλότης, ἦκω παρασκευασάμενος εὐωχίαν· βραχὺς γάρ ὢν ὁ καιρὸς οὐκ ἐνέδωκε συγκαλέσαι τοὺς εἰωθότας τῶν λόγων ὀψοποιούς.

13.1.16

The occasion is provided by Justinian's *Brumalia*. Choricus uses the metaphor again elsewhere:

... εἰς τὴν ἐγκύκλιον εὐωχίαν, φέρε ἴδω, εἶπου δυναίμην ἀβρότερον ὑμᾶς ἐστίασαι. λίχνοι γάρ ἐστε τῶν λόγων καὶ ἄπληστοι.

16.1.1

The lexicon is clearly Platonic. See Plato's *Republic* 579b λίχνω δὲ ὄντι αὐτῷ τὴν ψυχὴν μόνω τῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει οὔτε ἀποδημῆσαι ἔξεστιν οὐδαμῶσε, οὔτε θεωρῆσαι

⁴⁰ Cf. *Oratio funebris in Procopium* 8.1.15 and *Aen. Gaz. Ep.* 15 Massa Positano. The inundations of the Nile are an object of Herodotus' observations (2.19), cf. Penella 2009, 54 n.63, along with other suggestive phenomena to which its waters are subjected: cf. Gigli 1998.

⁴¹ On the metaphor, cf. Litsas 1980, 30; furthermore, the comparison of the rhetor with the κακὸς μάγειρος in Pl. *Phdr.* 265e, and Vicaire 1960, 399.

ὄσων δὴ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ἐλεύθεροι ἐπιθυμηταὶ εἰσιν, with reference to the tyrant's desires, and 332c – d Ἡ δὲ τίσι τί ἀποδιδούσα ὀφειλόμενον καὶ προσήκον τέχνη μαγειρική καλεῖται; Ἡ τοῖς ὄψοις τὰ ἡδύσματα, in which the τέχνη of medicine is linked to the art of cooking. Cooking is compared to medicine and rhetoric in *Gorgias* 465b–e too: here the issue is the yearning for knowledge.⁴² At a later time, the *iunctura* λόγων εὐωχία is attested in *AP* 4.3.5–6 (Agath.) λόγων γὰρ ἡμῖν πολυτελῶν καὶ ποικίλων / πολλοὶ προθέντες παμμειγῆς εὐωχίας. It is also found, in a rhetorical context, in Maximus of Tyre' *Dissertation* 22.6, 191.144 Trapp (εὐωχία λόγων) and, in the Christian sphere, in Methodius of Olympus' *Symposium* 9.5 (*PG* 18.192B) and Ps.-Methodius *De Symeone et Anna* 10 (*PG* 18.372C).⁴³ Literary beauty, already defined as ἡδύσμα in 16.2, reappears in this metaphorical sphere.

The occasion of a banquet, furthermore, evokes a relationship of familiarity and sharing, typical of people partaking of the same food or of the nourishment of culture, in which barbarians have no part.⁴⁴ In contrasting contests of the Persians with those of the Greeks, Choricus observes:

ἐκείνοις μὲν οὖν—οὐ γὰρ ἐστιῶσι βαρβάρους ἄνδρας αἱ Μοῦσαι—τοιαύτας ἐπιτρέψωμεν εὐωχίας ἐπινοεῖν τε αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐργάζεσθαι, ἡμῖν δὲ ὄψων ἔστω μῦθος τοῦ ρόδου, ὃν οὔτε ἡμῖν οὔτε ἄλλοις ἐγὼ παρατέθεικα δαιτυμόσιν.

39.1.2

And he concludes:

ταῦτα, ὦ φιλότης, ὁ μῦθος, τί γὰρ ἄν τις ἕτερον ἐν τῷδε ἡμᾶς ἐστιάσειε τῷ καιρῷ;

39.1.8

Myth, which we have seen is the poetic element *par excellence*, is thus the dish that makes the banquet delicious, that is, the sweetness inspired by the Muses.

⁴² The desire for knowledge can also be represented as a “thirst” to know: cf. Aristid. *Or. Fun. Eteon*. 8: ἀκρώμενος τοίνυν οὕτω σφόδρα τῶν λόγων ἦν ὥστ’ οὐκ ἐσχόλαζεν ἐπαινεῖν, ἀλλ’ ὥσπερ οἱ διψῶντες σιωπῇ πίνουσιν, οὕτως ἐκείνῳ ἤρκει δέχεσθαι τὰ λεγόμενα. Cf. Berardi 2006, *ad loc.*

⁴³ On the linking of Λόγοι and medicine, cf. Viansino 1967, 28–9, in which the poetic precedents are collected.

⁴⁴ On the occasion of a public festival, declamation is a collective banquet in 1.1.5: εἰ λόγων ἡμᾶς ἐστιάσω τοιούτων, οἶων αἰεὶ φιλεῖτε μεταλαμβάνειν. Choricus’ position on ability in λόγοι as an exclusively Greek characteristic does not absolutely shut out the barbarians: they, too, if they study, can achieve excellence. See on this Lupi 2010, 139. To these references, one should add that, as a teacher of rhetoric, Choricus must have had non-Greek students; for example, in *Laudatio Summi* 4.1.24–25, he mentions an Arab pupil. Barbarians’ success in acquiring παιδεία must have been an object of his daily reflection. Furthermore, the cosmopolitan character of late ancient cultural centers is well known: consider the school of Alexandria, familiar to the learned men of Gaza, and the school of Berytus, on which cf. Jones Hall 2004. Finally, *Oratio funebris in Procopium* 8.1.42 narrates a display of wisdom on the part of a barbarian.

But more often recourse is had to other artistic activities, particularly to the figurative arts, through a comparison of painting and poetry and through participation in the discussion of μίμησις.⁴⁵ Choricus returns in the *Dialexeis* to a comparison between τέχνα:

ζώγραφος μὲν γὰρ ὅπως ἂν ἔχοι τὰ εἶδη φιλοτεχνεῖτω, τοῦτο γὰρ ἐκείνου τὸ ἔργον, ῥήτορι δὲ τὰ αἰσχρά, εἴτε σώματα εἴτε πράγματα φαῖνοι, δίδωσιν ἐπισκιάζειν ἢ τέχνη.
21.1.5

The reference, although a brief one, is to the ancient discussion about the truthfulness of a work of art, which, in a celebratory context, takes on an importance that is hardly secondary. Rhetoric is allowed somehow to cloud over the subject treated. The verb ἐπισκιάζειν is not Platonic. In *Lysis* 207b one reads ἐπηλυγασάμενος, which the commentators cite as corresponding to ἐπισκιάζειν (e.g., Ael. Dion. η 8.2: ἡλύγη· σκιά, σκέπη· καὶ ἐπηλυγασάμενος παρὰ Πλάτωνι (*Lys.* 207b) τὸ προβαλόμενος καὶ ἐπισκιάσάμενος).⁴⁶ Choricus prefers to resort to a term very often used in a metaphorical sense, both in a philosophical and in a Christian context. Cf., e.g., Philo *De mundi opificio* 170.8 πλάσμασι μυθικοῖς ἐπισκιασάντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν. So, too, Proclus *Theologia Platonica* 6.104.2 καὶ γὰρ τῶν ἀγενήτων γενέσεις καὶ τῶν ἀπλῶν συνθέσεις καὶ τῶν ἀμερίστων διανομάς οἱ μῦθοι παρεσκευκλῶντες ὑπὸ πολλοῖς παραπετάσμασιν ἐπισκιάζουσι τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων ἀλήθειαν. Of particular interest are the occurrences of the verb in the Neoplatonic sense of covering over intelligible truths with an ἀγλῦς; cf. Philo *De praemiis et poenis* 37.3; *De specialibus legibus* 3.4.5.⁴⁷ Apparently Choricus wanted to choose a verb charged with Neoplatonic philosophical meanings instead of staying with his formal model: rhetoric has in itself the possibility of concealing (but not of altering), of spreading a shadow over that which it represents; and thus it is implied that exegetical work will be necessary to dispel the shadow and reach a correct understanding of the contents or, better, reach a clear vision of the object.

Similarly, in the already cited 34, Choricus recalls that Alexander, son of Philip, was immortalized by very many artists. Then he adds:

5. ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν Τιμόμαχος τε φιλοτεχνεῖτω καὶ Μύρων καὶ Λύσιππος ἢ καὶ ἄλλος τις μετιῶν ἴσα ἐκείνοις· ἄνδρα δέ, ὅτι ἢ γλῶττά ἐστι τὸ ἐπιτήδευμα, ὃ τι ἂν αὐτῇ πλάσας τυγχάνοι, τοῦτο μμεῖσθαι προσήκον, ἵνα μὴ τὴν ἀλλως ἢ κωμῶδια σφαιράν πως ὀνομάζῃ τὴν γλῶτταν οἷα τε εὐάγων οὔσαν καὶ ῥαδίως, ὅποι ἂν βούλοιο, στρεφομένην.
34.1.5

⁴⁵ On the meanings of the word and its application to the arts, cf. Murray 1996, 3–6.

⁴⁶ The same word in Tim. Soph. *Lex. Pl.* η 989.10, and in *Schol. in Pl. ad Lys.* 207b.

⁴⁷ The metaphorical use of ἀγλῦς is of Homeric origin (*Il.* 5.127, 15.668, 20.341). See Agosti 2004, 780, on Nonn. *Dion.* 38.87–8 and Caprara 2006, 190–92, on Nonn. *Par.* 4.61.

The reference to comedy is to Aristophanes *Nubes* 792 and *Ranae* 892, in dispute with the arguments of the sophists. Against painting and sculpture, arbitrary and not always faithful reproductions, Choricus sets the effort of the rhetor, who must respect the proper proportions of what he is representing. The example of Lysippus, who depicts Alexander, is taken up again, along with others, in 37.3: rhetoric must represent all in their proper dimensions. The choice of the Platonic term ἐπιτήδευμα, adopted by Choricus elsewhere as well,⁴⁸ expresses at once both one's occupation and one's choice of life. Among the numerous Platonic occurrences of the term, two may be cited here: *Laws* 846d δύο δὲ ἐπιτηδεύματα ἢ δύο τέχνας ἀκριβῶς διαπονεῖσθαι σχεδὸν οὐδεμία φύσις ἱκανὴ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων, and *Timaeus* 17d καὶ κατὰ φύσιν δὴ δόντες τὸ καθ'αὐτὸν ἑκάστῳ πρόσφορον ἔν μόνον ἐπιτήδευμα, μίαν ἑκάστῳ τέχνην. Human nature can carry out only one activity, the one to which the Muse urges it on. Thus in *Ion* 534c–d τοῦτο μόνον οἷός τε ἕκαστος ποιεῖν καλῶς ἐφ'ὃ ἡ Μοῦσα αὐτὸν ὤρμησεν...διὰ ταῦτα δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἐξαιρούμενος τούτων τὸν νοῦν τούτοις χρῆται ὑπέρταις καὶ τοῖς χρησιμωδοῖς καὶ τοῖς μάντεσι τοῖς θείοις. One should dedicate oneself only to the artistic form for which one receives inspiration: in this sense, the artist (poet or declamer), as servant of the Muse, has in himself something divine.

Touches of the sacred also characterize the *Dialexis* that introduces the *Laudatio Marciani I*:

ἐνταῦθα δέ, ὧ φιλότης—ἔστι μὲν τὰ τῆς Σπάρτης ἡδέα, ἔστι δὲ τὰ τῆς Ἀττικῆς σεμνότερα, ἀτὰρ ἐκεῖνό γε οὐ μιμούμεθα, τοὺς Ἀθήνησι ρήτορας, οὐ θέμις ἡμῖν κεχαρισμένα καὶ ἀπατηλὰ πρὸς τὰ θέατρα λέγειν.

1.1.4

The textual problems posed by this text have been recently discussed by Corcella,⁴⁹ who provides a convincing interpretation of Choricus' statement, which implies a selection among the Attic cultural tradition: the passage finds its place along the discussion on rhetoric and philosophy from Plato's *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus* until the late Neoplatonic developments and in its historical context.

Therefore, I believe that these brief theoretical observations should not be regarded as simple technical prescriptions, but that they have deep philosophical reflection behind them, reflection that Choricus is able to associate with Platonic thought both in form, with the selection of an appropriate lexicon, and in content, revisited by the sensibilities of a late ancient man.

Attention to the figurative arts in Choricus has already been amply studied and in a sense has even determined the author's fortune in modern scholarship, so I do

⁴⁸ Cf., e.g., 3.1.6, 5.1.2, 32.2.17, 18, 25, 88, 94, 34.1.5, 42.2.117.

⁴⁹ Corcella 2008, 450, reads the text as follows: ἐνταῦθα δέ, ὧ φιλότης, ἔστι μὲν τὰ τῆς Σπάρτης ἡδέα, ἔστι δὲ τῆς Ἀττικῆς τὰ σεμνότερα· ἀτὰρ ἐκεῖνό γε οὐ μιμούμεθα τοὺς Ἀθήνησι ρήτορας· οὐ θέμις ἡμῖν κεχαρισμένα καὶ ἀπατηλὰ πρὸς τὰ θέατρα λέγειν, ἀλλ' ἢ ἂν ἡμᾶς τὰ πράγματα ἄγη, ταύτη ἐπόμεθα καὶ γραφὴν ἂν τις φύγοι παρ' ἡμῖν κολακείας.

not think that this is the place to dwell on general issues.⁵⁰ The arts as terms of comparison are a traditional argument in a rhetorical context, and the occurrence of the verb πλάττω in technical terminology is evidence of this.⁵¹ It has been observed⁵² that this insistence on Choricus' part is not so much to be interpreted as a sign of special interest in the figurative arts in themselves as to be seen as a manner of representing the distinct function of a creator of literary worlds. This is true; and, among other things, the descriptions of works of art in his orations are rather basic and do not seem to betray a technical interest. Choricus turns to the figurative image as a synthesis of the message that he has transmitted by means of the oration, thus giving a visible concreteness to values, ideas, and feelings.⁵³

From what it is possible to reconstruct of Choricus' literary theory through the *Dialexeis*, Platonic influence is felt both in his lexicon and in his choice of themes: he excludes the Athenian philosopher's motif of the μανία that makes the poet unaware of what he is singing, but he retains the concept of divine inspiration, the ideal outcome of which is a felicitous composition of the good and useful and the true, of the Muse of Homer and the Muse of Hesiod. Now we need to confront some important passages from the orations, with the aim of getting hold of the concrete literary and ideological application of these principles.

2. The bishop and the rhetor: in search of a cultural paradigm (*Laudatio Marciani 1–2; Oratio funebris in Procopium*)

In his encomiastic orations, Choricus often displays an interest in the cultural formation of those being celebrated, regarding this aspect of their lives as the foundation of both their private and their public personality.⁵⁴ But for an investigation that aims at collecting and arranging the elements that traditionally make up the portrait of a cultivated person, it is especially the orations in praise of the bishop Marcianus and

⁵⁰ Cf. Greco 2007, 97–9, for the bibliography.

⁵¹ Cf. Greco 2010, 153–4. The correspondence between πράγματα and πλάσματα as a foundation of μίμησις is discussed by Westberg 2010, 121–3.

⁵² Cf. Webb 2006, 114–5, who cites 34, in which the work of the orator is compared to that of Lysippus, and also gives a bibliography on the theme rhetor-πλαστής. Note especially 114: “The theme of artistic representation serves as a figure for the art of declamation itself. It draws attention to Chorikios' own project, to the way in which he creates imaginary worlds and their inhabitants.”

⁵³ An example of this is the description that closes *Laudatio Aratii et Stephani* (*Or.* 3.2.79–83), in which the emperor is depicted between his representatives at Gaza, and the image sums up the values of virtue and authority, courage and justice, that are celebrated in the encomium. On this passage, cf. Greco 2011, 112–4. On the grades of artistic imitation in painting and oratory according to Choricus, cf. Greco 2007, 99–103.

⁵⁴ Cf. Greco 2011, for a study of the individuals celebrated in the encomiastic orations.

of the teacher Procopius that are a precious source of information.⁵⁵ These orations present the whole traditional repertoire of Platonic formulas, some of which deserve attention for the interpretation and elaboration to which they have been subjected. Choricus dedicates two encomia to Marcianus (*Orr.* 1 and 2 F.-R.) and a funeral oration to his teacher Procopius (*Or.* 8 F.-R.).

Encomium and pictorial representation

The orations in honor of Marcianus are famous for their descriptions of the splendid churches of Gaza, due to the generosity of the bishop. The first begins precisely with a comparison with the work of painters, from which the honest rhetor keeps his distance:

πολλοί μὲν εἰς ἑτέρους τινὰς ἐπαίνους ποιοῦσι κεχαρισμένους καὶ τῶν ζωγράφων μιμοῦνται τοὺς κόλακας, οἱ τοὺς καταγελάστους τὴν ὄψιν παραμυθοῦνται κάλλει χρωμάτων· ὁ δὲ σὸς ἐπαινέτης τοὺς τοιούτους οὐ ζηλοῖ τῶν γραφῶν.

1.2.2

Choricus' declamation, inspired by the Muses, seeks instead to offer an image that corresponds to the truth:

τὴνδε σοι γράφω τοῦ τεμένουσιν εἰκόνα χρώμασι μουσικοῖς, καὶ τῶν πόνων ἐμοὶ μεγάλην ἀμοιβὴν ἀπονέμεις φιλαλήθη δι' ἧν ποιεῖς ἀποφαίνων.

1.2.77

The expression χρώμασι μουσικοῖς comes from Plato *Republic* 601b τὰ τῆς μουσικῆς χρώματα⁵⁶; although the comparison with painting is introduced here probably because of the ephrastic nature of the oration, its ethical content is obvious. The inadequacy of a painted image—or, better still, the suffering that its deceptive nature provokes—is also remarked in the funeral oration for Procopius:

ἦπου καὶ τὰς εἰκόνας ὀρῶντες ἐκείνου δακρύετε καὶ τῆ τῶν χρωμάτων μορφῇ πρὸς τὴν ἔμψυχον ἀναγόμενοι μείζονι πλήττεσθε πόθῳ καὶ πρὸς τὴν τῶν γραφῶν ἴσως ἄχθεσθε τέχνην, ὅτι μὴ δύναται καὶ φωνὴν τοῖς οἰκείοις ἐνθέναι φιλοτεχνήμασιν.

8.1.32

Pictures that depict the dead provoke even greater sorrow in those who remain frustrated in failing to be presented with a living figure of their dearly departed.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Information on the two individuals in Greco 2010, 23–5.

⁵⁶ Cf. Vicaire 1960, 399.

⁵⁷ A comment in Greco 2010, 184–5.

Myths and their usefulness

The passage just cited immediately precedes the consolatory theme of philosophy as a medicine for the mind; philosophy is presented, instead of images, as the true remedy for one who has received the nourishment of the Muses:

ιδιώτη μὲν γὰρ φάρμακον ἔστω λύπης ὁ χρόνος, ὁ δὲ διὰ Μούσης ἐλθὼν καὶ θεῶν γευσάμενος ἀκουσμάτων μὴ μοι τὴν τοιαύτην θεραπείαν ἀναμενέτω... ἢ τί πλέον ἡμῖν οἱ λόγοι δωρήσονται; τοῦ δὲ χάριν ποιοῦμεν τὰς τῶν παλαιῶν ἐκμανθάνοντες τύχας; οὐ γὰρ ἵνα τὸν χρόνον ἀνόνητα δαπανώμεν, ἀλλ' ὅπως, οἶμαι, τὴν τε ἄλλην ἐκεῖθεν ὠφέλειαν δρεψώμεθα καὶ τοιοῦτου συμβάντος καιροῦ πρὸς ἄνδρας ἴσα πεπονθότας ἡμῖν ἢ πικρότερα πάθη τὸν νοῦν ἀναφέροντες οὕτως οἴσομεν ῥῆον.

8.1.35, 8.1.36

Although a Christian interpretation is also possible, the focus here seems to be on education: for one who has participated in the banquet of the Λόγοι (θεῶν γευσάμενος ἀκουσμάτων), it is not time that will be the remedy for sorrow, but the Muse's teaching or the Λόγοι themselves.⁵⁸ We are immediately told what their content is: the fortunes of the ancients, that is, myths, from which it is possible to obtain philosophical instruction. The verb δρέπομαι is Platonic, and it recurs in Choricus every time a reference has to be made to harvesting the benefits of instruction, in accordance with *Ion* 534b λέγουσι γὰρ δῆπουθεν πρὸς ἡμᾶς οἱ ποιηταὶ ὅτι ἀπὸ κρηνῶν μελιρρύτων ἐκ Μουσῶν κήπων τινῶν καὶ ναπῶν δρεπόμενοι τὰ μέλη ἡμῖν φέρουσι ὥσπερ αἱ μέλιτται, καὶ αὐτοὶ οὕτω πετόμενοι. Here the characteristics of inspiration and poetic creation are enunciated: the sweetness of song, which flows as if from a spring, the gardens or meadows of the Muses, and the process of selecting poetic material.

The laudations of both individuals contain a full description of their education, thanks to the biographical element that is a structural part of the encomium. Learning is the outcome of a process of selecting that which is beautiful and useful:

Νεός μὲν ὢν ἐκ ποιητικῆς ἐδρέψω τὰ κάλλιστα συλλέγων μὲν ὅ τι χρησίμων ἔφην, προσμειδῶν δὲ τοῖς μύθοις εἰς ἀνόνητον εὐφροσύνην ὑπολαβὼν πεποισθῆαι τοῖς Ὀμηρίδαϊς, ὥσπερ ἐν ἄλλῃ ποικίλῃ καὶ τὰς ὄψεις κηλοῦντι τῶν εἰσιόντων ἔστι μὲν τὰ συντελοῦντα τὴν χρεῖαν, εἰσὶ δὲ κυπάριττοι κύκλω καὶ πλάτανοι καλὸν ὑπηχοῦσαι καὶ ἄκαρπον εὐθυμίαν εἰσάγουσαι τῷ κεκτημένῳ τὸν χῶρον.

Laudatio Marciani 1.2.6

The shrewd discernment of the beautiful from the useful is expressed in Platonic terms, in reference to the study of poetry: the same verb is used by Choricus of his own education under Procopius in *Oration* 8.1.1 παρ' ᾧ λειμῶνας Ἀττικὸς ἐδρεψάμην. Marcianus has achieved, on an ethical and aesthetic level of choice, what Demosthenes accomplished on a stylistic level, choosing and putting together

⁵⁸ On the consolatory function of rhetoric, cf. Westberg 2010, 111–4.

the best of every author, each one individually incomplete and imperfect: Dionysius of Halicarnassus *de Demosthene* 8: ἐξ ἀπάντων δ'αὐτῶν ὅσα κράτιστα καὶ χρησιμώτατα ἦν, ἐκλεγόμενος συνύφαινε καὶ μίαν ἐκ πολλῶν διάλεκτον ἀπετέλει. The passage, which immediately precedes the already cited one on Proteus, underscores the virtue of the ποικιλία that characterizes a good oration: Proteus' transformations are compared to those of discourse in Plato *Euthydemus* 288b: ἀλλ'οὐκ ἐθέλετον ἡμῖν ἐπιδείξασθαι σπουδάζοντε, ἀλλὰ τὸν Πρωτέα μιμῆσθον τὸν Αἰγύπτιον σοφιστὴν γοητεύοντε ἡμᾶς, the Proteus who is defined precisely as “an Egyptian sophist.”⁵⁹ Marcianus' attitude towards myths is one of good-natured irony (προσμειδιῶν), and it recalls the wariness with which Choricus alludes in his *Dialexeis* to the affirmations of poets. The metaphor of a beautiful garden, besides recalling the κῆποι Μουσῶν (cf. Plato *Ion* 534b), introduces the concepts of the spell produced by beauty (τὰς ὄψεις κηλοῦντι) and of the innocuous pleasantness of myth,⁶⁰ which nonetheless also has a share of usefulness. It is precisely to this usefulness that Choricus refers in 8.1.35–36, that which leads to a philosophical formation, as is shown by the numerous mythological *exempla* that follow (37–44). Behind this affirmation, one picks up the Neoplatonic conception of myth as a means to achieve knowledge of the higher realities. We recall Maximus of Tyre's position along these lines and the allegorical method of Neoplatonic exegesis.⁶¹ So, to achieve this end, a correct interpretation is necessary, and this is a task that belongs to the rhetor.⁶² In a passage of the funeral oration for Procopius, the qualities of the ideal sophist are laid out, the beauty of the declamation that enchants the public and the ability to interpret the most complex texts:

δύο γὰρ ὄντων, οἷς ἀρετὴ βασανίζεται σοφιστοῦ, τοῦ τε καταπλήττειν τὰ θέατρα συνέσει λόγων καὶ κάλλει τοῦ τε τοὺς νέους μυσταγωγεῖν τοῖς τῶν ἀρχαίων ὀργίοις· ἐκεῖνοι γὰρ εἴτε τὴν παλαιὰν διασώζοντες παροιμιᾶν–χαλεπὰ γὰρ φησι τὰ καλά–εἴτε τὴν πολλὴν ἀκοὴν ἀμύητον εἶναι τῶν οἰκείων βουλόμενοι συγγραμμάτων εἴτε τὴν ἀνθρωπεῖαν ἐπιστάμενοι φύσιν τὸ μὲν εὐκόλως ἀνυόμενον οὐ θαυμάζουσαν, τιμῶσαν δὲ τὸ πόνῳ τινὶ κατορθούμενον... οὐ πᾶσι βασίμους τὰς οἰκείας προὔθηκαν τέχναις..., ὃ δὲ φύσεώς τε ῥώμη καὶ πόνων ἐπιμελεία καθάπερ ἐκάστῳ συνεσκεμμένος ὅσα πεποίηκεν ἕκαστος, οὕτω σὺν ἀκριβείᾳ τὰ πάντων ἤγεν εἰς φῶς.

8.1.7

⁵⁹ Cf. on this passage Buffière 2010, 353, n.50, who also notes Bas. *Adol.*, in which the same definition recurs.

⁶⁰ In *Apologia Mimorum* 32.2.36–40, 65, 102, 113, myths are regarded by Choricus as simple jokes, cf. Greco 2011, 102. On the insistence upon the verb παίζειν in John of Gaza's *Anacreontea*, especially with reference to 6.86–90, and to the interpretation of these lines through Pl. *Phdr.* 277e–278a, cf. Ciccolella 2000, 173.

⁶¹ For the use of myth in Choricus and its defence through allegory, cf. Westberg 2010, 87–92. For rhetoric, myths are essential instruments of knowledge in Synesius, too; cf. Roques 2006, 269.

⁶² On this part of instruction, cf. Berardi 2006, 260, with reference to Alexander of Cotiaeum, lauded by Aristides. “Hermes” is associated with ἡρμενεύς in Pl. *Crat.* 407e–408b, cf. Buffière 2010, 289–96.

With regard to the use of the verb καταπλήττειν, a technical term in a rhetorical context, one can find a parallel in Plato *Phaedrus* 234d, where Socrates is “stunned” (ἐκπλαγήναι) by Lysias’ discourse.⁶³ With regard to interpretative capability, what is said, in terms drawn from the language of initiation, is that it consists of “bringing into the light,” with effort, that which is hidden: that is, it is consistent with the use of the verb ἐπισκιάζειν to indicate the shadow that covers the deep sense of the λόγοι and also with the image of myths as “coverings.” Hard work is necessary and useful because the human soul does not love that which is too easy.⁶⁴ The necessary technical competence (σὺν ἀκριβείᾳ) shows the distance from Plato and an affirmation of τέχνη, despite the lexical echoes:

τρίτη δὲ ἀπὸ Μουσῶν κατοκωχὴ τε καὶ μανία, λαβοῦσα ἀπαλὴν καὶ ἄβατον ψυχὴν, ἐγείρουσα καὶ ἐκβακχεύουσα κατὰ τε ὤδὰς καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην ποίησιν, μυρία τῶν παλαιῶν ἔργα κοσμοῦσα τοὺς ἐπιγυνομένους παιδεύει· ὅς δ’ ἂν ἄνευ μανίας Μουσῶν ἐπὶ ποιητικὰς θύρας ἀφίκηται, πεισθεὶς ὡς ἄρα ἐκ τέχνης ἰκανὸς ποιητὴς ἐσόμενος, ἀτελὴς αὐτὸς τε καὶ ἡ ποίησις ὑπὸ τῆς τῶν μαινομένων ἢ τοῦ σωφρονοῦντος ἠφρανίσθη.

Phdr. 245a

Technical teaching has the character of an initiation, in accordance with an established rhetorical tradition.⁶⁵

The Muse

Choricus’ Muse is thus a synthesis of all that is beautiful and good: a spell for the soul, which, initiated through the sweetness of the word, receives nourishment, recovers from its ills, and reaches knowledge of the philosophical truths.⁶⁶ But Choricus is not an abstract thinker, and he applies these considerations to the events of life. The conclusion of the long consolatory section of his funeral oration for Procopius ends with an exhortation to those who have been instructed by the Muse to ac-

⁶³ Cf. Vicaire 1960, 398.

⁶⁴ So in Max. Tyr. *Diss.* 4.5, 33.94–98 Trapp θρασεῖα γὰρ οὐσα ἡ ἀνθρωπίνῃ ψυχῇ τὰ μὲν ἐν ποσὶν ἦσσαν τιμᾶ, τοῦ δὲ ἀπόντος θαυμαστικῶς ἔχει· καταμαντευομένη δὲ τῶν οὐχ ὀρωμένων καὶ θηρέουσα ταῦτα τοῖς λογισμοῖς, μὴ τυχοῦσα μὲν σπεύδει ἀνευρεῖν, τυχοῦσα δὲ ἀγαπᾷ ὡς ἑαυτῆς ἔργον.

⁶⁵ On the vision of the philosophical mysteries through rhetoric and poetry in Synesius, cf. Roques 2006, 265. The theme in Fronto is studied by Fleury 2011, 65–75, and, with respect to Aristides, by Downie 2006, 77–78, in which she notes that in the second century the image of the mysteries becomes specialized and applied to the various τέχναι (anatomy, mathematics, rhetoric).

⁶⁶ The image of Procopius convincing, through his eloquence, the sick who do not want to be healed (8.1.22) recalls Max. Tyr. *Diss.* 4.6, 34.115–21 Trapp: καθάπερ δὲ οἱ ἰατροὶ τοῖς κακοσῆτοις τῶν καμνόντων τὰ πικρὰ τῶν φαρμάκων ἀναδεύσαντες προσηνεῖ τροφῇ ἀπέκρυψαν τὴν τοῦ ὠφελούντος ἀηδῖαν, οὕτως καὶ ἡ παλαιὰ φιλοσοφία καταθεμένη τὴν αὐτῆς γνώμην εἰς μύθους καὶ μέτρα καὶ σχῆμα ὡδῆς, ἔλαθεν τῇ περιβολῇ τῆς ψυχαγωγίας κεράσασα τὴν ἀηδῖαν τῶν διδαγμάτων. The effect of the sweetness of Nestor’s eloquence is like that of honey, very sweet for the healthy, but very bitter for the ill and suffering: Dio Chrys. *Nestor* 57.8, and Buffière 2010, 349–54.

cept God's will with courage. This is the point of the example of Harpagus, who endures with strength of mind the murder of his son by Astyages:

εἰ τοίνυν ὁ ποιεῖ βασιλεὺς φορητὸν ἀνδρὶ λόγων ἀμοίρω, πολὺ μᾶλλον παιδείαν ὑμῖν ἡσκημένοις
ὅ τι ἂν πράττοι θεός.

8.1.37

Although we are dealing with a motif common even in philosophical circles,⁶⁷ it seems that the sacredness of the Muse is no more to be understood strictly as a cult,⁶⁸ but rather as the inspiration that allows one not only to penetrate, through the beauty of sweet fantasies, the ultimate truths and, for a Christian, the will of God, but also to confront those trials imposed on us by life and society and thus to reach a happy state.

Choricus' debt to Plato is, therefore, immense. Nevertheless, these examples, among the many others, have shown that the selection of a lexical formulary and the adoption of a terminology that had become traditional by then are not a thoughtless formal adherence to a preordained repertoire, but the outcome of reflection and of a dialogue both with his model and with his contemporaries.

⁶⁷ Cf. Greco 2010, 186–93.

⁶⁸ Cf. Boyancé 1937, 2–3.

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“The Academy and the Lyceum are Among Us”: Plato and the Platonic tradition in the works of Aeneas, Zacharias and Procopius

Aeneas of Gaza proudly claimed that the famous philosophical schools of classical antiquity had come to life in the final years of the fifth century (Aeneas, *Ep.* 18).¹ He composed his *Theophrastus*, a philosophical and theological dialogue about the pre-existence of the soul and the eternity of the world, around 485.² Zacharias followed suit, partly dependent on Aeneas. He began his *Ammonius*, a dialogue on the creation and eternity of the world in the early 490s.³ Procopius of Gaza also wrote about creation in the opening of his *Commentary on Genesis*.⁴ The Gazans were stimulated by a renewed challenge from Neoplatonism and transformed the Platonic heritage as they constructed their own Academies. Earlier in the fifth century, the Athenian Neoplatonist Proclus had published his *Eighteen Arguments for the Eternity of the World*. This text, together with his magisterial *Commentary on the Timaeus*, acted as a catalyst for renewed Christian and Neoplatonic thinking about the creation and eternity of the cosmos.⁵ The sixth-century stage of this debate is well-known, as the Christian Neoplatonist John Philoponus took up cudgels against Proclus directly in his *Against Proclus on the Eternity of the World*, and in turn faced the ire of the contemporary Neoplatonist Simplicius as well as Christians such as Cosmas Indicopleustes, who thought him dangerously philosophical.⁶ The Gazan creation debates thus fill a gap between Proclus and the sixth-century disputes. They are significant in their own right as evidence for Christian thinking about the doctrine of creation, the social dynamics of the Gazan rhetorical schools and the activities of Gazan teachers, and also more generally for the light they cast on the sixth-century debates.

The Gazans' use of Platonism in this polemic context of dispute with Neoplatonists is rich. It certainly figures conflict. They seek to turn Plato and Platonism against their Neoplatonic opponents. But they also use the Platonic tradition to open connections with their opponents and with Christians among their intended audience, and

1 παρ' ἡμῖν τὴν Ἀκαδημειαν καὶ τὸ Λύκειον εἶναι νομίζοντες (*Ep.* 18.9).

2 Minniti-Colonna 1958. For some textual emendations to this edition, see Galliget 1978, Part I, 117–35. For modern analyses of Aeneas' dating, see Wacht 1969, 18 note 17. See also Aujoulat 1986; Segonds 1989, 83. For Aeneas' life, see *ibid*; Seitz 1892; Sikorski 1909; Wacht 1969.

3 Minniti-Colonna 1973. For dating and life, see Honigmann 1953, 194f.

4 There is no critical edition of the *Commentary*. The text is found in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca* 871.

5 Tarrant 2007; Festugière 1966; Lang/Marco/McGinnis 2001.

6 For Philoponus and Simplicius, see relevant volumes of the *Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* 1980. For Cosmas, see Wolska-Conus 1968; Wolska 1962.

their use of Platonism is not merely destructive. To different degrees, Aeneas, Zacharias and Procopius each believe that Greek philosophy can be useful for the formation of Christian ideas. They seek to carve out room for the continued use of philosophy even as they vigorously reject connections between philosophy and heterodox religious practices in the schools of late antiquity in Gaza, Alexandria and Berytus. In this chapter, I consider the rhetorical use of Platonic allusions in the Gazans' dialogues and briefly discuss how they adapt and transform Platonic dialogue as part of an attempt to shape the culture of the rhetorical schools and wider society. I then investigate how they use Platonism within their theological programs. Their knowledge of Plato and Platonism is direct, and they seek to adapt Platonic ideas to render Christian thought coherent while attempting to demonstrate the ultimate incoherence of Platonic philosophy and associated religious practices. Problems generated from within Christianity lead them to reframe the Platonic tradition and dismiss some Neoplatonic axioms. In this use of Plato against Platonists they show some affinity with Philoponus' later project. Philoponus' exceptional philosophical creativity and precision is illumined by the Gazan debates.⁷

By now, the varied contributions to this volume have made it clear that later Greek sophists were actively engaged in contemporary politics, social controversies, religious disputes and intellectual problems. My analysis of Plato and the Platonic tradition in the works of Aeneas, Zacharias and Procopius continues in this key. Their knowledge of Platonism is not evidence for nostalgia for a bygone era or intellectual or social isolation. The Gazan sophists, like so many of their precursors in the second sophistic, were actively trying to solve the social, intellectual and religious problems they identified, and they used Platonism in the process.⁸ They were able to connect with their audience through Platonic allusions. They engaged in philosophical debate and attempted to render Platonic beliefs implausible, and they used Platonic concepts to support Christian arguments, and to advocate for the social changes they desired in the classically-oriented rhetorical schools of late antiquity.

Aeneas, Zacharias and Procopius are still not widely studied, so brief introductions are in order. Aeneas was born in the second half of the fifth century, grew up in Gaza, was educated there and in Alexandria, and then became a leading sophist in the Gazan schools, where he taught Greek rhetoric. From his letters, we can reconstruct his rich social networks, which were built around his teaching.⁹ He recommended his students to posts around the empire, and was called upon to act as a mediator in business disputes. There are letters to other teachers, literary figures, lawyers, presbyters and an architect who invented a new hydraulic device, and is praised in Homeric terms as a new Alcinous (*Ep.* 25). Like Zacharias after him, he was closely connected with non-Chalcedonian Christians in Palestine, and with

7 For a more general study of these debates, and attention to the place of Aeneas and Zacharias within the Platonic tradition, see Champion 2014; Wear 2013.

8 Van Hoof 2010.

9 Wolska-Conus 1962.

holy men in the local Gazan monasteries. Zacharias tells us that he consulted a local holy man whenever he was troubled by problems in Neoplatonic philosophers (*Life of Isaiah* 8 Brooks), a traditional claim for the superiority of Christian learning, as well as evidence for Aeneas’ philosophical interests and the ways in which Platonism shaped the discourse of late-antique schools and monasteries around Gaza.¹⁰

Zacharias and Procopius (who may well have been brothers) were both deeply influenced by Aeneas. They each had similar educational training in Gaza and Alexandria, and Zacharias also studied law at Berytus, which he calls the “mother city of laws” (*Ammonius* 9).¹¹ Zacharias spent most of his working life away from Gaza, first as a *scholasticus* and then in the church, ending his career as Bishop of Mitylene, although he continued to identify himself as Gazan (e.g. *Life of Severus* 23.18–24,1 Kugener). Zacharias’ Greek writings include his dialogue the *Ammonius* which is directed against Ammonius, a contemporary philosopher in Alexandria, and against the prominent pagan iatrosophist Gessius.¹² He also wrote a Greek refutation of Manicheans.¹³ His other works, similarly polemic in purpose, and often in tone, are preserved in Syriac translation. They include sections of a church history and lives of various local non-Chalcedonian Christians.¹⁴

Procopius’ social influence was probably stronger than Aeneas’ and at least matched that of Zacharias.¹⁵ The addressees in his extensive collection of letters are often more powerful than those in Aeneas’ admittedly much smaller extant collection. His fame had reached the cities of Antioch, Tyre and Caesarea, and he refused “the allurements of the Sirens for the love of his rocky Ithaca,” rejecting several requests to leave Gaza and teach in other late-antique cities.¹⁶ We have one hundred and seventy-four letters written by Procopius, several speeches and a series of biblical commentaries.¹⁷ He may also have written a refutation of the philosophy of Proclus but the authorship of the fragments we have attributed to him is disputed.¹⁸ They appear verbatim in a twelfth-century refutation of Proclus by Nico-

10 See further Watts 2007.

11 References to the *Ammonius* are to line number in Minniti-Colonna’s edition. Page and line numbers are given for Aeneas’ *Theophrastus*. Column numbers in *PG* 871 are given for Procopius’ *Commentary on Genesis*.

12 For questions of dating of this work, see Bardy 1950, col. 3677; Segonds 1989, 89; Wacht 1969, 18 n.17. Watts has argued that Zacharias came back to the dialogue to update it in the 520s in Watts 2005.

13 For the anti-Manichean works, see Lieu 1983.

14 For Zacharias’ Monophysite biographies and church histories, see Watts 2007; Brooks 1919–21; 1977.

15 For Procopius and his works, see Amato (ed.) 2010.

16 Choricus, *Oration* 8.14 (Foerster-Richsteig p. 114).

17 See Amato 2010 and Garzya/Loenertz 1963; Leanza 1983; Martino 2005; Leanza 1978. On Procopius and his sources, see Ter Haar Romeny 2007.

18 For possible philosophical works, see Des Places (ed.) 1971, 46–7; Westerink 1942. For controversy over authorship, see Mai (ed.) 1831, 274; Russos 1893, 52–69; Dräseke 1897, 55–91; Stiglmayer 1899.

laus of Methone; if Nicolaus was not an egregious plagiarist, the fragments have been misattributed. The securely attributed works are sufficient evidence for Procopius' debt to Platonism, which both supports his attempts to grapple with problems generated within Christianity and provides rhetorical inspiration.

I begin my treatment of the rhetorical use of Platonism in Gaza, however, by exploring the dialogues of Aeneas and Zacharias. These dialogues are woven from a dense collection of Platonic allusions. In the prologue to the *Ammonius*, Zacharias promises a "Platonic composition" (διασκευή Πλατωνική) and the beginning immediately evokes the Platonic tradition:

τί νεώτερον γέγονεν, ὃ φίλε ἑταῖρε, ὅτι σὺ, τὰς ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ καταλιπὼν διατριβάς καὶ τὸν Νεῖλον τό τε μέγα τοῦ Μακεδόνοιο ἄστου, ἐνθάδε νῦν διατρίβεις;
Ammonius 6–8¹⁹

What new thing, friend, has happened, that you have left your amusements in Egypt, the Nile and the great city of Alexander and are now spending your time here [in Berytus, the city of laws]?

This clearly alludes to the start of Plato's *Euthyphro*:

τί νεώτερον, ὃ Σώκρατες, γέγονεν, ὅτι σὺ τὰς ἐν Λυκείῳ καταλιπὼν διατριβάς ἐνθάδε νῦν διατρίβεις περὶ τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως στοάν;
Euthyphr. 1a

What new thing, Socrates, has happened, that you have left your amusements in the Lyceum and are now spending your time here about the court of the King Archon?

The reference to the *Euthyphro* is reinforced within 15 lines with a more oblique verbal allusion (*Ammonius* 22–3, *Euthyphr.* 3c6–10).

The particular choice of the *Euthyphro* as an inter-text is significant. Zacharias was writing his dialogue for an audience in the schools, probably while he was a student in Berytus. The *Euthyphro*, with its dramatic setting outside the law courts, connects the text to its immediate audience. *Euthyphro*, of course, is prosecuting his father on a charge of murder, and it is tempting to see the culture that engendered late antiquity similarly indicted in Zacharias' dialogue. The *Euthyphro* specifically puts the morality of the gods on trial, and Zacharias will throughout his dialogue seek to make a case that the Christian God is a better first principle of ethics than any Greek philosophical or religious alternative.

Westerink 1942, challenged Stiglmayer's negative assessment. Others follow Westerink's lead: Emrich 1994, 993–4; Ter Haar Romeny 2007, 178; Watts 2007, 156 n.13. For the twelfth-century work, see Angelou 1984.

¹⁹ The line numbering of the dialogue in Minniti-Colonna's edition begins from the title. These are the first words of the dialogue proper.

Crucially, the *Euthyphro* reminds a classically trained audience of Socrates, corrupter of young men and inventor of new gods. A few lines later, an allusion to Socrates perverting the youth of Athens again takes us back into the world of the *Euthyphro*. The Neoplatonic philosopher Ammonius is Socrates, but the philosophically aware reader is left in no doubt about Zacharias’ Christian allegiance and his reform agenda for the schools:

φράζε δὴ οὖν ὅπως αὐτῶ τὸ φροντιστήριον ἔχει καὶ ὁ τῶν ἀκροατῶν σύλλογος, καὶ εἰ φοιτῶσιν ἐς αὐτοῦ τὰ νῦν νέοι τινὲς ἀγαθοὶ τε καὶ καλοὶ καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἄσυλοι. καὶ γὰρ με δέος ἴσχει ἀκήριον, ἀγωνιῶντα μὴ ἐμπλήσῃ τῆς αὐτοῦ ἀδολεσχίας τοὺς νέους· δεινὸς γὰρ ὁ ἀνὴρ διαφθεῖραι νέων ψυχὰς, ἀφιστῶν θεοῦ τε καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας.

Ammonius 27–32

Tell me, therefore, how is his thinking-shop, and the gathering of his pupils, and tell me whether any good, fine young men, who are even unblemished in their soul, frequent his [school] now. For mortal fear holds me in agony in case he fill the young men with his garrulity. For that man is clever at corrupting the young men’s souls, renouncing God and the truth.

This is an extraordinary use of Socrates as a negative exemplar. It alludes to a minority tradition of representations of Socrates, with vocabulary evoking the scenes of Old Comedy (τὸ φροντιστήριον, ἀδολεσχίας; e.g. Ar. *Clouds* 93.1478–92). It is difficult to find parallels for such negative depictions of Socrates in later literature; Socrates is normally adopted into the Christian world as a proto-Christian ethical sage.²⁰ Later in his dialogue, Zacharias will meet this tradition of respect for Plato and Socrates head on. When his interlocutor argues that the antiquity of Greek philosophical beliefs should count in their favour, Zacharias argues that truth rather than tradition should be valued:

τὰ παλαιὰ τιμᾶσθαι θέμις, ἤνικα καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἔχει ἐπανθοῦσαν τῷ χρόνῳ. ὅταν δὲ μῦθος τὴν ἄλλως ἐστὶ κεκαλλιεπημένοις ὀνόμασι καὶ τῷ γλαφυρῷ τῆς εὐπειρίας γοητεύων τὴν ἀκοήν, τότε δὴ τότε τὸν κηρὸν τοῖς ὤσιν ἐπιτίθεμεν τὸν Ὀμηρικόν, οὕτω τε τὴν ὀλέθριον ὥδην τῶν θανατηφόρων Σειρήνων ἀποφυγάνομεν, τοῦ δηλητηρίου τὴν κύλικα μέλιτι παραρτυθεῖσαν καὶ περιχρισθεῖσαν ἐπιγινώσκοντες.

Ammonius 467–73 (cf. 477–82)

It is only right to honour the ancient things, when they also have the truth appearing plainly for [their] time. But whenever the story is false, bewitching the hearer with embellished words and the sweetness of fancy language, then indeed we place Homeric wax in our ears so that we might escape the deadly song of the death-bearing sirens, when we recognise the honey-rimmed cup of poison.²¹

²⁰ For the reception of Socrates, see Trapp 2007.

²¹ This passage is rich in allusions which demonstrate the diverse cultures which helped to generate Zacharias’ text: Theodore’s *Cure for Greek Maladies* (*Graecarum affectionum curatio*) (pref. 1.5: τῷ γλαφυρῷ τῆς εὐπειρίας; 1.52.2: τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἔχει ἐπανθοῦσαν τῷ χρόνῳ); Homer’s *Od.* and Plato’s *Ap.* (κεκαλλιεπημένοις ὀνόμασι).

Elsewhere, Zacharias places Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, and other Greek philosophers directly in his sights, strenuously rejecting their truth claims. In such passages, Zacharias clearly places himself on the side of the Athenians against the Greek philosophical tradition generally. He is simultaneously aligning himself with the religious and political aims of the Byzantine state as a whole, which sought to eradicate pagan teachings in favour of “God and the truth.” His dialogue paves the way for Justinian’s closure of the Academy in Athens in 529, although as I will argue, he is not solely dismissive of Greek philosophy.

In the contemporary philosophical scene, Neoplatonism was, of course, the dominant school. Both Plato and Aristotle were central figures for Neoplatonism. Further work is needed to determine the specifically Aristotelian interests, if any, of members of the Gazan school. Timotheus of Gaza, a contemporary of Aeneas, seems to have had scientific interests particularly indebted to Aristotle.²² But it is clear that when Zacharias attacks Aristotle, he is attacking contemporary Neoplatonists in Alexandria and elsewhere, who were actively involved in commenting on Aristotelian texts.²³ In a direct verbal allusion to Aeneas’ dialogue from which he often borrows, Zacharias has one character suggest that learning to be a political citizen means leaving “dear Aristotle and the initiators of his mysteries” (*Ammonius* 10–11) (Ἀριστοτέλη τὰ μὰ παιδικὰ καταλιπὼν καὶ τοὺς τῶν αὐτοῦ ὀργίων μυσταγωγούς) (cf. *Theophrastus* 11.20). Zacharias connects adherence to Aristotle in the Neoplatonic schools to pagan religious practices. He shows himself to be implacably opposed to the expression of non-Christian religious and civic identities.

Aeneas also begins his dialogue with a Platonic allusion, in his case the *Phaedrus* (*Theophrastus* ποῖ δὴ καὶ πόθεν, Εὐξίθεε; [l. 2]; cf. *Phdr.* ὦ φίλε Φαῖδρε, ποῖ δὴ καὶ πόθεν; [227a1]). The choice of the *Phaedrus* for the initial allusion again has doctrinal as well as stylistic force. The initial subject of Aeneas’ dialogue—the pre-existence of the soul—is related to the discussion of metempsychosis in the *Phaedrus*, a doctrine Aeneas will decisively reject. Rhetorically, the allusion sets up a very different tone in the opening section of his dialogue in comparison to Zacharias’ dialogue.

The *Phaedrus*, of course, begins with the characters choosing a scenic location for the ensuing dialogue. The characters converse amiably and they find themselves a pleasant position under the shade of a plane tree to embark on their ethical and metaphysical discussions (*Phdr.* 229a–b). The meeting of friends we remember from the *Phaedrus* is paralleled in Aeneas’ dialogue, as old friends from student days in Alexandria are reunited, discuss the state of philosophy in Athens—a Neoplatonic stronghold—and begin to grapple with philosophical problems associated with the question of the pre-existence of the soul. Aeneas’ dialogue sets discussions on the banks of the Nile, rather than the *Phaedrus*’ Ilissus (*Theophrastus* 2.5–6: καὶ ἰδοὺ σοι πάρεμι τὸν Νεῖλον οὐ τὸν Ἰλισόν, τὴν δὲ Φάρων οὐ τὸν Πειραιᾶ θεώμενος;

²² Fragments of *On Animals* are collected by Haupt 1869.

²³ On this tradition, see Sorabji 1990; 2005; 2010.

cf. *Phdr.* 229a), but allusion to the Platonic dialogue helps to create a sense of open conversation between the Christian and pagan philosophical characters at the beginning of Aeneas’ dialogue. The Platonic world has been transposed into the late fifth century, and readers can expect fruitful philosophical discussion between the different intellectual systems, although as we shall see, such openness is only part of the story.

The impression that Aeneas’ engagement with Platonism is more open than Zacharias’ is strengthened after examination of Zacharias’ use of the *Phaedrus* in his dialogue. He too refers, albeit obliquely, to this Platonic dialogue in the introductory section of his treatise when the main character leads the interlocutor out into a suitable spot for philosophy, to relate philosophical conversations in peace and tranquility, so that no one can interrupt the dialogue (*Ammonius* 42–50). But instead of the pastoral scene of the *Phaedrus*, what follows in Zacharias’ dialogue is a vivid description (*ecphrasis*) of a new church (*Ammonius* 61–72). In this move, Zacharias goes beyond Aeneas’ confident transferral of Athenian philosophy to Alexandria. In addition, he claims that the proper place for philosophical discussion is within the boundaries of the church. While he is just as familiar with Plato as Aeneas, rhetorical moves such as these make the claim that the only useful philosophy is specifically Christian philosophy, limited by the contours of Christian doctrine.

It is not surprising then, that while Zacharias quotes several philosophers directly, it is only Aeneas who has an extended passage taken from Plotinus’ *Enneads* (4.8.1), placed in the mouth of Theophrastus, the pagan philosopher in his dialogue, to explain various Greek views about the soul (*Theophrastus* 5.10 f.). Theophrastus’ extended doxography about the fate of the soul after death sets him up as a traditional Neoplatonist, and performs the strength and vitality of the contemporary Neoplatonic tradition. Aeneas then augments Plotinus’ doxography with accurate accounts of the views of later Neoplatonists in the “golden chain” of Platonism up to his own day.²⁴ His dialogue has been seen as a “point by point” refutation of the views of the Alexandrian Neoplatonist Hierocles (who may have taught Aeneas), and if that claim is too strong, it certainly points to Aeneas’ direct engagement with contemporary Neoplatonism as well as his audience’s interest in and familiarity with contemporary philosophy.²⁵ Procopius describes Alexandria as the “mother city of letters” (Procopius, *Ep.* 119), and the Gazans’ experiences in the schools in Alexandria brought them and their students into contact with the major figures of late-antique Platonism, and helped to stimulate creative adaptations of the Platonic heritage.

The use of the Platonic dialogue genre by the Gazans continues these themes of creative interaction and tension.²⁶ I have already noted that Aeneas and Zacharias

²⁴ Theophrastus reports the views of Heraclitus, Empedocles, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Boethus, Numenius, Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Syrianus and Proclus. Hierocles’ version of the history of philosophy privileges the same figures.

²⁵ Hadot 1978, 20.

²⁶ I pursue this line of inquiry further in Champion 2013.

identify themselves as heirs of the tradition of Platonic dialogue from the opening sections of their dialogues and that the language of their dialogues is woven from Platonic sources. The use of Platonic dialogue connects the Gazans to the classical tradition, implicitly suggests that Platonism is a useful, culturally and intellectually relevant system, and figures both tension between interlocutors and creative mutually beneficial interaction. The use of the dialogue form by the Gazans is both an acknowledgement of their continuing debt to the classical past as well as a confident claim that the baton has been passed from the hero of Greek philosophy to Christianity. Classical *παιδεία*, they confidently claim, remains useful for late-antique society.

Yet the Gazans do not merely duplicate Platonic dialogue; they recast it into a new discourse, performing generic transformations intended to perform and generate desired social changes. The Gazans progressively silence their pagan interlocutors as the dialogues progress. The dialogues hence quickly come to approximate the genre of “question and answer” literature (*eratapokriseis*), a genre being developed in the local Gazan monasteries as a means of instruction and the establishment of spiritual authority.²⁷ By the end of Aeneas’ dialogue, philosophical argument is replaced by Christian miracle stories akin to those found in hagiographies, and both Aeneas’ and Zacharias’ dialogues end in prayer, with their target audience converted to Christianity.

This transformation of Platonic dialogue into other Christian genres forms a new tradition based on the authority of Christian teachers and holy men. It sidelines Neoplatonic authority figures. Most importantly, it performs the reversals and transformations both Aeneas and Zacharias desire in the schools and their wider cultures. In their rhetorical adaptation and transformation of Platonic dialogue they attempt to create real cultural transformations that limit pagan authority and diversity of religious belief in late-antique society. The rhetoric of their dialogues points to ways in which they sought to address contemporary social changes and remain relevant in a society in transition. There is a pattern of incorporating classical traditions into a new discourse, in the process performing a transformation and resetting the parameters of culturally valued social action, rather than merely offering a simple negation or rejection of the original classical model.

Such a pattern continues when we explore the philosophical detail of their use of Platonic and Neoplatonic arguments more closely. The writings of Aeneas, Zacharias and Procopius all engage with Platonism and show evidence of accurate knowledge of Platonic arguments. Yet while the Gazans do offer some arguments that are at least thought-provoking objections to Platonism on Platonic grounds, many of their arguments fail to connect with the logic of their opponents’ arguments. On one view, this is evidence for lack of philosophical rigor, and it is certainly the case that many of

²⁷ This generic change was perceptively analysed by Papadoyannakis 2006. On this genre, see Volgers/Zamagni 2005. The genre of “Sayings of the Desert Fathers” (*apophthegmata*) may also be an associated genre.

the arguments the Gazans put up are *ad hominem*, tending towards cheap point scoring. But more importantly, the failure of the Gazans’ to make valid Neoplatonic arguments against Neoplatonists is evidence for the way in which their Christian commitments reframe the arguments they draw on from the Platonic tradition and lead them down new paths. A complete analysis of how the Gazans engage with Platonic and Neoplatonic ideas is a much larger project than can be attempted here. Discussion of the central concept of “coeternity” (συναἰδιος), which entered Christian-Neoplatonic debates about creation through Gaza, and arguments grounded in Christian eschatological expectation, will be deferred since they are not indebted to Plato, and I treat them elsewhere.

To restrict attention to the Gazans’ engagement with Plato, I begin by investigating their interpretation of his *Timaeus*, especially *Timaeus* 28b. In comparison with the extended Platonic exegesis in Philoponus, the Gazans seem more interested in poking holes in Neoplatonic arguments than seriously engaging with them. Similarly, Platonic images about eternal creation, drawing on an analogy between bodies and their shadows traceable to the *Republic’s* image of the divided line, are intentionally misinterpreted by Aeneas and Zacharias. Their serious point is that divine creation must be a purposive act, a claim they ground in the *Timaeus* before they offer biblical evidence. In this area, they do offer arguments that will later be seen in a more detailed form in Philoponus’ *Contra Proclum*, drawing without citation on an Iamblichan distinction between the mutability of the knower and the changeability of the object of knowledge. While their arguments point to knowledge of this distinction, they do not go beyond pointing out a potential inconsistency within the Platonic tradition: they do not seek to use Platonic arguments to overcome the inconsistency. In a similar way, when Aeneas and Zacharias turn to questions about the composition and mutability of the heavens, they show knowledge of a live debate about whether Plato’s four elements should be augmented by Aristotle’s quintessence, but use the debate only to identify a point of tension in their opponents’ tradition. Their governing problems come from within Christianity, and so they display little charity towards the Platonic arguments except where they can provide support for Christian claims. As a final example of this dynamic, I sketch arguments about creation from nothing offered by Procopius on the basis that Neoplatonists, seeking to harmonize Plato and Aristotle, apparently accept the creation of form from nothing. The doctrine of creation from nothing is central to the Gazans’ Christian claims about the creation and eternity of the world. They seek to make this distinctively Christian claim intelligible using Neoplatonic arguments alongside traditional Christian ones, although Philoponus will carry the philosophical argument further in his *Contra Aristotelem*.

For Proclus, “whether [the cosmos] has come into being or is ungenerated” (*Ti.* 28b–c) is the fundamental problem of the *Timaeus* (*in Ti.* 1.235.32–238.5), because it provides the primary problem in Platonic physics. Plato’s answer to this crucial question is that “[the cosmos] came into existence (γένεονεν); for it is visible and has body” ([κόσμος] γέγονεν· ὁρατὸς γὰρ τέ ἐστιν καὶ σῶμα ἔχων). In Philoponus’

Contra Proclum 6.7–8 (135.10–149.25 Rabe), we find what Richard Sorabji calls a “window onto ancient techniques of textual criticism” on the interpretation of this lemma.²⁸ He begins by setting out the key passages in Plato on the basis that “no commentary could present Plato’s meaning as clearly as he has made himself” (*Contra Proclum* 6.7.14). He seeks to use Plato to interpret Plato, sometimes drawing on evidence from other places in the *Timaeus* and at other times drawing on evidence from other dialogues. Through this discussion, he identifies the key debating point within the Platonic tradition after Aristotle: when Plato said that the world was γέγονεν, did he mean that the world had a temporal beginning, or could his claim be reconciled with Aristotle’s belief that the cosmos is eternal? He notes, polemically, that the majority tradition of Platonic tradition, beginning with Aristotle, understood Plato as having believed that the cosmos has a temporal origin.²⁹ But having set out Plato’s views on the subject, he then offers a detailed history of alternative interpretations of *Timaeus* 28b. Philoponus preserves an extended fragment of the second-century Platonist Taurus’ *Commentary on the Timaeus*, where four different possible meanings for Plato’s γέγονεν were offered in an attempt to show that the cosmos could be both γέγονεν and everlasting. Taurus’ exegesis is then augmented with Porphyry’s views, which also propose that the cosmos is everlasting. Philoponus concludes his survey with a list of the plausible contemporary contenders within Neoplatonism, and suggests that Plato’s γέγονεν should instead be understood in his preferred fashion, limiting the temporal duration of the cosmos:

ὥστε λείπεται τὰ λοιπὰ τέσσαρα σημαίνόμενα, λέγω δὴ τό τε ἐν τῷ γένει τῶν γενητῶν ὄν, εἰ καὶ μὴ γέγονεν, καὶ τὸ ὡς σύνθετον ἐξ ὕλης καὶ εἴδους γενητὸν, ᾧ μάλιστα ὁ Πορφύριος τίθεται, καὶ τὸ ἐν τῷ γίνεσθαι τὸ εἶναι ἔχον καὶ τὸ κατ’ αἰτίαν γενητὸν. δίκαιον οὖν οἶμαι ἐν ἕκαστον τούτων προχειρισάμενον ἐξετάσαι, εἰ οἷόν τε ἐστὶν τῇ Πλάτωνος διανοίᾳ σύμφωνον φαίνεσθαι· τούτων γὰρ ἀπάντων ἐλληλεγμένων λείπεται κατὰ χρόνον γενητὸν εἶναι τὸν κόσμον ὑπὸ τοῦ Πλάτωνος λέγεσθαι, κἄν αὐτοὶ μὴ βούλωνται.

Contra Proclum 6.8 (149.16–26 Rabe)

This leaves the remaining four senses in the field, that is, [1] things which are in the genus of things which are generated even though they have not [themselves] come to be, [2] things which are generated in the sense that they are composed of matter and form (the sense which has Porphyry’s vote), [3] things which have their being in coming to be, and [4] things which are generated with respect to causation. I think we should take each of these in turn and ask whether it can be shown to be in accord with Plato’s intentions. For once they have all been invalidated, the only alternative left, whether they like it or not, is that Plato described the world as generated with respect to time.

Philoponus correctly identifies that Proclus subscribes to Taurus’ third and fourth definition, that the world is generated in that it comes to be and in that it depends

²⁸ Share 2005, viii.

²⁹ If we take Alcinous’ second-century handbook *Did.* 14.3 to represent the mainstream of Platonic interpretation, the Atticus-Plutarch position had been demoted in favour of Taurus’ interpretation early in the history of middle Platonism.

on a cause (*Contra Proclum* 6.8 [148.1–7 Rabe]).³⁰ His ensuing discussion of these four ways of understanding the generation of the cosmos is not always fair to the opposition, and it is not free from *ad hominem* argument. But his account is respectful of the intellectual system he opposes and its cogency can be fairly measured from his report. The detailed account of exegesis within the Platonic tradition shows a thinker thoroughly cognisant with the detail of contemporary Neoplatonism, determined to take Neoplatonic arguments seriously even as he rejects them.

The contrast with the Gazans is stark. They too know about the debate within Platonism, and external evidence can be used to show that they accurately report the philosophical views of the Neoplatonists Hierocles and Ammonius on this question. But they do not give any space to the tradition encapsulated by Taurus, which in its Proclan form had been accepted as canonical in later Neoplatonism. Instead, Zacharias interprets Plato’s γέγονεν as controversially denoting creation in time, stringing together a series of passages (*Timaeus* 27d–28c, 38b, 41ab; *Ammonius* 668–701) to make his point without reference to the alternative interpretations. By citing Plato rather than his later interpreters, Zacharias, like Aeneas before him, co-opts Plato as a supporter of a temporally bounded creation and suggests that contemporary Platonists have been unfaithful to their founder, without seriously testing the logic of the alternative line of interpretation. Aeneas also refuses to take the opposition arguments seriously, content to ridicule the controversy within the interpretive tradition as evidence for intellectual incoherence among his opponents:

τὸν δὲ Ἀριστοτέλη καὶ γελοῖον ἀποκαλεῖ, ὁμολογοῦντα μὲν τόδε τὸ πᾶν ὄρατὸν εἶναι καὶ ἀπτόν καὶ σωματοειδές, ἀγένητον δὲ καὶ ἀφθαρτον εἶναι φιλονεικοῦντα. Ἡ πῶς οὐ καταγέλαστος ἐκεῖνος...;

Theophrastus 46.23–47.3

[Atticus] also calls Aristotle laughable, since he agrees that the universe is visible, tangible and corporeal, yet, being a great controversialist, [he says] that it is ungenerated and indestructible. How is that man not ridiculous...?

Atticus (along with Plutarch) was the main champion, after Aristotle, of the view that Plato’s γέγονεν implied the cosmos’ temporal origin, and this passage comes within a section in which Aeneas claims that Plato believed the world had a temporal origin. Thus it reminds philosophically informed readers of the debate within Platonism over *Timaeus* 28b. Lang and Macro have argued that Proclus’ *Eighteen Arguments for the Eternity of the World* were generated by a revival of the Plutarch-Atticus position in the Neoplatonic schools.³¹ This revival can plausibly be connected to Christians such as Aeneas, Zacharias and Procopius in the schools, who could adopt the Plutarch-Atticus position to their advantage.³² While the Gazans do go on to offer ar-

³⁰ For discussion, see Phillips 1997.

³¹ Lang/Macro/McGinnis 2001.

³² Saffrey 1975.

guments that the universe has a temporal origin, they do not treat the Platonic tradition with the respect Philoponus affords it in his reporting of his opponents position and careful Platonic exegesis.

A similar dynamic of knowledge of significant Neoplatonic arguments without charitable engagement with them can be seen in initial arguments about change and alteration in God when he wills the existence of the cosmos, although on this point the Gazans also have some more philosophically cogent arguments. Gessius, the pagan doctor in Zacharias' dialogue, offers an argument which had become traditional in Neoplatonism, that the eternity of the world would not render the creation equal to the creator.³³ His argument is by analogy. Shadows, Gessius claims, accurately reporting a tradition that goes back at least to Plotinus, exist for as long as their bodies do, but that in no way puts them on the same ontological level as the body:

καθάπερ αἴτιον τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἐκάστου σκιάς γίνεται, ὁμόχρονος δὲ τῷ σώματι ἢ σκιά καὶ οὐχ ὁμότιμος, οὕτω δὴ καὶ ὁδε ὁ κόσμος παρακολουθημά ἐστι τοῦ θεοῦ, αἰτίου ὄντος αὐτῷ τοῦ εἶναι, καὶ συναϊδιός ἐστι τῷ θεῷ, οὐκέτι δὲ καὶ ὁμότιμος.

Ammonius 523–6

just as the body is the cause of the shadow of each thing, and the shadow comes into existence at the same time as the body but is not equal to it in honour, so too this cosmos is an incidental consequence of God, who is the cause of its being, and is coeternal with God but not at all equal to him in honour.³⁴

While Zacharias thus displays knowledge of standard Platonic arguments, as in his approach to interpretation of *Timaeus* 28b, he does not engage charitably with the Neoplatonist position. The general point the Neoplatonist want the analogy to make is that ontological equality between creator and cosmos does not follow from the eternal generation of the cosmos. Zacharias does not acknowledge this point, but instead points to deficiencies in the analogy (*Ammonius* 516–552). The analogy, according to Zacharias, makes God into a bodily entity, who is only an accessory cause of creation, since in addition to a body, the sun is needed for a shadow to be cast. This is mere shadowboxing, since no Neoplatonist conceptualised divinity as bodily. His stronger attack on the analogy, however, introduces a more philosophically cogent argument, although at this point it remains a misconstrual of the intention of the Neoplatonic analogy. The body-shadow, creator-creature analogy, Zacharias points out, would mean that the act of creation would be unwilled. He draws on

³³ On the history of the shadow analogy, see Baltes 1976, 166–69.

³⁴ Aeneas has a shorter version of the same set of arguments: “How much better was he, and how much more truly was he the creator, he who made and harmonised as he willed, than [the creator] of the shadow which accompanies by necessity? Who could will to order (κοσμεῖν) or destroy his own shadow? Therefore this reasoning of senseless men would also destroy Providence, since care for a shadow would be impossible. Further, a shadow appears alongside the body simultaneously [with it]. But it is impossible for the creator to produce (παρалаμβάνειν) matter simultaneously [with himself].”

axioms from Proclus’ *Elements of Theology* to show that a “purposeless and involuntary cause (ἀπροαίρετον αἰτίαν καὶ ἀβούητον)” is only a spontaneous by-product (παρακολούθημα) (cf. Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 97; *Ammonius* 527–534, 652–5). This would preclude thinking of creation as a willed act. In insisting that the cosmos is the freely chosen creation of a generous God, the Gazans attack any suggestion that the process of creation is in any sense unwilled.

Procopius, for example, argues that unless the cosmos is created from nothing, it will be given its existence “by the necessity of nature, not by the [divine] will (ἔσται γὰρ ἀνάγκη φύσεως, οὐ βουλήσει, τὸ εἶναι λαχών)” (29d). For Procopius, the eternal procession of the material cosmos is untenable because it would mean that God did not control the creative process. The “procession” account of creation means, he claims, that “God does not have the power to control his creative impulses (μὴ δυναμένου τοῦ θεοῦ τὰς ποιητικὰς ἐπέχειν ὀρμάς)” (29d). Procopius draws on the connotations of ἡ ὀρμή, which refers to irrational desires rather than rational judgement in Platonic psychology.³⁵ If God has no control over procession, there is nothing to stop God creating many worlds (29d): “how did he stop making, and not create a series of cosmoses? (πῶς ποιῶν ἐπαύσατο, καὶ μὴ καθεκástην κόσμους δημιουργεῖ;).” Procopius does not need to spell out explicitly the absurd implications of the theory of many worlds to his Neoplatonic audience, since Platonists from Plato onwards had ruled out this possibility, although believing in multiple worlds is a minority position found in Epicurus, Anaximander and Democritus.³⁶ Procopius’ argument is shared by Zacharias, who argues that the cosmos must be created by divine will if Plato’s claim in *Timaeus* 31b that the cosmos is μονογενής is true (*Ammonius* 434).

But if creation is an act of the divine will, and the cosmos is not everlasting, it seems that the Christian is committed to thinking that God’s will is subject to alteration. On this point, the Gazans begin to sketch a set of more philosophically cogent arguments that will be sharpened by John Philoponus in the sixth century. Proclus’ fourth argument for the eternity of the world is based on the claim that the first cause of the cosmos is “unmoving” or incapable of undergoing alteration:

εἴ τι ἄρα ἀκίνητόν ἐστιν, ἢ οὐδέποτε ποιήσει ἢ ἀεί, ἵνα μὴ διὰ τὸ ποτὲ ποιεῖν κινήται... ὥστε, εἴ τις εὐσεβεῖν οἰόμενος εἰς τὸν αἴτιον τοῦ παντός ἐκεῖνον λέγοι μόνον αἰδίων τὸν δὲ κόσμον οὐκ αἰδίων, τοῦτον λέγων οὐκ αἰδίων ἐκεῖνον ἀποφαίνει κινούμενον ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἀκίνητον.

Contra Proclum 56.6–7, 15–18

If, then, something is unmoving, it will either never produce or always produce, so as not to be in movement by producing [only] sometimes....And so if someone with the intention of paying reverence to him who is the cause of the universe, should say that he alone is everlasting while the world is not everlasting, he is, by denying that the latter is everlasting, declaring that the former is in movement and not unmoving.

³⁵ He shows knowledge of this psychology, at least as mediated by Gregory, at *Commentary on Genesis* 117cd, which is modelled on *De op. hom.* 145.36f.

³⁶ Lucretius *De rerum Natura* 1.73; Diogenes Laertius 2.1.2; 9.44; cf. *Ti.* 30d–31b.

Like Philoponus after them, the Gazans all have arguments designed to demonstrate that God's will does not change in any relevant sense if he is not producing the cosmos eternally. Hence an everlasting creation is not a necessary corollary of an eternal, unchanging God. They each use the analogy of the builder or architect. The architect does not cease to be an architect when he is not actually building. So too, God remains the creator when not actually creating (e.g. Aeneas *Theophrastus* 36.16–18; Procopius *Commentary on Genesis* 33a; Zacharias *Ammonius* 371–4).

Aeneas and Zacharias both argue that God always has the generative principles of the cosmos in his mind, as an architect always has blueprints in mind, although God, the Gazans insist, does not plan in time (e.g. *Ammonius* 774–6). Hence the continually active willing of creation is unnecessary:

φαμέν γὰρ τὸν θεὸν αἰεὶ δημιουργόν, ὡς ἔχοντα τοὺς δημιουργικοὺς λόγους ἐν ἑαυτῷ καὶ τοὺς, ὅταν ἐθέλῃ, προάγοντα. οὐ γὰρ ἀργίαν καθόλου τοῦ θεοῦ κατηγοροῦμεν, οὐτ', ἐπειδὴ ποτε μὴ δημιουργεῖ, δημιουργὸν εἶναι τοῦτον ἀρνούμεθα. ἀλλ' ἐκ τῶν γεγονότων δημιουργὸν ἐπιστάμενοι, πάσης σχέσεως αὐτὸν καὶ ἀνάγκης καὶ τυραννίδος, ὡς θεὸν ὄντα καὶ ἔν, ἐλεύθερον εἶναι ὑποποτάζομεν. οὐ γὰρ ἀνάγκη δημιουργεῖ ἢ ἐλευθέρᾳ καὶ μακαρίᾳ φύσιν, οὐτ', ἐπειδὴ ποτε μὴ δημιουργεῖ... ἤδη καὶ τοῦ εἶναι δημιουργὸς ἔξω κείσεται.

Ammonius 387–395

We say that God is always the creator since he has the creative thoughts in himself and enacts them whenever he wills. For we absolutely do not accuse God of inaction, nor, whenever he is not creating, do we deny that he is the creator. Rather, knowing the creator by what has come into being, we infer that God is free from every relation and necessity and tyranny, since he is and is one. For a free and blessed nature does not create by necessity, nor will he actually be placed outside the role of creator...because he sometimes does not create.

The sole reason for the divine act of creation, according to the Gazans, is the generosity of God. When God wills the creation, he acts generously and when he does not will the creation, or wills to destroy it and transform it into the new creation, he similarly acts generously. Hence his will is always unchanging as an act of goodness:

οὕτω καὶ θεὸς τῶν μηδέπω γεγονότων ὁ θεός, ὡς ὄντων ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ πρὸ γενέσεως. ἅπαντα γὰρ περιεληφε τῇ προγνωστικῇ δυνάμει τὰ πρὸς γένεσιν παράγεσθαι μέλλοντα· ἕκαστον δέ, οἷον ἐθέλει καὶ ὅτε προσήκει καὶ ὡς ἂν κάλλιστα ἔχοι, σοφία τινὴ καὶ τέχνη καὶ δημιουργικῇ δυνάμει προβάλλεται. ... οὕτω δὲ καὶ ὁ θεὸς οὐ λωβηθήσεται ἢ ζημιωθήσεται τὸ εἶναι δημιουργὸς καὶ ἀγαθός, τόνδε τὸν κόσμον μεταποιῶν καὶ μετασκευάζων καὶ φθείρων. οὐκ εἰς αἰδίων μετασηματίζει γὰρ τοῦτον ... καὶ φθείρων δὲ τὸν αἰσθητὸν τοῦτον καὶ ὀρώμενον κόσμον, ἔστιν ἀγαθός καὶ διαμένει ἐν ἀγαθότητι· οὐ γὰρ ἄρδην ἀφανίζει, οὔτε ἀναρῶσει πάμπαν καταδικάζει τὸδε τὸ πᾶν· ἀλλὰ τὴν πρὸς τὸ κρείττον ἀλλοίωσιν καὶ μεταβολὴν ἐργάζεται, καὶ μετασηματισμὸν ἀμείνονα ποιεῖται. 'καινοὺς γὰρ οὐρανοὺς καὶ καινὴν γῆν' φησὶ τὰ θεῖα λόγια.

Ammonius 795–799, 648–50, 654–658

So too God is the God of the things which have not yet come into being since they existed in himself even before they were born. For he embraced everything that he would bring to birth with foreknowing power. He sends each one forth as he wills, when it is proper and how it would be most beautiful, with a certain wisdom, skill and creative power. ... so too God will not be dishonoured nor will his being the creator and good be damaged, in changing, transform-

ing, and destroying this cosmos. The cosmos will not exist forever; for he will change it. ... But when he destroys this perceptible and visible cosmos, he is good and remains in goodness, since he does not destroy utterly, nor condemn the universe completely with destruction. Rather, he accomplishes alteration and change for the better, and makes what is altered better: ‘new heavens and a new earth’ say the divine scriptures.³⁷

In the references to God’s foreknowledge and to the creation of individuals, we have a hint of the philosophical background. The question of divine knowledge of future contingents is not followed up in the works of the Gazans (cf. Philoponus *Contra Proclum* 78.19–79.4). They emphasise instead that Neoplatonists agree that God can have knowledge of particular individuals. Their argument is a polemic *tu quoque*. Zacharias, for example, accuses his opponents of inconsistency in accepting that God could know (and create) Socrates and Plato without God’s knowledge thereby undergoing change or his goodness being affected by the fact that Socrates and Plato are mortal and so subject to change (e.g. *Ammonius* 173 f.). If God can have knowledge of individuals without thereby undergoing alteration, then God’s will is not changeable merely because it creates individuals. Further, Neoplatonists accept that divine providential concern for individuals exists, so again accept that an unchanging intellect is capable of knowledge of changing individuals. These *ad hominem* arguments are also found later in Philoponus, although he also offers positive arguments (*Contra Proclum* 4.9, 16.1–4). They all sit within a tradition of Neoplatonic thought initiated by Iamblichus about whether God can have knowledge of individuals or the future without thereby being bound up in particulars or time. Zacharias may have learned about the future contingents debate in the Alexandrian classrooms from Ammonius.³⁸ Like Philoponus after him, he transfers these arguments about divine knowledge to divine will as part of a wider project to make plausible the claim that creation from nothing is a unique act of God’s will.

A distinctive feature of the Gazans’ arguments on this point as elsewhere is their emphasis on the freedom of God to will a new creation. Proclus had framed his arguments about the need for God’s will to be unchanging in the context of the eternal origin of the cosmos, and arguments within Platonism about the creation of the cosmos typically focus on origins. The Gazans do engage with these debates, but Christian claims about the possibility of a “new heaven and a new earth” in the promised new creation at the end of time give their arguments a distinctive emphasis at key points. As Procopius puts it, “if God and the cosmos exist together, there is nothing new in the cosmos” (εἰ ἅμα Θεὸς ἅμα κόσμος, οὐδὲν καινὸν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ) (*Commentary on Genesis* 33b). Even if they accepted that there was an eternal origin for the cosmos, they would still have to argue that God could will a new creation in order

³⁷ *Is* 65:17, 66:22; 2 *Pet* 3:13.

³⁸ For relevant texts, see Blank/Kretzmann 1998; Iamblichus, ap. Ammonius *in Int.* 135.14ff. (Busse); Proclus, *in Tim.* 1.352.11–16 (Diehl). Courcelle has shown the currency of these debates in Ammonius’ school in his study of Boethius. See Courcelle 1967, 216–229.

to make room for God's eschatological promises. Their arguments that the divine will does not change even when God wills new creations is deeply influenced by their belief in the coming general resurrection, understood as a divinely willed and complete transformation of created reality, a new *creatio ex nihilo*.

While the temporal origin of the cosmos seems to mean that God would undergo change, the apparent lack of change in the heavens seems to cause problems for the Christian position from the opposite direction (Proclus, *Eighteen Arguments for the Eternity of the World*, Argument 13). Sorabji sketches the background to this claim in his general introduction to James Wilberding's English translation of books 12–18 of the *Contra Proclum*.³⁹ For our purposes the key point is that Philoponus, in contrast to Proclus, rejected the Aristotelian claim that the heavens consist of a fifth, non-terrestrial element which explains their incorruptibility and their everlasting circular motion (*Contra Proclum* 484.18f., 527.11–531.21). Philoponus argues that since the heavens are made up of the (albeit purified) four terrestrial elements, they consist of contraries, and are therefore corruptible. This allows him to reject the Platonic idea that heavenly bodies, as gods, while naturally corruptible, are held in eternal existence by the divine will (*Timaeus* 41ab). Aristotle had used the quintessence to explain the naturally circular motion of heavenly bodies. Philoponus does not have this explanation available to him once he rejects the aether, and suggests instead, on Platonic authority, that heavenly bodies move in a circle because of soul, not by their nature (*Contra Proclum* 484.18f.).

Both Aeneas and Zacharias take up the claim that the heavens are immutable in their dialogues, again pointing to stimulus from Neoplatonic works such as Proclus'. Aeneas argues for the corruptibility of the heavens by adducing evidence from the phases of the moon (*Theophrastus* 38.11–13), an illicit move within Neoplatonism, which only claimed that the region above the moon was immutable, but Aeneas' claim is that physics is unified. Zacharias makes the same elision: the sun and moon are destructible, just like the rest of the cosmos (*Ammonius* 1309f.). In the Gazans' view, the same laws that govern terrestrial changes also govern the heavens. Both share an argument based on the claim that the universe must be fitting for mortal creatures. The cosmos, Zacharias argues, must be corruptible to have an affinity with mortals (*Ammonius* 1195f.). The heavens, he goes on to claim, must be mortal, perishable and destructible if they are to be capable of being received by mortal senses (*Ammonius* 1206–1211). So he, like Aeneas before him, uses Plato's claim that what is *gegonen* is perceptible, together with the evident perceptibility of the heavens and the Aristotelian axiom that what comes into being is also corruptible, to claim that the heavens are corruptible. Plato, he says, in an argument that again shows familiarity with the contemporary state of a canonical Platonic debate, considered that the heavens were naturally corruptible (*Ammonius* 689–701). Plato had argued that the heavens are naturally corruptible, but can be held in immortality

³⁹ Wilberding 2006, 1–3.

by the will of the demiurge (*Timaeus* 41ab). Several thinkers in the Platonic tradition had claimed that God is capable of overcoming the nature of an entity, but Plotinus, Proclus (and Simplicius later), claimed that this is impossible.⁴⁰ This motivated Proclus’ acceptance of Aristotle’s claim that the heavens are composed of aether, the naturally everlasting element. Aeneas takes the former line of interpretation and uses it in a way the tradition had not imagined. Those who believed that God could override the nature of a body used this claim to show that the heavens, naturally corruptible, could be held in immortality by the will of God, in harmony with Plato’s claim at *Timaeus* 41. Aeneas, and Zacharias after him, agree that God is able to hold the naturally corruptible heaven, like the rest of the cosmos, in being for as long as he is willing to. But they go on to argue that God’s ability to override the nature of a body makes the Christian hope for the final transformation of corruptible reality into immortality in the eschaton plausible within a Platonic worldview. They therefore move away from the technical detail of the Neoplatonic argument about whether there are four or five elements to focus on a Christian claim about the hoped-for paradise, the subject of the final, substantial sections of their dialogues. Their more explicitly Christian problems reframe the Platonic tradition.

Similarly, whereas Philoponus in the *Contra Proclum* had stayed within a Neoplatonic frame by claiming (in orthodox Neoplatonic terms) that the circular motion of the heavens could be explained by soul, the Gazans explicitly reject this solution.⁴¹ Zacharias makes the heavens, like all creation, radically dependent on the divine will and act:

δίκτην τροχοῦ περιπολεῖ τόδε τὸ πᾶν, μονοειδῆ μὲν ἔχων τὴν φορὰν καὶ ἀκούσιον ὡς δοῦλος καὶ ἄψυχος καὶ μηδὲν λογικὸν τυγχάνων, ὡς ὑποτοπάζουσι οἱ τοῦτον θεολογούντες.
Ammonius 336–8

The sun traverses the whole universe in the manner of a wheel, holding a uniform and involuntary course as a slave who does not have a soul and is not at all a rational creature, as they who divinise it imagine.

As in his earlier arguments about creation as divine will and act, this claim is directed against any suggestion of polytheism, pointing to his desire to use his dialogue to restrict diversity of religious belief in the late-antique schools. Most importantly, it makes a claim for the radical uniqueness of the creator in the context of arguments for creation from nothing. The Gazans intend all of their arguments to work together to make the Christian doctrine of the creation from nothing plausible in the school environment. Their rhetorical appropriation of a neglected strand of Platonic interpretation of *Timaeus* 28b makes room for creation from nothing by showing that plausible interpretations of the *Timaeus* are consistent with a temporally finite cosmos. Similarly, God as the efficient cause of a non-everlasting cosmos is the target of

⁴⁰ See Sorabji’s discussion in Wilberding 2006, 2, 11.

⁴¹ In this respect they anticipate Cosmas Indicopleustes’ arguments in the sixth century.

the shadow boxing episode. Arguments for the immutability of the divine will if the creative act is not eternal are designed to show that the Christian Creator may have Platonic divine attributes. Finally, treating the heavens as passive divine creations removes any eternal creatures from the cosmos, strengthening the distinction between creator and creature which is at the heart of *creatio ex nihilo*.

The detail of the strongest Neoplatonic argument for creation from nothing was not offered until John Philoponus' *Contra Aristotelem* later in the sixth century, but a sketch of the argument appears in Procopius' *Commentary on Genesis*. Like Philoponus, Procopius thinks that Neoplatonists have no reason to reject creation from nothing, since they believe, he argues, in the creation of form from nothing (29bc).⁴² "How," he asks,

πῶς δὲ τὰ εἶδη ἐκ μὴ ὄντων ποιῶν, ἃ δὴ καὶ κρείττονα, τὴν ὕλην οὕσαν χεῖρω, ποιεῖν οὐκ ἠδύνατο;

Commentary on Genesis 29bc

was [God] unable to make matter, which is inferior, although making the forms, which indeed are also better, from nothing?

In this claim we have an argument that again suggests knowledge of Neoplatonic arguments.⁴³ Aristotle had accepted that an object may become white or cease being white, and that the quality of whiteness need only exist potentially before it qualifies a particular body (Aristotle *Metaph.* 7.9.1034b16–19, 8.5.1044b21–4). He further argued that the quality of whiteness does not undergo the processes of generation and corruption. Rather, proximate matter takes on form instantaneously (*Metaph.* 7.15.1039b23–7, 8.3.1043b14–16, 8.5.1044b21–22). Treating the quality of colour as a form (in harmony with contemporary Neoplatonists), these considerations render plausible Procopius' claim that Greek philosophers accept the creation of form from nothing. Procopius' argument anticipates Philoponus' characteristically more philosophically rigorous argument. Philoponus also argued that Aristotle accepted that form was created from nothing, using this claim within an argument that motion was not eternal (*Contra Aristotelem* in Simplicius in *Phys.* 1142.1–28). He also argued by analogy that God can destroy matter into not-being, just as he does with form (*Contra Aristotelem* in Simplicius in *Phys.* 1177.10–26).

Returning to Gaza, Procopius argues that if form were created from nothing, form comes from God. Form is better than matter, so if God has control of form, he should also be able to create matter from nothing. Otherwise one must assume that God could do something harder (creating form) but not something easier (creating matter). This, in Procopius' view, is absurd. Procopius is probing difficulties in the Neo-

⁴² For Philoponus on this question, and the Aristotelian background, see Haas 1997, 4f., 281–83; Sorabji 1983, 247–49, who uses the "whiteness" example.

⁴³ Cf. Maximus in Eusebius *PE* 7.22. See also Philoponus *Contra Proclum* 340, 347, 365.3.

platonic treatment of form and matter, as Philoponus would do with greater logical rigour later in the sixth century.

Continuing the argument for *creatio ex nihilo*, Procopius utilises the Neoplatonic idea that matter must be suitable for form. Plato had argued that the receptacle can receive each and every form, whereas proximate matter on the earth is only suitable for particular forms (e.g. *Ti.* 50c).⁴⁴ If forms are created from nothing, then matter must also be created from nothing in order to be suitable for the forms it receives. If the Platonists maintain that matter is not created in this way and hence is not identically from God, there can be no affinity between form and matter:

πῶς δὲ ξένη οὐσα Θεοῦ καὶ μὴ παρ’ αὐτοῦ γενομένη, τῶν εἰδῶν τῶν ἐξ αὐτοῦ γέγονε δεκτική;
Commentary on Genesis 29b

how did [matter] come into being as suitable for the forms which are from God, if it is alien to God and did not come into being through him?

This argument combines the idea of the suitability of matter with the idea of the instantaneous creation of immanent forms. Again, it seeks to show that Neoplatonic arguments are mutually inconsistent. The argument relies on Neoplatonic appropriations of Plato and Aristotle, and shows Procopius seeking to test contemporary philosophical problems.

To conclude this overview of the use of Plato and Platonism in creation debates at Gaza, it should be clear that Aeneas’ boast that the Academy and Lyceum had been transferred to Gaza operates at many levels. Throughout the Gazans’ writings, Platonic rhetoric is intended to effect social change, and to unite and divide in an age of social and intellectual transition. The Platonic tradition remains central to the thought of Aeneas, Procopius and Zacharias, as a source of creative inspiration that also poses strong challenges to key Christian claims. Their knowledge of Plato is direct and they are all interested in contemporary trends in Neoplatonism, plausibly motivated to think about creation by discussion generated in late-antique schools following Proclus’ writings on the eternity of the world which clashed with the established Christian doctrine of creation from nothing. In this context, use of Platonism can be seen as a rhetorical strategy to connect with opponents in order to encourage them to accept Christian arguments as well as an intellectual attempt to make Christian claims more plausible among members of the educated elite, who were thoroughly familiar with Plato. The Gazans’ use of Plato is stylistic, but it is not merely decorative. Platonic rhetoric performs social functions and secures intellectual claims. Zacharias’ opening allusion to the *Euthyphro* sets up a more antagonistic contest than we are initially promised by Aeneas, but in both authors, dialogue figures

⁴⁴ See Haas 1997, 4f. for discussion and further texts from the history of Platonism to support the widespread acceptance of this distinction. Aubry 2008, has recently discussed the concept of ἐπιτηδεύτης in the context of the question of whether matter has an active ability to receive form or whether it should be conceptualised as purely passive.

both confrontation and creative interaction. Conflict is a much-overused category in studies of late antique society. But while the Gazans' works are each generated in part by continuing religious and doctrinal differences within the diverse student population, it is clear that they are deeply influenced by Platonism. I have argued that their emphasis on the promised new creation alters a Platonic focus on origins, but even in this move, another chapter could have explored ways in which their Christian eschatology is supported by Platonic optimistic teleology. Yet in their transformation of the Platonic dialogue genre into Christian forms of literature, as in their intellectual engagement with Platonism, Aeneas and Zacharias both seek to perform in their texts social changes in a religiously heterogeneous environment. Many of their arguments are thus polemic, insufficiently charitable towards their opponents' positions. Given this feature of their works, by no means unique in ancient (or modern) philosophy and theology, it may be easy to doubt the level of systematic knowledge of contemporary Platonism the Gazans actually have. I hope by now it is clear that although the Gazans each do not seek to construct a revised Neoplatonic system or set out Neoplatonic claims in detail, they repeatedly display knowledge of key Neoplatonic arguments and engage Neoplatonists on their own ground at times. Reconstructing the distinctively Christian problems that help to frame their arguments and further explain their rejection of key Neoplatonic claims is the work of another day. My comparison between the Gazans' treatment of Platonism and that of John Philoponus, however, points to a significant difference between their approaches to philosophy. Plato would have been much more at home in Philoponus' Academy (at least discussing his *Contra Proclum*) than in Aeneas'. The place granted for philosophy by Aeneas, Zacharias and Procopius is by contrast much more limited. A century of Christian and pagan philosophers and rhetors in the early Byzantine East continued to contribute to the tradition of the "Third Sophistic" beyond the temporal limits of this collection, and arguments from Gaza also help to cast light on significant aspects of this later activity.

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