

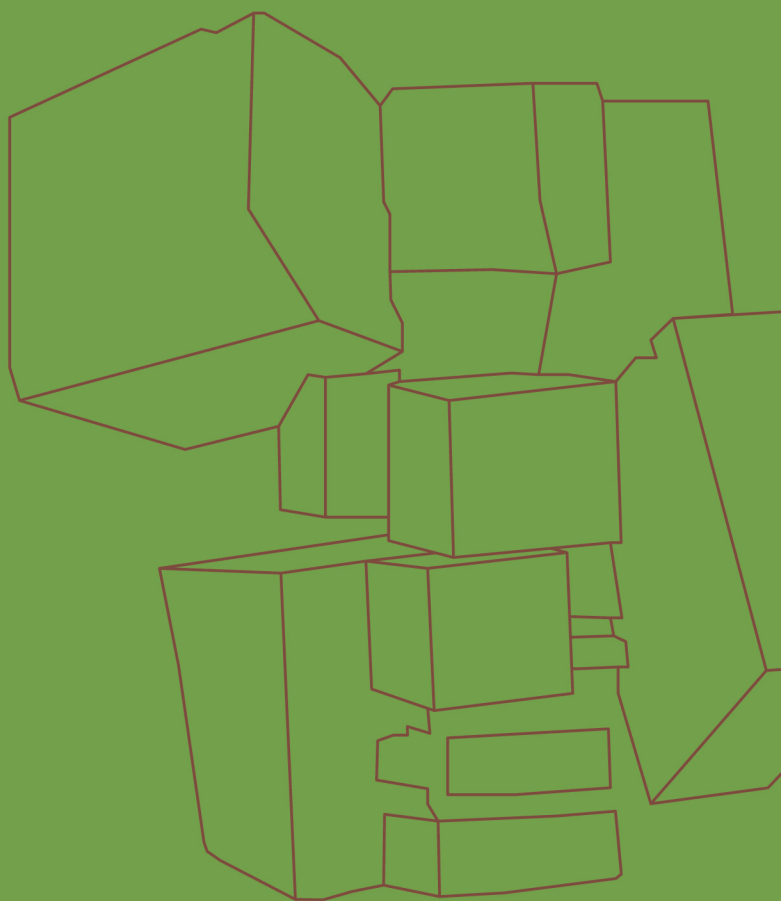
HISTORY OF METAPHYSICS: ANCIENT, MEDIEVAL, MODERN

---

Edited by Jonathan Greig, Joshua Robinson and Dragos Calma

# Nicholas of Methone, Reader of Proclus in Byzantium

*Context and Legacy*



BRILL

Nicholas of Methone, Reader of Proclus in Byzantium

# History of Metaphysics: Ancient, Medieval, Modern

*Edited by*

Olivier Boulnois (*École Pratique des Hautes Études*)

Dragos Calma (*University College Dublin*)

Wouter Goris (*Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität*)

Pasquale Porro (*Università di Torino*)

VOLUME 7

The titles published in this series are listed at [brill.com/hmtp](http://brill.com/hmtp)

# Nicholas of Methone, Reader of Proclus in Byzantium

*Context and Legacy*

*Edited by*

Jonathan Greig  
Joshua Robinson  
Dragos Calma



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON



This is an open access title distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC 4.0 license, which permits any non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author(s) and source are credited. Further information and the complete license text can be found at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

The terms of the CC license apply only to the original material. The use of material from other sources (indicated by a reference) such as diagrams, illustrations, photos and text samples may require further permission from the respective copyright holder.

The publication of this volume has received the generous support of the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme through the ERC Consolidator Grant *NeoplAT: A Comparative Analysis of the Middle East, Byzantium and the Latin West (9th–16th Centuries)*, grant agreement No 771640 ([www.neoplat.eu](http://www.neoplat.eu)).



## European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available online at <https://catalog.loc.gov>  
LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2025015067>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: “Brill”. See and download: [brill.com/brill-typeface](http://brill.com/brill-typeface).

ISSN 2666-9307

ISBN 978-90-04-51289-4 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-51290-0 (e-book)

DOI 10.1163/9789004512900

Copyright 2025 by Jonathan Greig, Joshua Robinson, and Dragos Calma. Published by Koninklijke Brill BV, Plantijnstraat 2, 2321 JC Leiden, The Netherlands.

Koninklijke Brill BV incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Nijhoff, Brill Schöningh, Brill Fink, Brill mentis, Brill Wageningen Academic, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Böhlau and V&R unipress.

Koninklijke Brill BV reserves the right to protect this publication against unauthorized use.

For more information: [info@brill.com](mailto:info@brill.com).

This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

# Contents

- 1 Introduction 1  
*Jonathan Greig and Dragos Calma*

## PART 1

### *Nicholas of Methone and His Contemporary Intellectual Context*

- 2 Ioanne Petritsi between Proclus and Nicholas of Methone 13  
*István Perczel*
- 3 Nicholas of Methone and Ioane Petritsi on Intellect 69  
*Lela Alexidze*
- 4 Different Understandings of Proclus' First Principle(s) in Nicholas of Methone and Ioanne Petritsi 91  
*Levan Gigineishvili*
- 5 Nicholas of Methone against Eustratios of Nicaea? On Proclus' Presence in the *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics* II 107  
*Michele Trizio*

## PART 2

### *The Refutation and Nicholas' Other Works*

- 6 Standards of Argument in Nicholas of Methone and Proclus: Comparing the *Elementatio theologica* with Nicholas' Attempts to Disarm It 139  
*Jan Opsomer*
- 7 A Relativistic Approach to Proclus: Nicholas of Methone's Critique of the *Elements of Theology* § 67–74 (on Parts and Wholes) 167  
*Arthur Oosthout*
- 8 Nicholas of Methone on Divine Ideas: Between Proclus and the Early Byzantines 201  
*Jonathan Greig*

- 9 The Motion of the Fertile One in Nicholas of Methone and Earlier Sources 233  
*Joshua M. Robinson*
- 10 Ontological Foundations and Methodological Applications of Analogy in Nicholas of Methone: An Example of Realism 261  
*Christos Terezis and Lydia Petridou*
- 11 12th-Century Philosophers and the Filioque: The Case of Nicholas of Methone's Corpus on the Procession of the Holy Spirit 290  
*Alessandra Bucossi*
- 12 Reconsidering Nicholas of Methone's Corpus on the Procession of the Holy Spirit 347  
*Carmelo Nicolò Benvenuto*

### PART 3

#### *Nicholas of Methone's Reception and Legacy*

- 13 Scholia on Proclus' *Elements of Theology* in Marc. gr. Z 512. New light on the discussion on participation in Nicholas of Methone 375  
*Carlos Steel*
- 14 Proclus (and Nicholas of Methone) in the Hesychast Controversy 400  
*Börje Bydén*
- 15 Marsilio Ficino and Nicholas of Methone on Platonic Theology 422  
*Stephen Gersh*

Index of Manuscripts 445

Index of Names (before 1800) 447

Index of Names (after 1800) 450

# Introduction

*Jonathan Greig*

HU Berlin / KU Leuven

*Dragos Calma*

University College Dublin

Nicholas of Methone (d. after 1160 AD), while showing up sporadically in surveys of Byzantine philosophy, has had very little attention devoted to him in recent and current scholarship.\* Little is unfortunately known about Nicholas' life, except that he became bishop of Methone around 1150 AD, while he was a theological adviser and panegyrist of the Emperor Manuel I Komnenos. Among other things, Nicholas is most well-known for writing the only complete commentary in Greek on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, titled the *Explication* [or *Refutation*] of the *Elements of Theology of Proclus of Lycia the Platonic philosopher* (full title in Greek: Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου τοῦ Λυκίου πλατωνικοῦ φιλοσόφου), albeit covering Propositions 1–198 out of the total 211 propositions in the *Elements*.

Nicholas was also known for writing a series of theological treatises, mainly against the Latins in defending against the doctrine of the *Filioque*. The little work that has been done on Nicholas has been focused around the *Refutation*, yet little attention has been paid to Nicholas' engagement with Proclus and Neoplatonism, more broadly, either within the context of Proclus' own thought or the general intellectual context of middle-period Byzantium in which Nicholas was involved. Additionally, a common criticism is that Nicholas' engagement with Proclus is purely polemical and possesses no value, implying that a study of Nicholas is fruitless and not worthy of pursuit.

This volume puts this latter claim entirely to rest by providing the first full study of Nicholas' thought across 14 chapters, examining Nicholas as a key wit-

---

\* This volume gathers the contributions of the conference *Nicholas of Methone between Neoplatonism and the Byzantine Tradition* organized online (due to COVID-19 restrictions), on April 12–13, 2021, by Jonathan Greig, Joshua Robinson, and Dragos Calma, with the participation of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. The conference, the publication of this volume and the purchase of digitized images of manuscripts were supported by the ERC project NeoplAT (CoG\_771640) directed by Dragos Calma.



ness to a central period of the reception of Neoplatonism, especially Proclus, in 12th-century AD Byzantium. We divide the volume between three themes in which we consider Nicholas: (1) Nicholas of Methone in his contemporary intellectual context; (2) the *Refutation* and Nicholas' other works; and (3) Nicholas of Methone's reception and legacy.

## 1 Nicholas of Methone and his Contemporary Intellectual Context

An analysis of Nicholas of Methone by himself, especially as representative of the 12th-century Byzantine attitude toward Proclus, would be incomplete without a close look at his 11th/12th-century Georgian parallel, Ioane Petritsi, to which Chapters 10–12 are devoted. One striking feature of Petritsi, in contrast to Nicholas, is how the former sees Proclus in harmony with a Christian framework—such that Proclus' metaphysics can be taken with little to no adjustment—in sharp juxtaposition to Nicholas' view.

In Chapter 2, István Perczel, in collaboration with Levan Gigineishvili, aims to locate Petritsi's thought in the circle of Proclus scholars in the 11th and 12th centuries, between John Italos, Eustratios of Alexandria, and Nicholas himself. Among various highlights in his chapter, Perczel notes how Petritsi and Italos differ in ways that one would not expect from previous scholarly consensus: for instance, whereas Italos is often critical of Proclus and typically turns, rather, to Plotinus and Origen (a position which, as we will see, Ficino also finds himself in: cf. pp. 441–442 in Stephen Gersh's chapter), Petritsi is much more supportive of Proclus, both in the latter's figure and structurally closer in his metaphysics (pp. 27–29). This implies that Petritsi could not have been a student of Italos, but rather was more likely a student of Eustratios of Nicaea (pp. 42–54) who rejects Italos' subordinationist Trinitarianism and shows a more positive attitude to Proclus—aspects which become more manifest in Petritsi's interpretation of the Trinity, as articulated within his commentary on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*. This helps to contextualize Nicholas' polemic against his heretical opponents who use Proclus: put together with Petritsi, in connection with Eustratios, Proclus is very well used in the Patriarchal School, even while Nicholas and Petritsi had access to different manuscript traditions of Proclus' *Elements*, as Perczel argues (pp. 54–57). From this, we can see that Petritsi himself may be a representative, if not one of the main, explicit figures of the circle of Proclus readers that Nicholas attacks in the *Refutatio*'s Preface.

In Chapter 3, Lela Alexidze looks at the principle of Intellect and the intelligibles between Nicholas of Methone and Ioane Petritsi. Just as Gigineishvili (below) shows in other aspects, Petritsi follows Proclus' position on Intellect

and the Forms closely, oftentimes articulating Proclus' framework within a Christian context: for instance, Petritsi compares the soul to Adam, insofar as both depart from their respective "father"—either the soul from its source, Intellect, or Adam from his source in God—yet both can return to their respective "father", i.e. Intellect, by attaining an intellectual way of life (p. 78). This lies in contrast to Nicholas, who disagrees sharply with aspects of Proclus' framework: for instance, unlike Petritsi who places Being (as the first Intellect) below God, Nicholas identifies Intellect and Being with God alone (p. 79), and distinguishes between God's thinking, as Intellect, and God's making, as Being (pp. 83–84). In turn, Nicholas rejects the identification of the intelligible with Intellect, where Proclus and Petritsi identify the two. Both shifts from Proclus and Petritsi likely reflect Nicholas' explicit concern to safeguard a creationist account of God, while Petritsi, strikingly, lacks such concern. In turn, Nicholas argues that Intellect (as God) is self-moved, rather than unmoved, as Proclus and Petritsi maintain instead: a case where we find Nicholas following the earlier Byzantine theologian Gregory Nazianzen (as Joshua Robinson discusses below in Chapter 9), whereas Petritsi adheres to the pagan Platonist Proclus.

This contrast in theme becomes further developed in Levan Giginishvili's Chapter 4, where he compares Petritsi and Nicholas of Methone on the first principle. One can see how Petritsi closely adapts Proclus' first principles to the Christian Trinity: for instance, Petritsi accepts Proclus' notion of the One, and identifies the Trinitarian person of the Father with Proclus' One (while the Son and Spirit are respectively identified with Proclus' principles of the Limit and Unlimited, posterior to the One: pp. 101–102). This lies in contrast to Nicholas, for whom Proclus' One is an attack on the Christian Trinity: instead Nicholas denies Proclus' One and follows Ps.-Dionysius when he establishes that God is both "one" and "three", as expressing the one essence and the Trinitarian persons (respectively), and God is simultaneously beyond "one" and "three", as beyond the created distinctions implied in saying "one" and "three" (pp. 97–99). In addition, where Nicholas emphasizes a distinction between the production of Trinitarian persons and that of created beings below the Trinity, for Petritsi there is no concern for such a distinction, such that "there is a kind of terminological indifference between the production of things by the One and the production of things by other, intermediary causes" (p. 102). Petritsi is, thus, more of a faithful Proclean, which one can see in his emphasis on the harmony between Proclus and the Christian framework. Yet, as Giginishvili recognizes at the end of his chapter (pp. 104–105), Petritsi's harmonism elides certain, important differences between Proclus and a Christian framework—for instance, the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* which becomes marginalized in

Petritsi's account. By contrast, Nicholas recognizes the underlying tension in this approach, an issue that Stephen Gersh, as we will see, also detects in both Nicholas and Marcilius Ficino.

In Chapter 5, Michele Trizio extends on the previous surveys on Proclus' reception in the 12th century with an analysis of Nicholas' contemporary, Eustratios of Nicaea (d. after 1120 AD). Although described as a mere "scholar" or summarizer, Eustratios' commentaries on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Posterior Analytics* show clearer signs that he enthusiastically embraces Proclus' metaphysics and language. For instance, Eustratios argues that syllogisms which explain the "reason why" (τὸ διότι) by mixing the two extreme terms with the middle term are an instantiation of the *Philebus*' mixture of the Limit and Unlimited which brings about the mixed principle Being: a core tenet Proclus uses in his metaphysics. Eustratios' eclectic use of Proclus' works, beyond just the *Elements of Theology*, stands in contrast to Nicholas who only engages Proclus in the purview of the *Elements*: one reason among others, as Trizio concludes, that Eustratios was not Nicholas' direct target, although Eustratios is witness to a broader phenomenon in Middle Byzantium.

## 2 The *Refutation* and Nicholas' Other Works

Considering Nicholas' intellectual environment, especially with contemporaries like Eustratios and Petritsi, helps us to understand better the content of Nicholas' work—both his critical interpretation of Proclus and the positive responses he attempts. These chapters conduct a studied analysis of particular aspects of Nicholas' thought in both the better-known *Refutation* as well as the lesser known, but equally important, theological treatises that he also wrote.

In Chapter 6, Jan Opsomer takes Nicholas' objective in the *Refutation* seriously as a critique of Proclus in the *Elements of Theology*, moving beyond the standard scholarly quips on Nicholas as a polemical writer in the *Refutation* and addressing the philosophical issues of Nicholas' argumentative strategy in contrast to Proclus. Opsomer notes how Proclus presents the starting points of his demonstration in the *Elements*, unlike Proclus' other texts (such as the commentaries or the *Platonic Theology*), as common notions (*koinai ennoiai*) "introduced in a manner that is both subtle and implicit", whereas Nicholas "states his starting points unambiguously", either from revelation or what he takes (mistakenly) to be common sense beliefs, such as the Christian position of the possibility of two natures present in one *hupostasis* (pp. 147–148). Where Nicholas often appeals to authorities in his critiques—and assumes Proclus would be vulnerable to such counter-authorities—the *Elements* noteworthy avoids

depending on external authority or arguments as much as possible. Opsomer takes Nicholas' critique of the One in the first five propositions of the *Elements* as an example of his argumentation, where Nicholas sees Proclus' articulation of the One as an attack on the Christian Trinity: Nicholas instead redefines the terms of the dispute and "refutes" Proclus this way. Although this furthers his own program of defending Christian orthodoxy, through his use of the Pseudo-Dionysius, Nicholas' strategy against Proclus ends up being critically faulty.

Arthur Oosthout in Chapter 7 expands on Opsomer's critical assessment of Nicholas' attack on Proclus by looking at the consequences of Nicholas' claim that God, alone, is the only subsistent transcendent whole. One result from this is that the parts in part-whole relations are merely relations: in critiquing Proclus' principle of intermediaries, insofar as this leads to polytheism, Nicholas does away with the notion of a subsistent whole-of-parts; instead, the parts reflect the wholeness of God as the first, and only, whole-before-parts, while they relate to each other, as parts, only *per accidens*. This leads to a radically nominalist view of universals, against an Aristotelian realist position, where the different species or genera belonging to any set of individuals (such as the kind "tree" pertaining to particular trees) are "mere concepts" (ψιλαί ἐπίνοιαι), while those individuals are only accidentally related, as parts with only an apparent wholeness. Although, as Opsomer also points out, there are problems of consistency in Nicholas' argument, one finds a unique view about part-whole relations and universals in Nicholas' framework.

In Chapter 8, Jonathan Greig discusses Nicholas' conception of the divine ideas, highlighting how Nicholas articulates his notion in the context of a response to Proclus on causality. For Proclus, all causes produce by virtue their own, mere being (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι), which leads to his position that divine causes eternally produce their effects—in other words, an eternalist view of the cosmos. For Nicholas this is a problem: as a creationist, he sees that affirming such causality goes against the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, and hence maintains a temporalist view of the cosmos. This results in Nicholas emphasizing that God produces beings by his will (θελήματι), and not by "mere being" (which is reserved, instead, for the Trinitarian production of the Son and Spirit by the Father). Nicholas' discussions of intellection in God elsewhere in the *Refutation* points towards this, where God's willing of beings is distinct from his mere possession of the ideas, or *logoi*, by which beings are produced. Greig connects Nicholas' discussion with the earlier 6th/7th-century AD Maximus the Confessor and John Philoponus, who similarly address the problem of eternalism with their own creationist framework for the divine ideas.

In Chapter 9, Joshua Robinson discusses the notion of divine fecundity and motion in Nicholas, picking up on Nicholas' claim that God is self-moved rather

than unmoved, as Proclus maintains for the divine intellect. For his claim, Nicholas draws on a well-known line from Gregory Nazianzen's *Oration* 29 which states that "the monad from the beginning moved toward a dyad and at the trinity came to a halt". Nicholas takes this to imply the procession of persons within the Trinity, which embodies in a paradigmatic way the motion seen in creation, which, by contrast, always implies being other-moved rather than being properly self-moved. Whereas Maximus the Confessor (one of Nicholas' patristic sources) takes the phrase to describe God from a subjective perspective, though God remains unmoved in himself, Nicholas takes self-motion, or particularly self-determination, as an ontological characteristic of God's being.

In Chapter 10, Lydia Petridou and Christos Terezis discuss Nicholas' use of analogy in his arguments critically responding to Proclus' framework. Petridou and Terezis argue that Nicholas' thought ultimately has a systematic character, even though Nicholas' *Refutation* lacks an explicit structure, merely following the *Elements'* order of propositions. One of the main factors in that systematic aspect is Nicholas' use of analogical reasoning from lower to higher principles in refuting Proclus' framework, which Petridou and Terezis point out in various observations throughout their chapter.

Although most of the contributions in this volume are oriented around Nicholas' engagement with Proclus in the *Refutation*, Alessandra Bucossi in Chapter 11 sheds insightful light on Nicholas' lesser-researched corpus on the procession of the Holy Spirit (notably the *Ad magnum domesticum*, the *Adversus Latinos de Spiritu Sancto*, the *Refutationes theologicae doctrinae Latinorum*, and the *Memoriae contra Latinos*), which illuminates the broader strategy of Nicholas' polemic in the *Refutatio*. Across these texts on the Spirit, Bucossi notes how Nicholas is well-versed in Aristotle's logic, especially from the late antique commentators on Aristotle (pp. 327, 332–334), in the construction of his critical arguments against the Latin *Filioque* position (i.e. that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son). As Michele Trizio and István Perczel note in this volume, the case of Nicholas shows that the Byzantine ecclesial authorities did not condemn the use of syllogisms in theological arguments, as such, but only the misuse of syllogistic reasoning in specific contexts (as in the case of Eustratios of Nicaea). Of greater interest is Bucossi's discussion of Nicholas' employment of Proclus' terminology in the texts on the Spirit, especially in his arguments for speaking more precisely about the Trinitarian persons in their distinct properties and relations (pp. 307–317). One can then see Nicholas' *Refutation* not just as a direct critique against Proclus, but also as the theoretical background behind Nicholas' anti-Latin arguments in his texts on the Spirit—the main, dominant concern of 12th-century Byzantines, as Bucossi notes well. Once more we can see how Nicholas' concern in addressing Proclus is guided

by the more dominant intellectual and theological concerns that marked this period, and continued to hold sway afterward.

Carmelo Benvenuto in Chapter 12 follows up the theme of Bucossi's chapter with an overview of the philological history of Nicholas' theological works. As Benvenuto shows, Nicholas' reputation from the 19th century "silently shifted to that of an insignificant compiler, or even a plagiarist" (p. 350), thanks in part to the forger Constantinos Simonides who published an edition of Nicholas' texts, which made known Nicholas' name for a modern audience. A better appreciation of Nicholas—both his theological texts as well as in his own figure—ultimately necessitates understanding the history of the texts better, which includes understanding how Simonides assessed the earlier manuscripts from which he constructed his *editio princeps*. Benvenuto insightfully argues that Nicholas' polemical works should be rightfully considered as witness to the broader twelfth-century disputes, and that they should still be considered "within a wider discussion about literature in Byzantium" (p. 350). This ties in with Bucossi's own point that Nicholas' philosophical arguments, as in the *Refutation*, should be read together with the theological texts in the background to better understand Nicholas' broader project.

### 3 Nicholas of Methone's Reception and Legacy

Although Nicholas' *Refutation*, perhaps surprisingly, had little major influence in later Byzantine thought or in other intellectual contexts (such as Latin medieval scholasticism), these chapters, as we find out, reveal notable instances of Nicholas' implicit influence, especially in the use of and response to Proclus in the later 14–15th centuries AD.

Carlos Steel in Chapter 13 examines the question of the participation of the One in three contexts: a series of anonymous marginal notes, Nicholas of Methone and the Palamite controversy. The paper focuses mainly on the scholia which are here, for the first time, edited and translated: they are preserved in three manuscripts, of which one is the oldest known witness of the *Elements of Theology* (Marciana, gr. 512). Some of the scholia arguably date back to Michael Psellos' time and school. Among the scholia, some affirm that the One is both participated and unparticipated. In order to resolve this apparent paradox, the scholiast argues that participation indicates a relation, and distinguishes between two senses of the term: a radical sense (i.e. something cannot be participated and it is not participated) and a weaker sense (i.e. something is out of the range of what participates it, but participation is not excluded). Proclus uses the term in this latter, weaker sense. Nicholas of Methone agrees

that the One is both participated and unparticipated, but does not provide any explanation for it; it seems that Nicholas ignored the scholia and the latter do not present any influence on the former. Palamas distinguishes between the unparticipated supersubstance of God and his power, or activities, which can be participated by created things. Nikephoros Gregoras is surprised to observe that someone who is steadfastly against the influence of pagan philosophy could be so close to Proclus' views.

Börje Bydén in Chapter 14 continues and deepens the reflection proposed by Carlos Steel (and confirmed by other scholars) on the presence of Proclus within the Palamite controversy. Bydén considers that Nikephoros knows the *Refutation* of Nicholas of Methone, even if it is not yet possible to provide convincing philological evidence. He also shows that Nikephoros Gregoras modifies his interpretation of Proposition 24 of the *Elements of Theology* between the second volume of the *Roman History* and his *Sixth Dogmatic Oration* (which is a response to Synodal Tome of 1351 stating the triumph of Palamas). However, in both texts, Nikephoros considers that Palamas postulates, like Proclus, on the one hand, an unparticipated and superordinate God and, on the other hand, a second and third rank of beings. In the second volume of the *Roman History*, Nikephoros considers that Proclus' second rank is composed of participated and subordinate divinities, whereas in the *Sixth Dogmatic Oration*, the second rank is filled by entities both participating and participated (which is surprising with respect to Proclus' views). Bydén suggests that Nikephoros might have changed his interpretation to render it more like Palamas' system, whose uncreated light is also described in the same passage as both participating and participated. The only major difference, according to Nikephoros, is that Proclus does not qualify the entities in the second and third ranks as uncreated and unoriginated.

Stephen Gersh in the final Chapter 15 notes that in the commentaries on Plato's *Parmenides* and on Plotinus' *Enneads* (v.3 and v.6), Marsilio Ficino refers explicitly to his (fifteen) notes written in the margins of the *Refutation* of Nicholas of Methone transmitted in manuscript BnF gr 1256 (which are translated into English in this article). Methone's name does not seem to play a minor role in Ficino's system of cross-references. These notes reveal the thematic knots that preoccupy Ficino around the Trinity: the similarities and differences in relation to the one-many position in Platonism; the relationships between the persons inside and outside (i.e. towards creation) of the Trinity; the dissimilarities with the false trinity of the *Platonici* who postulate first being—first life—first intellect. Ficino, unlike Nicholas, seeks to prove that Platonism and Christianity can be considered not so much from the point of view of opposition as from that of dissimilarity, which makes it possible to envisage a path of rap-

prochement. The central idea, which Ficino finds in Plotinus, is that the Trinity must be considered from the point of view of the unitary act, and not as a compounding mathematical number, which is rightly denied in both Christianity and Platonism. Gersh concludes that Ficino finds in Nicholas an authority that comforts him in his preference for Plotinus over Proclus within the Platonic tradition.

These contributions underline (once more) that Proclus' reception in the 12th-century Byzantium is greatly varied: contemporaries of Nicholas, such as Eustratios of Nicaea and Ioane Petritsi, embrace Proclus' framework in full harmony within a revealed Christian framework, with little or no modification. Nicholas, in this respect, represents a polar opposite as someone who raises a number of difficulties in accepting Proclus uncritically, especially in juxtaposition with the authority of the corpus of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. Although Nicholas' argumentative strategy bears a number of great difficulties, the themes that Nicholas investigates show an attempt to articulate a Christian response to basic issues of metaphysics, such as causality, creation, participation, the nature of divine thought, and so on. The repercussions of Nicholas' thought stretch out into the later 14th and 15th centuries. It became obvious that a study of Byzantine philosophy is severely deficient without a study of Nicholas of Methone's thought, which this volume seeks to address.





**PART 1**

*Nicholas of Methone and His  
Contemporary Intellectual Context*





# Ioanne Petritsi between Proclus and Nicholas of Methone

*István Perczel\**

CEU Vienna

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In the Byzantine and Byzantino-Caucasian philosophical tradition, there are two complete, or almost complete, commentaries on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, with opposite intentions: that of Nicholas of Methone, in Greek, from the late 1150s,<sup>2</sup> commenting upon and refuting 198 propositions, and that of Ioanne Petritsi, in Georgian, commenting upon 211 propositions, of which one (128bis) is different from those commented upon by Nicholas—obviously, because Nicholas' copy of the *Elements* did not contain this proposition—and which fails to comment on one of Nicholas' propositions (149)—obviously, because Petritsi's copy of the *Elements* did not contain this proposition. Received wisdom has it that Petritsi had studied in Byzantium before returning to his native Georgia. Yet, when this had happened and who his teachers of philosophy had been, this is a hotly debated question, as we shall see. Alternatively, Psellos, John Italos, or some unspecified later schoolmasters have been proposed as Petritsi's teachers. Yet, the metaphysical system revealed by Petritsi's commentary seems to be rather unique, such that it is difficult to situate his oeuvre in the development of Byzantine philosophy. As to Nicholas of Methone, his commentary obviously aims at refuting a contemporary Byzantine Platonist circle, which used the *Elements*—written by a pagan philosopher—as a handbook of metaphysics for logically treating questions relative to Trinitarian and Christological theology. However, how to identify this circle? Had we not thought for

\* With the contribution of Levan Gigineishvili (Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University).

1 This study is the fruit of many years of collaboration, besides Levan Gigineishvili, with Carlos Steel and, more recently, András Kraft. It also owes much to the remarks and suggestions of Michele Trizio. I am immensely grateful to all four of them.

2 Nicholas of Methone, *Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου πλατονικοῦ φιλοσόφου* / *Nicholas of Methone. Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*, ed. A.D. Angelou (Athens / Leiden: Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984), pp. xli–xlii.

long—although this becomes less and less tenable—that the Proclus Renaissance in Byzantium, initiated by Psellos, was forcibly stopped by the condemnations striking Italos in 1082, and that Byzantine philosophy under the Komnenian dynasty turned to an exclusive Aristotelianism?

Although there is an obvious parallel between Nicholas and Petritsi, their commentaries have never been compared to see to what extent Petritsi's ideas match those refuted by Nicholas. If they do, then one could suppose that Petritsi was a representative or, rather, predecessor of the circle against whom Nicholas wrote his commentary/refutation. Whether a representative or a predecessor, this would depend on how we date Petritsi's activities, a question to which I will return in this study. Be this as it may, the present study will argue that such a comparison would be heuristically fertile for mutually illuminating both Nicholas' and Petritsi's agenda but will not engage in this work. Instead, it is intended to serve as an introduction to such comparative studies, by giving a report on a work in progress.

For many years, Levan Gigineishvili and I have been working on what we are calling "a critical translation" of Ioanne Petritsi's commented translation of Proclus' *Elements of Theology* (hereafter, for brevity's sake, *Proclus Ibericus*). First, I will place our philological work in the context of ongoing research on Petritsi. The presentation of the older literature, below, will be largely based on Levan Gigineishvili's published summary.<sup>3</sup> This will be supplemented by a selective survey of more recent publications, focusing on the relationship of the putative Greek manuscript of Petritsi to the extant Greek textual tradition, as well as on the questions raised by Petritsi's chronology and his place in the development of Byzantine philosophy and theology. In the second part, I will propose a solution for the riddle of Petritsi's education in Byzantium, inspired, on the one hand, by Michele Trizio's studies on Eustratios of Nicaea and, on the other hand, by the studies of András Kraft and myself on John Italos. Finally, in the light of this solution, I will return to the *quaestio vexata* of the textual tradition of the Greek original of Petritsi's text of the *Elements of Theology* and to the relevance of Petritsian studies for understanding Nicholas of Methone's *Anaptyxis* as well as to the relevance of Methonian studies for understanding Petritsi.

---

3 L. Gigineishvili, *The Platonic Theology of Ioane Petritsi* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2007), pp. 23–29 and *passim*.

## 2 Petritsian Studies, 1909–2021: A Selective Survey

### 2.1 *Georgian Scholarship Founding Petritsian Studies*

The modern study of Petritsi was inaugurated by Niko Marr in 1909,<sup>4</sup> followed by Shalva Nutsubidze and Simon Kaukchishvili, who published the critical edition of the commented translation of the *Elements of Theology* in 1937 and 1940.<sup>5</sup> This remains the only critical edition to date, although Nutsubidze and Kaukchishvili were not able to collate the earliest, thirteenth-century manuscript of the text. Nutsubidze's Introduction to the edition set the tone for the study of Ioanne Petritsi and his contribution to Georgian Platonist philosophy. Nutsubidze considered Petritsi a representative of old Georgian paganism. Although this was questioned by Korneli Kekelidze in *The History of the Old Georgian Literature*,<sup>6</sup> Kekelidze did not found his opinion on an internal analysis of Petritsi's authentic writings, but on a number of ecclesiastic translations wrongly attributed to Petritsi in the tradition. Recent philological research has proven the inauthenticity of these translations attributed to Petritsi.<sup>7</sup> Naturally, Nutsubidze's study claiming Petritsi's alleged paganism was welcomed in Soviet times. Yet, its implausibility notwithstanding, it has set the tone for further studies, as historians of philosophy still tend to consider Petritsi simply as a continuator of Neoplatonist philosophy, often neglecting his Christian theological thought.

These initial contributions were followed by a plethora of scholars, writing in Georgian, Russian, and then, increasingly, in German and English. Within Georgian scholarship, I would mention here, knowing that I am omitting very important contributions, only the great milestone publication in 2016, by Damana Melikishvili and Natia Mirotadze, of a new diplomatic edition provided

4 N. Marr, *Ioane of Petritsi: A Georgian Neoplatonist* (St. Petersburg: Russian Imperial Archeological Society, 1909) [in Russian].

5 Ioanne Petritsi, *Opera. Tomus II, Commentaria in Procli Diadochi ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΩΣΙΣ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΚΗ*, eds S. Kaukchishvili, S. Nutsubidze (Tbilisi: Tbilisi State University, 1937); and Ioanne Petritsi, *Opera. Tomus I, Procli Diadochi ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΩΣΙΣ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΚΗ, versio Hiberica*, ed. S. Kaukchishvili, with an introduction by M. Gogoberidze (Tbilisi: Tbilisi State University, 1940).

6 See Chapter V.1 (entry "Ioane Petritsi") in K. Kekelidze, *History of the Old Georgian Literature*, vol. 1 (Tbilisi: "Metsniereba", 1980), p. 284 [in Georgian].

7 E.g. John Climacus, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, commentaries on the Gospels of Luke and Mark by Theophylact of Ochrid etc.: see E. Chelidze, "The Life and the Literary Activities of Ioane Petritsi", [in Georgian] Part 1, in *Religia* 1994/3–5(1994), pp. 113–126; E. Chelidze, "The Life and the Literary Activities of Ioane Petritsi", [in Georgian] Part 2, in *Religia* 1995/1–3, pp. 76–89; D. Melikishvili, "On the Question of the Unity and Individuality of the Linguistic Style of the Gelati Literary School", in *Transactions of the Gelati Academy of Sciences* 2(1996), pp. 65–74 [in Georgian]; Giginishvili, *The Platonic Theology*, p. 22.

with critical notes of the oldest, 13th-century, manuscript (Institute of Manuscripts MS H-1337) of the *Proclus Ibericus*.<sup>8</sup> When Shalva Nutsubidze and Simon Kaukhchishvili published their edition in 1937, they were aware of this manuscript but were not able to have access to it, and so had to content themselves with publishing the readings of 17th–18th century copies. The next great milestone for a better study of Petritsi's text is Maya Raphava's edition of the Armenian translation by Symeon of Phndzahank' of the *Proclus Ibericus*, published in 2017.<sup>9</sup> As this translation was made in 1248 from the Georgian original, it has great value for establishing the original readings of Petritsi's text.

## 2.2 *E.R. Dodds, Lela Alexidze and Hans-Christian Günther*

As to non-Georgian scholarship, in 1933 was published E.R. Dodds' critical edition and translation of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*. This was re-published in a revised and improved version in 1963.<sup>10</sup> As the oldest extant Greek manuscripts, namely *Marcianus gr.* 512 (col. 678) [= M] and *Parisinus gr.* 2423 [= P], are from the end of the 13th century, while Petritsi's translation can be safely dated to the twelfth—even its oldest manuscript antedating the oldest Greek manuscripts—necessarily, Dodds had to deal with Petritsi's translation. For the first edition, Kaukhchishvili had sent to Dodds a text of the first five propositions, based on a manuscript of the Institute of Manuscripts in Tbilisi. Dodds got these translated by David Lang, Reader in Caucasian Studies at SOAS.<sup>11</sup> Between the first and the second editions of Dodds, the edition of Kaukhchishvili and Nutsubidze had been published and Lang was able to acquire a copy of it. He translated for Dodds over fifty selected passages. Based on Lang's translation of the Georgian text, Dodds passed a negative judgment on Petritsi's translation, saying that "it exhibits many errors which are unlikely to go back to the Greek. Some of these are evidently due to a failure to follow Proclus' reasoning (...)." He has established that "Petritsi's exemplar belonged

8 Ioanne Petritsi, *Proclus Diadochus—Platonic Philosopher, Elements of Theology (Georgian Version), translation, introduction and commentaries by Ioane Petritsi, part 2, Diplomatic Edition of MS H-1337*, ed. D. Melikishvili, N. Mirotadze (Tbilisi: Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation, 2016).

9 Ioane Petritsi, *The Armenian Translation by Symeon of Phndzahank' of Proclus Diadochos' Elements of Theology and Ioane Petritsi's commentary*, ed. M. Raphava (Tbilisi: Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation, 2017) [in Georgian].

10 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, edition, translation, introduction and commentary E.R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963<sup>2</sup>).

11 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, pp. xli–xlii.

to the MPQW group”, that is, out of the three families of the Byzantine textual families distinguished by Dodds, to families  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$ .<sup>12</sup>

Yet, Dodds also found that Petritsi’s exemplar, indicated by the sign Geo, may preserve some correct readings that have “vanished from the direct tradition”.<sup>13</sup> So, while admitting that Geo has a certain value for the reconstruction of the text of the *Elements*, he found that this role had to remain limited. This view was most probably triggered by Dodds’ conviction that the manuscripts BCDE of the  $\alpha$  family, that is, those that contain Nicholas of Methone’s *Refutation* and those that derive from the *Refutation*, contain the most reliable version.

A particular difficulty was posed by the fact that Petritsi’s translation omits Proposition 149, on the limited number of the divine henads, but includes instead another proposition, missing from the entire direct tradition and inserted between Proposition 128, which treats the different ways of participating in the henadic gods, and Proposition 129, which treats the divine bodies that are participating via the divinised souls and the divine minds. This additional proposition, numbered conveniently 128bis, treats the way the divine and the demonic souls (demons in the sense of higher but not yet divine beings) are cognising in their spherical motions following the gods (see *Phaedr.* 247b) via the passive intellect, which is memory. Based on Lang’s translation, which apparently was incorrect, Dodds concluded that the proposition was inauthentic and was an intrusion into the text.<sup>14</sup>

Dodds’ view was questioned by Lela Alexidze in a study written in Georgian in 1984, followed by a German article,<sup>15</sup> whose main arguments were re-elaborated in the German translation by Lela Alexidze and Lutz Bergemann of Petritsi’s *Commentary on the Elements of Theology*.<sup>16</sup> Alexidze has pointed to the fact that the initial sentence of the proposition quoted by Dodds was seriously mistranslated by Lang, so that Dodds’ conclusions on the inauthenticity of the proposition, based on his impression that the proposition contradicts Prop’s.

12 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, p. 343.

13 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, p. 343.

14 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, p. 343.

15 L. Alexidze, “The Grades of Knowledge in the Works of Proclus and Ioane Petritsi”, in *Matsne (Journal of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, Series for Philosophy and Psychology)*, 2(1984), pp. 41–47 [in Georgian]; L. Alexidze, “Das Kapitel 129 der *Elementa der Theologie* des Proklos bei Ioane Petrici”, in *Georgica (Zeitschrift für Kultur, Sprache und Geschichte Georgiens und Kaukasiens)* 17(1984), pp. 47–53.

16 Ioane Petritsi, *Kommentar zur Elementatio theologica des Proklos. Übersetzung aus dem Altgeorgischen, Anmerkungen, Indices und Einleitung*, translation, annotation and introduction L. Alexidze, L. Bergemann (Amsterdam / Philadelphia: B.R. Grüner, 2009), pp. 20–24.



170 and 184, are simply invalid. Alexidze has also demonstrated that, according to the correct understanding and translation of the text, Prop. 128bis perfectly corresponds to the philosophical doctrine exposed in Prop's. 170 and 184 and does not contain anything un-Proclean.

The late Hans-Christian Günther also argued for the authenticity of Proposition 128bis, but thought that it should have been placed after Proposition 184, which treats the different kinds of souls. According to Günther, Petritsi's version testifies to the fact that, in the 12th century, there existed a version of the *Elements* with Prop. 128bis and without Prop. 149, which was more authentic than that of the direct textual tradition published by Dodds.<sup>17</sup> In a monograph published in 2007, Günther even tried to reconstruct Petritsi's Greek *Vorlage* based on the German translation of 20 propositions, provided by Lela Alexidze.<sup>18</sup> However, as Günther admittedly did not know Georgian sufficiently well, and as his Greek retroversions are not grammatically sound, his work remains unconvincing.

### 2.3 *Petritsi beyond Georgia*

In 1984, a commented Russian translation of Petritsi's commentary was published by Gulam Tevzadze, N.R. Natadze and I.D. Pantskhava, which made Petritsi quite popular in Russian-speaking intellectual circles.<sup>19</sup> This was followed by the substantial work, mostly published in German, by Lela Alexidze<sup>20</sup> and Tengiz Iremadze,<sup>21</sup> including a German translation of Petritsi's commentaries

- 
- 17 H.-C. Günther, "Zu Ioane Petritzis Proklusübersetzung", in *Georgica (Zeitschrift für Kultur, Sprache und Geschichte Georgiens und Kaukasiens)* 22(1999), pp. 46–55.
  - 18 H.-C. Günther, *Die Übersetzungen der Elementatio theologica des Proklos und ihre Bedeutung für den Proklostext, Einige vorläufige Bemerkungen zur Bedeutung von Petritzis Übersetzung der Elementatio für die Textkonstitution* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).
  - 19 Ioane Petritsi, *An Overview of the Platonic Philosophy of Proclus Diadochus*, ed. N.R. Natadze, G. Tevzadze [Russian translation I.D. Pantskhava], *Filosofskoe Nasledie*, vol. 91 (Moscow: Progress, 1984).
  - 20 L. Alexidze, "Griechische Philosophie in den Kommentaren des Joane Petrizi zur *Elementatio Theologica* des Proklos", in *Oriens Christianus. Hefte für die Kunde des christlichen Orients*, 81(1997), pp. 148–168; L. Alexidze, "Ioane Petritsi", in Gersh (ed), *Interpreting Proclus*, pp. 229–244; L. Alexidze, "The Demiurge in Ioane Petritsi's Commentary on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in *Revista Latinoamericana de Filosofía* 47.1(2021), pp. 149–165.
  - 21 T. Iremadze, "Zur Rezeption und Transformation der Aristotelischen und Proklischen Ursachenmodelle bei Joane Petrizi", in *Archiv für mittelalterliche Philosophie und Kultur*, Heft XVII(2011), pp. 96–111; T. Iremadze, "Die erkennende Seele des Menschen und ihre Funktion im Proclus-Kommentar von Joane Petrizi", in *Quaestio (Yearbook of the History of Metaphysics)* 15(2015), pp. 201–209; T. Iremadze, "Joane Petrizi", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2019 Edition), online at the following address <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/joane-petrizi/>; T. Iremadze, "Die *Elementatio theologica* des

on the *Elements of Theology* by Lela Alexidze and Lutz Bergemann.<sup>22</sup> However, both the Russian and the German translations aim at translating only the commentary, while it would have been desirable to also include the text of the *Elements of Theology* in Petritsi's version.

Levan Gigineishvili has written the first comprehensive English monograph on the metaphysical system of Petritsi. The great merit of this work is that it breaks away from the tradition of considering Petritsi merely as a Neoplatonist and aims at reconstructing his theology, too.<sup>23</sup> The book is a revised version of Gigineishvili's Ph.D. thesis written at Central European University under my supervision. He was the first to identify the theological concepts of Petritsi with his metaphysical ideas, showing for example that Petritsi identified the One with the Father, the Limit with the Logos, Infinity with the Holy Spirit, and the Unified, or True Being, with Christ's pre-existent Intellect in the Evagrian sense.<sup>24</sup> Also, he was the first to trace the Patristic references in Petritsi's commentary, being helped by his shadow co-supervisor Dr. Basile Markesinis, whose great assistance should be profusely thanked here.

#### 2.4 *Carlos Steel's Revision of Dodds' Theories*

The place of Petritsi's putative original Greek text was re-examined by Carlos Steel in the framework of his recent reconsideration of Dodds' interpretation of the textual tradition of the *Elements*.<sup>25</sup> This study reassesses the entire textual tradition of the *Elements of Theology* and, revising Dodds' superficial judgment, attempts to integrate Petritsi's text into the general textual tradition of the treatise. For this, Levan Gigineishvili and I have communicated to Carlos Steel our draft translation of Petritsi's work and discussed with him

---

Proklos im Kontext der kaukasischen Philosophie", in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes. Volume 2. Translations and Acculturations* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2021), pp. 139–153.

22 Ioane Petritsi, *Kommentar zur Elementatio theologica*.

23 Gigineishvili, *The Platonic Theology*.

24 On this, see also L. Gigineishvili, "The One, the Limit, and the Infinity in the Philosophy of Ioanne Petritsi", *Phasis* 2–3 (2000), pp. 141–146; L. Gigineishvili, "The Doctrine of Logos and Intellect in the Philosophy of Ioanne Petritsi: Evagrian Origenist Influences", in L. Perrone (ed), *Origeniana Octava. Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition. Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress. Pisa, 27–31 August 2001* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), pp. 1139–1148; L. Gigineishvili, "Proclus as a Biblical Exegete: Bible and its Platonic Interpretation in Ioane Petritsi's Commentaries", in D.A. Layne, D.D. Butorac (eds), *Proclus and his Legacy* (Berlin / Boston: de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 241–248, *passim* but especially 71 ff.

25 C. Steel, "La tradition du texte de l'*Elementatio theologica* de Proclus", in G. Aubry, L. Brisson, Ph. Hoffmann, L. Lavaud (eds), *Relire les Éléments de théologie de Proclus. Réceptions, interprétation antiques et modernes*, (Paris: Hermann, 2021), pp. 27–68.

the arising questions. Although our views on Proclus' textual tradition remain divergent, this interaction was mutually beneficial. Steel maintains Dodds' distinction of three families of Greek, Latin, and Georgian manuscripts ( $\alpha$ , represented by the manuscripts BCDE, issuing from Nicholas of Methone's refutation;  $\beta$ , represented by the manuscript M, and by W, the putative original of Moerbeke's translation; and  $\gamma$ , represented by the manuscripts PQ). Steel, following Dodds, claims that Geo, Petritsi's putative original, is following the MWPQ tradition but is closest to the  $\gamma$  group.<sup>26</sup> According to him, Petritsi's readings are most useful for establishing the critical text when they confirm the readings of PQ, and especially of Q, where P, a manuscript that contains only Propositions 1–78, cannot be used.<sup>27</sup> Yet, in personal correspondence, Steel accepts that Geo might have conserved more “good readings” against the Byzantine textual tradition than what Dodds was ready to admit, and he gives an example thereof.<sup>28</sup> He advances two theories for the provenance of Geo: either it was directly copied from the uncial manuscript that also served as the model for Psellos' manuscript,<sup>29</sup> or it was copied from an archetype independent of Psellos' manuscript, from which the Greek manuscripts PQ also derived.<sup>30</sup>

The great merit of Steel's study is that it rejects the priority of the  $\alpha$  group, which served as the basis of Dodds' edition, characterising its “good readings” as “intelligent conjectures”.<sup>31</sup> This is all the more reasonable as the tradition of  $\alpha$  is the latest textual tradition, contemporary to or postdating the version that Nicholas of Methone had used, and postdating by two centuries the work of Psellos, so that Dodds' preferred reliance on this textual tradition was anachronistic.

Steel also analyses the odd Proposition 128bis, of which he publishes a retroversion, which he had thoroughly discussed with Levan Gigineishvili and myself.<sup>32</sup> At the end of a thoroughgoing and illuminating analysis, he concludes that the proposition can hardly be from Proclus himself and that it is also improbable that it would be the work of a Byzantine author, due to its manifestly pagan content. In fact, this is the only proposition treating the divine and the demonic souls and their omniscience, in the sense of the pagan religion

26 Steel, “La tradition du texte”, p. 55.

27 Steel, “La tradition du texte”, p. 54.

28 Steel, “La tradition du texte”, p. 53, n. 23.

29 Steel, “La tradition du texte”, p. 53.

30 Steel, “La tradition du texte”, p. 54.

31 Steel, “La tradition du texte”, p. 48.

32 Steel, “La tradition du texte”, pp. 55–66.

underlying the Neoplatonist philosophy, which considers the demons superior, semi-divine beings. The subject of this proposition is manifestly incompatible with the Christian teaching, which considers the demons to be fallen angels, certainly powerful beings but evil and ignorant. As a result, Steel raises the possibility that, “if this proposition is an ancient addition, Petritsi’s copy must have represented a textual tradition that was older than the entire Greek textual tradition.”<sup>33</sup> However, he rejects this possibility as he thinks it improbable that Geo would be independent of the Byzantine versions. Thus, he proposes the hypothesis that the additional proposition was originally a marginal note in the archetype of the Byzantine versions but was copied only in Geo, while it was omitted from the other copies.

One must note that, even if we are to accept the hypothesis of the additional proposition being a marginal note inserted in the series of propositions, Geo would prove older and independent from the entire Greek textual tradition, since either it or its model would go back directly to the archetype of all the extant Greek texts. However, in the following I will propose that Steel’s first intuition, which he subsequently rejected, was correct: Geo represents an independent textual tradition of the *Elements*, one that antedates what I call the Byzantine revision of the text, from which the three families established by Dodds derive. This does not mean that Geo is a “better text” as Günther has claimed, but only that it is an independent version of a text that, as we will see, had served as a handbook of metaphysics, and had other versions besides the Byzantine one represented by the extant Greek manuscripts.

### 2.5 *Petritsi’s Dates and His Place in the History of Byzantine Philosophy*

By now, many questions related to Petritsian studies are dealt with in European languages, as Petritsi has become important for the history of Neoplatonism and Byzantine philosophy. Due to the work of a plethora of scholars, we begin to get to know a unique Christian Platonist philosophical system born on the soil of Byzantine intellectual life but developed in Georgia, the like of which could not be produced in Byzantium itself because of censorship. However, to place Petritsi’s oeuvre in the Byzantine philosophical tradition, we should establish the approximate dates of his life and of the composition of his *Proclus Ibericus* work. This is far from being an easy task.

---

33 Steel, “La tradition du texte”, p. 66: “Mais s’il s’agit d’une addition ancienne, la copie dont disposait Petritsi devrait représenter une tradition du texte plus ancienne que toute la tradition grecque du texte.”

A sure *terminus ante quem* is the date of the Armenian translation of the work, by Symeon of Płndzahank', dated 1248.<sup>34</sup> Until recently, the majority of Georgian scholars had thought that Petritsi had had an immediate contact with the Constantinopolitan school of Psellos and Italos. According to a popular theory, he would have been a pupil of Italos who, after his teacher's condemnation in 1082, would have escaped to Bulgaria, to the Petritsoni Armeno-Georgian Monastery in Bačkov, newly founded by the Byzantine general Gregory Pakourianos (Grigol Bakurianisdze, Grigol Bakurian, d. 1086), from where, or from his later stay in the Monastery of the Black Mountain near Antioch, he would have been invited by King David IV the Builder (1073–1125, reigned from 1089) to return to Georgia.<sup>35</sup> Even, Korneli Kekelidze proposed the hypothesis of identifying Petritsi with the addressee of one of Italos' letters, an "Abazg grammarian",<sup>36</sup> as "Abazgos" (Abkhazian) at that time meant a native of Western Georgia, and as Petritsi's language displays Western dialectal characteristics.<sup>37</sup> The tradition that Petritsi was from Guria, W. Georgia, comes from a later source that is adduced by S.R. Gorgodze.<sup>38</sup>

Yet, several elements in Kekelidze's proposal, including his proposed dating for Petritsi's activities, have been seriously reconsidered, not to say, refuted, by recent Georgian scholarship. After the elimination of the spurious writings attributed to Petritsi, Georgian scholars attribute three extant works as being his genuine compositions: a Georgian translation of Nemesius of Emesa's *De natura hominis*, a *Preface* to Petritsi's lost translation of the Psalms (thought earlier to be an *Epilogue* to the *Proclus Ibericus*)<sup>39</sup> and his commented version of the *Elements*. However, many scholars, such as Lela Alexidze and Lutz Bergemann, are not convinced by Chelidze's and Gigineishvili's arguments and continue to hold that the *Epilogue*, its clear references to the Book of Psalms notwithstanding, belongs to the *Proclus Ibericus*<sup>40</sup> and was formulated as a Christian recapitulation of the commentaries on Proclus. As it will be seen from

34 This translation is contained in two manuscripts of the Matenadaran No. 1500 and 1832 and was published by Maya Raphava (Cf. Ioane Petritsi, *The Armenian Translation*).

35 Gigineishvili, *The Platonic Theology*, p. 14.

36 John Italos, *Opera. Textum graecum secundum collationem*, pp. 161–165.

37 Kekelidze, *History of the Old Georgian Literature*, p. 285, n. 4; Gigineishvili, *The Platonic Theology*, p. 17, n. 54.

38 Ioane Petritsi, ნემესიოს ემესელი, 1914, p. viii.

39 Chelidze, "The Life and the Literary (2)", pp. 81–89; Tskitishvili, T., "Concerning the Essence and Meaning of an Original Work by Ioane Petritsi" (in Georgian: იოანე პეტრიჭის ერთი ორიგინალური ნაშრომის რაობისა და მნიშვნელობისთვის), in *Bulletin of Kutaisi University* 4(1995), pp. 121–139; Gigineishvili, *The Platonic Theology*, pp. 20–23; Gigineishvili, "Ioane Petritsi's Preface", p. 194–198.

40 Cf. Ioane Petritsi, *Kommentar zur Elementatio theologica*, pp. 34–37; L. Alexidze, "Imago

the arguments that follow, on the one hand, I am accepting Chelidze's thesis on the *Epilogue* being a *Prologue* to Petritsi's lost translation to the Psalms and, on the other, I believe to find in its text a reference to the fact that its writing preceded the completion of the *Proclus Ibericus*.

A possible *terminus post quem* for Petritsi's literary activity is 1106, the foundation of the Gelati monastic and educational complex, to which Georgian scholarship generally links his activity. However, there is no positive evidence for this view, and it does not appear before the eighteenth century. Even the following marginal gloss in one of the late manuscripts (in fact, from the nineteenth century) containing the Georgian translation of Nemesius, is not a proof as it can be based on the recent, eighteenth-century, tradition:

From the language of the Hellenes this [book] was translated into Georgian by our marvelous philosopher, Petritsi, called Ioane, in a cell of Gelati.<sup>41</sup>

Although this gloss has no proving force, there is nothing improbable in supposing that Petritsi was one among the intellectuals, along with Arsen Ikaltoeli, who were invited either by King David the Builder, or his son and successor, Demetrius (Demetre) I (c. 1093–1154, reigned from 1125), to participate in the new Hellenistic type of teaching introduced in the Gelati monastic school.<sup>42</sup>

That what was traditionally thought to be the *Epilogue* to the translation of the *Elements of Theology*—a view that is still maintained by prominent Georgian scholars—is in fact about a new translation of the Psalms, is rather clear from the text itself. Petritsi clearly speaks about a “Book of Prayers” written by “Orpheus”, meaning here David, the son of Jesse, and the author of Psalm 75 (76):

And now, we have investigated this, and by the succour of the Word of God the Father we reasoned about and touched upon this Book of Prayers,

---

*et Similitudo Dei* (Platon—Philon von Alexandrien—Kirchenväter—Ioane Petrizi)”, in *Phasis* 12(2009), pp. 48–72, here pp. 54–57.

41 Ioane Petritsi, ნემესიოს ემესელი, 1914, p. xiv [translation L. Gigineishvili]. The gloss is found in MS A2; the manuscript is from the nineteenth century and is reproduced in Gordzhe's introduction to his edition. Translation and data from a personal communication of L. Gigineishvili, 14.04.2023. The text is cited also in a shorter form in Gigineishvili, *The Platonic Theology*, p. 17. I thank Lela Alexidze for stressing, during our recent encounter in Tbilisi (on 31 October 2024), the unreliability of the gloss' information.

42 D. Melikishvili, “The Gelati Monastic and Literary School” [in Georgian], in *Bulletin of Kutaisi University* 1–2(1995), pp. 6–24; Gigineishvili, *The Platonic Theology*, pp. 1–12.

which is like a vessel or a sentry of the vineyard of the Father of Christ. In fact, the one who is infallible in <His> promises,<sup>43</sup> will come for pressing them [i.e., the grapes of this vineyard] (see Isaiah 63: 1–3, and Revelations 16, 17–20),<sup>44</sup> and the wage of each one is with himself. Only let him give the wine of his prayers to the Most High, for he [David] says: “Pray and offer to the Most High” [cf. Ps 75 [76]:12].<sup>45</sup>

Now, let the discourse say about this spiritual *Organon*:<sup>46</sup> What kind of arrangement is there of the book of *Orpheus*,<sup>47</sup> who could describe the quality and quantity of its goodnesses,<sup>48</sup> being those of the supremely victorious one?<sup>49</sup> Do not wonder, for the Spirit of the First Intellect<sup>50</sup>—for the sake of creating the holinesses of His activity—<has chosen the son of> Jesse, whom He desires, saying, “I have found a man desirable to me” [1 Kings [1 Samuel] 13:14 and Acts 13:22], and in this man and king He stirred the strings of His music in order to embellish<sup>51</sup> in this book the road of the souls towards the Father of the souls.<sup>52</sup>

Petritsi ends his text with these enigmatic verses:<sup>53</sup>

43 Or: “... who is infallible in <both> testaments.”

44 “The one who is flawless in His promises” is Christ. Isaiah 63:1–3 was traditionally interpreted as a prophecy about the advent of Christ. Here Petritsi refers to the Second Coming.

45 The Psalmic verse is not cited literally. According to the Septuagint: “Pray and give to the Lord, your God!”

46 “The spiritual *Organon*” is the Book of Psalms. Here Petritsi equates its role in the spiritual life to the *Organon* of Aristotle for logic.

47 Here “Orpheus” is a metonym for David.

48 “Goodnesses”, ἀγαθότητες in plural, is a Proclian and Dionysian term.

49 “The supremely victorious one” is God.

50 “The First Intellect” in Petritsi’s parlance is Christ. His Spirit is the Holy Spirit.

51 L. Gigineishvili’s note to his translation: “Embellish” here translates a transitive verb, of which the direct object is “the road.” Perhaps, this means that God does not embellish a road that already is there before this embellishment, but sets or paves this road in this book, so that “embellish” here may mean “beautifully paves.”

52 Ioanne Petritsi, *Opera. Tomus II*, p. 208; new translation of Levan Gigineishvili, modifying Gigineishvili, “Ioane Petritsi’s Preface”, pp. 200, 202; Georgian text *ibid.* pp. 201, 203. Here and in the following, the translations of Alexidze and Bergemann (Ioane Petrizi, *Kommentar zur Elementatio theologica*) and of Gigineishvili (“Ioane Petritsi’s Preface”) of the texts cited from the *Prologue / Epilogue* are radically different both from each other and from the present solutions, showing the difficulty of the text. Gigineishvili and I believe that the present translation is more precise than the previous ones.

53 Ioanne Petritsi, *Opera. Tomus II*, p. 223; new translation by Levan Gigineishvili, modifying “Ioane Petritsi’s Preface”, p. 234; Georgian text *ibid.*, p. 235; see also Ioane Petrizi, *Kommentar zur Elementatio theologica*, p. 370.

Translating those one hundred and fifty spiritual *Muses*,  
 A *mimos* of the word, I am removing the *akanth-erma-s*.  
 And may you understand that he, being a *hērōs*,  
 has made *A-pollôn* the summit in a *Hermes*-like manner!<sup>54</sup>

In this carefully constructed Hellenizing poem, there is one Greek word in Georgian transcription in each of the first three lines, but two in the fourth. The “one hundred and fifty spiritual *Muses*” are songs or melodies: meaning obviously the Psalms. *Mimos* (μίμος) means here “imitator”, but can also mean “comedian” imitating in a ridiculous manner the actions of the people. It has a self-depreciative tone here, in artful counterpoint to the *hērōs* of the third line. *Akanth-erma-s* (ἀκανθέρματᾱ?) is an expression that is difficult to interpret. The word in this form does not occur in Greek literature, nor is there any Georgian suffix with *-erma*. However, ἄκανθα means “thorn”, while ἔρμα means “ballast” in Greek. *-T’a* is the plural suffix in Georgian. So, it is possible that Petritsi says that he is removing the thorns and ballasts from the way of understanding the deeper meaning of the Psalms. As to *hērōs* (ἥρωϛ), according to Alexidze-Bergemann, the term *hērōs* mentioned here is to be understood in its Neoplatonist sense, as a higher being connecting the mortals to the heavenly gods. Thus, Petritsi seems to intimate that he is a comedian on the one hand but a heros revealing Apollo, signifying here most probably the highest One, God, following Plotinus’ etymology, Ἀ-πόλλων, “Not-from-many” (v.5, 6.28). Finally, Petritsi’s *Hermes*-like character indicates his activity as a go-between the Greek and the Georgian culture.

Moreover, apparently, at the end of his *Preface / Epilogue*, Petritsi mentions his previous translation of Nemesius as well as his commentaries on the *Elements of Theology*, but the latter as something planned or in progress, rather than as something achieved:

Had I been shown a tiny bit of love and support on their [his Georgian contemporaries’] part, I would have followed that which is providentially destined to me by God, and I do swear by my very longing for the theories, that I would have shown that the capacities of [the Georgian] language are equal to those of [the Greek] language and, so, I would have Aristotelized,<sup>55</sup> embarking upon the theoretical thought of the philosophers presenting the *Theology that stands aloof of matter*. Yet, even now, I shall

54 asergasist’a amat’ sulist’a *mus-t’a*//enat’maqcevi *aqanterma-t’a* davtsk’ued//sitk’vis *mimo-i* da icann me-*iro-eman*//man *erma-ulad* imtsvervalen *a-pollo*.

55 That is: “philosophize like Aristotle”.



venture [to translate the Psalms] within the limits of my powers, relying on the mercy of God and, likely, on the understanding, mercy, and support of [the prophet] David himself.

In fact, in addition to all that was said above, there is one more problem: It is a usual habit among us to embellish and beautify the language when dealing with easy and habitual texts; however, in dealing with the intellectually difficult texts of the philosophers, while I do try to follow all the simplicity and the properties of our language, I do so only to the extent to which excessive simplicity will not destroy or harm the meaning. Actually, all my ideas have to do with the meaning and the theory that is hidden in them [that is, in the Psalms]—be it a logical, a mathematical, a physical, or a metaphysical theory. I have already undertaken the same task when I translated the book of Nemesis.<sup>56</sup>

“The theoretical thought of the philosophers presenting the *Theology that stands aloof of matter*”<sup>57</sup> seems to be nothing other than a planned or already in-progress translation of Proclus’ *Elements of Theology*, which later Petritsi edited and provided with commentaries.

Lela Alexidze is of a different opinion. As she thinks that the *Epilogue* of earlier Georgian scholarship is indeed part of the *Proclus Ibericus* and is written in reference to the already completed commentaries on the *Elements*, she is inclined to understand the statement “I would have Aristotelized etc.” as indicating the desire to write an independent treatise on “Platonic theology” that has never materialized.<sup>58</sup> I would object that this independent treatise has been in fact written by Petritsi, and is nothing other than his detailed commentaries on the *Elements of Theology*.

If the above interpretation of Petritsi’s claim, i.e. “I would have Aristotelized etc.”, is correct, this would mean that, in the series of Petritsi’s extant authentic

56 Ioanne Petritsi, *Opera. Tomus II*, p. 222, tr. L. Gigineishvili, “Ioane Petritsi’s *Preface* to his annotated translation of the Book of Psalms”, in T. Nutsubidze, C.B. Horn, B. Lourié (eds) with the contribution of A. Ostrovsky, *Georgian Christian Thought and its Cultural Context: Memorial Volume for the 125th Anniversary of Shalva Nutsubidze (1888–1969)* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 232, slightly modified by Gigineishvili himself.

57 Gigineishvili has modified his earlier translation, which had read as follows: “and would have Aristotelized, embarking upon the theoretical thought of philosophers, presenting the *Theology that stands aloof of matter*.” The change is that of the removal of the comma after “philosophers”. which changes the meaning, and makes it clear that Petritsi speaks here about his—then still unfinished or only planned—translation of the *Elements of Theology*.

58 A view expressed at our meeting on 31 October 2024.

works, the commented translation of the *Elements* must be the third, as proposed by Levan Gigineishvili.<sup>59</sup> Thus, if we are to link Petritsi's literary activity to the Gelati school, the more than 24-year time gap between Italos' condemnation in 1082 and the foundation of the Gelati complex in 1106 does not bode well for Kekelidze's proposed chronology. Also, recent linguistic research by Edisher Chelidze and Damana Melikishvili<sup>60</sup> has revealed that Petritsi's language differs from that of the early Hellenising translators of the Gelati school, namely from that of the philosophical translations of Arsen Iqaltoeli and from that of the Gelati Bible translation, while he seems to be aware of the linguistic innovations of the Gelati school. The linguistic analysis points to a twelfth-century, even possibly early thirteenth-century, date, *the terminus ante quem* being, as mentioned above, 1248. Thus, nothing assures that Petritsi was among the first intellectuals educated in Byzantium who began teaching at the Gelati monastic school.

### 3 Petritsi and John Italos

To the above results of the Georgian scholarship of the last decades one might add that there are remarkable divergences between Italos' and Petritsi's thought, which also may speak against making Petritsi a direct pupil of the condemned Consul of the Philosophers. Here are some points of comparison between Italos and Petritsi:

#### 3.1 *Their Relationship to Proclus Is Different*

While Italos is critical of Proclus and creates his own Christian metaphysics against Proclus, often going back to Plotinus and, most of all, to Origen (as we will see in the following), for Petritsi Proclus is an unquestionable authority, whose teaching is interpreted as coinciding with and illuminating Christian doctrine. In his introduction to the *Elements of Theology*, Petritsi summarises what Marinus writes in the *Life of Proclus or Concerning Happiness* but transforms Marinus' life into a quasi-Christian hagiography:

This Proclus, the successor of the chair of the divine Plato, according to his origin was from Ionia, an offshoot of most noble parents, who did not have a child and through prayers continuously called on the temples of

59 Gigineishvili, *The Platonic Theology*, p. 17.

60 Melikishvili, "On the Question of the Unity".

divine mercy. On this account they got a promise from a divine oracle: "You will be given a son who will spend all stages [of life] in contemplation of the reality above." As the years of his adolescence proceeded, through the holiness of the powers in him he eclipsed all, beyond any comparison of measures. First, I will mention his chastity and the extinction in him of the youthful burnings, through which the power of the perceptible things and of the imaginations beset the souls that have fallen into becoming. Next, the concentration and sharpness in toils of studying, either in logical or in natural theories, or in arithmetic, geometry, and even music itself, through which one can discover the embroidery and plaiting of the constitution of beings, their mutual communication and division, and how through those things one can discover that the good art of God, the Originator of all, surpasses the contemplator. However, he transcended those theories that are intertwined with nature, for he left those transient forms of time and becoming, which only imitate Being—in fact, most of what they consist of is connected to the non-being—and attained to the True Being and Essence. However, he did not set the limit of his contemplations here, but followed the lead of his predecessors, I mean the Platonists, and tried to know, as much as possible, the One—the object of desire and love of all beings, who is inaccessible even to that Superior Intellect, having revealed what is sealed and hidden in Plato's dialogues. He kindled the wisdom within them, that is, the faith "co-present with beings,"<sup>61</sup> and how, in them, Plato thirsted for that unimaginable One and for the entire intellectual and supra-intellectual ornament.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, he refuted the word that is formed by the laws of the Peripatetics, the followers of Aristotle, who proliferated like fire, and he revealed and demolished the truth that is claimed to be based on the syllogistic laws discovered by Aristotle himself, through which the Peripatetics attacked Plato. Thirdly, to all these he added the purity and clarity of demonstrations and, to the loftiness of his contemplations, [he added]

61 See Proclus, *Platonic Theology* I. 1. 5. 9–10: τὴν ἀλήθειαν τὴν ὁμοῦ τοῖς οὐσιν συνυφεστῶσαν. This quote was indicated in L. Gigineishvili, G. Van Riel, "Ioane Petritsi: A Witness of Proclus' Works in the School of Psellus", in A.Ph. Segonds, C. Steel (eds), *Proclus et la théologie Platonicienne. Actes du Colloque International de Louvain (13–16 mai 1998). En l'honneur de H.D. Saffrey et L.G. Westerink* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), p. 576: "The whole passage is a paraphrase of the opening sentence of the *Theol. Plat.*, attributing to Proclus the merits that Proclus himself ascribes to Plato."

62 This word stands for "world" (κόσμος). Petritsi's usual translation of κόσμος is "ornament" (*ajmkuli*), thus creating a neologism from the verb *mk-oba*, "to ornate", "embellish."

the spring of his interpretation [of Plato], for which reason he was called by his followers *Diadokhos*, which means the “Successor of Plato”. This we have said in passing about Proclus.<sup>63</sup>

Marinus builds up his biography on the double triadic structure of the series of Neoplatonic virtues: in the first instance, natural, moral, and social (political) virtues and, in the second, purificatory, contemplative, and theurgical virtues. Petritsi replaces this with the fourfold structure of the Evagrian spiritual ascent: first the *praktikē*, that is ascetic practice, second, the first natural contemplation, meaning the contemplation of the reasons (*logoi*) of the corporeal beings, thirdly, the second natural contemplation, meaning the vision of the reasons of the incorporeal or intelligible beings, and finally, the vision of the Trinity.<sup>64</sup> I think that, in Petritsi’s reshaped Platonist system, reaching the level of what he calls the True Being and Essence, and the Superior Intellect, whom he identifies with the Evagrian Christ-Intellect, corresponds to Evagrius’ second natural contemplation, that is, the vision of the intelligible beings. The final level is to attempt to know the One, whom he identifies with the Father of Christian theology, while the Limit of Proclus’ theology corresponds to the Logos, and Infinity to the Holy Spirit (see above).

Thus, via a Christian Platonist/Origenist reinterpretation, Proclus becomes a contemplator of the one God. Nowhere does Petritsi speak about the gods as Marinus does, but Proclus’ whole life is converted to monotheist worship. The pagan temples become dedicated to the “divine mercy”, and in the natural contemplation Proclus becomes initiated into “the good art of God, the Originator of all.” Moreover, a hagiographic element is added, absent from Marinus’ *Vita*, according to which Proclus’ parents had been childless until their prayers are heard, and a divine oracle announces to them the birth of an extraordinary child. This is as good as baptizing Proclus—evidently against his original intentions—and completely fusing his metaphysics with Christian theology. This, Italos, who was critical of Proclus, had never done.

63 Ioanne Petritsi, *Opera. Tomus II*, pp. 4–5; Ioanne Petritsi, *Proclus Diadochus—Platonic Philosopher*, pp. 116–118. Levan Giginishvili has treated this issue in Giginishvili, “Proclus as a Biblical Exegete”, pp. 242–243, in the subchapter “Saint’ Proclus”, where he also gave a somewhat paraphrastic translation of the same passage. The present, more precise, translation is due to our joint revision of that original translation. See its German translation in Ioane Petritsi, *Kommentar zur Elementatio theologica*, pp. 64–67, with insightful commentaries.

64 See P. Géhin, “Introduction”, in Évagre le Pontique, *Scholies aux Psaumes*, vol. 1 (*Psaumes 1–70*) (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2021), subchapter “Les étapes de la vie spirituelle”, pp. 62–87.

### 3.2 *They Diverge in the Question of the Eternity versus Temporal Creation of the World*

Although one of the anathemas condemning Italos imputed to him the teaching of the eternity of the world,<sup>65</sup> this accusation was false. Italos has written a treatise in which he refutes, mainly summarizing Philoponus' arguments against Proclus, the doctrine of the eternity of the world.<sup>66</sup> There, Italos' position is that the world as a composite of form and matter has a beginning, namely its creation, and will have an end, the second coming. However, its form is eternal, so that there will be a formal, not numerical, identity between the present world and the world to come.<sup>67</sup> Unlike Italos' position, Petritsi adopts without any qualms the doctrine of an eternal world. Here is one example taken from his commentary on Proposition 50 of the *Elements of Theology*:

*For "was" and "will be" differ from each other (Elements of Theology 50, 48.19–20). This means that time is divided by "was" and "will be", and in between them is "now", that is, in Greek in, estin, este (ἦν, ἐστίν, ἔσται)—these three have divided the reality of time, for wherever time and temporal motion govern, nothing can escape those three. In fact, those three first subjected the first and the most divine of the bodies, I mean that of the sky, for there was the cycle of the spheres, there is the cycle of the spheres and there will be the cycle of the spheres. Now, learn that the past, the existing, and the future, which comprise time, are seen differently in the sky and differently in the mortals, for the past of the sky is linked with the future and is made one with it, and its end becomes the start and beginning of the other and it remains immortally and inextinguishably, and yet, through repetition and not as simply immortal, for the simple immortality is changeless and unalterable, while the immortality in the sky is changing and repetitive. In fact, such as the activities are, such are also the essences. However, the nature of those that are altogether perishable is not so, for it can neither unite the beginning and the end of*

65 Fourth anathema against Italos: J. Gouillard, "Le procès officiel de Jean l'Italien: Les actes et leurs sous-entendus", in *Travaux et Mémoires* 9(1985), 59.198–202.

66 Critical edition, English translation, and commentary in A. Kraft, I. Perczel, "John Italos on the Eternity of the World: A New Critical Edition of *Quaestio* 71 with Translation and Commentary", in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 111/3(2018), pp. 659–720. A further analysis of Italos' creationist doctrine will be published in A. Kraft, I. Perczel, "John Italos on the Soul, Matter, and the Resurrection: A new critical edition of *Quaestiones* 86 and 89 with translation and commentary" (forthcoming).

67 Greek text: Kraft, Perczel, "John Italos on the Eternity of the World", pp. 676.58–677.70, the English translation at p. 684, and commentary pp. 699–704.

the activities—unlike the power in the sky—so as to make them immortal, nor, furthermore, sustain its essence in the bliss of immortality, but it perishes and is extinguished in both ways.<sup>68</sup>

This is quite a radical difference between Italos' anti-Proclian, Philoponian, position on the one hand, and Petritsi's Proclian eternalist position on the other. As Italos is developing a genuine Christian Platonist but not fully orthodox doctrine, arguing for the eternity of the forms which was one of his propositions condemned, there is no probability for a dissimulation here, while it is true that, concerning other doctrines, such as that of a world soul or that of all the souls constituting parts of a whole, Italos is hiding, albeit in a transparent way, his own doctrines.<sup>69</sup>

### 3 Their Respective Metaphysical Systems Are Different

While the two philosophers share the tendency of identifying the Christian theological concepts with standard Neoplatonist metaphysical principles, their systems differ considerably. Italos exposes his metaphysical and theological system in *Quaestiones quodlibetales*, *quaestio* 68. I am citing the beginning of this text, which contains Italos' doctrine on the first principles and is cryptically exposing his Trinitarian theology, too.<sup>70</sup>

The foremost theologians of the Hellenes are positing a triple most principal hypostasis among the intelligibles, among which they call the first, Being, the second, Intellect, and what is after these, Soul. They also say that there is something else before these, which they call the Beyond, and also the One, and the Good. They are not speaking about these hypostases randomly, nor by an awkward concept but—so they assert—as demon-

68 Ioanne Petritsi, *Opera. Tomus II*, p. 110; Ioanne Petritsi, *Proclus Diadochus—Platonic Philosopher*, pp. 247–248.

69 N. Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 82; and Kraft, Perczel, "John Italos on the Soul". Here I should apologize for misquoting Siniosoglou in Kraft, Perczel "John Italos on the Eternity of the World", p. 712, n. 117. We hastily attributed to him a position that he had never held. Even the page number in the reference to his book was incorrect.

70 Cf. John Italos, *Opera. Textum graecum secundum collationem a Gregorio Ceretel*, ed. N. Ketschakmadze (Tbilisi: Metsniereba, 1966), pp. 180–181. For a new critical edition of the Greek text of this passage, see below Appendix 1.

strating Him.<sup>71</sup> For they are saying that the very First is the principle of beings, in which the beings are directly participating—so that there is nothing, whether being or non-being, that would not participate in It—named not simply but as something else.<sup>72</sup> What is that in which all things participate, this is no easy task to find out, but we are going to say the following.<sup>73</sup> In fact that, in which they participate, is not soul, for thus, all things would be animated and no being would be without a share in soul. In fact, something should reach from the first Cause to those that derive from It, if at all it is the principle of these things by nature and not only by will.<sup>74</sup> It behoves the supreme Goodness that first It should communicate its quality to those who have been born from It.<sup>75</sup> However, as not all things have a share in soul, therefore, Soul is not the principle of the beings. Then, perhaps, that which is beyond the Soul, whom we call Intellect? Yet, there is something that has no share in it, nor in Being. In fact, the privations are not beings but participate in the One. Therefore, as not all things participate in Soul, nor in Intellect, nor in Being, but there is nothing that would not have a share in the One or that would not desire

71 That is, the hypostases are demonstrating the one God. The manuscripts read here unan-  
imously αὐτόν, “Him”, referring to the triune God. Here, the previous editions had accepted  
an erroneous reading: αὐτοί, “they”, suggested due to a lack of understanding this subtle  
Trinitarian allusion. See the critical apparatus of this text in Appendix 1.

72 This is a very difficult sentence. Apparently, it means that, while all the beings are directly  
participating in the first principle, it is impossible to name it, unless indirectly, through its  
effects: the beings. This is both a Proclian and Pseudo-Dionysian principle.

73 See Plato, *Timaeus* 28c3–5: τὸν μὲν οὖν ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντός εὐρεῖν τε ἔργον  
καὶ εὐρόντα εἰς πάντας ἀδύνατον λέγειν: τόδε δ’ οὖν πάλιν ἐπισκεπτέον περὶ αὐτοῦ (“To find the  
Maker and Father of this universe is a difficult task, and even once found, it is impossible  
to declare him to all. Yet, we should consider the following about Him.”) This is a precious  
testimony to the fact that Italos, following the mainstream Christian Platonist tradition  
and at variance from the Neoplatonists, considered the highest God to be the Creator  
Demiurge.

74 See Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 122: [sc. οἱ θεοί] αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι τοῖς πᾶσιν ἀφθόνως τάχαθὰ  
χορηγοῦσιν, οὐ κατὰ λογισμὸν ποιοῦμενοι τὴν διανομήν, ἀλλὰ τούτων μὲν κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν ἀξίαν  
δεχομένων, ἐκείνων δὲ κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν ὑπαρξιν διδόντων. (“[The gods] are bestowing upon all  
the good things without envy, by their very being. They are not making the distribution  
through deliberation but these [sc. all the beings] are receiving according to their merit,  
while they [the gods] are giving according to their existence.”) By reformulating this prin-  
ciple, Italos enters an intra-Christian debate on the question whether God creates by His  
nature, being pure goodness, or by an act of will. Italos’ position coincides with that of  
Pseudo-Dionysius.

75 See Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 122.

the Good—for all things desire It and partake in It as far as possible<sup>76</sup>—thus, it is clear that the One and the Good is the principle and cause of the beings. It is in this that all things participate, being made good through their unification through It, and are being, and one, and good, as much as this is possible for each one according to its own capability.

As It (the One or the Good) is the principle of beings as it has been shown, it is clear that, if there is another [principle] after this, it is a principle not absolutely, but only towards those coming after it. It holds its *logos* of being principle and cause from It, but not any more towards the absolute principle. Rather, it returns towards It, desires It, continuously depends on It, and is perfected by it, being, so to say, deficient and in need of the enlightenment coming from there. Therefore, it is imitating and would imitate its own principle, from which it proceeded. It is in It and is not cut off, even if It is cut off, just like the light of the sun, for it is not possible to say that the One who came out from God<sup>77</sup> would be cut off once for all in this way and still be [what it is].

In fact, this system cannot be found in any Greek philosopher, as it is a revised version of Plotinus' doctrine of the three principal hypostases, enriched by elements borrowed from later Neoplatonism, mainly Proclus, such as asserting a Being-Intellect-Soul intelligible triad subordinate to the One, or positing Being as a hypostasis separate from Intellect, in which Intellect participates. Moreover, it is a system in which God is described as consisting of three hypostases, Being, Intellect, and Soul, and a supra-hypostasis, which is not called a hypostasis, the One. This is, in fact, Italos' own unavowed metaphysical system, in which he combined the principal hypostases of this quasi-Plotinian system into the three hypostases of the Christian Trinity. However, the theological interpretation of this metaphysical system is far from being obvious. Two Christian principles/persons, God the Father and Christ, can be identified based on Italos' confession of faith submitted to emperor Alexios Komnenos in April 1082, which included a paraphrase of, or parallel text to, the second paragraph of the above text, with a clear Trinitarian meaning:

76 See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.1, 1094a: διὸ καλῶς ἀπεφάνησαντο τὰγαθόν, οὗ πάντ' ἐφίεται ("It has been well said that the Good is that at which all things aim" [tr. H. Rackham]).

77 See John 8:42: (...) ἐγὼ γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξήλθον καὶ ἤκω· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀπ' ἐμαυτοῦ ἐλήλυθα, ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνός με ἀπέστειλεν. ("[...] for I *proceeded forth* and came *from* God; neither *came* I of Myself, but He sent Me." [my italics]).



John Italos, *Credo*, ed. Gouillard, *Le procès*, p. 145, ll. 164–168 (my italics):

Πιστεύω εἰς πατέρα ἀναρχον καὶ υἱὸν  
συνἀναρχον, καὶ αὐθις οὐκ ἀναρχον,  
οὐ χρόνῳ ἀλλ' αἰτίᾳ, ὁμοούσιον ἅμα  
καὶ ὁμοδύναμον, ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς πρὸ  
αἰώνων γεννηθέντα καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ αὐτῷ  
μένοντα καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐπιστρέφοντα·  
οὐ γὰρ ἐστι τῇ οὐσίᾳ ἕτερος, εἰ καὶ τῇ  
ὑποστάσει γέγονεν ἄλλος.

I believe in the Father without beginning and in the Son who is equally without beginning but on the other hand with a beginning in causality but not in time; he is of the same substance and same power, begotten from the Father before the ages and remaining in Him and *reverting to Him*; for He [the Son] is not different in substance, even though He *became another* according to His hypostasis.

John Italos, *Quaestio* 68, ed. Ketschakmadze, p. 181, ll. 4–12:

Ἐπεὶ δὲ ἀρχὴ τῶν ὄντων αὕτη ὡς δέδεικται, φανερόν ὡς εἴ τις ἑτέρα εἴη μετὰ ταύτην, οὐκ ἀρχὴ ἀπλῶς, ἀλλὰ πρὸς μὲν τὰ μετ' αὐτήν, καὶ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἀρχῆς ἂν ἐπέχει καὶ αἰτίας λόγον· πρὸς δὲ τὴν ἀπλῶς ἀρχὴν οὐκέτι· ἀλλ' ἐπιστρέφουσα ἐστὶ πρὸς ἐκείνην, καὶ αὐτῆς ἐφιεμένη· καὶ ἡρτηται διηνεκῶς καὶ τελειοῦται ὡς εἰκὸς ἐνδεῆς οὔσα, καὶ τῆς ἐκεῖθεν ἐλλάμψεως δεομένη· οὐκοῦν καὶ μιμεῖται καὶ μιμήσεται τὴν ἑαυτῆς ἀρχὴν, ἀφ' ἧς προελήλυθεν· ἐν αὐτῇ γὰρ ἐστὶ, καὶ οὐκ ἀποτέμνηται εἰ καὶ ἀποτέμνηται πάλιν καθάπερ καὶ τὸ ἀπὸ ἡλίου φῶς· οὐ γὰρ ἔξεστι λέγειν τὸ ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἐληλυθός, καὶ ταῦτα τοιοῦτως καθάπαξ ἀποτετμησθαι καὶ αὐθις εἶναι δύνασθαι.

As it (the One or the Good) is the principle of beings, as it has been shown, it is clear that, if there is another [principle] after this, it is a principle not absolutely, but only towards those coming after it. It holds its *logos* of being principle and cause from Him, but not any more towards the absolute principle. Rather, it *reverts towards It*, desires It, continuously depends on It, and is perfected by it, being, so to say, deficient and in need of the enlightenment coming from there. Therefore, it is imitating and would imitate its own principle, from which it proceeded. It is in It and is not cut off, even if It is cut off, just like the light of the sun, for it is not possible to say that the *One who*

(cont.)

John Italos, *Credo*, ed. Gouillard, *Le procès*, p. 145, ll. 164–168 (my italics):

John Italos, *Quaestio* 68, ed. Ketschakmadze, p. 181, ll. 4–12:

*came out from God* would be cut off once for all in this way and still be [what it is].

Thus, in *Quaestio* 68, Italos describes the Neoplatonic concept of the second principle, the hypostasis of the Intellect (νοῦς), in unmistakable Christological terms. When talking about the second principle he alludes to John 8:42. By virtue of this allusion, Italos identifies his seemingly second principle with Christ. To make things even more complicated, this principle, the Intellect, is not Italos' second principle but his third in the One/Good-Being-Intellect-Soul series, so that one might guess that he alludes to the Origenist doctrine of Christ (Intellect) carrying in himself and divinised by the Logos (Being), a doctrine that is subtly hinted at in this phrase: "It holds its *logos* of being principle and cause from It (the One)." The parallel text of his confession also makes clear Italos' identification of the One/Good with the Father, and of the Intellect with Christ, while the metaphysical role of the Holy Spirit remains unclear but is logically indicated by that of the Soul or, rather, by a divine principle carried by the hypostasis of the Soul, just as the Christ-Intellect carries the Logos-Being in it. The following section on the Soul, which it would be too long and complicated to analyse here, is replete with hidden allusions to this identification of the "whole Soul"—to use here a Plotinian expression—to the Holy Spirit. This doctrine, inspired as much by Plotinus as by the Origenist teaching condemned in 553, is indeed subordinationist. It is also un-Evagrian in the sense that, according to it, the Christ-intellect is not created but uncreated.

It is also worth remembering that the synodal Fathers of the council of 1082 condemned Italos' confession of faith not only as subordinationist but also as Sabellian.<sup>78</sup> They derived this conclusion from Italos' claim that,

<sup>78</sup> See Gouillard, "Le procès officiel", pp. 149, 233–236.

[T]here are not three eternal but only one eternal, given that there are not three uncreated, nor three incomprehensibles but one uncreated and one incomprehensible.<sup>79</sup>

How he meant this is elucidated by the statement in Qu. 68, according to which,

[T]he foremost theologians of the Hellenes are positing a **triple-most principal hypostasis** among the intelligibles, among which they call **the first, Being, the second, Intellect, and what is after these, Soul**. They also say that there is something else before these, which they call **the Beyond, and also the One, and the Good**. They are not speaking about these hypostases randomly, nor by an awkward concept but—so they assert—as **demonstrating Him**.

This seems to indicate that the three elements of the one triple hypostasis—Being, Intellect, Soul—are names or manifestations pertaining to the only one God, the One or the Good, or the Father, so that there is “only one uncreated and one incomprehensible”. Dirk Krausmüller, who proposed a subtle analysis of Italos’ confession of faith and Quaestiones 5, 8, 71, and 88,<sup>80</sup> has arrived at a diametrically opposed conclusion. According to Krausmüller, Italos was simultaneously a quasi-Sabellian and a tritheist. Krausmüller explains this paradox by claiming that Italos interpreted the common substance (οὐσία) of the Trinity in Aristotelian terms as “second substance” (δεύτερα οὐσία), and the three hypostases as “first substances” (πρώται οὐσίαι), so that he approached Philoponus’ tritheist position, the common substance being distinguishable only in thought (κατ’ ἐπίνοιαν) and not existing in reality. Such a theory would be based, as it is in Philoponus, on Cyril of Alexandria’s principle of the enumerability of the three persons. Yet, Italos states the exact opposite. According to him, it is the plurality of the hypostases, which exists only in relation to us (πρὸς ἡμᾶς):

But if there is God and God and again God, then how is there nevertheless one God and one nature and one power? This [difficulty] does not necessarily follow. In fact, the many people are not different natures of people, but rather, the nature is a monad, while number belongs to the hypostases. However, if It [i. e., the Godhead] is simple, how is It a number? It is a number in relation to us, because this is how we can naturally

79 Gouillard, “Le procès officiel”, pp. 221–223.

80 D. Krausmüller, “Between Tritheism and Sabellianism: Trinitarian Speculation in John Italos’ and Nicetas Stethatos’ Confessions of Faith”, in *Scrinium* 12(2016), pp. 261–280.

understand and know It, but It is not subject to number, nor is It subordinate to nature, or to a plurality of names, or to anything else that is said concerning human beings.<sup>81</sup>

Rather than being a Philoponian tritheist position, this structure seems to be inspired by Origen, according to whom the “only source of divinity is the Father”,<sup>82</sup> while the Son and the Spirit are participating in the Father’s divinity.

Besides an Origenist reworking of the Plotinian metaphysical system, Italos amply uses the metaphysical logic of Proclus, elaborated in the *Elements of Theology*. In fact, the relationship of the Christ-Intellect to the One-Father is described in terms of Propositions 29–32 of the *Elements of Theology*. According to Prop. 29, “all procession is accomplished through likeness of the subsequent to the first”; according to Prop. 30, “all that is immediately produced from a principle **both remains in its producer and proceeds from it**”; according to Prop. 31, “all that proceeds from a principle, **reverts substantially to that from where it proceeds**”;<sup>83</sup> and according to Prop. 32, “all reversion is accomplished by means of the likeness of those that revert to the principle to which they return.” I am not analyzing here all the minute details, in which Italos uses the vocabulary of these propositions. Suffice it to say that the conciliar Fathers of 1082 were well informed about Italos’ sources, so that they declared that he had taken the doctrine of the procession of the Son from the Father and His reversion to Him from Proclus and Iamblichus.<sup>84</sup>

Petritsi’s metaphysical-theological doctrine is like this as far as it also contains an identification of Neoplatonist metaphysical principles with the hypostases of the Trinity, and as it is also highly reminiscent of the Origenist doctrines. He also uses Propositions 29–32 to define the intra-Trinitarian relations. However, he identifies the three Persons of the Trinity with Proclus’ transcendent triad, not with the Plotinian three principal hypostases, and thus avoids the same subordinationist savour. By identifying the Father with the Proclian One, the Logos with the Limit, and the Holy Spirit with Infinity, Petritsi elevates the three hypostases beyond the sphere of the intelligible and plays on the concept that the two highest *henads* belong to the world of the One and are

81 Italos, *Quaestio* 71, 146–151, in Kraft, Perczel, “John Italos on the Eternity of the World”, p. 689, Greek text at p. 680.

82 Origen, *De princ.* 1.3.7, 247 sqq.: [C]um *unus deitatis fons* verbo ac ratione sua teneat universa, spiritu vero oris sui quae digna sunt sanctificatione sanctificet [...].

83 For a discussion of “essential (κατ’ οὐσίαν) procession” and “reversion”, see below, Appendix 2, n. 1.

84 Gouillard, “Le procès officiel”, pp. 147, 202–208.

perfectly one while carrying their own properties—a well-found analogy with the transcendent Christian Trinity. There is also room for the Evagrian created Christ-Intellect, which is Petritsi's "True Being and First Intellect", corresponding to Proclus' Unified, or Compound, being the unification, or mixture of the three supra-essential hypostases. Here is one example from Petritsi's commentary on Proposition 29 of the *Elements*.<sup>85</sup>

*Every essential procession is accomplished through the likeness of those subsequent to those prior (Elements of Theology 29, 34. 3–4).* Listen, that the whole meaning of this chapter is that he (Proclus) introduces the likeness as a mediator between the producer and the produced and he explains the birth of the effect from the cause as well as its reversion to its origin through the same likeness. For the Likeness is the cause of both the production and, again, of the reversion to the origins; and the more alike one thing is, the closer it is, and the closer it is, the more alike it is. For which reason, the word of my sun-minded Paul enters here, because he says that He is the Image, and Likeness, and *ekmagio*<sup>86</sup> of the One, whom the discourse dared to also call God the Father. Now, with the reference to the likeness he says that He is the "changeless Image".<sup>87</sup> This addition of "changeless" here indicates to us the likeness that is measureless and dense.<sup>88</sup> Again, he (Paul) says that "He carries the whole wealth" of the Father in Him.<sup>89</sup> These and all such things show for us the measurelessness of the Word, who is born before the beings and even before the *henads*, whom the Philosopher calls "the Idea of the ideas" and "the Limit of the limits".<sup>90</sup>

85 In the present study, Petritsi's commentaries on the Elements of Theology are cited according to the English translation, in preparation, by Levan Gigineishvili and István Perczel.

86 Georgian transcription of the Greek *ἐκμαγεῖον* ("imprint"), according to the Byzantine pronunciation.

87 See 2 Cor 4:4: τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὃς ἔστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ ("the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the Image of God"), and Col. 1:15: ὡς ἔστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου ("who is the image of the invisible God ...") see also Gregory of Nazianzus (the Theologian), *Oration 38, On Theophany*, 13, PG 36, 312. For the reference, see Ioane Petritsi, *Kommentar zur Elementatio theologica*, p. 173, n. 414.

88 See John 3:34: ὃν γὰρ ἀπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ θεοῦ λαλεῖ, οὐ γὰρ ἐκ μέτρου διδωσιν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα. ("The one whom God has sent speaks the speeches of God, because God does not give the Spirit according to measure.")

89 See Col 2:3: ἐν ᾧ εἰσιν πάντες οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ τῆς γνώσεως ἀπόκρυφοι. ("in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.")

90 See Aristotle, *De anima* 432a2, and Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.64.

This passage is a typical illustration of Petritsi's method. He explains Proclus' text by means of Christian theological texts and, vice versa, Christian theology by means of Proclus, implying that the two perfectly coincide. This part of the commentary interprets Proclus by means of two Christian authorities, Gregory of Nazianzus and Origen. Gregory is cited under the name of the Apostle Paul, while Origen, under the name of Aristotle (the Philosopher). Gregory's text is the following (in bold are highlighted the expressions taken over and reinterpreted by Petritsi):

That was **the Word of God Himself**, the Pre-eternal, the Invisible, the Uncontainable, the Incorporeal, the Principle from the Principle, the Light from the Light, the Source of Life and of Immortality, **the Imprint** of the original Beauty, the unmovable Seal, **the changeless Image, the Limit and Word of the Father**. He comes to His own Image, bears flesh for the flesh and mingles Himself to an intellectual soul for the sake of my soul, cleansing His likeness **through the Likeness**.<sup>91</sup>

In fact, Gregory calls the Logos ὁ τοῦ Πατρὸς ὅρος καὶ λόγος, that is, "the Definition and Word/Reason of the Father", meaning that, what the Father is, is expressed and revealed by the Son,<sup>92</sup> but ὅρος can also mean "limit", and Petritsi chooses this translation, using the same Georgian word *sa-zg'va-ri*,<sup>93</sup> which he normally uses for translating Proclus' πέρας, thus identifying the metaphysical term πέρας with the Christological term ὅρος.

91 Gregory of Nazianzus (the Theologian), *Oration* 38, *On Theophany*, 13 (= PG 36, 312): Τὸ δὲ ἦν αὐτὸς ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγος, ὁ προαιώνιος, ὁ ἀόρατος, ὁ ἀπερίληπτος, ὁ ἀσώματος, ἡ ἐκ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἀρχή, τὸ ἐκ τοῦ φωτὸς φῶς, ἡ πηγὴ τῆς ζωῆς καὶ τῆς ἀθανασίας, τὸ ἐκμαγεῖον τοῦ ἀρχετύπου κάλλους, ἡ μὴ κινουμένη σφραγίς, ἡ ἀπαράλλακτος εἰκὼν, ὁ τοῦ Πατρὸς ὅρος καὶ λόγος· ἐπὶ τὴν ἰδίαν εἰκόνα χωρεῖ, καὶ σάρκα φορεῖ διὰ τὴν σάρκα, καὶ ψυχὴ νοερὰ διὰ τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχὴν μίγνυται, τῷ ὁμοίῳ τὸ ὅμοιον ἀνακαθαίρων. My translation was made according to the way Petritsi apparently understands this passage. In bold are printed the parts that Petritsi directly uses. For the reference, see Ioane Petritsi, *Kommentar zur Elementatio theologica*, p. 173, n. 414. However, "changeless Image" is a commonplace of patristic literature. It is used throughout by Athanasius of Alexandria. Also, see for example, John Damascene, *Orations about the Holy Images*, 1, 9.7; 1, 21=2, 15.15–16; 3, 18.7, 19–20, 29–30; 3, 114.15. It is a usual practice of Petritsi that he cites the commentaries on either Platonic, Aristotelian, or scriptural passages as said directly by Plato, or Aristotle, or the scriptural authors.

92 See John 1:18: Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· ὁ μονογενὴς υἱὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς, ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο ("No one has ever seen God; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has explained him").

93 "The etymology is from *zg'va*, which means "sea" since the Georgians were not a sailing nation and considered the sea as the ultimate limit of the land" (explanation by Levan Gigineishvili).

The Philosopher here is indeed Aristotle, as he was usually called, meaning that he was the *par excellence* philosopher.<sup>94</sup> However, the Christological reinterpretation of this term goes back to Origen who, in *Contra Celsum* 6.64, defines the divine Logos as “the Idea of the ideas”:

There is much to say which is hard to perceive about substance, and especially if substance in the proper sense is the unmoved and incorporeal substance, so that we may find out whether God “is beyond substance in rank and power” (Plato, *Republica*, 509B), and grants a share in substance to those to whom He gives share according to His Word, and through the Word-itself, or He is Himself substance, but is said to be invisible by nature in the words that say of the Saviour: “Who is the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). That He is incorporeal is indicated by the word “invisible”. One should also inquire whether we ought to say that the Only-begotten (John 1:18) and “Firstborn of all creation” (Col. 1:15) is the Substance of Substances, and the Idea of ideas, and Principle (Jn 1:1), and that his Father and God is beyond all these.<sup>95</sup>

According to the metaphysical Christological doctrine that is outlined here, and which will be developed in the so-called “Origenist” tradition which I prefer to simply call the *par excellence* Christian Platonist tradition,<sup>96</sup> the Logos is

94 See Aristotle, *De anima* 432a2: καὶ γὰρ ἡ χεὶρ ὄργανόν ἐστιν ὀργάνων, καὶ ὁ νοῦς εἶδος εἰδῶν καὶ ἡ αἴσθησις εἶδος αἰσθητῶν (“In fact, the hand is the organ of the organs, **the intellect is the form of the forms**, and sense-perception is the form of the perceptible things.”)

95 Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.64: Πολὺς δ' ὁ περὶ τῆς οὐσίας λόγος καὶ δυσθεώρητος καὶ μάलि-στα, ἐὰν ἡ κυρίως οὐσία ἢ ἐστῶσα καὶ ἀσώματος ἢ ἔν' εὐρεθῇ, πότερον ἐπέκεινα οὐσίας ἐστὶ πρεσβεία καὶ δυνάμει ὁ θεὸς μεταδιδούς οὐσίας οἷς μεταδίδωσι κατὰ τὸν ἑαυτοῦ λόγον καὶ αὐτῷ λόγῳ, ἢ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐστὶν οὐσία, πλὴν τῇ φύσει ἀράτος λέγεται ἐν τῷ περὶ τοῦ σωτή-ρος λόγῳ φάσκοντι· “Ὁς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου”, σημαίνεται δὲ ἐκ τῆς “ἀοράτου” φωνῆς ὁ ἀσώματος. Ζητητέον δὲ καί, εἰ οὐσίαν μὲν οὐσιῶν λεκτέον καὶ ἰδέαν ἰδεῶν καὶ ἀρχὴν τὸν μονογενῆ καὶ πρωτότοκον “πάσης κτίσεως” ἐπέκεινα δὲ πάντων τούτων τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ θεόν.

96 “Origenism” has been repeatedly condemned as a heresy but, at the same time, many reputed Church fathers also belong to the same movement. Evagrius is condemned in the Chalcedonian Churches and is venerated as a saint in the Church of the East and the miaphysite Churches. The letters of Saint Antony, the founding father of monasticism, testify to a theology very similar to Evagrius. Saint Maximus the Confessor comes from a Palestinian “Origenist” background. John Italos was condemned for teaching that the risen body will have a different kind of matter from that of the earthly body, but this is the teaching of Saint Symeon the New Theologian, too. Thus, considering “Origenism” a “heresy” is creating inextricable problems as some of the representatives of this trend were condemned as heretics, while others are venerated as saints.

the “Idea of ideas” or “Form of forms”, that is, using Aristotle’s terminology, the universal Intellect containing the fullness of the ideas/forms, the Principle (ἀρχή), in which God created the world, and the universal Substance/Being that contains all the substances and from whom they receive their being, while the Father is beyond this, either as a superior and utterly ungraspable Being (this is expressed in Origen’s terminology by the words “invisible” and “incorporeal”), or as something that is even more than this. Metaphysically speaking, this is very close to Plotinus’ system of the “three principal hypostases” of the One, the Intellect, and the Soul, except for the fact that Origen, inspired by the revelation of God on Mount Sinai to Moses in the Exodus 3:14: *Ehyeh asher ehyeh*, translated into Greek by the Septuagint as “I am the one who is” (ἐγὼ εἰμὶ ὁ ὢν), and also by John 1:18—was reluctant to apply the radical negations of negative theology to God the Father, insisting that he has been made known in and by the revelation of the incarnate Word.<sup>97</sup> The metaphysical interpretation of the three first hypotheses of the second half of Plato’s *Parmenides* is not an invention of Plotinus but was quite a standard doctrine in pre-Plotinian Platonism.<sup>98</sup> Also, the interpretation according to which the subject of the first hypothesis is the Father, that of the second is the Logos, while that of the third is the Holy Spirit, appears at least as early as in Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215).<sup>99</sup> This might have been the cause of a fairly standard Christian identification of the three Plotinian hypostases with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which we find in Theodoret of Kyros and in Cyril of Alexandria.<sup>100</sup> Yet, these authors do not miss to note the inadequacy of Plotinus’ doctrine, as it does not give justice to the doctrine of consubstantiality.

Origen’s is a subordinationist doctrine, too, which became problematic after the adoption of the doctrine of consubstantiality at Nicaea. Thus, a new Christian Platonist metaphysical doctrine was elaborated by Evagrius of Pontos, who did not any more identify the Word of God with the Intellect but distinguished between an uncreated Wisdom and a created Wisdom, the first being the Logos, for whom Evagrius gives an ontological definition: Henad (ἕνας) and an epistemological one: “the Knowledge of the Monad” (ἡ γινῶσις τῆς μονάδος), while the second being the Intellect, “the Knower”. Thus, the Monad

97 See Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 6. 65–70.

98 See the classical article of E.R. Dodds, “The *Parmenides* of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic ‘One’”, in *The Classical Quarterly* 22, No. 3/4 (Jul.-Oct. 1928), pp. 129–142.

99 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, IV, 25, 155–157.

100 See Theodoret of Kyros, *Curation of Hellenic Diseases*, 1. 82–87; Cyril of Alexandria, *Contra Julianum imperatorem*, 8. 30–31 (= PG 76, 917d–919c).



is the Father, and the Henad, that is, the Knowledge of the Monad, or the Logos, is in the Knower, the Intellect, that is, in Christ. Besides the Knowledge of the Monad, the Knower-Intellect-Christ also bears the Natural Contemplation of the Created Beings (θεωρία τῶν γεγονότων), whom Evagrius identifies to the Holy Spirit.<sup>101</sup> This gives justice to the doctrine of the consubstantiality between the Father (the Monad, or the One), the Son (his Knowledge) and the Holy Spirit (the Knowledge of the Beings), but posits a created Christ Intellect, a doctrine that was condemned as heretical at the fifth ecumenical council in 553. Italos' Christian metaphysical system seems to follow this doctrine but his identification of the Father with the Plotinian One, of the Logos with the hypostasis Being of later Platonism, the Christ-Intellect with the Plotinian Intellect, and—presumably—the Holy Spirit with the universal Soul, preserves Origen's subordinationist system, as Being/Logos and Intellect together constitute Christ's divine nature, which is dependent upon and returns to the One/Father. Petritsi has apparently devised a different metaphysical system. The identification of the Trinity with the triad of One-Limit-Infinity, while considering the Evagrian concept of the Christ-Intellect as corresponding to the First Intellect-First Being, avoids the accusation of subordination, without ceasing to be an Origenist doctrine.

### 3.4 *Petritsi and Eustratios of Nicaea*

Thus, if Petritsi had most probably not been Italos' direct student or, at least, if he was, he was not following his teacher's metaphysical doctrines, then, where could he get his rhetorical, logical, and philosophical education? The question should be asked in this triple form, as Petritsi, unlike Italos, is fond of using rhetorical tropes in his writings, believes in the universal value of Aristotelian syllogisms, and builds up his metaphysics, but also his biblical exegesis, by means of syllogisms. A quite probable answer to this question has been suggested by Michele Trizio. Trizio thinks that among the Byzantine philosophers Petritsi's thought is closest to Eustratios of Nicaea (c. 1050–1120). According to Trizio, “the closest parallel to Petritsi is Eustratios' very radical acceptance of Proclus' metaphysics. I hope my contribution on Eustratios”—meaning here his grand 2016 monograph on the Neoplatonism of Eustratios of Nicaea—“helps assess-

101 For a detailed exposition of this metaphysical Trinitarian doctrine, see I. Perczel, “Notes sur la pensée systématique d'Evagre le Pontique”, in M. Girardi, M. Marin, (eds), *Origene e l'alessandrinismo cappadoce (III–IV secolo): Atti del V Convegno del Gruppo Italiano di ricerca su 'Origene e la tradizione alessandrina' (Bari, 20–22 settembre 2000)* (Bari: Edipuglia, 2002), pp. 277–297.

ing the difficult issue of Petritsi's education."<sup>102</sup> In the following, I will show that this is indeed the most probable scenario. Let it be said in advance that Trizio's monograph has indeed achieved what it claims in its English-language summary:

Against the commonly accepted view of Eustratios as an intellectual seeking to restore Aristotelianism against the Platonism of the earlier Michael Psellos and John Italos, this book demonstrates that Eustratios was rather a Neoplatonist who intriguingly shaped Proclus' works with themes and motifs from the Christian monastic tradition.<sup>103</sup>

Eustratios, being an ecclesiastic in the rank of a deacon, and the head (*proximos*) of a grammar school at the Monastery of Saint Theodore in the Constantinopolitan quarter called *Ta Sphorakiou*, studied philosophy with Italos, and was interrogated during the latter's trial.<sup>104</sup> Together with three other deacons, he denied to share his teacher's "impiety in which he had been convicted, and anathematized the propositions contained in his [Italos'] written confession that he had given to our powerful emperor, as being strange doctrines that are alien to the Christian Orthodox Church."<sup>105</sup> Thus, the four deacons were cleared of all the charges and received the permission to continue their teaching activities.<sup>106</sup> Soon Eustratios was consecrated presbyter, became a trusted court theologian, received the rank of "teacher of the oecumene" (οἰκουμενικὸς διδάσκαλος), and participated in theological controversies, among others the

<sup>102</sup> Email communication to the author on 26 September 2018.

<sup>103</sup> M. Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo di Eustrazio di Nicea* (Bari: Edizioni di pagina, 2016), p. 228. The strong Proclian influence on Eustratios has been noted earlier. See Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, pp. lvi, lix–lxi; C. Steel, "Neoplatonic Sources in the Commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics* by Eustratios and Michael of Ephesus", in *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale* 44(2002), pp. 52–54. Yet, Trizio has given a systematic exposition of Proclus' presence in Eustratios' oeuvre in M. Trizio, "Neoplatonic Source-Material in Eustratios of Nicaea's Commentary on Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*", in C. Barber, D. Jenkins (eds.), *Medieval Greek Commentaries on the Nichomachean Ethics*, Leiden / Boston, Brill, 2009, pp. 71–109; Trizio, "Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium", pp. 182–215; Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo di Eustrazio*. See also recently S. Gersh, "Universals, Wholes, *Logoi*: Eustratios of Nicaea's Response to Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus. Volume 2*, pp. 32–55.

<sup>104</sup> His name is mentioned in the Acts of the Synod held against Italos on 11 April 1082. See Gouillard, "Le procès officiel", p. 159, n. 434. For Eustratios the Metropolitan of Nicaea being identical with the deacon Eustratios being interrogated in the lawsuit, see Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo di Eustrazio*, pp. 5–7.

<sup>105</sup> Gouillard, "Le procès officiel", pp. 449–452.

<sup>106</sup> Gouillard, "Le procès officiel", pp. 452–463.

one around the views of Leo of Chalcedon on the veneration of the holy images. The title of his treatise against Leo reveals that at the time of the controversies, sometime between 1088 and 1095, Eustratios was appointed as the “*maistôr* [teacher] of the rhetoricians”, which means, according to Trizio, that he was professor of rhetoric at the Patriarchal School,<sup>107</sup> nominated by the emperor. Sometime before 1112, he was made Metropolitan of Nicaea. As an official theologian of emperor Alexios Komnenos, he participated in theological debates with the Latins (in 1112) and the Armenians (in 1116/17).<sup>108</sup> In 1117, he was condemned for heresy and deposed, his reneguing of his heretical propositions notwithstanding.<sup>109</sup>

The 24 heretical positions condemned at Eustratios’ trial<sup>110</sup> indicate a similar development to the one between Italos and Petritsi. Apparently, as we have seen, Italos considered the three principal hypostases of Plotinus, the One, the Intellect, and the Soul, as synonyms of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, defining the divine nature of Christ as consisting of the compound of Being/Logos and Intellect. As a result, he could not avoid a certain subordinationism, his claim of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father notwithstanding, as this principle depends on the first principle and returns to it. Also, as I tried to demonstrate, for this, he had venerable predecessors, from the pre-Plotinian speculations of Clement of Alexandria to those, post-Plotinian, of Theodoret of Cyrus and Cyril of Alexandria.

Italos’ subordinationist doctrine was condemned in 1082, and his pupil Eustratios signed the condemnatory decisions, a move that earned for him the licence of being able to teach. Although his Christological writings have been lost, the anathemas of 1117 show in what sense he had changed his teacher’s system. This time, Eustratios’ Christian Platonist metaphysical system is not being condemned for any subordinationist doctrine about Christ’s divine nature but for detaching Christ’s assumed human nature (τὸ ἀνθρώπινον τοῦ Σωτῆρος Χριστοῦ, τὸ πρόσλημμα) too much from his divine nature and positing a similar subordinationist relationship between the human nature and the divine nature, to the one that Italos attributed to Christ’s divine nature in its relationship to the One/the Father. It is instructive to compare Eustratios’ words about the

107 Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo di Eustrazio*, p. 9; A. Rigo, M. Trizio, “Eustratios of Nicaea: A Hitherto Unknown ‘Master of Rhetors’ in Late Eleventh Century”, in C. Dendrinos, I. Giarenis (eds), *Bibliophilos: Books and Learning in the Byzantine World. Festschrift in Honour of Costas N. Constantinides* (Berlin / Boston: De Gruyter), 2021, p. 364.

108 Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo di Eustrazio*, pp. 10–11.

109 Joannou, “Eustrate de Nicée”; Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo di Eustrazio*, p. 11.

110 Joannou, “Eustrate de Nicée”, pp. 32–34.

assumed nature as reflected in the anathemas of 1117 to those of Italos in his Quaestio 68, corresponding, as we have seen, to his confession of faith condemned by the Synod of 1082:

**Anathemas 4 and 5 against Eustratios (Joannou 32)**

δ. "Ὅτι αὐτοῦ ἐφίεται καὶ ὕπ' αὐτοῦ ΤΕΛΕΙΟῦΝΤΑΙ, καὶ μᾶλλον τῶν ἄλλων, ὅσῳ καὶ τῷ ΤΕΛΕΙΟῦΝΤΙ *Λόγῳ* κατὰ μίαν ὑπόστασιν ἦνῳται.

ε. "Ὅτι πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐπιστρέφει, εἴπερ καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ποιήμασι τὸ πρὸς τὸν πλάσαντα νεύειν καὶ ἐπιστρέφειν ὡς ἐφικτὸν ἀνάβασίς ἐστι καὶ ΤΕΛΕΪΩΣΙΣ.

4. That it (the human nature) *desires It* (the divine nature) and **IS PERFECTED BY IT** even more than the others (the other rational beings), to the extent that it is united to the **PERFECTING *Logos*** in one hypostasis.

5. That it **returns toward It**, given that for all the creatures, **to be inclined toward the Creator and to return to It** as much as this is possible constitutes their ascent and **PERFECTION**.

**Italos, Quaestio 68, ed. Ketschakmadze, p. 181, ll. 4–9:**

Ἐπεὶ δὲ ἀρχὴ τῶν ὄντων αὕτη ὡς δέδεικται, φανερόν ὡς εἴ τις ἐτέρα εἴη μετὰ ταύτην, οὐκ ἀρχὴ ἀπλῶς, ἀλλὰ πρὸς μὲν τὰ μετ' αὐτήν, καὶ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἀρχῆς ἂν ἐπέχει καὶ αἰτίας λόγον· πρὸς δὲ τὴν ἀπλῶς ἀρχὴν οὐκέτι· ἀλλ' ἐπιστρέφουσα ἐστὶ πρὸς ἐκείνην, καὶ αὐτῆς ἐφιεμένη· καὶ ἡρτῆται διηνεκῶς **ΚΑὶ ΤΕΛΕΙΟῦΝΤΑΙ** ὡς εἰκός ἐνδεής οὖσα, καὶ τῆς ἐκεῖθεν ἐλλάμψεως δεομένη· οὐκοῦν καὶ μιμεῖται καὶ μιμῆσεται τὴν ἑαυτῆς ἀρχήν, ἀφ' ἧς προελήλυθεν·

As it (the One or the Good) is the principle of beings, as it has been shown, it is clear that, if there is another [principle] after this, it is a principle not absolutely, but only towards those coming after it. It holds its *logos* of being principle and cause from Him, but not any more towards the absolute principle. Rather, it **returns towards It, desires It, continuously depends on It, AND IS PERFECTED BY IT**, as it is reasonable, *being, so to say, deficient* and in need of the enlightenment coming from there. Therefore, it is imitating and would imitate its own principle, from which it proceeded.

I believe that these parallels show clearly enough that Eustratios has indeed rejected Italos' subordinationist doctrine as to the divine nature of Christ, which Italos had identified with the Being/Intellect compound, but has preserved the Origenian/Evagrian idea of the Christ consisting of an intellect-soul-body compound, which depends on the divinity (this time common to the Trinity), returns to it, is perfected by it, and has the pre-eminence over all the rational beings due to its hypostatic union to the Logos. Eustratios has also adopted Evagrius' distinction between the uncreated Wisdom—the divine Logos—and the created Wisdom of the Proverbs—the Christ-Intellect—as demonstrated by the following parallel:

---

**Anathema 18 against Eustratios  
(Joannou 33–34)**

ιη. Ὅτι εἰ κτίσμα κατὰ τὴν κάτω γέννησιν ἡ σοφία, κτίσμα πάντως τὸ κάτω γεγεννημένον· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, πῶς θεὸς ἀπλῶς; ὡς γὰρ θεὸς ὢν ὁ Λόγος οὐ κτίσμα ἐστίν, οὕτω κτίσμα ὑπάρχον τὸ πρόσλημμα, οὐ θεὸς ὡς ὁ Λόγος, ἀλλὰ τρόπον ἕτερον. καὶ ὁ τρόπος δηλός, ὅτι τῷ θεῷ ἐνυπόστατον.

18. [Eustratios has said] that, **if Wisdom is a creature according to its birth here-below, the one born here-below is a creature by all means.** If so, how is it God simply? *Just as the Logos, being God, is not a creature, so also the assumed nature, being a creature, is not God as the Logos is but in another manner.* And the manner [in which it is God] is clearly [the fact] that it is enhypostasised.

---

**Evagrius, Scholia ad Proverbia, s. 88  
(ad Prov. 7, 4):**

88. Ἀδελφὴ ἡμῶν ἡ σοφία ἐστίν, διότι ὁ ποιήσας τὴν ἀσώματον φύσιν πατήρ καὶ ταύτῃν πεποίηκεν. Σοφίαν δὲ ἐνταῦθα λέγει οὐ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ τὴν θεωρίαν σωμάτων καὶ ἀσωμάτων καὶ τῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς κρίσεως καὶ προνοίας, ἥς εἰδὸς ἐστὶ καὶ ἡ φρόνησις καὶ ἡ γνῶσις καὶ ἡ παιδεία καὶ ἡ σύνεσις.

s. 88 (ad Prov. 7, 4: “Say that Wisdom is your sister, take prudence a kinswoman for yourself”)

“Wisdom” is our “sister”, because the Father who has created the incorporeal nature has also created her. *Here he does not designate by “Wisdom” the Son of God but the Contemplation of the bodies and the bodiless and of the judgment and the providence which are in these*, whose different kinds are prudence, science, instruction and intelligence.

---

All this shows that Eustratios indeed wanted to escape the condemned subordinationism of Italos but also that he wanted to preserve the basic Origenist structure of Christian metaphysics, as can also be seen in Petritsi's expositions. However, how did Eustratios handle the metaphysical content of the consubstantiality of the Trinity? As we have seen, Petritsi had found this metaphysical content in a—presumably new—identification of the Trinity with the highest triad in Proclus' metaphysical system, the One, the Limit, and Infinity, while identifying Evagrius' Christ-Intellect with Proclus' Compound (μικτόν), which Petritsi called the First Being and the First Intellect.<sup>111</sup> Now, what is Eustratios' solution to this problem? To this question, the anathemas, which had not found fault with Eustratios' Trinitarian theology, do not give any answer but the answer can be found in Eustratios' commentary on the second book of the Posterior Analytics of Aristotle. There, commenting Aristotle's statement "The things we seek are equal to those we understand. We seek four things: the fact, the reason why, if something is, what something is" (Anal. Post. II.1 89b23–25, transl. Jonathan Barnes), Eustratios says, among others, the following:

---

Eustratios, *In Analyticam posteriorem* II, p. 9, 35–10, 32

---

English translation

ὥσπερ τὸ ἐν πρώτιστον ἀπάντων ἐστὶ  
καὶ ἐξηρημένον τῶν ἐξ αὐτοῦ προϊόντων,  
ἄρρητόν τε παντὶ λόγῳ καὶ ἀφραστον καὶ  
ἄγνωστον πάσῃ γνῶσει καὶ ἄληπτον,

Just as the One is First among all  
things and is abstracted from those  
that come out from It, as it is inex-  
pressible and unspeakable for all

---

111 I write "presumably new", because David Evans, whom I consider the most important precursor to my studies on fifth, sixth-century Origenism, had suggested, in D.B. Evans, "The Christology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite", in *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 41.1–2 (2001), pp. 154–155, that this identification is already there in Pseudo-Dionysius. Yet, I am doubtful about this identification, which Evans treats quite briefly. The Trinitarian theology of Pseudo-Dionysius is a very difficult question, most of all because, as I have been able to demonstrate recently, the Greek text of Pseudo-Dionysius, probably written in the 480s, had undergone a thorough re-edition and re-writing in the 530s, 540s, during the Second Origenist Controversy, which eminently affected the trinitarian passages (see Perczel, "Notes on the Earliest Greco-Syriac Reception of the Dionysian Corpus", in M. Edwards, D. Pallis, D. Steiris (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Oxford: OUP, 2022; and I. Perczel, "Christology and the Eucharist in Two Redactions of Pseudo-Dionysius", in: G. Klima (ed), *The Metaphysics and Theology of the Eucharist—A Historical-Analytical Survey of the Problems of the Sacrament* (Cham: Springer), 2023, pp. 1–29). The original version is preserved in the Syriac translation of Sergius of Reshaina and in the testimonies to the first reception of the Corpus (Perczel, "Notes on the Earliest Greco-Syriac Reception"). Thus, drawing conclusions on Dionysius' trinitarian doctrine uniquely based on the sixth-century rewriting of the Corpus is necessarily misleading.

(cont.)

**Eustratios, *In Analyticam posteriorem* II, p. 9, 35–10, 32**

**English translation**

αἰτία πρωτίστη διὰ πάντων χωροῦσα τῶν ἐξ αὐτῆς καὶ μηδενὸς τῶν μετ' αὐτήν ἀπολειπομένη, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ ἡ τοῦ εἶ ἐστι ζήτησις ὑπερήπλωται καὶ καθ' ἑαυτήν πρὸ τῶν λοιπῶν τεθεώρηται καὶ ταῖς ἄλλαις παρέπεται, οὐκ εἶδος ζητούσα καθ' ἑαυτήν, οὐκ αἷτιον, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι ἀπλῶς. [...] καὶ ὥσπερ ἐκεῖ τὸ πέρας φασὶ καὶ τὸ ἄπειρον ἐκ τῆς πρώτης αἰτίας προϋφίστασθαι, τὸ μὲν τὰ ὄντα ὀρίζον καὶ αἷτιον τοῖς πᾶσιν ὑπάρχον μονιμότητος καὶ συνοχῆς, τὸ δὲ τοῦ εἰς ἀπογεννήσεις προῖέναι καὶ τοῦ πληθύνεσθαι, οὕτως ἐνταῦθα τὸ μὲν τί ἐστι καὶ ὁ ὅρος τῷ πέρατι ἐοικῶς τὴν ἐκάστου παρίστησιν ιδιότητα, περατοὶ δὲ καὶ ὀρίζει καὶ συνέχει τὰ ὀριστά, καὶ ποιεῖ παραμένειν ἐν ταῖς σφῶν ὑπάρξεσι, τὸ δὲ εἰ ὑπάρχει τῷδε τόδε ἀρχὴν συνθέσεως καὶ πληθὺς παρέχεται ταῖς ζητήσεσι, δυνάζον ἢδη τὰ πράγματα καὶ ἄλλο μὲν παριστῶν τὸ περὶ οὗ ζητούμενον. καὶ ἔτι ὥς τὸ ὄν ἐκεῖ μικτὸν ἐκ τοῦ πέρατος καὶ τῆς ἀπειρίας φασὶ καὶ τριαδικὸν τοῦτο τιθέασιν, μίγμα μὲν ὄν τῶν εἰρημένων δυοῖν, τὸ ἐν δὲ ἔχον τὸ τὴν μίξιν ἀπεργαζόμενον, οὕτω δὴ κἀνταῦθα τὸ διότι ὑπάρχει τῷδε τόδε τὸν τε ὅρον ἔχει τῇ ἀποδόσει τῆς αἰτίας ἀναφαινόμενον καὶ τὸ εἶναι τῷδε τόδε ὁμολογούμενον, καὶ τὸ εἶναι ἀπλῶς ἄμφω τοὺς ὅρους τοῦ συμπεράσματος, καὶ τριαδικὴν τὴν ἅπασαν σύνθεσιν τῶν τε ἄκρων καὶ τοῦ μέσου. [...] εἰ δὲ βούλει, τὰ μὲν πρῶτα σιγῇ ἐάσθων ὥσπερ ἐν ἀδύτοις ἱεροῖς ἀπο-

word, unknowable and ungraspable for all knowledge, First Cause, which traverses all things that originate from It and not abandoning any one from those that come after It, so also the question about “if something is” extends over all and is considered in itself before all the others, and accompanies all the others, in itself not asking about a species, or about a cause, but simply about existence itself. [...] Just as it is said *there* that the Limit and the Infinity had been established before all from the First Cause, the first [that is, the Limit] defining the beings and being the cause of stability and coherence for all things, while the second [that is, Infinity] being the cause of proceeding to new births and of multiplication, so also *here* the “what something is” and the definition, which is alike to the Limit, shows the property of each thing, limits, defines and maintains the things defined and makes them remain in their own existences, while the question “whether something is in this way?” gives the principle of combination and of multiplicity to the questions, by this fact already duplicating the things, and presents the subject of the query as something else. Moreover, just as *there* it is said that the Compound is constituted of the Limit

(cont.)

Eustratios, *In Analyticam posteriorem* II, p. 9, 35–10, 32

English translation

κεκρυμμένα, τό τε αἰτίον ἔν καὶ τὰ ἐξ  
ἐκείνου δεικνυμένα τε καὶ ἐκφαινόμενα,  
οὐ ποιούμενα οὐδὲ παραγόμενα· ἐκ τῶν  
ποιουμένων δὲ ὁ λόγος γινέσθω, καὶ ἔστω  
πρῶτον τὸ ὄν, ταὐτὸν δὲ εἰπεῖν τὸ νοητόν,  
εἴτα ἡ ζωὴ, ταὐτὸν δὲ εἰπεῖν ἡ νόησις,  
εἴτα ὁ νοῦς, ταὐτὸν δὲ εἰπεῖν τὸ νοοῦν,  
καὶ ἔσχατον ἡ ψυχὴ.

and the Infinity and this [principle] is posited as triadic, being a mixture of the aforementioned two, while the One is completing the mixing, so also *here* the question of “why is something this way?” shows the definition by attributing the cause and confesses that something is in the way it is, as well as the simple existence of the two definitions of the conclusion, and the triadic nature of the entire composition of the two extreme terms and of the middle. [...] However, if you agree, let us keep the first things in silence, as if hidden in holy sanctuaries, namely the one Cause and those that are shown and shining forth from It but are neither created nor made, and let us start our discourse from the created things, among which let Being be the first, that is to say, the Intelligible, then [second] the Life, that is to say, the Intellection, then [third] the Intellect, that is to say, the Intelligent being, and last the Soul.

This carefully constructed text, seemingly intended to explain the principles of Aristotelian semantics and the construction of the syllogisms by their analogy to universal metaphysics, is in fact intended to formulate Eustratios’ metaphysical system, thoroughly inspired by Proclus, with reminiscences of Pseudo-Dionysius. According to this system, there are three divine principles, which “are neither created nor made”—these are “the one Cause and those that are shown and shining forth from It”, that is, the Limit and the Infinity, while the



series of the created things begins with Being, which is identical with the universal Intellect, having a threefold structure, that is, consisting of the Intelligible/Being, of Intellection/Life, and of the Intelligent being/Intellect, after which comes the Soul, whose life, as Eustratios explains in the continuation, is in discursive thought.

This system is directly derived from that of Proclus but contains the same simplifications thereof as those of Petritsi, thus omitting the complicated hierarchical structures of the intelligible, intelligible and intellectual, and intellectual principles, which Proclus identifies with the many gods of pagan polytheism, and reducing the system to the divine Triad/Trinity, and the first universal creature, which is the First Being/First Intellect. This is in fact the same system as the one that we find in Petritsi's commentaries on the *Elements* but also in Petritsi's *Prologue* to his lost translation of the Psalms. What we do not find, though, is the explicit identification of the One with the Father, the Limit with the Logos, and the Infinity with the Holy Spirit, and finally the Compound with the Christ-Intellect being the universal intellect and being also the assumed human nature. However, the expressions used by Eustratios make this identification necessary. Thus, the only difference between this system and that of Petritsi consists in these explicit identifications by the latter. This difference is well explainable by the stricter Church censorship in Byzantium, and the relative freedom provided by the Georgian language. The importance of this passage for Eustratios' metaphysics as well as for understanding the environment of Nicholas of Methone's *Anaptyxis* has been indicated by Angelou.<sup>112</sup> Yet, without the parallels in Petritsi, it was nearly impossible to recognize that Eustratios speaks here of the Holy Trinity in metaphysical terms, so this has not been mentioned by Angelou.

#### 4 Petritsi, a Possible Pupil of Eustratios, and the Peculiarities of His Text of the *Elements of Theology*

As a conclusion to this lengthy analysis of the respective metaphysical and theological systems of Italos, Eustratios, and Petritsi, I would propose that Petritsi was closer to Eustratios than to Italos and perhaps he was even his pupil. He could have studied with Eustratios when the latter was *Maistōr*, that is, teacher of rhetoric, in the Patriarchal School of Constantinople, in the years between 1086 and 1090, or perhaps later, during Eustratios' time as *oikou-*

<sup>112</sup> Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, pp. lv–lvi.

*menikos didaskalos*. Nothing prevents nor proves him to be identical with the “Abazg Grammarian”, the addressee of one of Italos’ letters but, be this as it may, he seems to owe his metaphysical and theological formation to Eustratios. Eustratios’ school must have been both a continuation of Italos’ school and an independent one, not situated any more in the *Magnaaura Pandidakterion*, the imperial University of Constantinople, but in the rival *Patriarchal School*, and breaking away from the traditions of the condemned courtier of the Dukids. Petritsi could move to Georgia after 1117, Eustratios’ condemnation, but this could have happened earlier, too, as David the Builder was inviting Georgian intellectuals, well trained in Byzantium, to teach in the newly founded Gelati monastic school.

Petrtsi as a pupil of the *Patriarchal School* could have had access to the School’s rich library, where he could have read a wide range of philosophical and patristic authors whose impact can be detected in his works, including most works by Proclus. Just like in the case of Eustratios, the “Great and the Small Theologies”, that is, the *Platonic Theology* and the *Elements of Theology*, as well as Proclus’ commentaries on the *Timaeus*, the *Parmenides*, the *Republic*, and *Alkibiades*, have influenced Petritsi’s thought and his metaphysical system, along with the texts of the Cappadocian Fathers, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, and even Symeon the New Theologian. He might have got his own copy of the *Elements of Theology*, which he translated when he was back in Georgia in the Gelati monastic school, also in the library of the Patriarchal School. This might explain the peculiarities of his text of the *Elements*, which differs in many respects from the Byzantine textual tradition with its three branches as established by Dodds and re-examined by Carlos Steel. Yet, as we know very little about the Patriarchal School and know nothing on its library, this remains highly speculative and is not more than an explicative hypothesis.

In Petritsi’s text of the *Elements* not only is there a difference in the chapter structure—namely that Petritsi’s copy omitted Proposition 149 yet added another proposition, inexistent in the extant Greek copies and indicated by the number 128bis—but there are also numerous major differences in the texts of many propositions, which would be difficult to explain by Petritsi’s loose translation method, or by his misunderstanding the text. A general difference can be observed in the following peculiarities. It seems that the text of the *Elements* had suffered extended corruption by iotacism in the pre-eleventh century tradition. This must have happened in the phase when the text was copied in uncial manuscripts. To this, one should add that uncial manuscripts rarely had a thoroughgoing accentuation and aspiration, or a clear distinction of words. This must have resulted in insecurity in distinguishing ἐν from ἔν, εἰ from ῥ, ῑ, or ῒ, τό from τῶ etc. and also in distinguishing similarly sounding

words or clauses. Apparently, when the uncial manuscripts were transcribed into minuscules in the middle-Byzantine period, this meant more than a simple copying; it needed decisions in these questions, which also meant a thorough re-interpretation of the texts transmitted in the uncial tradition. As the transcription of important texts was carried out in scriptoria, where one person was reading the texts and a few scribes were putting down what they had heard, the interpretation was the task of the person reading out the text. He had to distinguish the words and to dictate the secondary signs. Finally, the versions of the scribes had to be checked.

One can observe that the middle and late Byzantine textual tradition of the *Elements of Theology*, represented by all our extant Greek manuscripts, is fairly consistent in the interpretation of these variants, which indicates that all the three families distinguished by Dodds go back to the same standardisation procedure, carried out presumably in one scriptorium. At the same time, Petritsi's text, Geo according to Dodds' sigla, is independent of the Byzantine standardisation. Nor does it stand to reason that Geo is following the tradition of family  $\gamma$  according to Dodds' sigla, that is, the Greek text transmitted by P (Parisinus 2423, saec. xiii), and Q (Marcianus 316, saec. xiv). In fact, whenever Geo's versions correspond to one or another in the Byzantine textual tradition, they may coincide with those of either one of the three families, a fact that also indicates that Petritsi's text was independent of the standardised Byzantine text. Statistically, Geo has most common readings with Moerbeke's putative original, and often Geo and W are the only witnesses to a certain variant reading.

All this seems to indicate that all our Greek manuscripts of the *Elements*, as well as the one that had served as model for Moerbeke's translation, are coming from a standardised Byzantine version. Apparently, this was the text read in the schools of Psellos and of Italos, that is, the text that was available in the *Magnaúra Pandidakterion*. Carlos Steel has made a compilation of all the citations of Psellos from the *Elements*, and came to the conclusion that the variants correspond to the family  $\beta$ , represented by Marcianus 678, saec. xiii–xiv (M) and Moerbeke's putative original (W), incidentally to PQ, having no community with the family  $\alpha$ , issuing from Nicholas of Methone's *Exposition* (Steel 2021, 36–37). This might indicate that what I call the standardised Byzantine version was created in a scriptorium of the *Magnaúra Pandidakterion*, perhaps under Psellos' supervision. However, Petritsi might have found a different copy either in the *Patriarchal School* or elsewhere, which was lacking the standardisation of the *Magnaúra* copy, was of inferior quality in many respects, and was not used in the subsequent Byzantine tradition. However, Petritsi's version has its own value for the history of the text. In a few cases it preserves a better variant than the standard Byzantine text, and often it has a slightly or radically different text.

The annotated translations in *Appendix 2* to this study of Propositions 29 to 32 and of 61, 62 of the Georgian version are destined to give a taste of the variants and the philological challenges presented by Petritsi's text.

The variants in these propositions show that, often, W and Geo are the only witnesses to a certain variant, over against  $\omega$ , that is, the entire Greek manuscript tradition. Such are the cases recorded in *Appendix 2*, notes 9, 12, 21, 26, 28. Among these, notes 12, 26, and 28 are meaningful and can be considered the correct meaning over against  $\omega$ . In a number of cases, Geo displays a variant not attested in the Byzantine tradition, including W. Such are those recorded in the same *Appendix 2*, notes 6, 11, 13, 14, which belong together; 15, 19, 24, 25, which belong together; and 28, 29, 31–34, which belong together. Such are also the variants mentioned in notes 1 and 2, too, but they may not be real variants in Geo but Petritsi's additions. Among the above, 11 and 29 show a standard variation, Geo reading the future  $\xi\sigma\tau\alpha\iota$  instead of the present tense  $\xi\sigma\tau\iota$  of Byz, which is a variation carried throughout the text of the *Elements*. Notes 13 and 14 present perfectly possible variants according to the proposition, while the variant of Byz also makes good sense. Note 15 presents a typical variation in the accentuation, therefore of standardisation. Yet, it misses a parallel structure and, therefore, is erroneous. In the case of 19, the standard Byzantine text, including W, is manifestly corrupt, and Geo is the only witness to preserve the correct reading. Notes 24 and 25 present interesting variants, which are most probably wrong. Note 28 is a case of corruption in the standard Greek text through the misreading of an  $\upsilon$  (*upsilon*) for a  $\nu$  (*nu*), a common scribal error, where only W and Geo preserve the correct reading. The editors (Portus followed by Dodds) emended the text to make sense but ignored that their proposal coincided with the reading of W, which, in the standard Byzantine tradition, alone presents a sensible reading. As the text was also affected by iotacism, W and Geo gave different solutions, which do not differ in the meaning and are equally sensible. Note 31 is another typical variation between  $\tau\acute{o}$  in nominative and  $\tau\hat{\omega}$  in dative, which could be easily confounded due to their identical pronunciation. Yet, Geo's version seems to be more correct. Finally, notes 33 and 34 present readings that are entirely different from the Byzantine variant. Besides this, Geo sides with MPQ over against BCDO in the variants noted in 4 and 7, but with BCDM over against PQ and W in 18. It follows BPQW over against CD and M in note 20.

All this shows Geo's independence from the Byzantine tradition and, also, that any critical edition based on the extant Greek texts and on Moerbeke's translation can only aim at reconstructing the hyparchetype of Byz but not the original *Elements*. Most probably, the *Elements*, serving as a universal handbook of metaphysics, took different shapes in different schools, with such a

wide range of variations that it would be vain to aim at reconstructing the original text. A collation of Geo's readings with the witnesses of Byz also shows that, within the latter tradition, the  $\alpha$  group, that is, BCDE given in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation*, upon which E.R. Dodds had based his edition, is a late and secondary development of the Byzantine standardised version, its variant readings not being endorsed by any one of the early witnesses.

## 5 Petritsi and Nicholas of Methone

In the previous part, treating Eustratios' and Petritsi's Platonist metaphysico-theological systems, I have shown how intricately these systems incorporate the Neoplatonist elements borrowed from Proclus into the Christian theological thought that is called in the anti-heretical literature "Origenism". I have also shown that, in a way much more critical of Proclus and leaning toward Plotinus, Italos was creating a similar synthesis.<sup>113</sup> Looking for the possible opponents against whom Nicholas of Methone's *Exposition* had been written, Angelou designated, on the one hand, Eustratios of Nicaea as a philosopher-theologian making heavy use of Proclus and, on the other hand, two contemporary teachers of the *Patriarchal School*, Nikephoros Basilakes and Michael of Thessalonike, as probable opponents teaching Origenist doctrines. Angelou speculates, based on Nicholas' anti-Origenist work on 1Cor 15, 28, that the expression of an Origenist interpretation of "so that God may be all things in all things" played a role in the downfall of Nikephoros and Michael.<sup>114</sup> All this seems to indicate that, after Eustratios had left his position of the *Maistōr* teaching rhetoric, his methods and ideas survived in the Patriarchal School.

However, Angelou wonders whether we can infer from Nicholas' refutation that Proclus' *Elements* were taught in any philosophy school outside of private circles:

It is significant that Nicholas did not refute Proclean doctrines in general but specifically the propositions of the *Elements of Theology*, chapter by chapter. We are entitled to infer that this "Hellenic" text was not merely read but studied in detail. We have no evidence though of its being taught in a school during the entire twelfth century; in fact we have no evidence, as we have said, of any official teaching of philosophy from the death of

<sup>113</sup> Italos' synthesis will be treated in more detail in Kraft, Perczel, "John Italos on the Soul".

<sup>114</sup> Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, p. lxiii.

Theodore of Smyrna till the appointment of Michael ὁ τοῦ Ἀγγιᾶλου as ὑπατος τῶν φιλοσόφων.<sup>115</sup>

Yet, this missing evidence is provided precisely by the *Proclus Ibericus*, that is, Petritsi's commented translation of the *Elements*, which is, as I mentioned in the exordium to this study, the closest parallel in Byzantino-Caucasian literature to Nicholas' *Exposition*, though the two are with opposite signs. Petritsi's *Prologue* to his translation and commentaries reveals the school environment in which the *Elements* were studied, even Petritsi explicitly calls the *Elements of Theology* a "handbook" of philosophy:

Let us add a few words also about reading, that is, *how one should read such handbooks*.<sup>116</sup> Actually, even about Socrates it has been said that he read as did small kids, repeatedly returning to what he had already read, for not only a formal aspect of reading should be adhered to, but the reading is for knowing and understanding. For this purpose, it is proper to mind separation and connection, returning, and extracting meaning from the previous passages and, in order to grasp the meaning unerringly, it is proper for us to use, together with the sounding and visibility of the word, dots and all the other diacritical marks, such as the acute accent—*oksia*, and the *varia*, which is grave, and the *perispomeni*, which is circumflex,<sup>117</sup> and all the rest. Moreover, we also should consider that loud reading ruins the contemplation because the pulsation of the voice carries along with it the contemplator—which is the soul. As much as this about this issue.<sup>118</sup>

This text shows, on the one hand, that Petritsi considered the *Elements* a school handbook and, on the other hand, that he was reading a fully aspirated and accentuated minuscule manuscript. However, as the breathings, the accents, and the solutions adopted for the iotacised words do not match the standard Byzantine textual tradition, this indicates that his minuscule manuscript was independent of the Byzantine standardisation of the *Magnaura Pandidakterion*.

115 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, p. lviii.

116 Petritsi uses here the Georgian expression *sa-stsavl-o tsigni* ("study book"), from the verb *stsavla*, "to study".

117 *Oksia*, *varia*, and *perispomeni* are Georgian transcriptions, according to the Byzantine pronunciation, of the names of the accents: ὀξεῖα, βαρεῖα, περισπωμένη sc. προσωδία, that is, acute, grave, and circumflex accent.

118 Ioanne Petritsi, *Opera. Tomus II*, p. 6; Ioanne Petritsi, *Proclus Diadochus—Platonic Philosopher*, pp. 118–119.

Thus, it seems to me that, after Italos' condemnation and after the abolition of the office of the Consul of the Philosophers, and with the activity of Eustratios of Nicaea, the main hub for teaching philosophy, although this was not necessarily recognised officially, had become the *Patriarchal School*, where Petritsi was a pupil for a while. When he moved to Georgia and founded his own school, he reproduced the teaching methods that he had learned in Constantinople. Also, he had taken a copy of the handbook of metaphysics that was in the focus of the teaching of his teacher Eustratios, which he translated and commented. Some decades later, Nicholas was engaging with the teachers in the Patriarchal School because of their Origenist leanings, and perhaps also because of their methodology of teaching Christian metaphysics with the help of the Proclian handbook. In fact, we have seen how inextricably Byzantine Origenist doctrine, represented by Italos, Eustratios, and Petritsi, had been entangled with Proclian metaphysics, and especially with the *Elements of Theology*. In his refutation of the theses of Propositions 29–32, about which we have seen that all the three authors had used them for explaining the intra-Trinitarian relations, Nicholas is not attacking Proclus on the grounds of his original purpose of establishing the laws of a hierarchic metaphysical universe that gives room to the Hellenic gods and demons, but he strives to prove that the logic of procession and reversion exposed in these propositions cannot be applied to the Holy Trinity. This seems to indicate that, even after Eustratios' condemnation, and Petritsi's departure for Georgia—although we do not know when the latter happened—the practice of using Proclus for Trinitarian and Christological speculations continued in Constantinople, and this, within a school environment. Thus, the *Proclus Ibericus* and Nicholas' *Expositions* are two independent witnesses to a school practice in Constantinople.

Why, then, were Petritsi and Nicholas of Methone using texts of the *Elements* belonging to different textual traditions, namely the latter being the reworked Byzantine standardised text of the group  $\alpha$  according to Dodds' taxonomy, while the former an otherwise unknown version, which I hypothetically identify with the version available in the *Patriarchal School*? Apparently, as no commentary on the *Elements* had been written before that of Petritsi, whose Georgian text was not available to Nicholas, there was no standard text that Nicholas could have refuted. Thus, he wrote his commentaries on the text that was available to him, and which was not precisely that of his opponents. To know more about the textual transmission of Petritsi's Greek original, Geo, one would need a thorough study of the way Eustratios is referring to the *Elements*. This is research for the future.

## 6 Conclusions

To resume the results of this study: The recognition that Petritsi most probably had not been a pupil of the *Magnaura Pandidakterion* under Psellos or Italos as it had been previously supposed, and that his metaphysical and theological system has its closest parallel in that of Eustratios of Nicaea, has manifold heuristic values. I believe that it assigns to Petritsi his proper place in the Byzantine philosophical tradition and presents him as a genuine continuator of Eustratios, rather than an odd outlier. This also confirms Michele Trizio's suggestion that the Byzantine Platonist renaissance was not quenched by the condemnations of Italos. Rather, it took a new turn. While Eustratios and Petritsi integrate the Byzantine Christian spiritual tradition more thoroughly into their philosophical systems than Psellos and Italos, they are also much less critical of the Neoplatonist metaphysics, and namely of Proclus, than their predecessors. Thus, Italos' condemnation did not put an end to Proclus' reception in Byzantium but rather gave it a new impulse. The suggestion that Petritsi was a pupil of the *Patriarchal School* of Constantinople may explain the oddities of the putative Greek text that he was using for his translation as, in the library of the School, he could have access to a copy of the *Elements*, which was independent of the standardised Byzantine edition used in the *Magnaura Pandidakterion*. As the latter text became the standard, later copyists stopped copying the version that we can reconstruct based on the *Proclus Ibericus*, so the latter remains the only witness—to our knowledge—of this version. Yet, an inquiry into contemporary authors using the *Elements*—and first of all, into Eustratios' writings, may reveal other examples for the usage of this version.

This study, together with another, twin study on Italos<sup>119</sup> has also shown how intricately the Byzantine Proclus Renaissance is intertwined with a renewal of Origenist speculation. This combination has been initiated by the mysterious author of the Dionysian Corpus, whose influence was paramount in Byzantium.<sup>120</sup> Finally, Petritsi's and Nicholas' commentaries on the *Elements of Theology*, although with opposite signs, seem to be independent witnesses to a school practice in Byzantium, which had used the *Elements* as a handbook of metaphysics—also of Christian metaphysics. Petritsi transferred this Constantinopolitan school practice to Georgia, from where it also entered Armenia with Symeon of Plndzahank's Armenian translation made in 1248.

119 See Kraft, Perczel, "John Italos on the Soul".

120 See, among others, I. Perczel, "Notes on the Earliest Greco-Syriac Reception of the Dionysian Corpus", in M. Edwards, D. Pallis, G. Steiris (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2022; and Perczel, "Christology and the Eucharist", pp. 1–29.



## Appendix 1: Critical Edition of the Beginning of John Italos' Quaestio 68

### Sigla

- B Vaticanus gr. 316, fol. 65<sup>r</sup>, saec. XIII  
 M Marcianus gr. Z. 265 (coll. 516), fol. 86<sup>v</sup>–87<sup>r</sup>, saec. XIII<sup>2</sup>  
 V Vindobonensis phil. gr. 203, fol. 102<sup>v</sup>–103<sup>r</sup>, saec. XV<sup>1</sup>  
 e EscorialensisX-I-II, fols 159<sup>v</sup>–160<sup>r</sup>, saec. XVI<sup>MED</sup>  
 m Monacensis99, fols 354<sup>v</sup>–355<sup>r</sup>, c. ann. 1550  
 n Matritensis 4754, fol. 119<sup>rv</sup>, c. ann. 1550  
 o Vaticanus gr. 1457, fol. 129<sup>v</sup>–130<sup>r</sup>, saec. XVI<sup>MED</sup>  
 p Parisinus gr. 2002, fols 254<sup>r</sup>–256<sup>r</sup>, ann. 1620

### Editions

- Jo Perikles Joannou (ed). 1956. *Ioannes Italos: Quaestiones quodlibetales (Studia patristica et byzantina, 4)*. Ettal: Buch-Kunstverlag, p. 135.  
 Ket Natela Ketschakmadze (ed). 1966. *Ioannis Itali Opera. Textum graecum secundum collationem a Gregorio Cereteli confectam edidit et praefatione instruxit N. Ketschakmadze*. Tbilisi: "Metsniereba", pp. 216–217.

Οἱ τῶν ἐλλήνων θεολογότατοι τριττὴν ἀρχικωτάτην ὑπόστασιν ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς εἶναι ὑποτίθενται, ὧν τὴν μὲν πρώτην ὃν προσαγορεύουσι· τὴν δὲ ἕτεραν νοῦν· καὶ ψυχὴν τὴν μετὰ ταύτας· πρὸ δὲ τούτων ἄλλο τι εἶναι λέγουσιν, ἐπέκεινα κατ' αὐτοὺς ὀνομαζόμενον, καὶ ἐν ἡδὴ καὶ τὰγαθόν· ταύτας οὖν τὰς ὑποστάσεις οὐχ ὡς ἔτυχε λέγοντες, οὐδὲ ἐξ ἐπινοίας ἀτέχνου, ἀλλ' ὡς αὐτὸν διίσχυρίζονται ἀποδεικνύντες. πρωτίστην μὲν γὰρ λέγουσιν εἶναι τῶν ὄντων ἀρχήν, ἧς τίνος ἀπλῶς τὰ ὄντα μετέχει, καὶ ἧς οὐδὲν ἐστὶ ὃ μὴ μετέχεται ὃν ἅμα καὶ μὴ ὄν· οὐχ' ἀπλῶς ἀλλ' ἄλλο τι προσαγορευόμενον. τίνος δὴ τὰ πάντα μετέχει, οὐ ῥάδιον εὐρεῖν, εἰρήσεται δ' ὁμῶς. οὐ γὰρ δὴ ψυχὴ τὸ μετεχόμενον, ἦν γὰρ ἂν ἅπαντα ἔμψυχα· καὶ οὐδὲν ἄρα ἦν ἀμέτοχον τῶν ὄντων ψυχῆς. δεῖ γὰρ ἐκ τῆς πρώτης αἰτίας ἐφηκεῖν τί εἰς τὰ ἀπ' αὐτῆς, εἴ γε ἀρχὴ τῶν τοιούτων ἐστὶ φύσει καὶ οὐ προαιρέσει μόνον. τῆς γὰρ ἄκρας ἀγαθότητος τὸ ἑαυτοῦ μεταδιδόναι τὸ πρῶτον τοῖς ἀπ' ἐκείνου γεγεννημένοις. ἐπεὶ δὲ οὐ πάντα ψυχῆς, οὐκ ἄρα ἀρχὴ τῶν ὄντων ψυχῆ. μήποτε δὲ τὸ ἐπέκεινα ψυχῆς, ὃ δὴ νοῦν προσαγορεύομεν; ἀλλ' ἐστὶ τί

3 πρὸ δὲ τούτων] BMVemno Jo, Ket / πρὸς δὲ τούτων p 4 τὰγαθόν] BMmnop Jo, Ket / τ' ἀγαθόν v / τὸ ἀγαθόν e 5 αὐτόν] BMVemn / mo in margine ἴσως αὐτοί / n in margine αὐτοί / αὐτοί p Jo, Ket 6 ἀρχήν] τὴν ἀρχήν p 7 καὶ μὴ ὄν· οὐχ' ἀπλῶς ἀλλ' ἄλλο τι] BMVemop / καὶ μὴ ὄν οὐχ' ἀπλῶς· ἀλλ' ἄλλο τι n 8 μετέχει] BMVemn Jo, Ket / μετεχόμενον op et omittit οὐ ῥάδιον ... ψυχὴ τὸ μετεχόμενον, quod addidit in margine secunda manus o 9 ψυχῆς] τῆς ψυχῆς p 12 τοῖς ἀπ' ἐκείνου γεγεννημένοις] MVemno Jo, Ket / ἐν τοῖς ἀπ' ἐκείνου γεγεννημένοις B | ψυχῆς] τῆς ψυχῆς p 13 ψυχῆς] τῆς ψυχῆς p

καὶ τούτου ἀμέθεκτον ὥσπερ καὶ τοῦ ὄντος. αἱ γὰρ στερήσεις οὐκ ὄντα καὶ μετέχουσι  
 του ἑνός· ἐπεὶ δὲ οὐχ ἅπαντα μετέχει ψυχῆς, οὔτε νοῦ, οὔτε ὄντος, τοῦ δὲ ἑνός οὐκ ἔστι  
 τί ἀμέτοχον, οὔτε μὴ ἐφίεμενον τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ—τούτου γὰρ ἕκαστον ἐφίεται καὶ μετέ-  
 χει ὡς δυνατόν—φανερὸν ὡς τὸ ἐν ἅρα καὶ τάγαθὸν ἀρχὴ τῶν ὄντων καὶ αἰτία ἐστὶ·  
 5 τούτου γὰρ ἅπαν κατὰ τὴν ἔνωσην ἀγαθυνόμενον ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ μετέχει καὶ ὃν ἐστὶ καὶ ἐν  
 καὶ ἀγαθὸν ὡς ἐφικτὸν ἐκάστω κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν.

Ἐπεὶ δὲ ἀρχὴ τῶν ὄντων αὕτη, ὡς δέδεικται, φανερόν ὡς εἴ τις ἐτέρα εἶη μετὰ ταύ-  
 την, οὐκ ἀρχὴ ἀπλῶς, ἀλλὰ πρὸς μὲν τὰ μετ’ αὐτήν, καὶ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ ἀρχῆς ἃν ἐπέχει καὶ  
 αἰτίας λόγον· πρὸς δὲ τὴν ἀπλῶς ἀρχὴν οὐκέτι, ἀλλ’ ἐπιστρέφουσά ἐστι πρὸς ἐκείνην,  
 10 καὶ αὐτῆς ἐφιεμένη· καὶ ἡρτῆται διηνεκῶς καὶ τελειοῦται ὡς εἰκὸς ἐνδεῆς οὔσα, καὶ  
 τῆς ἐκείθεν ἐλλάμψεως δεομένη· οὐκοῦν καὶ μιμεῖται καὶ μιμήσεται τὴν ἑαυτῆς ἀρχήν,  
 ἀφ’ ἧς προελήλυθεν· ἐν αὐτῇ γὰρ ἐστὶ, καὶ οὐκ ἀποτέτμηται εἰ καὶ ἀποτέτμηται πάλιν  
 καθάπερ καὶ τὸ ἀπὸ ἡλίου φῶς· οὐ γὰρ ἔξεστι λέγειν τὸ ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἐληλυθός, καὶ ταῦτα  
 τοιούτως καθάπαξ ἀποτετμήσθαι καὶ αὖθις εἶναι δύνασθαι.

## Appendix 2: Annotated Translations of Propositions 29–32 and 61–62 in the Georgian Translation of *Proclus' Elements of Theology*

(translation and notes by Levan Gigineishvili and István Perczel)

### *Sigla*

The sigla are those of E.R. Dodds, reinterpreted and supplemented according to the principles of the present study.

### *Codices*

- B Vaticanus 237, 14th c.
- C Vaticanus 626, 13th–14th c.
- D Ambrosianus 648 + 727, end of 14th c.
- E Parisinus 1256, 15th cent.
- G Parisinus 2045, xv. cent.
- L Leidensis Voss gr14, xvi. cent.

1 τούτου] τοῦ τούτου p 2 ψυχῆς] τῆς ψυχῆς p 3 τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ] M Vemnop Jo, Ket / τάγαθου B  
 4 τάγαθόν] B Me / τὸ ἀγαθόν Vmno p Jo, Ket 6 καὶ ὃν ἐστὶ καὶ ἐν καὶ ἀγαθόν] BM Vmno p Jo, Ket /  
 καὶ ὃν ἐστὶ ἐν καὶ ἀγαθόν e | δύναμιν] τὴν δύναμιν p 8 πρὸς μὲν τὰ μετ’ αὐτήν] BM Vmno, Jo, Ket /  
 πρὸς μὲν μετ’ αὐτήν e / πρὸς μὲν τὰ μετὰ τὴν αὐτήν p. | ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ ἀρχῆς] M Vemno / ἀπ’ αὐτῆς ἀρχῆς  
 B, Jo, Ket / ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ τῆς ἀρχῆς p. Interpunctum editorum alteravi. | ἐπέχει] BM Vmno p / ἐπέχει  
 Jo, Ket sine teste. 13 τὸ ἀπὸ ἡλίου φῶς] BM Vemno, Jo, Ket / τὸ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἡλίου φῶς p.

- M Marcianus 678, 13th/14th c.  
 O Bodleianus Laud. 18,1358.  
 P Parisinus 2423, 13th c.  
 Q Marcianus 316, 14th c.  
 Arg Codex Argenterianus, lost and only known from Schweigerhauser's description  
 W the putative original of William of Moerbeke's Latin translation  
 Geo the putative original of Ioanne Petritsi's Georgian translation  
 α first family of the Byzantine manuscripts, containing or issuing from Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation*, comprising mss BCDE  
 β second family of the Byzantine manuscripts, comprising MOWGLArg  
 γ third family of the Byzantine manuscripts, comprising PQ  
 ω consensus of codices BCDMPQ, and BCDMQ after Prop. 77  
 Byz. The consensus of all the manuscripts issuing from the Byzantine standardisation, including W

### *Editions*

Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, edition, translation, introduction and commentary E.R. Dodds, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963<sup>2</sup>.

Proclus, *Institutio Theologica*, ed. A. Portus, Hamburg, Ap. Rulandios, 1618, pp. 415–502.

Proclus, *Institutio Theologica*, ed. F. Creuzer, Frankfurt a. Main, In officina Broenneriana, 1822.

29. *Every essential procession*<sup>121</sup> *is accomplished through the likeness of those subsequent to those prior*. Now, if the producers make stand the like before the unlike, therefore, it is the likeness that makes stand the produced from the producers; for, in fact, the like are made like through the likeness and not through the unlikeness; therefore, the essential procession<sup>122</sup> in the downward movement will preserve the identity of the born towards the parent, and as that is

121 *πᾶσα* [κατ' οὐσίαν] πρόοδος *fortasse* Geo / *πᾶσα* πρόοδος Byz. It is very difficult to decide whether κατ' οὐσίαν was there in Geo, or Petritsi adds the adjective "essential" to Proclus' text. The extant Greek text several times speaks about "essential procession" (e.g. Prop. 31, p. 34, 28, Prop. 43, p. 44, 29), and "essential" or "natural reversion" (e.g. Prop. 34, p. 36, 20; 25–26). In Proclus, this most probably refers to the substance of the effect. Yet, apparently, Petritsi understands this adjective as indicating consubstantiality of the effect with the cause.

122 *ἡ οὖν* [κατ' οὐσίαν] πρόοδος *fortasse* Geo / *ἡ οὖν* πρόοδος PQ / *εἰ οὖν ἡ* πρόοδος BCDM + W (*si igitur processus*) + Dodds.

in a primary way, the same way it shines forth the subsequent, for in fact the latter has its hypostasis through likeness.<sup>123</sup>

30. *Everything that is produced from something*<sup>124</sup> immediately, is remaining in the producer and is produced<sup>125</sup> from it. In fact, if every product is of those remaining and first,<sup>126</sup> and is made perfect<sup>127</sup> through the likeness, the like coming to standing<sup>128</sup> before the unlike, then the product is somehow remaining in the producer.<sup>129</sup> In fact, if it were produced altogether, it would have no identity and remaining in the producer,<sup>130</sup> but would be altogether split from it.<sup>131</sup> However, if it has anything common and united to it, that will remain in it as it is remaining in itself.<sup>132</sup> Yet, if it only remains, it would not be produced and in no way would be separated from its cause, to which it belongs and become other, while it would remain. And if other, it is split and separated from it; and if separated, it will remain in it<sup>133</sup> and proceed from it so that which is

123 δι' ὁμοιότητος ἔχον τὴν ὑπόστασιν PQ + Geo / δι' ὁμοιότητος ἔχει τὴν ὑπόστασιν BCDM + W (*per similitudinem habet ypostasim*) + Dodds / δι' ὁμοιότητα ἔχει τὴν ὑπόστασιν ArgGL.

124 ἀπό τινος MPQ + W (*ab aliquo*) + Dodds + Geo / ὑπό τινος BCD

125 Petritsi translates here *πρόεισιν* by *tsarmoiarsebis*: “is produced” which permits him to translate *πρόοδος* in the next sentence by *tsarmonaarsi*: “product”. Usually he translates *πρόοδος* by *gzavna*, which means literally “sending” and is the Petritsian *terminus technicus* for procession. The reason might be that he wants to separate the procession of the persons of the Trinity, which he understood Proposition 29 to speak about, from production as creation.

126 μενόντων τε γίνεται καὶ τῶν πρώτων *fortasse* Geo / μενόντων τε γίνεται τῶν πρώτων ω + W + Dodds.

127 ἀποτελεῖται MPQ + Dodds + Geo / τελεῖται BCDO.

128 The Georgian term is *carmo-dg-omi*. Petritsi translates *ὑφίστημι*, “to establish”, “to bring to existence”, and *ὑφίσταμαι*, “to become established”, “to come to existence”, by derivatives of the verb “to stand” (*carmo-qen-eba*: inf.—“to make something stand”, *carmo-chin-eba*: inf. “to give birth”, “to make something be seen”, *dg-oma*: inf.—“to stand”, *carmo-dg-oma*: inf. “to come to standing”, *m-dg-omi*: act. part.—“that which is standing”). Apparently, he wants to avoid using the verb “to be”, which is precisely the reason why *ὑφίσταμαι* is considered a more general term than εἶναι by the Platonist philosophers. However, incidentally, he also translates *ὑφίστημι* by *carmo-a-ars-eba*: “make to exist”, derived from *ars*: “existent”, “being”.

129 μένει πη τὸ παραγόμενον W (*manet aliququaliter quod producitur*) + Geo / μένει πη καὶ τὸ παραγόμενον ω + Dodds.

130 “It would have no identity and remaining in the producer” may be an interpretative translation of οὐδὲν ἂν ἔχει ταῦτὸν πρὸς τὸ μένον, unless Geo had a radically different text, which is not likely here.

131 ἄλλ' ἔσται πάντῃ διακεκριμένον Geo *ut videtur* / ἄλλ' ἔσται πάντῃ διακεκριμένον ω + W + Dodds.

132 ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ μένει W (*in seipso manet*) + Geo *ut videtur* / ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ μένει PQ / ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ μένον ἦν BCDM + Dodds.

133 μένει δὲ ἐν ἐκείνῃ Geo / μένει δὲ ἐκείνῃ ω + W (*manet autem illa*) + Dodds.

remaining in it be separated.<sup>134</sup> In fact,<sup>135</sup> the product has identity with the producer and so remains in it, whereas by difference it proceeds from it. And is simultaneously alike through the identity, and also different. Therefore, it simultaneously remains and is produced and neither one is without the other.

31. *Everything that is produced from something essentially, reverts to that, from which it had proceeded.* In fact, if it were only to proceed but it would not revert<sup>136</sup> to the cause that had produced it,<sup>137</sup> then, it would not desire its cause; in fact, every desirer reverts towards that which it desires. All desire the Good, and its obtaining<sup>138</sup> is through their proximate cause. In fact, each thing desires its cause. For, from whichever each term has its being, from the same it also has the goodness; and from which the goodness, towards that the longing is in the first place; and towards which the longing is in the first place, towards that also the reversion.

32. *Every reversion is accomplished through the likeness of those reverting, to that, to which they revert.* In fact, everything strives towards the object of reversion<sup>139</sup> in order to be conjoined, and desires to participate in, and get tied with

134 ἵνα διακριθῇ μένον Geo *ut videtur* / ἵνα διακριθῇ μενούσης ω + W (*ut segregetur a manente*) + Dodds.

135 ἡ μὲν ἄρα Geo / ἡ μὲν ἄρα ω + W (*qua quidem*) + Dodds, *recte*.

136 ἐπιστρέφοι *plurimi codices graeci* + Dodds + Geo / ἐπιστρέφει M / ἐπιστρέφοιτο ArgGL + Cr. + *fortasse* W (*convertatur*).

137 “The cause that had produced it” translates τὸ αἴτιον τῆς προόδου ταύτης.

138 τεύξις BCDM + Dodds + Geo / τάξις PQgl + W (*ordo*).

139 τὸ γὰρ ἐπιστρεφόμενον πᾶν πρὸς τὸ παράγον συνάπτεσθαι σπεύδει *fortasse* Geo *recte* / τὸ γὰρ ἐπιστρεφόμενον πᾶν πρὸς πᾶν συνάπτεσθαι σπεύδει ω + W (*omne ad omne copulari festinat*) + Dodds, *manifeste e corruptione*. The version of the Greek manuscripts is manifestly corrupt. “All” cannot be the object of the conversion and the second πᾶν is most probably resulting from a scribal error. Based on the version in the translation, one might surmise that the original text was πρὸς ὃ ἐπιστρέφεται συνάπτεσθαι σπεύδει but, on the one hand, this would be a tautology (as it is indeed in the Georgian text) and, on the other, this would not explain the corruption in the Byzantine manuscripts. Our reconstruction is based on the commentary, where Petritsi gives a different translation of the same sentence: “In fact, all that reverts strives towards conjunction with its cause from where it was produced.” Probably, as is often the case, it is the commentary that preserves the original translation. “With its cause from where it was produced” seems to be a periphrastic translation of πρὸς τὸ παράγον, from where it was corrupted into πρὸς τὸ πᾶν, eventually corrected to πρὸς πᾶν for a better grammar. Proclus has stated in the previous, 31st, proposition that the object of reversion for each term is its cause. Compare this to Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* III, p. 16: πρὸς ἐκεῖνο δὴ οὖν καὶ συνάπτει [ἡ ὁμοιότης] τὸ πλῆθος ἀφ’ οὗ τὴν πρόοδον ἔλαχε (“therefore, [likeness] connects the multitude to that, from where it received its procession”).

it. Thus, likeness ties everything, as the unlikeness divides and separates. In fact, if the reversion<sup>140</sup> is a sort of participation and unification, and every participation and unification<sup>141</sup> is through likeness, therefore every reversion is accomplished through likeness.

61. *Every undivided and unitary power<sup>142</sup> is<sup>143</sup> cause of more,<sup>144</sup> whereas the divided, of less, and of inferior ones.<sup>145</sup>* In fact, as it has become divided,<sup>146</sup> it proceeded towards multiplicity. And if it is so, it has become more remote from the One and, if so, it will be less able than the One<sup>147</sup> and will be separated from that which encompasses it and be inferior, for the goodness of each thing<sup>148</sup> is to remain in its unity.

62. *Every multitude that is closer to the One will be<sup>149</sup> less in quantity than that which is farther away<sup>150</sup> but stronger in power.* In fact, it is more alike to the One due to its greater closeness,<sup>151</sup> and the One is the producer of all<sup>152</sup> without multiplication. Therefore, that which is most alike to It, is cause of more, for which reason it is most unitary of all and undivided.<sup>153</sup> In fact, that which is less multiplied is more akin to the One—the Cause and Producer of all.<sup>154</sup>

- 
- 140 εἰ οὖν ἡ ἐπιστροφή BPQ + W (*si igitur conversio*) + Dodds + *fortasse* Geo / εἰ οὖν ἐπιστροφή CD / ἡ οὖν ἐπιστροφή M.
- 141 πᾶσα δὲ κοινωνία καὶ συναφή δι' ὁμοιότητος W (*omnis autem communio et coniunctio per similitudinem*) + Geo / πᾶσα δὲ κοινωνία καὶ συναφή πᾶσα δι' ὁμοιότητος ω + Dodds.
- 142 "Undivided and unitary power" is a hendiadyoin translation for ἀμέριστος δύναμις.
- 143 οὕσα P + *fortasse* Geo / μέν οὕσα BCDMQ + Dodds / μένουσα W (*manens*)
- 144 μεϊζόνων ἐστὶ *fortasse* Geo / μεῖζων ἐστὶ Byz, *recte*.
- 145 ἐλαττόνων *fortasse* Geo / ἐλάττων Byz, *recte*. "Of less, and of inferior" is a hendiadyoin translation.
- 146 ἡ γὰρ μερίζεται W (*qua enim partitur*) + Geo *fortasse recte* / εἰ γὰρ μερίζεται ω + Dodds.
- 147 Petritsi connects τοῦ ἐνός to the preceding ἐλάττω δυνήσεται. However, most probably, τοῦ ἐνός should be connected to what follows: τοῦ ἐνός καὶ τοῦ συνέχοντος αὐτὴν ἀφισταμένη. See Dodds' translation: "as it falls away from the One which contains it in unity ..."
- 148 ἡπερ τὸ ἐκάστου ἀγαθόν Geo *fortasse recte* / εἴπερ τὸ ἐκάστου ἀγαθόν *coniecit* Portus + Dodds *sed habet et* W (*siquidem uniuscuiusque bonum, fortasse recte*) / εἴπερ ἐκάστου τὸ ἀγαθόν *coniecit* Creuzer / εἴπερ τὸ ἐκάστου ἀγαθόν ω *falso*.
- 149 πόσῳ μὲν ἔσται *fortasse* Geo / πόσῳ μὲν ἐστὶ Byz.
- 150 τῶν πορρωτέρω ω / τῶν πορρωτέρων P / W et Geo *non liquet*.
- 151 τῷ ἐγγύτερον *manifeste* Geo, *fortasse recte* / τὸ ἐγγύτερον Byz.
- 152 τὸ δὲ ἐν πάντων ὑποστατικόν *fortasse* Geo / τὸ δὲ ἐν πάντων ἦν ὑποστατικόν Byz.
- 153 ἡπερ ἐκεῖνο πάντων ἐνοειδέστερον ἔσται καὶ ἀμεριστότερον *manifeste* Geo / εἴπερ ἐκεῖνο πάντων ἐνοειδέστερον ἔσται καὶ ἀμεριστότερον, εἴπερ ἐκεῖνο ἐν BCDM + W + Dodds / ἐνοειδέστερον ἔσται καὶ ἀμεριστότερον, εἴπερ ἐκεῖνο ἐν PQ.
- 154 ὥς μὲν οὖν ἐνὶ τὸ ἦττον πεπληθυσμένον μάλλον συγγενές, τῷ πάντων αἰτίῳ καὶ παρακτικῷ *fortasse* Geo / ὥς μὲν οὖν ἐνὶ τὸ ἦττον πεπληθυσμένον μάλλον συγγενές, ὥς δὲ πάντων αἰτίῳ τὸ πλειόνων παρακτικόν—τοῦτο δέ, δυνατώτερον Byz.

## Bibliography

### *Primary Sources*

#### Manuscripts

- Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, P 206 sup. (Martini-Bassi 648)  
 Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, R 125 sup. (Martini-Bassi 727)  
 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud. Gr. 18  
 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 1256  
 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 2423  
 Vaticano (Città del), Vat. gr. 237  
 Vaticano (Città del), Vat. gr. 626  
 Venezia, Biblioteca nazionale Marciana, gr. Z. 512 (coll. 0678)  
 Venezia, Biblioteca nazionale Marciana, gr. Z. 521 (coll. 0316)

#### Printed Sources

- Eustratios de Nicaea, *In Analyticorum posteriorum librum secundum commentarium*, ed. M. Hayduck, Berlin, Georg Reimer, 1907.
- Ioane Petritsi, ნემესიოს ემესელი, ბუნებისათვის კაცისა. იოანე პეტრიწის თარგმანი [old Georgian translation by Ioane Petritsi of Nemesius of Emesa's *De natura hominis*], ed. S.R. Gorgodze, Tbilisi, Church Museum Editions, 1914.
- Ioanne Petritsi, *Opera. Tomus II, Commentaria in Procli Diadochi ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΩΣΙΣ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΚΗ*, eds S. Kaukchishvili, S. Nutsubidze, Tbilisi, Tbilisi State University, 1937.
- Ioanne Petritsi, *Opera. Tomus I, Procli Diadochi ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΩΣΙΣ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΚΗ, versio Hiberica*, ed. S. Kaukchishvili, with an introduction by M. Gogoberidze, Tbilisi, Tbilisi State University, 1940.
- Ioane Petritsi, *An Overview of the Platonic Philosophy of Proclus Diadochus* [Иоанэ Петрици, Рассмотрение Платоновской Философии Прокла Диадоха], eds N.R. Natadze, G. Tevzadze, Russian translation I.D. Pantskhava, *Filosofskoe Nasledie*, vol. 91, Moscow, Progress 1984.
- Ioane Petritsi, *Explanation of Proclus the Diadochus' Elements of Theology* [Modern Georgian translation], translation, introduction and commentary D. Melikishvili, Tbilisi, Tbilisi State University Press, 1999.
- Ioane Petritsi, *Kommentar zur Elementatio theologica des Proklos. Übersetzung aus dem Altgeorgischen, Anmerkungen, Indices und Einleitung*, translation, annotation and introduction L. Alexidze, L. Bergemann, Amsterdam / Philadelphia, B.R. Grüner, 2009.
- Ioane Petritsi, *Preface to the Book of Psalms*, in L. Gigineishvili, "Ioane Petritsi's Preface" (see below).
- Ioanne Petritsi, *Proclus Diadochus—Platonic Philosopher, Elements of Theology (Georgian Version), translation, introduction and commentaries by Ioane Petritsi, part 2*,

- Diplomatic Edition of MS H-1337*, ed. D. Melikishvili, N. Mirotadze, Tbilisi, Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation, 2016.
- Ioane Petritsi, *The Armenian Translation by Symeon of Pñdzahank' of Proclus Diadochos' Elements of Theology and Ioane Petritsi's commentary* (in Georgian), ed. M. Raphava, Tbilisi, Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation, 2017.
- John Italos, *Opera. Textum graecum secundum collationem a Gregorio Ceretel*, ed. N. Ketschakmadze, Tbilisi, Metsniereba, 1966.
- John Italos, *Quaestio 71*, in A. Kraft, I. Perczel, "John Italos on the Eternity of the World: A New Critical Edition of *Quaestio 71* with Translation and Commentary", in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 111.3 (2018), pp. 659–720.
- Marinus, *Vita Procli graece et latine*, ed. J.-F. Boissonade, Leipzig, Weigel, 1814.
- Nicholas of Methone, *Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου πλατωνικοῦ φιλοσόφου* / *Nicholas of Methone. Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*, ed. A.D. Angelou, Athens / Leiden, Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984; English translation in Robinson 2014, pp. 159–447.
- Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, edition, translation, introduction and commentary E.R. Dodds, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963<sup>2</sup>.
- Proclus, *Institutio Theologica*, ed. A. Portus, Hamburg, Ap. Rulandios, 1618, pp. 415–502.
- Proclus, *Institutio Theologica*, ed. F. Creuzer, Frankfurt a. Main, In officina Broenneriana, 1822.
- Proclus, *De malorum subsistentia* (= *De l'existence du mal*), ed. D. Isaac, in Proclus, *Trois études sur la providence*, vol. 111, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1982.
- Proclus, *Theologia Platonica* (= *Théologie platonicienne*), ed. H.-D. Saffrey, L.G. Westerink, 6 vols., Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1968–1997.
- Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, ed. B.R. Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum* 1, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1990.

### Secondary Literature

- Alexidze, L., "The Grades of Knowledge in the Works of Proclus and Ioane Petritsi", in *Matsne (Journal of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, Series for Philosophy and Psychology)*, 2(1984), pp. 41–47 [in Georgian].
- Alexidze, L., "Das Kapitel 129 der *Elementa der Theologie* des Proklos bei Ioane Petrici", in *Georgica (Zeitschrift für Kultur, Sprache und Geschichte Georgiens und Kaukasiens)* 17(1984), pp. 47–53.
- Alexidze, L., "Griechische Philosophie in den 'Kommentaren' des Joane Petrizi zur 'Elementatio Theologica' des Proklos", in *Oriens Christianus. Hefte für die Kunde des christlichen Orients*, 81(1997), pp. 148–168.
- Alexidze, L., "*Imago et Similitudo Dei* (Platon—Philon von Alexandrien—Kirchenväter—Ioane Petrizi)", in *Phasis* 12(2009), pp. 48–72.
- Alexidze, L., "Ioane Petritsi", in Gersh (ed), *Interpreting Proclus*, 2014, pp. 229–244.



- Alexidze, L., "The Demiurge in Ioane Petritsi's Commentary on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in *Revista Latinoamericana de Filosofía* 47.1(2021), pp. 149–165.
- Calma, D., (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes. Volume 2*. Leiden / Boston, Brill, 2021.
- Chelidze, E., "The Life and the Literary Activities of Ioane Petritsi", [in Georgian] Part 1, in *Religia* 1994/3–5(1994), pp. 113–126.
- Chelidze, E., "The Life and the Literary Activities of Ioane Petritsi", [in Georgian] Part 2, *Religia* 1995/1–3, pp. 76–89.
- Dodds, E.R., "The Parmenides of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic 'One'", in *The Classical Quarterly* 22, No. 3/4 (Jul.-Oct. 1928), pp. 129–142.
- Evans, D.B., "The Christology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite", in *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 41.1–2(2001), pp. 147–155.
- Géhin, P., "Introduction", in Évagre le Pontique, *Scholies aux Psaumes, vol. 1 (Psaumes 1–70)*, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, pp. 11–270.
- Gersh, S., "Universals, Wholes, *Logoi*: Eustratios of Nicaea's Response to Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus. Volume 2*, pp. 32–55.
- Gersh, S., (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus: From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Gigineishvili, L., "The One, the Limit, and the Infinity in the Philosophy of Ioanne Petritsi", in *Phasis* 2–3(2000), pp. 141–146.
- Gigineishvili, L., "The Doctrine of Logos and Intellect in the Philosophy of Ioanne Petritsi: Evagrian Origenist Influences", in L. Perrone (ed.), *Origeniana Octava. Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition. Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress. Pisa, 27–31 August 2001*, Leuven, Peeters, 2003, pp. 1139–1148.
- Gigineishvili, L., *The Platonic Theology of Ioane Petritsi*, Piscataway, Gorgias Press, 2007.
- Gigineishvili, L., "Ioane Petritsi's Preface to his annotated translation of the Book of Psalms", in T. Nutsubidze, C.B. Horn, B. Lourié (eds) with the contribution of A. Ostrovsky, *Georgian Christian Thought and its Cultural Context: Memorial Volume for the 125th Anniversary of Shalva Nutsubidze (1888–1969)*, Leiden, Brill, 2014, pp. 194–235.
- Gigineishvili, L., "Proclus as a Biblical Exegete: Bible and its Platonic Interpretation in Ioane Petritsi's Commentaries", in D.A. Layne, D.D. Butorac (eds), *Proclus and his Legacy*, Berlin / Boston, de Gruyter, 2017, pp. 241–248.
- Gigineishvili, L., Van Riel, G., "Ioane Petritsi: A Witness of Proclus' Works in the School of Psellus", in A.Ph. Segonds, C. Steel (eds), *Proclus et la théologie Platonicienne. Actes du Colloque International de Louvain (13–16 mai 1998). En l'honneur de H.D. Saffrey et L.G. Westerink*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2000, pp. 572–587.
- Gouillard, J., "Le procès officiel de Jean l'Italien: Les actes et leurs sous-entendus", in *Travaux et Mémoires* 9(1985), pp. 133–174 [edition and French translation of the Greek text on pp. 137–161].

- Gouillard, J., “Le Synodikon de l’orthodoxie, édition et commentaire”, in *Travaux et Mémoires* 2(1967), pp. 1–316 [the anathemas can be found at 57.184–61.246].
- Günther, H.-C., “Zu Ioane Petritzis Proklusübersetzung”, in *Georgica (Zeitschrift für Kultur, Sprache und Geschichte Georgiens und Kaukasiens)* 22(1999), pp. 46–55.
- Günther, H.-C., *Die Übersetzungen der Elementatio theologica des Proklos und ihre Bedeutung für den Proclustext, Einige vorläufige Bemerkungen zur Bedeutung von Petrizis Übersetzung der Elementatio für die Textkonstitution*, Leiden, Brill, 2007.
- Iremadze, T., “Die *Elementatio theologica* des Proklos im Kontext der kaukasischen Philosophie,” in Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus. Volume 2*, pp. 139–153.
- Iremadze, T., “Die erkennende Seele des Menschen und ihre Funktion im Proklos-Kommentar von Joane Petrizi”, in *Quaestio (Yearbook of the History of Metaphysics)*, 15(2015), pp. 201–209.
- Iremadze, T., “Joane Petrizi”, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/joane-petrizi/>.
- Iremadze, T., “Zur Rezeption und Transformation der Aristotelischen und Proklischen Ursachenmodelle bei Joane Petrizi”, in *Archiv für mittelalterliche Philosophie und Kultur*, Heft XVII(2011), pp. 96–111.
- Joannou, P., “Eustrate de Nicée. Trois pièces inédites de son procès (1117)”, in *Revue des études byzantines*, 10(1952), pp. 24–34.
- Kekelidze, K., *History of the Old Georgian Literature*, vol. 1. First edition: Tbilisi, Rustaveli Institute of the History of Georgian Literature, 1960; second edition: Tbilisi, “Metsniereba”, 1980 [კორნელი კეკელიძე. ძველი ქართული ლიტერატურის ისტორია. თბილისი, “მეცნიერება”].
- Kraft, A., Perczel, I., “John Italos on the Eternity of the World: A New Critical Edition of *Quaestio* 71 with Translation and Commentary”, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 111/3(2018), pp. 659–720.
- Kraft, A., Perczel, I., “John Italos on the Soul, the Resurrection and the Apokatastasis: A new critical edition of *Quaestiones* 86 and 89 with translation and commentary” (forthcoming).
- Krausmüller, D., “Between Tritheism and Sabellianism: Trinitarian Speculation in John Italos’ and Nicetas Stethatos’ Confessions of Faith”, in *Scrinium* 12(2016), pp. 261–280.
- Marr, N., *Ioane of Petrissi: A Georgian Neoplatonist*, St. Petersburg, Russian Imperial Archeological Society, 1909 [Март, Н., *Иоанн Петрицкий—Грузинский Нео-платоник*. Санкт-Петербург: Императорское Русское Археологическое Общество].
- Melikishvili, D., “On the Question of the Unity and Individuality of the Linguistic Style of the Gelati Literary School”, in *Transactions of the Gelati Academy of Sciences* 2(1996), pp. 65–74 [დამანა მელიქიშვილი. გელათის სალიტერატურო

- სკოლის ენობრივი სტილის ერთიანობისა და ინდივიდუალობის საკითხ-ისათვის. (გელათის მეცნიერებათა აკადემიის უწყებანი).
- Melikishvili, D., "The Gelati Monastic and Literary School", in *Bulletin of Kutaisi University* 1–2(1995), pp. 6–24 [in Georgian].
- Perczel, I., "Christology and the Eucharist in two redactions of Pseudo-Dionysius", in G. Klima (ed), *The Metaphysics and Theology of the Eucharist—A Historical-Analytical Survey of the Problems of the Sacrament*, Cham, Springer Nature (forthcoming).
- Perczel, I., "Notes on the Earliest Greco-Syriac Reception of the Dionysian Corpus", in M. Edwards, D. Pallis, G. Steiris (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022, pp. 172–204.
- Perczel, I., "Notes sur la pensée systématique d'Evagre le Pontique", in M. Girardi, M. Marin (eds), *Origene e l'alessandrinismo cappadoce (III–IV secolo): Atti del v Convegno del Gruppo Italiano di ricerca su 'Origene e la tradizione alessandrina'* (Bari, 20–22 settembre 2000), Bari, Edipuglia, 2002, pp. 277–297.
- Robinson, J.M., *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th-century Byzantium*, A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Graduate Program in Medieval Studies, Notre Dame (Indiana), 2014.
- Siniosoglou, N., *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Steel, C., "La tradition du texte de l'*Elementatio theologica* de Proclus", in G. Aubry, L. Brisson, Ph. Hoffmann, L. Lavaud (eds), *Relire les Éléments de théologie de Proclus. Réceptions, interprétation antiques et modernes*, Paris, Hermann, 2021, pp. 27–68.
- Steel, C., "Neoplatonic Sources in the Commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics* by Eustratios and Michael of Ephesus", in *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale* 44(2002), pp. 49–57.
- Trizio, M., "Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium", in Stephen Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus. From Antiquity to the Renaissance*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 182–215.
- Trizio, M., "Neoplatonic Source-Material in Eustratios of Nicaea's Commentary on Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*", in C. Barber, D. Jenkins (eds), *Medieval Greek Commentaries on the Nichomachean Ethics*, Leiden / Boston, Brill, 2009, pp. 71–109.
- Trizio, M., *Il neoplatonismo di Eustrazio di Nicea*, Bari, Edizioni di pagina, 2016.
- Tskitishvili, T., "Concerning the Essence and Meaning of an Original Work by Ioane Petritsi" (in Georgian: იოანე პეტრიწის ერთი ორიგინალური ნაშრომის რაობისა და მნიშვნელობისთვის), in *Bulletin of Kutaisi University* 4(1995), pp. 121–139.

# Nicholas of Methone and Ioane Petritsi on Intellect

Lela Alexidze

Tbilisi Ivane Javakhishvili State University

## 1 Introduction

Nicholas of Methone and Ioane Petritsi wrote their commentaries on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, Nicholas of Methone in Greek, Petritsi in Georgian.<sup>1</sup> Both were educated in Byzantium. Both lived in the twelfth century. The exact dates of Petritsi's life are unknown, so we are not aware whether he lived before Nicholas, was his contemporary, or lived later. Their commentaries are radically different,<sup>2</sup> though both of them reflect the atmosphere around Proclus'

- 1 For Nicholas' text, I use Angelou's edition: Nicholas of Methone, Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου / *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas' life and works by A.D. Angelou (Athens / Leiden: The Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984). For the English translation of Nicholas of Methone's texts, I use Joshua Robinson's dissertation which is supplied with the complete English translation of Nicholas' *Refutation*: J.M. Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th century Byzantium*. A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Notre Dame (Indiana), July 2014. (English translation of Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation* in Appendix A, pp. 162–459). For Petritsi's commentary, I use S. Kauchtschischvili's edition: Ioane Petritsi, *Opera*, t. II: *Commentaria in Procli Diadochi ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΩΣΙΝ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΚΗΝ*, textum Hibericum ediderunt commentariisque instruxerunt S. Nutsubidse et S. Kauchtschischvili (Tbilisi: Sumptibus Universitatis Tbilisiensis, 1937). [იოანე პეტრიტიის შრომები. ტომი II. განმარტებაჲ პროკლე დიადოხოზისა და პლატონურისა ფილოსოფიისათჳს. ტექსტი გამოსცეს და გამოკვლევა დაურთეს შ. ნუცუბიძემ და ს. ყაუხიშვილმა. ტფილისის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტის გამომცემლობა, ტფილისი 1937]. For the German translation of Petritsi's commentary on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, see Ioane Petritsi, *Kommentar zur Elementatio theologica des Proklos*. Übersetzung aus dem Altgeorgischen, Anmerkungen, Indices und Einleitung von L. Alexidze, L. Bergemann (Amsterdam / Philadelphia: B.R. Grüner, 2009). For Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, I use E. Dodds' edition and translation: Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*. A revised text with translation, introduction and commentary by E.R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963<sup>2</sup>).
- 2 For a comparison of Petritsi's and Nicholas' commentaries, see L. Alexidze, "Ioane Petritsi", in S. Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus. From Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 229–244, and M. Mtchedlidze, "Two Conflicting Positions Regarding the Philosophy of Proclus in Eastern Christian Thought of the Twelfth Century",

philosophy: the renaissance of his theories in the eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantine cultural milieu, on the one hand (represented in this case by Petritsi, who was a follower of Psellos' and Italos' tradition), and the reaction against this renaissance, on the other (represented by Nicholas of Methone).<sup>3</sup> Whenever the time of Petritsi's life may have been, it is useful and interesting to compare their commentaries in order to learn more about the variety of medieval interpretations, receptions and refutations of Proclus' philosophy, and of Ancient Greek philosophy generally. Moreover, it is in a certain sense (at least, formally) even easy to make such comparison because both Petritsi and Nicholas commented on Proclus' *Elements* chapter by chapter.

I aim to briefly expose and compare Nicholas of Methone's and Ioane Petritsi's theories of intellect, based on certain fragments from Petritsi's prologue and his commentaries on Proclus' *Elements*, on the one hand, and Nicholas' commentaries on propositions 160–184 of Proclus' same treatise, on the other. I shall attempt to concentrate on the main differences between Nicholas of Methone's and Petritsi's understanding of intellect and see if there is any agreement between these two commentators in their interpretations of Proclus' theory of intellect.

But why intellect? Certainly, any particular issue or concept of Proclus' philosophy is worthy of study in medieval commentaries on the *Elements*. Intellect is the first, most important hypostasis (I use this word here in a Neoplatonic and not Christian sense) in Proclus' philosophy. For Proclus and Petritsi, intellect is a very important entity because it embraces Forms and is, therefore, the basis for all kinds of beings.<sup>4</sup> Generally, the hypostases in Proclus' and, con-

---

in S. Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 137–152.

3 Cf. M. Trizio, "Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium", in Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus*, p. 203: "the *Anaptyxis* [i.e. Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation*] clearly reflects the intellectual climate of Nicholas' time, which is characterized by frequent spreading of Proclus' work." In some cases, Petritsi's commentary even makes an impression of a polemic against Nicholas of Methone's critic of Proclus' *Elements*. This is why I suppose that Petritsi could have composed his work as a response to Nicholas' criticism of Proclus. Alexidze, "Ioane Petritsi", p. 242.

4 On Petritsi's theory of intellect, see T. Iremadze, *Konzeptionen des Denkens im Neuplatonismus. Zur Rezeption der Proklischen Philosophie im deutschen und georgischen Mittelalter*. Dietrich von Freiberg—Berthold von Moosburg—Joane Petritzi (Amsterdam / Philadelphia: B.R. Grüner, 2004), pp. 220–241; L. Gigineishvili, "The Doctrine of Logos and Intellect in the Philosophy of Ioane Petritsi: Evagrian-Origenist Influences", in L. Perrone (ed.), *Origeniana Octava. Origen and the Alexandrian tradition. Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress. Pisa, 27–31 August 2001* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), pp. 1139–1148, and L. Gigineishvili, *The Platonic Theology of Ioane Petritsi* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007), pp. 145–175; L. Alexidze, "Michael Psellos and Ioane Petritsi on Intellect", in F. Lauritzen (ed.),

sequently, Petritsi's metaphysical systems are self-constituted, and unlike Nicholas' point of view, they are not placed in the supreme One / God or identical with it / Him;<sup>5</sup> nor are they simply manifestations of the relations which can be viewed in created things. In Nicholas' *Refutation*, certain ontological levels distinguished by Proclus are assimilated to God, so that the self-constituted substances turn into a relation of some kind, as, for example, the first limit and the first infinity.<sup>6</sup> For Petritsi, in his commentary the hypostases are self-constituted and complete in themselves, albeit ultimately dependent on the transcendent One.<sup>7</sup>

I shall start with an overview of Petritsi's theory of intellect, continue with Nicholas of Methone's point of view, and then compare their positions with each other, taking into consideration their relevance to Proclus' philosophy of intellect.<sup>8</sup>

## 2 Intellect in Petritsi's Commentary

### 2.1 *Definition of Intellect: Intellect and Being*

What is intellect for Petritsi? The first intellect is a hypostasis which is "after" the supreme One, the first limit / first infinity, and henads. It is the true being and basis of all kinds of beings. The true being is, according to Petritsi, the summit of intellects. It is produced by henads and is divine. It is the first cosmos and the first composed thing. It is a kind of monad of all intellects

---

Michael Psellos, special issue of *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai. Studia Theologia Orthodoxa*, 66.1 (2021), pp. 7–38.

5 As Michele Trizio says, "Nicholas' strategy in criticizing Proclus consists of denying entities other than God and causative power in order to avoid polytheism. So, under the authority of Pseudo-Dionysius, Nicholas (79, 10–12 [Angelou]) contends that the ideas of beings are not self-subsistent realities, but God's 'divine and good volitions'" (Trizio, "Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium", p. 207).

6 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 93, p. 92; ch. 94, p. 93. See also J. Robinson, "A Mixing Cup of Piety and Learnedness": Michael Psellos and Nicholas of Methone as Readers of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes*. Volume 2. *Translations and Acculturations* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2020), pp. 69–70.

7 Alexidze, "Ioane Petritsi", p. 232, 241–242.

8 I shall not discuss the famous citation from Gregory of Nazianz, *Oratio* 29 in Petritsi's so called epilogue (Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, epilogue, pp. 209–210) quoted also many times by Nicholas of Methone, though it concerns intellect too. On this issue see M. Mtchedlidzé, "Les interprétations d'un passage du *Discours* 29 de Grégoire de Nazianze par les auteurs byzantins et géorgiens des XI<sup>e</sup>–XII<sup>e</sup> siècles", in V. Somers, P. Yannopoulos (eds), *Philokappadox. In memoriam Justin Mossay* (Leuven / Paris / Bristol: Peeters, 2016), pp. 247–268.

and all those substances that possess form and figure. Each realm of intellects is a part of the first intellect. The first intellect is like a god and seer of everything that it has produced. The first pure intellect is the image of the One and, at the same time the monad of intellects. As an entity which contains parts, the first intellect is not one, though as the monad of intellects it is one and the image of the One.<sup>9</sup> Petritsi characterizes true being as the universal intellect, and calls it “the sky of intellects,”<sup>10</sup> “the sky of intellects and intelligible altar,”<sup>11</sup> “the sky of intellects and souls.”<sup>12</sup> It is an unparticipated intellect and the principle of all other intellects.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the true being is the principle of everything, including the physical cosmos—“sky.”<sup>14</sup> While the intelligible intellect is the true being, all other subsequent intellects are intellectual. The last ones, as Petritsi says, are filled with the light of the true being.<sup>15</sup>

In some cases, Petritsi even claims that the true being is superior to intellect.<sup>16</sup> He probably means that it is superior to other kinds of intellects, not the first one. Thus, in chapter 101 Petritsi distinguishes between the first being and intellect. As he claims, the first being is the true being, it is the image (Georgian ხატი, corresponds to Greek εἰκῶν) of the supreme One. Thereafter comes life and then intellect.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, commenting on prop. 161 and 166 of Proclus’ *Elements* and generally, on his theory of intellect-being relationship, Petritsi,

9 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 2, p. 21.

10 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 24, p. 67: ცად გონებათად.

11 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 130, p. 166: ცად გონებათად და გონებითად საკურთხეველადცა უწოდეს.

12 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 136, p. 169: დადვეს იგი ვითარ ცად გონებათა და სულთა.

13 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 181, p. 192. According to Petritsi, all other intermediate intellects produced by true being are also called ‘intellects’ “up to the intellectual intellect, where the intellectual Apollo and Chronos and Rhea and Dia are visible, which look at the sky of intellects, which is the true being, and they too become gods by means of it.” (და კუალად შემდგომითი შემდგომად გონებად ყოველთა უწოდა ვიდრე გონიერისა გონებისამდის, სადა გონიერი აპოლონო და კრონოს და რეა და დია გამოჩნდეს, რომელნი ხედვენ ცასა გონებათასა, რომელ არს ნამდვლ მყოფი, და ღმერთ იქმნებიან მის მიერ).

14 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 140, p. 171. Here, taking into consideration other parts of Petritsi’s commentary, we can add that by “everything” he does not mean prime matter, but everything that has form, cf. Petritsi, II, ch. II, pp. 42–43.

15 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 181, p. 192. On true being in Petritsi, see also L. Alexidze, “The Demiurge in Ioane Petritsi’s Commentary on Proclus’ *Elements of Theology*”, in *Revista Latinoamericana de Filosofía*, 47.1 (2021), pp. 149–165.

16 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 128, p. 165.

17 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 101, p. 148.

like Proclus, claims that Being precedes intellect and “fills” it with itself, being an object of intellection for the intellect.<sup>18</sup>

## 2.2 *Classification of Intellects*

Like Proclus, Petritsi makes a threefold classification of intellects. As he says, there are three kinds of intellect. One is unparticipated and it is the true being. Here, again, Petritsi follows Proclus, because according to Proclus too, the true being “is a divine intelligible, and unparticipated.”<sup>19</sup> Moreover, as Proclus claims (and Petritsi follows him), true being “fills Intellect by itself, and Intellect too is a being, as far as it is filled with being.”<sup>20</sup> Like Proclus, Petritsi asserts that true being precedes all other subsequent intellects.<sup>21</sup> The other two kinds of intellect are participated: one by the universal (whole) soul and those souls which are superior to bodies, the other by bodies through the mediation of souls. Sky and all stars and spheres participate in intellect because they are animated and intellectual. According to Petritsi, the cosmos participates in the first intellect through the mediation of the individual (particular) intellect (here Petritsi probably means the intra-mundane intellect).<sup>22</sup> Petritsi mentions the threefold classification of intellects again in chapter 184. As he says, an intellect can be either divine, or a pure intellect, or an intellectual being.<sup>23</sup> In a short commentary on prop. 173 Petritsi distinguishes three kinds of intellect as follows: that which is by participation in its priors and principles; that which is equal to its own substance and its own self; that which is a cause in regard to its consequents and effects.<sup>24</sup>

18 See also Petritsi's translation of prop. 161 and 166 in Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, pp. 96–97 and 99–100.

19 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 161, p. 140, 14–15: θεῖόν ἐστι νοητόν καὶ ἀμέθεκτον (transl. by Dodds, p. 141).

20 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 161, p. 140, 17–18: καὶ πληροὶ τὸν νοῦν ἄφ' ἑαυτοῦ (καὶ γὰρ ὁ νοῦς ὃν ἐστίν, ὡς τοῦ ὄντος πληρούμενος) (transl. by Dodds, p. 141, slightly modified: for Greek νοῦς I use consequently “intellect”, and for οὐσία “substance”).

21 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 161, p. 182.

22 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 166, p. 185. I think “the individual (particular) intellect” (ნაწილებითი გონებად) sounds quite strange here. This is why I suppose that Petritsi means the intra-mundane intellect, as it is in Proclus' prop. 166 and also Petritsi's own translation of this proposition. Obviously Petritsi here calls the intellect of the cosmos “individual (particular) intellect”.

23 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 184, p. 193: რამეთუ განყვნა გონებანი სამ დასად: საღმრთოდ გონებად, და თვთ ოდენ გონებად, და გონიერად არსებად.

24 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 173, p. 188.



### 2.3 *The Activity of Intellect: ousia-dynamis-energeia and Cognition*

Petritsi analyzes the activity of intellect. As he claims, all intellects act in a two-fold manner: on the one hand, they see those entities which precede them and, on the other, take care (განაგებებს, i.e. exercise their providential activity) of those that are inferior.<sup>25</sup>

Petritsi explains that each being which is able to revert completely upon itself is incorporeal. Though “sky” is able to revert, imitating soul and intellect, it cannot do so completely with all its parts. Petritsi compares intellect to the sun: in intellect substance and activity are inseparable, like sun and its rays are.<sup>26</sup> Thus, Petritsi compares the act of intellect’s cognition to the sun and its rays, which immediately follow the solar disc.<sup>27</sup> Like Proclus, Petritsi claims that intellect is invariable and eternal according to its substance and activity, and that what it produces is perpetual (სამარადისო).<sup>28</sup>

Like Proclus, Petritsi asserts that intellect’s substance, potency, and activity are fixed in an unmoved condition in eternity, since everything that is as a whole in eternity, is unmoved. As far as activity generally depends on substance, if the substance is simple, then the activity is also simple, and if the substance is composite, then the activity is also a composite one. Consequently, as Petritsi sums up, the manner of intellect’s cognition, i.e. its knowledge, is simple, unlike soul, since its substance is simple.<sup>29</sup> Neither intellect’s potency nor its activity is greater or lesser, but it is rather stable in its identity. Intellect acts toward itself and looks toward itself because it possesses the object of intellection in itself. Thus, thinking its own self, intellect thinks everything, and it is the latter which is the object of its intellection, i.e. the intelligible. Therefore, in the case of intellect, the intelligible and the intellectual (i.e. the knower) are the same: the intelligible is the intellectual and, vice versa, the intellectual is the intelligible, while the activity of intellect is intermediate between them. The intellectual activity is inseparable from intellect: intellect possesses it permanently. Consequently, unlike soul, intellect never transitions from a state of ignorance to that of knowledge.<sup>30</sup> Intellect has in itself such a source of cognition which can never expire. Therefore, intellect is always thinking an object that it knows from the very beginning.

<sup>25</sup> Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 135, p. 169.

<sup>26</sup> Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 171, pp. 187–188.

<sup>27</sup> Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, prologue, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 172, p. 188.

<sup>29</sup> Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, prologue, p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 20, pp. 57–58.

Intellect's substance is always accompanied by the activity and vice versa, none of them being second in rank to the other. Thus, intellect always exists in one and the same circular realm of eternal identity.<sup>31</sup> Petritsi claims that when Proclus mentions three aspects of intellection—namely, the intellectual, the intelligible, and intellect (i.e. the act of intellection) between them—we should understand this to mean the mode of soul's thinking, which contains three different aspects: the intellectual, the intelligible, and the act of intellection. Intellect, in turn, is simultaneously the intellectual and the intelligible, and it does not multiply, unlike soul's mode of cognition, which consists of three "parts".<sup>32</sup>

Petritsi, like Proclus, analyzes the kinds of intellect also in the context of the *ousia-dynamis-energeia* dialectic. He claims that every intellect acts in a threefold manner: (1) it can be equal to itself, i.e. it is a pure intellect, because its activity is identical with its substance; (2) it knows also that which is consequent upon it, and has, therefore, an activity which is weaker than its own substance; and (3)

it thinks its own causes, and possesses the intellection that is better than itself, because it becomes a member of its own *noetoi*,<sup>33</sup> i.e. of the intelligibles, and thinks, therefore, also its own self better; and it is the intellect and the intelligible, because all intelligibles are better than the intellectual[s].<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, Petritsi explains again that every intelligible is better than the intellectual, and knowledge of principles and causes is, at the same time, a better knowledge of self and of that which is consequent upon it. According to Petritsi, knowledge is twofold: (a) knowledge of the cause as of that which is better than self, and (b) knowledge of self in the cause as its producer.<sup>35</sup> In

31 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 129 (the proposition which corresponds to this commentary is absent in all Greek manuscripts), p. 165.

32 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 169, p. 186. On the modes of cognition in Petritsi see L. Alexidze, "Dianoia in Ioane Petritsi's commentary on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in *Chôra. Revue d'études anciennes et médiévales. Philosophie, théologie, sciences*, 14(2016), pp. 177–194.

33 Petritsi uses here the Greek word in Georgian transliteration.

34 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 167, p. 185: კჳალად გაიგონებს მიზეზთა დასაბამთა თჳსთა ნოიტოთა, რომელ არიან გასაგონონი, შორის ექმნების და იგონებს თჳსსაცა თჳთებასა უმჯობესად, და არს ვითარ გონებად და გასაგონოდ უმჯობეს გამგონებსა.

35 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 167, p. 185.

intellect the act of cognition and the object of cognition are the same.<sup>36</sup> The differences between intellect's simultaneous knowledge and soul's discursive reasoning is Petritsi's favourite theme.<sup>37</sup>

#### 2.4 *Intellect and the Forms, the Act of Intellection and Creation, and Participation*

What kind of relationship is between intellect and Forms? Petritsi compares the unity of Forms in the intellectual “womb” (საშობო) with the unity of seeds in the womb until their separation by the “creative reason”.<sup>38</sup>

According to Petritsi, some intellects are more universal and superior, others more partial and inferior. The first ones spread their power further than the latter ones, embracing more forms and substances; numerically they are less but their power is greater.<sup>39</sup> As Petritsi claims, every intellectual Form produces those which are perpetual, such as souls and substances of immortal bodies, like that of Apollo, Hermes and others.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Petritsi like Proclus claims that the act of intellection is creation. Intellect creates beings, and it is the father and creator of everything that has a form. Thus, intellect's power reaches those beings which have a form but it cannot reach those entities which are formless, either superiors or inferiors in regard to the intellect.<sup>41</sup> Like Proclus, Petritsi claims that:

The lower [intellects] are more in number, though they possess less power, while the higher ones, though less in number, are more powerful.<sup>42</sup>

Then Petritsi explains why it is so and how we should understand it:

because they imitate better the highest supreme transcendence. But when you hear “high” or “low”, don't imagine it in a local sense, i.e. don't think about incorporeal and non-dimensional [entities] [by means of

<sup>36</sup> Ioane Petritzi, *Commentaria*, ch. 168, p. 186.

<sup>37</sup> Ioane Petritzi, *Commentaria*, ch. 169, p. 186; ch. 170, p. 187; ch. 171, p. 187; ch. 175, p. 189 etc.

<sup>38</sup> Ioane Petritzi, *Commentaria*, ch. 176, p. 189, 31–190, 3; სიტყვა მიერ შემოქმედებითისა. This also can be translated as “creative word”; Georgian სიტყვა corresponds to Greek λόγος.

<sup>39</sup> Ioane Petritzi, *Commentaria*, ch. 177, p. 190.

<sup>40</sup> Ioane Petritzi, *Commentaria*, ch. 178, p. 190.

<sup>41</sup> Ioane Petritzi, *Commentaria*, ch. 174, pp. 188–189.

<sup>42</sup> Ioane Petritzi, *Commentaria*, ch. 177, p. 190: რამეთუ უქუენაესნი სიმრავლითა უკუე უფრო, ხოლო ძალითა უკნინეს; ხოლო უზენაესნი რაფზომობითა სიმრავლისა ათა უმცრო, ხოლო დაბესთაებითა ძალთადათა უფრო.

concepts of] *ogkoi* [i.e. material substrates: Petritsi uses the Greek word *ὄγκος* in Georgian transliteration] and dimension, but take into consideration rather the capacities of substances, [their] powers, and [their] actuality.<sup>43</sup>

Petritsi, like Proclus, speaks also about intellects as producers and causes of the effects: the higher intellects produce more effects by means of fewer forms, while the lower ones produce fewer effects by means of more forms.<sup>44</sup>

Like Proclus, Petritsi draws a scale of participation descending from intellect: first is the universal soul, which exercises its activity in time, but is perpetually attached to the intellectual forms, and enjoys their contemplation, though in a psychical and temporal mode that lasts perpetually. Furthermore, the celestial soul contemplates the true being by the mediation of a partial intellect and the universal soul. As for those souls which are sometimes intellectual, they cannot participate either in the universal soul or in a partial intellect without mediation.<sup>45</sup> Petritsi claims that the first soul is similar to the divine intellect, and generally, soul participates in henads by means of intellect. The return to the universal intellect occurs through a partial intellect: as Petritsi says, the cosmos and all the stars and spheres are endowed by souls and intellects,

and when cosmos participates in the first intellect, it does it by means of the partial intellect.<sup>46</sup>

Petritsi calls intellect “father of soul”. He explains that intellect possesses the Forms of beings, and transmits them to soul like a natural father does for his natural descendants. Intellect possesses Forms purely and in a superior manner, while soul contains them in a psychological and inferior manner. However, not all souls possess Forms in a same manner: there is a difference between, for example, Sun and Kronos etc., according to the differences between their substances.<sup>47</sup>

43 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 177, p. 190: რამეთუ უმეტეს ჰბადვენ მას ზესა ზესთაობისასაჲ. ხოლო შენ ოდეს ზეობად გესმას ანუ ქუეობად, ნუ ადგილთა წარმოიკერებ და ჰაზროდ უსხეულოთათჳს და განუზიდველთა, ონკოთა და განსაზიდთა, არამედ სიმარჯუენი არსებათა და ძალთანი და უფრო მოქმედიერობად გაიგონე.

44 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 177, p. 156. Cf. Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 177, p. 190.

45 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 175, p. 189.

46 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 166, p. 185.

47 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 194, p. 198.

Thus, Petritsi claims that soul proceeds from an unmoved and eternal cause, i.e. from intellect. And everything which proceeds from an unmoved cause is immortal. Reverting upon itself, it reverts first upon its own substance. “Therefore, a soul which is reverted upon itself, makes by its presence intellectual beings.”<sup>48</sup> Thus, soul’s reversion upon its own substance is reversion to its cause, i.e. the intellect. This is why a soul which is reverted upon itself, according to Petritsi, makes a being, which is provided with such a soul, intellectual. However, a soul which is only at certain times intellectual is unable to participate either in the universal soul or in a partial intellect without mediation.<sup>49</sup> As Petritsi says, our soul is changeable,

it changes from intellect to unintelligence, dismissing intellect. And there is [also] another soul, intermediate between these two [i.e. between the divine and changeable souls], which is permanently connected with intellectual [beings], and is unchangeable; such is [the soul] of sun and of other similar [beings].<sup>50</sup>

As for an intellectual soul, it is, according to Petritsi, “a knower of itself,”<sup>51</sup> though losing connection with the intellect, the soul becomes a non-intellectual entity, because “the wings of soul are its intellect.”<sup>52</sup> However, a soul can regain its wings, i.e. it can get back to the intellect, flying back to the “father of soul”. As Petritsi says, without intellect, the soul is like Adam who, because he was separated from his father (i.e. from the intellect), was embodied. However, by means of the intellectual way of life, the soul can drop its “leather chitons” (ნიკთებრივთა მათ ქეტონისკთა, i.e. the body), start to purify itself and rise back to its father—the intellect.<sup>53</sup>

48 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 193, p. 198: ვინაჲ ვიეთცა წარმოუდგეს სული, ვითარ უკუნეცელი თვსდამი, გონიერ ჰყოფს მათ.

49 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 175, p. 189.

50 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 184, p. 193: და კუალად არსო სული ქცევადი, ესე იგი არს ჩუენი, ოდესმე გონებისადა შეყოფილი და ოდესმე უგუნურებისადა, ვითარ გამგდე გონებისაჲ. და ამათ საშუვალ არსო სხუად სული, სამარადისოდ გონიერთადა შეყოფილი და უქცევი, ვითარ მზისაჲ და სხუათა ესვითათაჲ.

51 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 197, p. 200: რამეთუ მეცნიერ თვსისა აობისა გონიერ სული.

52 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 206, p. 204: რამეთუ ფრთე სულისა გონებაჲ.

53 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 209, p. 205; ch. 210, p. 205; ch. 211, p. 206. Alexidze, “*Dianoia* in Ioane Petritsi’s commentary”, p. 186.

### 3 Intellect in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation*

#### 3.1 *Definition of Intellect: Being and Intellect*

For Nicholas of Methone, the first Intellect is God, and all other intellects are divine by participation and grace. All differences from Proclus and Petritsi's understanding of intellect are the results of this thesis. Thus, for Nicholas, God is beyond intellect, though the primally Intellect is itself God.<sup>54</sup>

As we know, for Petritsi the true being is a very important entity in the ontological hierarchy. What about Nicholas? Again, for him the true being is not an entity after God but God is, as he claims, "both primally being and super-being".<sup>55</sup> Unlike Nicholas, for Proclus and Petritsi, God / the One is above being. Nicholas seems to share Proclus' (i.e. Petritsi's too) view that the intelligibles and intellectuals "that have eternal being from Him truly are."<sup>56</sup> However, this "He" for Nicholas is not the first intellect which is a hypostasis after the supreme One / God, as for Proclus and Petritsi, but it is rather God himself. Unlike Proclus and Petritsi, Nicholas claims that "He alone is unparticipated".<sup>57</sup> Nicholas does not accept Proclus' (and Petritsi's) mode of using "unparticipated intellect" in plural and claims that "unparticipated intellect is doubtless one".<sup>58</sup> As for the divine intellects, they are, according to Nicholas, "not gods by nature nor according to union with divinity, but according to participation in the divine illumination bestowed upon them."<sup>59</sup> Again, Nicholas claims that against "polytheist error", according to which the super-cosmic or encosmic souls are also gods, "God is one, the unparticipated intellect is also believed to be one, the same also remaining unparticipated in being participated."<sup>60</sup> Thus, as Nicholas asserts, "we do not admit that there is a multitude of gods whether super-cosmic or en-cosmic."<sup>61</sup>

54 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 160. Here and elsewhere, I use Joshua Robinson's English translation of Nicholas' *Refutation*.

55 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 161, p. 143, 21: Καὶ πρῶτως ὃν καὶ ὑπερὸν ὁ θεός ἐστι.

56 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 161, p. 143, 22–23: ὄντα δὲ ὄντως τὰ παρ' ἐκείνου τὸ εἶναι αἰώνιον ἔχοντα νοητὰ τε καὶ νοερά.

57 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 161, p. 143, 23: ἔστι δὲ καὶ μόνος ἐκείνος ἀμέθεκτος.

58 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 163, p. 145, 2: ἐνός δήπουθεν ὄντος.

59 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 165, p. 146, 10–12: θεοὶ δὲ οὐ φύσει οὐδὲ καθ' ἑνῶσιν θεότητος, ἀλλὰ κατὰ μέθεξιν τῶν χωρητῶν αὐτοῖς θείων ἐλλάμψεων οἱ θεῖοι νόες.

60 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 166, p. 147, 6–7: θεός εἷς, εἷς καὶ ὁ ἀμέθεκτος νοὺς πιστεύεται, ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ ἐν τῷ μετέχεσθαι μένων ἀμέθεκτος.

61 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 166, p. 147, 18–19: τὸ μὲν οὖν πλῆθος εἶναι θεῶν οὐχ ὑπερκοσμίων μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐγκοσμίων, οὐ προσιμέμεθα.

### 3.2 *The Act of Intellection: Actuality and Potentiality. Intellect Moved or Unmoved?*

Nicholas disagrees with Proclus' idea that every intellect thinks itself.<sup>62</sup> According to Nicholas, "the one and only God, the one and very first intellect, alone thinks himself as He is; for none of the other intellects thinks Him thus."<sup>63</sup> Moreover, Nicholas does not share Proclus' thesis that the primal intellect knows itself only,<sup>64</sup> but claims that "He does not think only himself, but thinks also all the beings of which he himself is cause."<sup>65</sup> Nicholas' argument in favour of this thesis is as follows: "For if [He did] not also [think] these things, He would not think himself as cause of these, which indeed is absurd."<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, Nicholas specifies that "it would more properly be said that He pre-thinks these [i.e. effects] which indeed would not reasonably be called a turning to the inferior."<sup>67</sup> The last part is again directed against Proclus, prop. 167: "if the last is true, this will mean that intellect reverts upon its inferior."<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, Nicholas says something that, in my opinion, would be also acceptable for Proclus: "And we say also that the beyond-intellect Intellect alone knows and thinks itself as it is, but none of the other intellects knows it thus [...] but in a lesser way."<sup>69</sup> Then Nicholas tries to prove once again that, unlike Proclus, the intellect knows all things after itself too:

If the intellect, knowing what is before it, knows both that it is a cause and of what it is cause, and [knows that] it is a cause of all things after it, then the intellect knows even the things that are after itself; for if it is ignorant of these, it will be ignorant both of itself and what is before itself.<sup>70</sup>

62 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 167, p. 144, 22.

63 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 167, p. 147, 29–30: 'Ο εἷς καὶ μόνος θεὸς ὁ καὶ εἷς καὶ πρῶτιστος νοῦς ἑαυτὸν νοεῖ, ὡς ἔστι μόνος· οὐδεὶς γὰρ τῶν ἄλλων νόων οὕτως αὐτὸν νοεῖ.

64 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 167, p. 144, 22–23.

65 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 167, p. 147, 32–33: ἀλλ' οὐδὲ μόνον ἑαυτὸν νοεῖ ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄντα, ὧν αὐτὸς ἐστὶν αἴτιος.

66 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 167, p. 147, 33–148, 1: εἰ γὰρ μὴ καὶ ταῦτα, οὐδ' ἂν ἑαυτὸν νοή ὡς τούτων αἴτιον, ὅπερ ἄτοπον.

67 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 167, p. 148, 2–5: διὸ καὶ προνοεῖν κυριώτερον αὐτὰ λέγοιτ' ἂν [...] ὅπερ οὐδ' ἂν ἐπιστροφὴ πρὸς τὸ χεῖρον εὐλόγως λέγοιτο.

68 See Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 167, p. 144, 28.

69 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 167, p. 148, 13–14; 21: Φαμέν δὲ καὶ ὅτι ὁ μὲν ὑπέρνοος νοῦς μόνος ἑαυτὸν οἶδ' τε καὶ νοεῖ καθὼς ἐστι, τῶν ἄλλων δὲ οὐδεὶς αὐτὸν οὕτως οἶδεν· [...] ἀλλ' ἡττόνως.

70 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 167, p. 148, 25–28: Εἰ τὸ πρὸ αὐτοῦ γινώσκων ὁ νοῦς οἶδεν ὅτι καὶ αἰτιὸν ἐστὶν ἐκεῖνο καὶ ὧν αἴτιον, ἐκεῖνο δὲ πάντων τῶν μετ' αὐτὸ αἰτιον, οἶδεν ἄρα καὶ τὰ μεθ' ἑαυτὸν ὁ νοῦς· εἰ γὰρ ταῦτα ἀγνοήσῃ, καὶ ἑαυτὸν καὶ πρὸ αὐτοῦ ἀγνοήσῃ.

As we already mentioned, for Nicholas, unlike Proclus and Petritsi, the first unparticipated intellect is nothing else but God himself. In Nicholas' opinion, again unlike Proclus and Petritsi, the first intellect thinks not only itself but all things that are after it. This knowledge is a kind of "providence", *pronoia*. This thesis, in principle, was acceptable for Proclus and Petritsi too, though it has another meaning in their theories: it is a kind of ontological necessity and does not imply any personal relation between cause and effect.

Nicholas agrees with Proclus that immaterial intellects perceive only by actuality. However, he criticizes Proclus for using the word "actually" in this context (Proclus: "every intellect perceives actually that it intellects", prop. 168), because, as he claims,

potentiality holds no place in regard to the immaterial intellects [...]. By much more indeed does potentiality not find place in the beyond-intellect Intellect; so that the addition of "actuality" is redundant.<sup>71</sup>

As for our individual intellect, Nicholas, like Petritsi,<sup>72</sup> shares Aristotle's opinion that our intellect is "sometimes active, sometimes not, because of the mist of corporeal matter that obscures it."<sup>73</sup> So, at least in this case we have an agreement between Proclus and Petritsi on the one hand, and Nicholas of Methone, on the other. But in the following chapter, we have again a declaration of disagreement with Proclus (consequently, also with Petritsi). Nicholas repeats that intellect "does not intellect only itself".<sup>74</sup> What follows from this thesis? As Nicholas says,

and so intellect and intelligible are not the same, nor therefore is intellection the same as these two, but all intellection is proper to the intellecting agent and sometimes is superior to the things intellected, and other times inferior.<sup>75</sup>

71 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 168, p. 149, 3–4; 6–7: ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν ἀϋλων νόων οὐδεμίαν ἔχει τὸ δυνάμει χώραν [...] πολλῷ δὴ μάλλον οὐ προχωρήσει τὸ δυνάμει εἰς τὸν ὑπέρνοον νοῦν ὥστε παρέλκει ἢ προσθήκη τοῦ κατ' ἐνέργειαν.

72 Ioane Petritzi, *Commentaria*, prologue, pp. 8–9.

73 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 168, p. 149, 2–3: ποτὲ μὲν ἐνεργοῦντος, ποτὲ δὲ μή, διὰ τὴν ἐπισκοτοῦσαν αὐτὸν τῆς σωματικῆς ὕλης ἀχλύν.

74 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 169, p. 149, 10: οὐχ ἑαυτὸν μόνον νοεῖ.

75 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 169, p. 149, 10–12: ὥστε οὐδὲ ταῦτὸν νοῦς καὶ νοητὸν, οὐδ' ἄρα ἡ νόησις ταῦτὸν ἀμφοῖν, ἀλλ' οἰκεία μὲν πᾶσα τῷ νοοῦντι, τῶν δὲ νοουμένων ἡ μὲν κρείττων, ἡ δὲ χείρων.



What can we say about this thesis? I suppose that if we divide it in two parts, the first one (“and so ... as these two”) contradicts Proclus’ and Petritsi’s points of view. As for the second part of the thesis, both Proclus and Petritsi would accept it, i.e. the statement that “all intellection is proper to the intellecting agent.” Generally, I suppose that Proclus (and Petritsi), on the one hand, and Nicholas of Methone on the other, understood the act of intellection by intellect differently: for Proclus and Petritsi it always meant intellect’s activity directed toward own self (even if intellect views the superior object, it views it in itself), while for Nicholas it seems that he understands the act of intellection as an activity directed toward an external object, i.e. that which is “outside” the intellect. This kind of intellection is for Proclus and Petritsi rather a discursive mode of thinking (*dianoia*), which is appropriate to souls but not a kind of pure intellection that characterizes intellect.

Furthermore, Nicholas does not agree with Proclus’ (and Petritsi’s) thesis that “the intellect is unmoved”.<sup>76</sup> He justifies his position with a famous quote from Gregory of Nazianz, Or. 29 (“moved toward a dyad”).<sup>77</sup> Obviously, for Nicholas the overflowing of God’s goodness (and God is the first Intellect for him) is a kind of movement too,<sup>78</sup> unlike Proclus’ and Petritsi’s understanding of movement. However, Nicholas admits that such movement “is super-temporal and eternal”,<sup>79</sup> and he agrees with Proclus (and, we can add, also with Petritsi) that “every intellect is without magnitude and incorporeal and, in virtue of this, without parts.”<sup>80</sup> According to Nicholas, angels move in both ascending and descending way, “serving the divine providence and entirely moved even if not according to nature but according to choice.”<sup>81</sup> As Nicholas explains,

renouncing the motion of the intellects according to choice, he [i.e. Proclus] thereby removes also their self-determination, and will be compelled to grant that some [intellects] are unwillingly good, while others unwillingly evil, with the further result that he would assign to the one

76 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 169, p. 149, 14: Ψεύδος τὸ ὅτι ἀκίνητος ὁ νοῦς. See also Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 171, p. 150, 30–151, 1.

77 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 169, p. 149, 15: εἰς δυάδα κινήθεις.

78 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 169, p. 149, 15–21.

79 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 169, p. 149, 26–27: ἡ τοιάδε αὐτῶν κίνησις ὑπέρχρονος καὶ αἰώνιος.

80 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 171, p. 150, 29–30: “Ὅτι μὲν ἀμεγέθης καὶ ἀσώματος καὶ ταύτῃ ἀμερῆς πᾶς νοῦς, δοτέον.

81 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 169, p. 149, 18–21: οἱ δὲ ἄγγελοι [...] τῇ θεῖᾳ προνοίᾳ διακονοῦμενοι καὶ ὅλως εἰ καὶ μὴ κατὰ φύσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ προαίρεσιν κινήτοί εἰσιν.

God and first Cause of all things not only the responsibility for good [things] but also [bad things].<sup>82</sup>

Unlike Nicholas, in Petritsi as well in Proclus, the activity of intellect does not depend on choice but on substance. Nevertheless, all of them, i.e. Proclus and Petritsi, on the one hand, and Nicholas of Methone on the other, “assign to the one God and first Cause of all things” the “responsibility” only for good, but not for evil.

### 3.3 *Intellecting and Making*

Another thesis of Proclus not accepted by Nicholas is that “every intellect simultaneously thinks all things” (prop. 170), because, as Nicholas maintains, if we accept this thesis in combination with the thesis from prop. 174, according to which “making is the same as intellecting”, then as a result we shall have a statement that “every intellect makes all things”.<sup>83</sup> But if, as Proclus says, intellect “does not ‘think the things after itself, but [thinks] itself and its priors’”, then, as Nicholas concludes, “it [i.e. intellect] makes itself and its priors”,<sup>84</sup> which is absurd for Nicholas. As he claims, “the beyond-Intellect alone [...] both thinks and makes all things.”<sup>85</sup> However, later on Nicholas specifies the meaning of the expression that It makes Itself:

Since It is both transcendent Intellect and the Being before all things, It also thinks Itself as being and pre-being, wherefore It is not said to make Itself; for Being, or rather Pre-Being, is not made, and since It has nothing before It, It would neither be said to make nor to think anything before It.<sup>86</sup>

82 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 171, p. 151, 4–8: τάχα δὲ οὗτος τὴν κατὰ προαίρεσιν τῶν νόων κίνησιν ἀπαγορεύων καὶ τὸ αὐτεξούσιον αὐτῶν ἀφαιρεῖται καὶ ἄκοντας τοὺς μὲν ἀγαθοὺς, τοὺς δὲ κακοὺς εἶναι δώσειν ἀναγκασθήσεται, ἵνα καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν οὐ τῶν ἀγαθῶν μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν κακῶν ἐπὶ τὸν ἕνα καὶ πρῶτον αἴτιον πάντων ἀνάψῃ θεόν.

83 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 170, p. 150, 3: καὶ πάντα ἄρα ποιεῖ πᾶς νοῦς.

84 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 170, p. 150, 5: ἑαυτὸν ἄρα ποιεῖ καὶ τὰ πρὸ αὐτοῦ. See also Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 174, p. 153, 4–5.

85 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 170, p. 150, 7–8: μόνος δὲ ὑπέρνοός [νοῦς] [...] καὶ νοεῖ καὶ ποιεῖ πάντα. See also Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 174, p. 153, 15–25.

86 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 174, p. 153, 22–25: αὐτὸς δὲ ὢν καὶ νοὺς ὑπέρτατος καὶ ὁ ὢν πρὸ πάντων νοεῖ καὶ ἑαυτὸν ὡς ὄντα τε καὶ προόντα, διὸ οὐδὲ ποεῖν ἑαυτὸν λέγεται· οὐ ποεῖται γὰρ τὸ ὄν, μᾶλλον δὲ τὸ προόν, πρὸ αὐτοῦ δὲ μηδὲν ἔχων οὔτε ποεῖν τι πρὸ αὐτοῦ οὔτε νοεῖν λέγοιτ’ ἄν.

Obviously, “intellecting as making” has another meaning for Methone than it has for Proclus and also Petritsi. Nicholas’ Intellect, unlike that of Proclus and Petritsi, as it is God, does not intellect anything before It, because there is nothing before It, as the first cause, but It thinks (again unlike Proclus’ and Petritsi’s understanding) things that are after It. Like Proclus and Petritsi, for Nicholas the first Intellect is Being, but unlike Proclus’ and Petritsi’s Intellect, this first Intellect, which is Being and also Pre-Being, is the supreme principle and cause of everything—God. For Proclus and Petritsi, unlike Nicholas, the supreme One is beyond any kind of being.

### 3.4 *Participation and Subsistence*

The concept of “participation” has a different meaning for Nicholas than it had for Proclus and also Petritsi. For Nicholas, it is “grace”: “According to participation, that is grace”, as he says.<sup>87</sup> Nicholas claims that God alone is the true cause of all things, and the divine intellects are not themselves causes of the things after them, but they only transmit the causes projected from God.<sup>88</sup> As he says,

these divine intellects [i.e., for Nicholas, Thrones, Cherubims and Seraphims], since they produce nothing from themselves, would not be said “to be participated”, but rather [would be said] to transmit and carry over to those after them the divine participations and distributions.<sup>89</sup>

Thus, Nicholas concludes that the divine intellects neither produce nor beget anything,

unless then someone should wish to call a begetting the initiation and distribution of the divine illumination coming down from the higher to the inferiors.<sup>90</sup>

In addition, Nicholas disagrees with Proclus’ thesis that “every intellectual Form is subsistence—giving of things perpetual.”<sup>91</sup> As Nicholas claims, this is

87 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 173, p. 152, 12–13: τὸ κατὰ μέθεξιν ἦτοι χάριν.

88 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 173.

89 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 175, p. 154, 3–5: αὐτοὶ δὲ οὗτοι οἱ θεῖοι νόες ἐπεὶ μηδὲν ἄφ’ ἑαυτῶν παράγουσιν, οὐδὲ μετέχεσθαι λέγοντ’ ἂν ἀλλ’ ἡ διαπορθμεύειν καὶ διαβιβάζειν πρὸς τοὺς μετ’ αὐτοὺς τὰς θείας μεθέξεις καὶ διαδόσεις.

90 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 177, p. 155, 27–29: εἰ μὴ ἄρα τις ἀπὸ τῶν ὑπερτέρων εἰς τοὺς καταδεεστέρους καθήκουσαν μύησιν καὶ διάδοσιν τῶν θείων ἐλλάμψεων γέννησιν ὀνομάζειν ἐθέλοι.

91 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 178, p. 156, 25.

false because “there is not besides God something else that makes substance to subsist.” Moreover, Nicholas says that “the one and only God would be cause of all things both perpetual and corruptible.”<sup>92</sup>

Nicholas also criticises Proclus over the way in which he uses the term “unparticipated”. In Nicholas’ opinion, Proclus’ thesis that “all that is unparticipated is divine” is false because the particulars which are specific and individual (μερικὰ καὶ ἄτομα), are unparticipated. Consequently, the universals must be participated, while “unparticipated” must be those that are specific, furthest from the One and therefore, participated by nothing.<sup>93</sup>

#### 4 Conclusion

Ioane Petritsi’s and Nicholas of Methone’s understanding of intellect are radically different from each other. Petritsi attempts to follow Proclus, while Nicholas criticizes him. For Petritsi, the first (unparticipated) intellect is a hypostasis “after” the supreme One, the first limit / first infinity, and henads. For Nicholas, the first unparticipated intellect is God himself and nothing else. All other disagreements between Petritsi and Nicholas can be explained by means of this primary difference. For Proclus and Petritsi, the first intellect is the true being, while the supreme One transcends any kind of being. In Nicholas’ opinion, the first intellect is God and He is the first true being and super-being.

For Proclus and Petritsi, there is a plurality of “unparticipated intellects”. Nicholas rejects this opinion. He claims that only God is unparticipated intellect. Moreover, he tries to overturn Proclus’ theory that the intellects which are closer to the One are unparticipated. Nicholas claims that this is not correct because they are universals, while “unparticipated” must be those that are specific, furthest from the One and therefore, participated by nothing. Nicholas does not agree with Proclus’ and Petritsi’s thesis that intellecting and making are the same in intellects; for Nicholas, this thesis is true only in respect of God. Furthermore, Nicholas does not accept Proclus’ and Petritsi’s thesis that the first intellect does not intellect those things that are subsequent to it; in Nicholas’ opinion, the first intellect, i.e. God, thinks them, and this kind of intellection is providence; nor does Nicholas accept Proclus’ and Petritsi’s thesis that the first intellect thinks that which is before it, because, in Nicholas opinion, nothing precedes the first intellect / God.

92 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 178, p. 156, 10–11; 14–15: οὕτε γὰρ οὐσίας ὑφίστησιν ἄλλο τι πλὴν τοῦ θεοῦ. [...] ὁ εἷς ἂν εἴη καὶ μόνος θεὸς πάντων αἰτίας, αἰδιῶν τε καὶ φθαρτῶν.

93 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 181, p. 158, 12–19.

These are some differences (among many others) between Petritsi's and Nicholas' understanding of intellect. This kind of comparison of their commentaries helps us, I think, in uncovering the diversity of approaches to Proclus' philosophy in the twelfth century Eastern Christian philosophical thought.

## 5 Addendum

There are at least two other interesting parallels in Petritsi's and Nicholas' commentaries which concern intellect. These are specific, concrete themes that show differences as well as similarities between Petritsi's and Methone's understanding of how far intellect can spread its power.

### 5.1 *Intellect's Inability to Grasp Matter*

The first case concerns matter. Petritsi, like Plato, claims that matter, insofar as it is formless, cannot be grasped by the mind. Therefore, Petritsi says, only "bastard thought" can understand it. Because of its formlessness, matter is unperceivable (i.e. unreachable) for an intellect, both human and universal. Matter can then be grasped only by a kind of unclear and *nothos*<sup>94</sup> opinion (reasoning).<sup>95</sup>

Interestingly, this idea of Plato that matter can be grasped only by a "bastard thought" is present also in Nicholas' *Refutation*, ch. 48:<sup>96</sup>

94 Greek word νόθος, meaning bastard, used by Petritsi in Georgian transliteration.

95 Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 59, p. 126. With this phrase and especially with the word *nothos* Petritsi refers to Plato's *Timaeus* 52ab. Plato uses this word, like Petritsi, as a definition of thought which attempts to grasp that what we call "matter". The similar definition of reasoning, which attempts to grasp matter, with reference to Plato, we find in chapters 6, p. 30, also in ch. 32 of Petritsi's commentary; cf. Ioane Petrizi, *Commentaria*, ch. 32, p. 83: "The one of the formless matter [unlike the supreme One, which is above all kind of form and definition] lacks any kind of limit and form. It is completely figureless and has no stability. As Plato says, it can be grasped only in spontaneity of unclear and untrue opinion." (ხოლო ერთი ნივთისა უგუაროვსა დაკლებულ ყოველთა საზღვართა და გუართაგან, და უსახო და უმდგო ყოვლითურთ, ვითარ პლატონ იტყვს, ვითარმედოდენ ნამრღუევსა და ეს ვითა ნაცესა გულმყისიერებასა შორის მონაგონი). See also L. Alexidze, "Matter in Ioane Petritsi's Commentary on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in A. Le Moli, L. Alexidze (eds), *Prote Hyle. Notions of Matter in the Platonic and Aristotelian Traditions*. Palermo, Palermo University Press, 2017, pp. 127–128.

96 This issue is discussed in detail by J. Robinson, "Proclus as Heresiarch: Theological Polemic and Philosophical Commentary in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation* (*Anaptyxis*) of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives*, p. 108.

And common to all is the confession that matter is deprived of all form; therefore, Plato even says that it is similar to God dissimilarly [...] and it lacks perfection and self-sufficiency to the extent that it is even nothing in actuality, being understood and impressed only upon a bastard intellect.<sup>97</sup>

Thus, matter cannot be known by intellect.

## 5.2 *Intellect's Inability to Grasp God*

Now let us see another case of intellect's inability. In their prologues, both Petritsi and Nicholas wrote generally about Proclus and his *Elements*. Both of them claimed that this work is logically constructed. Both Petritsi and Nicholas wrote about Proclus' education and his philosophical activity, though Petritsi characterized them in a very positive manner while Nicholas' judgment of Proclus' work was extremely negative. Both Petritsi and Nicholas claimed that God, the principle and creator of everything, is beyond any kind of thought and understanding. However, there is a radical difference between Petritsi's and Nicholas' assessment of Proclus' approach to this issue: according to Petritsi, Proclus, having studied everything, going upward through the stages of the disciplines such as logic, physic, mathematics, geometry, music, cosmology, and metaphysics (furthermore, Petritsi claims that Proclus even tried to explore the One as far as it is possible), had reached the level where "the goodness of creative activity of God, producer of all things, transcends the seer."<sup>98</sup>

Unlike him, Nicholas claims that Proclus, as Joshua Robinson says, "has failed to recognize the inaccessibility of God to human understanding."<sup>99</sup> To put it in Nicholas' own words, Proclus

97 Nicholas, ch. 48, p. 54, 22–24; 29–31: καὶ κοινὸν πάντων ἔστι ὁμολόγημα τὸ παντὸς εἶδους ἑστερηθῆναι τὴν ὕλην· διὸ καὶ ἀνομοίως ταύτην ὁμοιοῦσθαι τῷ θεῷ φησιν ὁ Πλάτων [the same expression—"dissimilarly similar" (უმსგავსო მსგავსება) is used also by Petritsi as a characteristic of matter; cf. Petritsi, II, ch. 59, p. 126—L.A.] [...] καὶ τοσοῦτα δεῖν τοῦ τελείαν αὐτὴν εἶναι καὶ αὐτάρκην ὥσθ καὶ τὸ μηδὲν ἐνεργεῖα εἶναι, νῦν δὲ μόνον παραλαμβανομένην καὶ τυπομένην. Robinson refers to the similar text by Proclus, *Comm. In Tim.* 11, 257–258, where the same expression (*nothos nous*) is used. For the expression "bastard thought" in Petritsi's commentary and its possible Neoplatonic sources see Alexidze, "Matter in Ioane Petritsi's commentary", p. 128.

98 Ioane Petritzi, *Commentaria*, prologue, p. 4: და თუ ვითარ ამათ მიერ კეთილმეჭელოვნობად ყოველთა ღმრთისა დამბადისა დაუზესთავდების მხედველსა. Furthermore, Petritsi claims again that the supreme One is inaccessible even for intellect. Ioane Petritzi, *Commentaria*, prologue, p. 5.

99 Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation*, p. 80.

aimed not only to reach the heaven, but even to surpass the super-celestial intellects by means of knowledge, and to run up to God himself, the Principle of all things, and to grasp the ungraspable.<sup>100</sup>

Thus, both Petritsi and Nicholas agree that God is ungraspable by knowledge. However, Petritsi was certain that Proclus recognized it, but Nicholas claimed that he did not.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

- Ioane Petritzi, *Opera*, t. II: *Commentaria in Procli Diadochi ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΩΣΙΝ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΚΗΝ*. Textum Hibericum ediderunt commentariisque instruxerunt S. Nutsubidse et S. Kauchtschischvili, Tbilisiis, Sumptibus Universitatis Tbilisiensis 1937. [იოანე პეტრიჭის შრომები. ტომი II. განმარტებაჲ პროკლე დიადოხოზისა და პლატონურისა ფილოსოფიისათჳს. ტექსტი გამოსცეს და გამოკვლევა დაურთეს შ. ნუცუბიძემ და ს. ყაუხჩიშვილმა. ტფილისის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტის გამომცემლობა, ტფილისი 1937].
- Ioane Petritzi, *Kommentar zur Elementatio theologica des Proklos*. Übersetzung aus dem Altgeorgischen, Anmerkungen, Indices und Einleitung von L. Alexidze, L. Bergemann, Amsterdam / Philadelphia, B.R. Grüner, 2009.
- Nicholas of Methone, *Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου* / *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas' life and works by A.D. Angelou, Athens / Leiden, The Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984.
- Nicholas of Methone, "Explication of the *Elements of Theology* of Proclus of Lycia the Platonic Philosopher: That those who read (this book) might not be seized by its seemingly compelling persuasion and be tempted against the true faith", (English translation by J. Robinson), in Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus*, pp. 162–459.
- Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*. A revised text with translation, introduction and commentary by E.R. Dodds, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963<sup>2</sup>.
- Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, ed. E. Diehl, 3 vols., Leipzig, Teubner, 1903–1906.

100 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, prologue, p. 3, 26–29: οὐκ εἰς οὐρανὸν φθάνειν μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ νόας ὑπερβαίνειν τοὺς ὑπερουρανίους τῇ γνώσει καὶ εἰς θεὸν αὐτὸν τὴν πάντων ἀρχὴν ἀνατρέπειν καὶ τὸν ἀκατάληπτον καταλαμβάνειν ἐτόπασεν.

### Secondary Sources

- Alexidze, L., "Ioane Petritsi", in Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus*, pp. 229–244.
- Alexidze, L., "Dianoia in Ioane Petritsi's commentary on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in *Chôra. Revue d'études anciennes et médiévales. Philosophie, théologie, sciences*, 14(2016), pp. 177–194.
- Alexidze, L., "Matter in Ioane Petritsi's Commentary on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in A. Le Moli, L. Alexidze (eds), *Prote Hyle. Notions of Matter in the Platonic and Aristotelian Traditions*, Palermo, Palermo University Press, 2017, pp. 123–134.
- Alexidze, L., "The Demiurge in Ioane Petritsi's Commentary on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in *Revista Latinoamericana de Filosofía*, 47.1(2021), pp. 149–165.
- Alexidze, L., "Michael Psellos and Ioane Petritsi on Intellect", in F. Lauritzen (ed.), *Michael Psellos*, special issue of *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai. Studia Theologia Orthodoxa*, 66.1(2021), pp. 7–38.
- Gersh, S., (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus. From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Gigineishvili, L., *The Platonic Theology of Ioane Petritsi*, Piscataway (NJ), Gorgias Press, 2007.
- Iremadze, T., *Konzeptionen des Denkens im Neuplatonismus. Zur Rezeption der Proklischen Philosophie im deutschen und georgischen Mittelalter. Dietrich von Freiberg—Berthold von Moosburg—Ioane Petrizi*, Amsterdam / Philadelphia, B.R. Grüner, 2004.
- Mariev, S., (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2017.
- Mtchedlidze, M., "Les interprétations d'un passage du *Discours* 29 de Grégoire de Nazianze par les auteurs byzantins et géorgiens des XI<sup>e</sup>–XII<sup>e</sup> siècles", in V. Somers, P. Yanopoulos (eds), *Philokappadox. In memoriam Justin Mossay*, Leuven / Paris / Bristol, Peeters, 2016, pp. 247–268.
- Mtchedlidze, M., "Two Conflicting Positions Regarding the Philosophy of Proclus in Eastern Christian Thought of the Twelfth Century", in S. Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives*, pp. 137–152.
- Robinson, J., *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th Century Byzantium*. A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Graduate Program in Medieval Studies, Notre Dame (Indiana), 2014.
- Robinson, J., "Proclus as Heresiarch: Theological Polemic and Philosophical Commentary in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation (Anaptyxis)* of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in S. Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2017, pp. 103–135.
- Robinson, J., "A Mixing Cup of Piety and Learnedness': Michael Psellos and Nicholas of Methone as Readers of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading*



*Proclus and the Book of Causes. Volume 2. Translations and Acculturations*, Leiden / Boston, Brill, 2020, pp. 56–93.

Trizio, M., “Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium”, in Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus*, pp. 182–215.

## Different Understandings of Proclus' First Principle(s) in Nicholas of Methone and Ioanne Petritsi

*Levan Gigineishvili*

Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

In this article I will compare Nicholas of Methone's and Ioane Petritsi's explanations of Proclus' *Elements of Theology* with regard to Proclus' idea of the One and the multitude of beings. The comparative analysis will reveal important differences, but also similarities between the two receptions. The aims of Nicholas and Petritsi are quite opposed: Nicholas' initial intention was to explain Proclus not in terms of Proclus' thinking itself, but in order to ward Christians from the perils that can come from this text, which, in his opinion contains overt or oblique attacks on Christianity. Petritsi, by contrast, read Proclus as conversant with the very essence and truth of reality through dialectics and philosophical contemplation, and thus cannot be in principle against the revealed truth of Christianity. Therefore, Petritsi saw that his aim was to translate Proclus' philosophical notions to Christian notions and vice versa. We thus get two quite different worlds of the reception of philosophy roughly in the same period of Byzantine history. This period was immediately preceded by Alexios Komnenos closing the philosophical school in Constantinople in 1083, with its rector, or *hypatos*, John Italos being condemned as a heretic. While Nicholas was quite comfortable with this imperialist tendency, in Petritsi the spirit of the school of Italos still lived and thrived in the precincts of the Gelati Monastic School in the Kingdom of Georgia, established by King David IV the Builder (1073–1125), where Petritsi enjoyed a greater freedom than his Byzantine counterparts to express the type of reception of philosophy that fell out of favour in Constantinople itself.

In fact, the 12th-century Byzantine debates about the role of philosophy and dialectics in matters of theology cannot be considered in separation from a broader background of tensions and debates that started as early as late antiquity and the first centuries of persecuted Christianity, and continued with the opposition of the Hellenistic tradition—epitomized by Neoplatonism—and the Christian tradition. Even those Christians who held the greatest openness towards the philosophical tradition, such as Origen or Justin, still clearly

regarded it as “outer wisdom”, upholding the exclusivity and uniqueness of the Christian message. Even if many centuries separated those initial tensions from Gregory Palamas’ fourteenth century stance, with his blatant insistence that philosophy does not and cannot save, the same attitude is noticeable in Christian thinkers of late antiquity and the entire Byzantine period to varying degrees. A danger always loomed that too much of an interest in, and adherence to, philosophy could mitigate the necessity of the Lord’s incarnation, as a unique historical fact, in the matter of salvation. This danger was checked by the Church through councils, such as the Fifth Ecumenical Council which condemned Origenism and its philosophizing tendencies that led to heretical ideas. However, another danger could sprout from the excess of such a condemning atmosphere: the great tradition of the application of dialectics to the Biblical narrative, which led to wonderful theological and Christological clarifications and discoveries, could suffer a setback, and as a consequence a rigidly fideistic attitude, with all its wrongs and pitfalls, could flourish.

The clash between Christianity and Platonism, that, as we have said, epitomized the entire Hellenic philosophical tradition, was in no way so central as in the question of the understanding of God—the first principle of the universe—and His(/Its) relationship with the rest of being. Even though Christians appreciated and admired the loftiness of the Platonic conception of God—for instance, St. Augustine was indebted to the “Platonic books”,<sup>1</sup> corresponding to Plotinus’ works by all appearances, for helping him to overcome Manichean dualism, and moreover to perceive a presence of the theology of the Trinity in them—Christians still fundamentally followed the Biblical narrative of God as the Person, ὁ ὢν (a notion absent in Platonism) who created the universe and knows and cares for it, and, moreover, who can listen to prayers and respond to them. Exactly these momenta could not be accepted by those entrenched in the Hellenic philosophical tradition: for one thing, the God (or gods) of Hellenic philosophy did not create the universe; neither Plato nor Aristotle would say that the physical universe, as we know it, came into existence as having a starting point (unless we take the story of Plato’s Demiurge literally, which all Neoplatonists in fact considered as a metaphor for an eternalist state of affairs). For both philosophers, this would be impossible, since creation, as understood Biblically, would imply a change in God, for God would start to produce in a way he did not beforehand: such a change would sound sacrilegious for a Hellenic ear, since it necessarily tarnishes the notion of changelessness

---

1 Augustine, *Confessions*, VII, ed. and transl. C.J.-B. Hammond (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

that should apply to deity. Already Plato attacked the idea of the possibility for change in deity in Book 2 of the *Republic*,<sup>2</sup> and this became the gist of Proclus' arguments against Christians, which we see from John Philoponus' responses against Proclus.<sup>3</sup> Christians then seemed to tarnish their God with too much involvement with the world, for creation also implied care of what is created in a volitional act: for to continue thinking in Cartesian lines, if caring for the universe is the same as keeping and preserving it, then absolutely the same energy should be exerted for preservation as for creation, and the two in fact stand for the very same divine activity.

Now, if creation is a volitional activity, then preservation and care are also volitional activities of a personal God. Moreover, creation and care also imply divine knowledge of what is created and cared about, for something unknown cannot be cared for either. But how, a Hellenic philosopher could ask, can the perfect know the imperfect, for does not Aristotle claim that God is a perfect thought of himself—that is to say, of the perfect thought, the νόησις νοήσεως? Thus, it is logically impossible for God to know creatures, far less for Him to listen to their plights and prayers. And how on earth, as Celsus would ask, could such a God care more for humans than for lions or dolphins, or even choose one nation of Israel over other nations?<sup>4</sup> A choosing and selecting God would be too busy, too intermingled with the world, too lacking in lofty transcendence, and instead impermissibly tarnished by an intentional immanence.

Paradoxically, however, what Hellenic thought would regard as claims of impermissible immanence, the Christian or the Biblical God had a clear upper hand over the Hellenic God with regard of transcendence: in fact, the doctrine of creation implied the notion of a complete detachment of God from creatures, in the sense that the universe was not *necessary*, but in a way, *arbitrary*, depending solely on the free volition of God. There is no possibility of such a detachment in Neoplatonism even at the highest degree of transcendence, since emanation implies that the world is a necessary outcome of the very reality of God: it is impossible to think about a god which does not cause the universe through its own outpouring, since the very essence of God implies its outpouring, the world being nothing but this outpouring and manifestation of God, the One, on different levels. To the contrary, Christianity can theorize and posit God even without creation, since creation is not necessary for God

2 Plato, *Republic*, II, 380d, ed. and transl. C. Emlin-Jones, W. Preddy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

3 John Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum*, ed. H. Rabe (Leipzig: Teubner, 1899).

4 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 4.99, transl. H. Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953).

and we can think of a case where God exists without the world, while with Neo-Platonists this idea is quite impossible, whatever acrobatics of dialectics they could hazard in attempting to prove the opposite. In this sense, the Christian God is more transcendent and detached from the rest of being (or created being, in Christian terms) than the Neoplatonic One is from being which emanates from It.

Now, the theological issue as to whether Hellenes or Christians had a truer and loftier version of God was also clad by, besides psychological, fervent socio-political concerns. One can surmise that detached philosophical speculations could be in fact fundamentally caused, or at least deeply conditioned by, the social-political setting of the time with all related polemics, passions, and expectations! Christians, of course, could more easily win the souls of people with their teaching of a personal God who cares and listens, albeit being of a totally different nature from that of the created universe, totally beyond, but paradoxically also the most intimately related and reciprocating with it: in this sense, instead of tortuous and painstaking study of liberal arts and philosophy in order to arrive at metaphysical visions, there was the shortcut of a cycle of yearlong liturgical services open to all nations, age and social groups, and prayers directly addressed to God. What could an impersonal Platonic God offer against such a caring and, in a way, easily accessible god? The later Neoplatonists faced this challenge of the rival religion seriously and introduced certain novelties, like theurgy, which claimed a supra-dialectical or non-dialectical participation in deity even by simple people. Quite possibly, given the polemical context, all this was influenced by Christian liturgy which it tried, in fact, to imitate.

The same can be said about Proclus' ἔρως προνοητικός in his *Commentary on Alcibiades*,<sup>5</sup> adapted later by Ps.-Dionysius,<sup>6</sup> which warranted a caring love of higher entities, i.e. gods, for lower beings.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the later Neoplatonists' attempt, especially Damascius', to detach the first principle (i.e. God) from oneness and even from the causation of beings, so as to reduce deity to ineffability and total silence, perhaps indicates not so much intra-Neoplatonic

5 Cf. Proclus, *In Platonis Alcibiadem I*, 55–56, ed. L.G. Westerink (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company, 1954).

6 (Ps.-)Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, ed. B.R. Suchla (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990), IV, 10, p. 155, 10–11 (= 705 B–C Migne).

7 Cf. D. Heide, "Divine Eros: the Providential and Perfective Ecstasy of God in Dionysius' *Divine Names IV*," in *Dionysius* 37(2019), pp. 44–59 in which the author compares Proclus' and Ps.-Dionysius' usages of the notion. Cf. also: D.A. Vasilakis, *Eros in Neoplatonism and its Reception in Christian Philosophy: Exploring Love in Plotinus, Proclus and Dionysius the Areopagite* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

school quarrels as rather who among the Neoplatonic greats—i.e. Plotinus, Iamblichus, Proclus, Damascius—had a loftier understanding of God, and thus who among them was a better philosopher. But, I would hazard an intuition (although this would require further inquiry) that this was propelled not the least by a need to polemicize against Christianity and achieve the level of the Christian God's transcendence over beings: for, as said above, the Christian God can be considered in His own existence apart from causing the world to exist, to such an extent that He is beyond all other beings. Damascius, in fact, similarly tried to establish a theology of transcendence by detaching the Ineffable even from the One itself, making his Ineffable totally unrelated and detached from anything else, beyond even the notion of causality, with the claim that the more something is detached the nobler it is.<sup>8</sup> Of course, this is so far only a conjecture and intuition, but it is clear from Julian the Apostate's *Contra Galileos* that the superiority of a vision of God, i.e. of theology, was directly related to the political issue of who—whether a Hellene or Christian—was a legitimate ruler of the Roman Empire. Only the best theology, and the best political ideology, for that matter, would fit the aim of the empire.

All these issues are important and come to the fore when we discuss the attitude of Nicholas of Methone and Ioane Petritsi toward Proclus' God or the One. Both Nicholas and Petritsi are Christians, Trinitarians, holding a doctrine and faith in the Christian triune God, and even praying to Him. However, both hold very different attitudes: the polemical attitude of Nicholas of Methone contrasts with the fundamentally reconciliatory and harmonizing attitude of Ioane Petritsi. The difference of attitudes applies not only to the different accounts and different understandings of the Neoplatonic One of Proclus, but also to their different attitudes to philosophy and dialectics in general. Moreover, Nicholas of Methone and Ioane Petritsi are roughly contemporaries, and their opposing stances show a tension in Byzantium with respect of the role of philosophy and dialectics in Christian life of faith. But why Proclus and his renowned treatise, *The Elements of Theology*? By all appearances, this treatise played the role of a compendium of dialectics and metaphysics in Byzantium: both sympathizers and enemies had to pick the treatise as their main point of reference. In fact, Proclus himself, as we read from Michael Psellos' *Chronography*,<sup>9</sup> was regarded as a kind of epitome of a Hellenic philosopher, for having studied all

8 Cf. Damascius, *De principiis*, Vol. 1, p. 6, 7–p. 7, 4, ed. L.G. Westerink, J. Combès (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1986).

9 Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, VI, ed. D.R. Reinsch (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014).

philosophers, and especially having gone through readings of Plato and Aristotle, he proceeded to Porphyry and Iamblichus and arrived eventually at the “divine Proclus” from whom he learned the whole of philosophy.

Petritsi has a similar panegyric attitude to Proclus as the true expositor of Plato, the revealer of the hidden meanings of his dialogues.<sup>10</sup> Not so for Nicholas of Methone, whose occasional admiration of Proclus merges with his more ubiquitous censure and even derision. The problem for Nicholas lay not only in the ideas of Proclus and Greek philosophers in general which were incompatible with Christianity, but rather in their very method: i.e. the method of logical inquiry and dialectics with the purpose of penetrating the depth of reality, ascending to the invisible and stable, perfect roots of reality through this logical-dialectical method. This was considered a danger for certain intellectual and political circles in Byzantium. Exactly this caveat led to the eventual closure of Psellos’ philosophical school at the precincts of the Imperial Palace during the time of the school’s second *hypatos* John Italos in 1083. But even before this closure, already during the time of the first *hypatos* Michael Psellos, we see a suspicious and censorious attitude towards this school from the side of the official Church. Psellos even had to defend the cause of Plato and philosophy against the onslaught of the Patriarch John Xiphilinos, a friend of his youthful years, urging him to descend to the valleys of dialectics from the dogmatic and mystical heights.<sup>11</sup>

If we look intently at the trials of John Italos, it is clear that the mismatch of his ideas with the established orthodoxy was just a pretext, but the basic motive was, just as in the case of Eriugena a few centuries before in the West, Italos’ reliance on the philosophical-dialectical method as a key for arriving at the truth.<sup>12</sup> This could have challenged the authority of the official Church, as the sole fountainhead of truth, and the emperor as well. Petritsi, believed to

10 Ioane Petritsi, *Opera*, t. II: *Commentaria in Procli Diadochi ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΩΣΙΝ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΚΗΝ*, ed. S. Nutsubidse, S. Kauchtschischvili (Tbilisi: Tbilisi State University, 1937) [იოანე პეტრიჭის შრომები. ტომი II. განმარტებაჲ პროკლე დიადოხოსისა და პლატონურისა ფილოსოფიისათჳს. ტექსტი გამოსცეს და გამოკვლევა დაურთეს შ. ნუცუბიძემ და ს. ყაუხჩიშვილმა. ტფილისის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტის გამომცემლობა, ტფილისი 1937].

11 Michael Psellos, *Miscellanea*. Vol. 5, ed. C. Sathas (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1876), p. 444.

12 This issue is well addressed by Lowell Clucas in *The Trial of John Italos and the Crisis of Intellectual Values in Byzantium in the Eleventh Century* (München: Institut für Byzantinistik, Neugriechische Philologie, und Byzantinische Kunstgeschichte der Universität München, 1981). As the author writes, ancient Christian heresies like Arianism or Apollinarianism were “veiled attacks on Italos for having begun inquiry, using dialectical methods, on the character of the relationship between the two natures of Christ” (p. 35).

be a disciple of John Italos, shares with his teacher the same stance towards dialectics, which for him is the key to the gates of both physical and metaphysical reality and even of the reality of the Biblical text itself, for only dialectics can provide a proper understanding of the Biblical revelation. Nicholas, while respecting the dialectical method and while heavily utilizing it, and even trying frequently to refute Proclus on his own dialectical grounds, still limits the usage of dialectics and relies upon the Bible and the theological-patristic tradition when dealing with the ultimate truth. Thus, by comparing Petritsi and Nicholas, we can see *par excellence* the two rivalling contemporary trends in Byzantium in acceptance and utilization of the Hellenic philosophical heritage, or the “wisdom of Greeks” Petritsi’s and Methone’s treatments on the One or the Good, the highest metaphysical entity of Proclus, will be an interesting and salient instance of revealing these rivalling trends.

In the following I shall show the differences and likenesses of Nicholas’ and Petritsi’s attitudes to Proclus’ One or Good.

## 1 Nicholas of Methone’s Reading of Proclus’ One

First of all, Nicholas thinks that Proclus’ purportedly unbiased logical discussion is just a guise, for in reality Proclus wants to deride and debunk the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in the very first proposition: “Every multitude in some way participates in One.” Christians, however, worship a multitude alongside the One, for the threeness of the divine hypostases is just as fundamental and principal as the oneness of the divine essence, which position for Proclus would be a gross error. Nicholas’ answer derives from Pseudo-Dionysius’ doctrine of transcendence, according to which God surpasses all human notions and definitions, even the notion of number: thus, the Trinity is both one and three and neither one nor three, which means simply that those human notions do not apply to the utter transcendence of Christian divinity.<sup>13</sup> Nicholas in

13 Nicholas of Methone, Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου / *Refutation of Proclus’ Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas’ life and works by A.D. Angelou (Athens / Leiden: The Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984), *Prooemium*, p. 4, 19–24: “And one must know that the things demonstrated by him [i.e. Proclus] concerning one and multitude are not at all set against us in regard to the doctrine of the highest Trinity, since to speak as does the great Dionysius, that which is worshipped by us is both one and three and neither one nor three, since it is beyond every one and every multitude, seeing that it is in fact even superior to number, and transcends every word and every concept.” (Here and henceforth, I use Joshua Robinson’s wonderful translation in *Nicholas of Methone’s Refutation of Proclus: Theology and*



many other places underlines this point, namely that Proclus' One is not transcendent enough. Moreover, the One's detachment from beings is not clear, and the application of the word *πρώτος*, "first", implies analytically that it is enlisted with the rest of the reality, being just the first of this continuum of reality.<sup>14</sup> Thus, "every multitude participates in One" for Nicholas in no way applies to the Trinity, since the Trinity for him is the very One, yet not a One that opposes multiplicity, but beyond this opposition even. The Christian Trinity is then not even a subject of the very notions introduced by Proclus. The fundamental principle of logical non-contradiction that something is either one or not-one, applied by Proclus, does not reach and apply to the reality of Trinity at all, since the Trinity is at once entirely one and entirely not-one.<sup>15</sup>

This is a strategy that Nicholas employs to debunk Proclean categories and put the Trinity beyond their grasp. Not only human intellects but even angelic intellects are unable to grasp the Trinity, and only an ecstasis from oneself can suffice for the union. We can hence see God only by becoming gods: that is, belonging to God, and not to ourselves. Again, in his commentary on the second proposition, "All that participates in unity is one and not one", Nicholas thinks that this claim does not apply to the Trinity, since the Trinity is indeed one, but not through participation in unity: instead, it is the very One-itself, albeit transcending the human notions of oneness and threeness. Nicholas acknowledges the truthfulness of Proclus' reasoning within his own limited categories—in

---

*Neoplatonism in 12th Century Byzantium*. A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Graduate Program in Medieval Studies, Notre Dame (Indiana), 2014.)

- 14 Interestingly, in a different context, Ioane Petritsi applies the same argument against the canonical Georgian translation of the opening words of John's Gospel, which runs as, "Firstly was the Word", claiming (Ioane Petritsi, *Commentaria*, p. 219) that "firstly" here is not a proper term, for it may imply that the Logos is first in the same row of beings, sharing the same nature with them: hence, the danger of Arianism looms large with such a translation. He offers another, verbatim version, namely "In the beginning was [the?] Logos."
- 15 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 1, p. 5, 18–24: "For it is Triad, but also beyond triad and multitude and every number; therefore it is certainly not subsumed with 'every multitude', so that it would 'participate the one' too, but it super-transcends every multitude, and does not participate the One, but it itself is the One, or rather, it is even beyond every one, wherefore it is also not-one, not in the sense that it is inferior to the One, but as super-transcending the kind of one that is opposed to multitude and in this way is co-ranked with it and of the same kind"; p. 6, 4–6: "it transcends every division and demonstration; and in relation to it even the law of non-contradiction falls apart."

this case, that unity must precede multitude—yet this principle does not apply to the oneness and threeness of the Trinity, for the Trinity is itself the One: thus “one” for Nicholas denotes the essential aspect of the Trinity common to all three hypostases, subsisting equally in all the hypostases, but in no way preceding them.<sup>16</sup> In Proposition 6, Proclus introduces the notion of atomic units—henads—saying that “every multitude is either from united things or from henads.” Nicholas understands “henads” here to mean the divinities of Proclus, although, objectively speaking, the term does not yet mean that, but simply a notion of atomic units. Nicholas accuses Proclus of polytheism and claims that this unification of henads in one does not apply to the hypostases of the Trinity, for They are not united in one: each of them and all three together are one God. Yet again, the notion of the Trinity eludes Proclean notions and is also, at least what Nicholas thinks to be, a subtle attack by Proclus on the Trinity. In Proposition 7, Proclus speaks of the producer and the produced, which provides Nicholas an opportunity to make a terminological distinction between the Christian notions of birth and procession applied to the Son and the Holy Spirit (respectively), on the one hand, and the creation of the world out of nothing, on the other. And thus, Proclus’ saying that “every producer is higher than that which is produced” is fundamentally wrong, for if production means “out of nothing”, then it applies only to one God, and thus “every” is a wrong term from the outset here.<sup>17</sup> Again, it is important to notice that Nicholas of Methone criticizes Proclus, not in Proclus’ own terms, but by introducing a notion alien to Proclus, i.e. *creatio ex nihilo*.

Nicholas of Methone’s criticism of predicating “first” of the One continues in his discussion of Proposition 8, where Proclus predicates “first” of the Good: Nicholas again claims that such expressions defy the transcendence of the supreme principle and cannot be applied to the Christian Deity. In his commentary on the next two propositions, Nicholas critiques Proclus’ notion of the self-sufficient (αὐτάρκης), stating that besides the one supreme principle, God, nothing can be self-sufficient, given that it will imply a duality of giver and a receiver in an entity, which is absurd: for if it has, than it does not lack nor gives to itself.<sup>18</sup> However, Nicholas also applies the notion of insufficiency to the Supreme Himself, following St. Gregory the Theologian’s own attribu-

16 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 6, p. 10, 3–20.

17 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 7, p. 12, 7–10: “But if, besides God, there is nothing else that produces from not being into being, then *every* has been applied there in vain; for it is unfitting that *every* be predicated to the One.”

18 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 9, p. 13, 32–p. 14, 3: “Nothing itself *provides* something to itself, but what *provides* is one thing, and what receives is another. But he says that *the*

tion,<sup>19</sup> but in a superlative sense: i.e. it was insufficient for the goodness of God to be merely contained in God, but rather it must be poured out into beings. He launches the same attack against the term “self-constituted” (αὐθυπόστατος). We shall see below that Petritsi treats this issue in a quite similar way. In his commentary on Proposition 11, Nicholas again attacks the application of the “first” to the One and refers to the authority of Ps.-Dionysius, saying that God pre-contains the entire world in Himself in a transcendent way. Nicholas repeats the same critique in his commentary on Proposition 13 as well, which is interesting, since Petritsi also makes the similar, un-Proclean, claim. In Proposition 12, Nicholas again uses the Ps.-Dionysian form of negative theology to attack Proclus, claiming that Proclus identifies the One and Good with the essence of the Supreme, while in sound theology even those terms are inapplicable: for all terms like good, beautiful, being, power etc. are applied to the Supreme not essentially but according to the particular manifestations of things possessing those traits around God and created by God, such that the attributes are known as God’s “hind parts”.<sup>20</sup> Proclus, on the contrary, thinks that One and Good describe the very substance of the Supreme, thus reducing the incomprehensible substance to knowability by intellect. Yet this does not seem to be a good reading of Proclus’ argument, since Proclus adheres to the standard Neoplatonist position that the One transcends every intellectual grasp, a position on which Plotinus insists and which is at least implicit in Plato. One more aspect that is crucial is the hierarchy and the monadic causes: Nicholas, in fact, limits productive powers to everything but the Trinity alone, and thus rejects the entire hierarchical series of Proclus, stating that there is only one series of beings which all depend on the supreme one principle of the Trinity.<sup>21</sup>

---

*self-sufficient* itself is *provider of what is good to itself*, identifying what *provides* and what *receives*, which indeed seems right neither to us nor to common sense.”

19 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 45.5, ed. J.-P. Migne, (Paris: Migne = PG36, 1858), 629a: Ἐπεὶ δὲ οὐκ ἔρχεται τῇ ἀγαθότητι τοῦτο, τὸ κινεῖσθαι μόνον τῇ ἑαυτῆς θεωρίᾳ, ἀλλ’ ἔδει χεῖρηναι τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ ὀδεῦσαι, ὥς πλείονα εἶναι τὰ εὐεργετούμενα (τοῦτο γὰρ τῆς ἀκρας ἥν ἀγαθότητος)· πρῶτον μὲν ἐννοεῖ τὰς ἀγγελικὰς δυνάμεις καὶ οὐρανίους.

20 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 11, p. 16, 2–19. On the reference to God’s “hind parts”, see Exodus 33:20–23.

21 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, ch. 11, p. 28, 4–p. 29, 28.

## 2 Ioane Petritsi's Reading of Proclus' One

Let us now see how Petritsi treats the same issues.

For one thing, Petritsi holds a thoroughly positive opinion of Proclus, whereas for Nicholas, Proclus is conversant with demons and a clandestine fighter against the Holy Trinity. For Petritsi, Proclus' metaphysics is based on a well-grounded dialectic that, through the necessary laws of syllogistic, leads to sound conclusions concerning the metaphysical world and entities therein. There is not a single instance where Petritsi would claim to disagree with Proclus. His sympathetic view of the Greek philosopher allows him to regard Proclus' world of ideas and notions with respect and without an ongoing intention, as in Nicholas, to find faults and inconsistencies in Proclus' train of thought. One of the basic critiques of Nicholas, as we have seen, is the usage of the term *πρώτος*, the first, with respect of the One, which analytically puts the One on the same level with the rest of beings. Petritsi sees through this term and allows for its usage, without seeing the necessity of attacking Proclus on this terminological point, although he could have, in fact, done so, if he wished, because it is exactly on that terminological ground that he attacks the Georgian translators of John's Gospel,<sup>22</sup> which shows that he understands the problematic character of this term.

Another important difference between Petritsi and Nicholas is that the Georgian philosopher does not take Proclus' One as a notion that does not reach the level of the transcendence of the Trinity, but, on the contrary, identifies the One with the Supreme principle of Christianity—although he does not identify the Trinity with the One, but rather God the Father with the One. Thus, for Nicholas, the term, "One", in a Christian understanding is beyond Proclus' notion of unity, the participation of which implies a multiplicity that acquires unity, and this One denotes the entire Trinity, whereas for Petritsi, Proclus' One is correlated with the Christian Trinitarian person of the Father. As for the other two hypostases of the Trinity, Petritsi says that those in Proclus' language are called the First Limit and the First Infinity, which are the principles of the henadic gods. For Nicholas, who adheres to a nominalist view, the "Limit" is a limit of any given thing and thus independently of that thing it cannot exist substantially or hypostatically, whereas Infinity is the privation of limit and hence does not exist at all: thus, the gods which derive from those non-existent principles do not exist. But Petritsi constructs an ingenious scheme saying that only the One in the Trinity is absolutely imparticipable

---

22 See footnote 14.

and transcendent, whereas the Logos, as the Limit, is the participable cause of the henads, which, because of this participation, only have a derivative deity and are called “divinized gods”, that is to say, divinized through participation in the Limit. The Limit is also called the “second One” that derives from the first One, the Father, and enters into communion with the henads, in fact creating them.<sup>23</sup> In this way, by relativizing the henads’ divine status Petritsi dispenses with the problem of Proclus’ polytheism, which sounds so unacceptable and idolatrous to the Christian ear. Infinity, or the Holy Spirit for Petritsi, has a function of multiplying beings, and on all levels of reality where there is an interplay of the Limit and Infinity. Petritsi only speaks once about the “consubstantiality” of the Trinitarian hypostases, but does not put much emphasis on this specifically Christian-Trinitarian term.<sup>24</sup>

An additional important distinction between Petritsi and Nicholas is that Petritsi follows Proclus’ basic hierarchical structures and allows for the productive powers of other entities, like the henadic and monadic causes, whose productivity imitates the One, the producer of all. He does not distinguish in a strict terminological way between “creation” and “birth-giving”, or “coming out”, as does Nicholas, when he drastically differentiates between the Son and the Holy Spirit’s derivation from the Father and creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). Petritsi never applies the term “out of nothing”<sup>25</sup> and there is a kind of a terminological indifference between the production of things by the One and the production of things by other, intermediary causes.

Having specified these important differences, we should proceed to note some less important similarities between Nicholas and Petritsi:

First, Petritsi also holds a very lofty, Ps.-Dionysian idea about the transcendence of God, since, for Petritsi as for Dionysius, God or the One is beyond all human naming and concepts, and even the terms “one” and “good” are predic-

23 Ioane Petritsi, *Commentaria*, pp. 157–158: “Every created one (i.e. henad) is both one and not one, for it is one through that by which it participated in being created; but since it is created, it is not one. In fact, every created [entity] is different from the uncreated [entity], and the first One is above participation, while the second and created (i.e. henad) is a participable cause of all its participants. In fact, the Causes of the henads differ, for there is the first One, the cause of henads, but without giving His properties to the subsequent ones (i.e. henads); and there is the [other] One produced by Him, who gives His properties in the series of henads.”

24 Ioane Petritsi, *Commentaria*, prop. 10. 37. 22–24: “The center of the true Being is the One Itself, and those two causes of the beings [Limit and Infinity] are *means* consubstantially [that is, consubstantially with the One].”

25 Although he has a term for absolute nothingness in an opposing pair of “existence” vs “non-existence” (in Georgian: ა-ობა (“*a-oba*”)- existence vs. არ-ა-ობა (“*ar-a-oba*”)—non-existence, nothingness).

ated of the One improperly, for those terms do not reveal the ineffable essence of the One. Not only do terms like Good, One, Power etc. apply to the One, but even pronouns like “he” or “it” fall short with reference to the One, probably because those pronouns entail some notion of pointing and indication, but the One cannot be even pointed at. Petritsi then refers to the One as the “it”-less It or “him”-less Him.<sup>26</sup> The One is even beyond causality and “only silence dared worship him by ceasing from words” (*Commentaries*, 46,6). Furthermore, the being of the One for Petritsi stands aloof from the opposition between being and not-being, since it is a completely different type of absolute being that has nothing opposed to Himself.<sup>27</sup> Thus, Petritsi preserves the absolute transcendence and unknowability of the One, which is for him the Father, but unlike Nicholas, he does not pit this idea against Proclus, appreciating in Proclus himself the same vision.

Besides, as mentioned above, Petritsi, like Nicholas, also says that the One transcendently pre-contains the blueprint of all plurality of beings in Himself in an indistinguishable way, which makes both him and Nicholas different from Proclus.

And finally, having encountered the term ἀὐτὸς πρὸς τὰτος, or “self-producing”, Petritsi’s Christian ear, just like Nicholas’, is pricked by the problem of ascribing to an entity other than God a self-sufficient status. Petritsi thus thoroughly relativizes these terms, saying that when Proclus speaks about the self-sufficient or self-constituted, this does not mean that such entities are not created by the One and do not depend on the One, but that they, *qua* monads, do not depend on anything below the series under their sway. Alternatively, he explains that something is self-sufficient (უმოქენო /*umogeno*—αὐταρχής) or self-subsisting (თვითმდგომარე /*t’vit’mdgomare*—αὐτὸς πρὸς τὰτος) as not requiring the substratum (ქვემდებარე /*quemdebare*—ὑποκείμενον) of matter.<sup>28</sup>

26 Ioane Petritsi, *Commentaria*, p. 37: “Where there can be observed neither parts no whole, there can be applied neither “it”, [“he”] nor “to it”, [“to him”], but we can worship [Him] with those names only from the perspective of the subsequent beings”.

27 Ioane Petritsi, *Commentaria*, p. 170: “The featureless One Himself likely transcends both being and not-being, for opposite to the non-being is the First Being, which is the True Being (i.e. the world of intelligible ideas), but the One who is above henads, has nothing in opposition of Him.”

28 Ioane Petritsi, *Commentaria*, p. 98: “He (Proclus) posits the immaterial ideas as self-standing (self-creating) and as ceaseless sources of their own existence. In fact, he says that they are causes of their properties because of their natural immortality and ceaseless life, positing them above all change, alteration, temporal motion and corporeal encompassment, saying that they aren’t produced by others, by which he even more differentiates them from the bodily ideas, for all bodily ideas acquire their being through others, being unable to stand by themselves, even if they belong to heavenly bodies, for they are in

### 3 Concluding Remarks

Overall Petritsi relies on Proclus' metaphysics as the true one and tries to approximate Trinitarian doctrine with it—to Christianize, as it were, Proclus and the entire Hellenic philosophical heritage through him. In other words, Petritsi wishes to create a bridge between dialectic and revelation. By contrast, Nicholas wants to debunk Proclus' metaphysics as fundamentally erroneous with regard to the Trinity and even with regard to itself.

This shows two different, conflicting attitudes within the Byzantine intellectual circles of the 11th to 12th centuries. This conflict is civilizational, in fact, for the two attitudes can give birth to two different worlds. Nicholas' stance, from a Christian perspective, has a positive side, in that it claims the existence of a specific knowledge of reality that is, in principle, unapproachable by reason and any human capacities and, thus, is to be given by God alone in revelation. Revelation, in this sense, is an interpersonal medium of the Personhood (or, to be more precise, Persons) of God interacting freely with human persons, serving as an effective check on human arrogance. On the other hand, there is a danger here of separating philosophical discourse from Christian theology and making the latter a totally different world of notions and ideas. Nicholas does not exactly do this, since he himself relies heavily on dialectic and ontological principles, albeit with a specific nominalist twist, but he finds it proper and permissible to attack a philosophical text not in terms of the text itself, but in terms of ideas that are hardly addressed and considered by the author of that given philosophical text. This tendency, if brought to an extreme, creates an unbridgeable breach between Christianity and philosophy, preventing the possibility of communication and mutual enrichment.

Petrtsi presents a contrary stance (alongside Petrtsi's teacher John Italos, for that matter), for he very optimistically claims that philosophers and Christians have the same innate dialectical *logos* in themselves and that the divine Logos illuminates it, providing insights into it regardless of religious differences. Thus, in the world of Petrtsi truth can be discussed and negotiated between Christian and Hellenic philosophers with a greater delicacy and responsiveness, without imposing one's own categories upon the others, but with an attempt to find a common epistemological-ontological ground between different truth-seeking traditions. Moreover, for Petrtsi, even Biblical revelation itself cannot be properly understood without the dialectical *logos* and

---

need of matter, as an accident (შემთხვევითი /*s'emt'xveni'ti*/—τὸ συμβεβηκόν) is in need of a substrate (ქუემდებარე /*quemdebare*/—τὸ ὑποκείμενον)."

the philosophical method. This stance has its salutary benefit in providing a vast space for dialogue and interaction between Christianity and philosophy, with the prospect of the above-mentioned mutual enrichment. However, one risk here is that Petritsi nearly equates Christian revelation with dialectic in terms of their importance for the human endeavor for true meaning and perfection. A consequence of this is a potential blurring of that specific salvific scandal in Christianity which radically differentiates it from the tradition of Hellenic philosophy. I think this great tension and the necessity to strike a correct balance are a perennial challenge and task for Christian philosophers.

## Bibliography

### *Primary Sources*

- Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. and transl. C.J.-B. Hammond, Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press, 2014.
- Damascius, *De Principiis*, Vol. 1, ed. L.G. Westerink, J. Combès, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1986.
- (Ps.-)Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, ed. B.R. Suchla, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1990.
- Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 45, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris, Migne (= PG 36), 1858.
- Ioane Petritsi, *Opera*, t. II: *Commentaria in Procli Diadochi ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΩΣΙΝ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΚΗΝ*. Textum Hibericum ediderunt commentariisque instruxerunt S. Nutsubidse et S. Kauchtschischvili, Tbilisiis, Sumptibus Universitatis Tbilisiensis 1937. [იოანე პეტრიჭის შრომები. ტომი II. განმარტებაჲ პროკლე დიადოხოზისა და პლატონურისა ფილოსოფიისათჳს. ტექსტი გამოსცეს და გამოკვლევა დაურთეს შ. ნუცუბიძემ და ს. ყაუხჩიშვილმა. ტფილისის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტის გამომცემლობა, ტფილისი 1937].
- John Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum*, ed. H. Rabe, Leipzig, Teubner, 1899.
- Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. D.R. Reinsch, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2014.
- Michael Psellos, *Miscellanea*. Vol. 5, ed. C. Sathas, Paris, Maisonneuve, 1876.
- Nicholas of Methone, Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου / *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas' life and works by A.D. Angelou, Athens / Leiden, The Academy of Athens Athens / Brill, 1984. English translation in Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus*.
- Origen, *Contra Celsum*, transl. H. Chadwick, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1953.



- Plato, *Republic*, ed. and transl. C. Emlyn-Jones, W. Preddy, Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Proclus, *In Platonis Alcibiadem 1*, ed. L.G. Westerink, Amsterdam, North Holland Publishing Company, 1954.
- Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. and transl. E.R. Dodds, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963<sup>2</sup>.

### ***Secondary Sources***

- Clucas, L., *The Trial of John Italos and the Crisis of Intellectual Values in Byzantium in the Eleventh Century*, München, Institut für Byzantinistik, Neugriechische Philologie, und Byzantinische Kunstgeschichte der Universität München, 1981.
- Heide, D., "Divine Eros: The Providential and Perfective Ecstasy of God in Dionysius' *Divine Names IV*", in *Dionysius* 37(2019), pp. 44–59.
- Robinson, J., *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th Century Byzantium*. A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Graduate Program in Medieval Studies, Notre Dame (Indiana), 2014.
- Vasilakis, D.A., *Eros in Neoplatonism and its Reception in Christian Philosophy: Exploring Love in Plotinus, Proclus and Dionysius the Areopagite*, London, Bloomsbury, 2021.

## Nicholas of Methone against Eustratios of Nicaea? On Proclus' Presence in the *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics* II

Michele Trizio

Università degli Studi di Bari "Aldo Moro"

According to Athanasios D. Angelou, the editor of the 1984 critical edition of Nicholas' *Refutation*, Nicholas challenges Eustratios' Neoplatonism in his commentary on *Posterior Analytics* II.<sup>1</sup> The Byzantine theologian and Aristotelian commentator Eustratios of Nicaea (d. after 1120 AD) is one of the most prominent medieval readers of Proclus and undoubtedly one of the most crucial Neoplatonic philosophers of the Middle Ages. The man rose to prominence under Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118) and stood out as a prolific writer of theological and philosophical works.<sup>2</sup> His philosophical writings include a commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* I and VI and a commentary on *Posterior Analytics* II. Eventually, Eustratios fell into disgrace in 1117, but his commentaries were destined to enjoy an everlasting fortune thanks to Robert Grosseteste's thirteenth-century Latin translations of the commentaries on *Nicomachean Ethics* I and VI. These commentaries became the standard reference works for medieval and renaissance scholars interested in Aristotle's ethics.<sup>3</sup>

Eustratios' Neoplatonism has already been thoroughly studied regarding the aforementioned commentaries.<sup>4</sup> Written after the request of Alexios' daughter, princess Anna Komnena (d. ca. 1154), these texts display a vast and original

1 A.D. Angelou, "Introduction", in Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas' life and works by A.D. Angelou (Athens / Leiden: The Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984), pp. lv–lxii.

2 On Eustratios' career, see A. Rigo, M. Trizio, "Eustratios of Nicaea: An Hitherto Unknown 'Master of Rhetors' in Late Eleventh Century", in C. Dendrinos, I. Giarenis (eds), *Bibliophilos, Books and Learning in the Byzantine World* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), pp. 359–368.

3 See H.P.F. Mercken, *The Greek Commentators on Aristotle's Ethics*, in R. Sorabji (ed.), *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 407–443 and M. Trizio, "From Anne Komnene to Dante: the Byzantine Roots of Western Debates on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*", in J. Ziolkowski (ed.), *Dante and the Greeks* (Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 105–139.

4 See K. Giocarinis, "Eustratios of Nicaea's Defense of the Doctrine of Ideas", *Franciscan Studies*, 12 (1964), pp. 159–204 and M. Trizio, "Neoplatonic Source-Material in Eustratios of Nicaea's

appropriation of the writings of the Neoplatonist Proclus. Eustratios' adaptation of Proclus' *œuvre* is remarkable both because of the author's nuanced and sophisticated strategy of appropriation and because of the hostility towards Proclus evident in the texts and documents of this period, including Anna Komnena's rebuttal in her *Alexias* of the Neoplatonism of Eustratios' former master, John Italos (d. after 1082).<sup>5</sup> However, Eustratios also wrote another commentary, namely on *Posterior Analytics* II. Even though this text displays a similar fascination for Neoplatonism, it has not yet received the same attention as Eustratios' other commentaries.<sup>6</sup> This paper fills the gap by investigating the Neoplatonic background of the most relevant passages from this commentary.

Written after the request of his contemporaries, Eustratios' commentary is the first medieval commentary on the Aristotelian work at hand.<sup>7</sup> In the late eleventh to early thirteenth centuries, readers could surely use Philoponus' commentary on book I and Themistius' paraphrase of the whole work, but probably the latter was not enough for Eustratios. He felt compelled to produce a full line-by-line commentary on *Posterior Analytics* II, which nevertheless often depends on Themistius for the literal explanation of the text.<sup>8</sup>

---

commentary on Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*", in C. Barber, D. Jenkins (eds), *Medieval Greek Commentaries on the Nicomachean Ethics* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2009), pp. 71–109.

- 5 See Anna Komnena, *Alexias*, 5.9.1, ed. D.R. Reinsch, A. Kambylis (Berlin / New York: De Gruyter, 2001), p. 165, l. 39–46. On this text see G. Arabatzis, "Blâme du philosophe. Éloge de la vraie philosophie et figures rhétoriques: Le récit d'Anne Comnène sur Jean Italos revisité", in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 95.2(2003), pp. 403–415. On Neoplatonism in this period see M. Trizio, "Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium", in S. Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus: From Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 182–215 and S. Mariev, "Neoplatonic Philosophy in Byzantium", in S. Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 1–29, 7–13.
- 6 A preliminary study of a few passages from this commentary is found in M. Trizio, *Il Neoplatonismo di Eustrazio di Nicea* (Bari: Pagina, 2016), at p. 80, 82, 85, 88, 165, 167, 170, 178. The present paper expands on these findings and discusses previously unstudied passages.
- 7 See Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, 2, ed. M. Hayduck (Berlin: Reimer, 1907), p. 123.27–29. On the Byzantine commentary tradition on this work, see S. Ebbesen, "The *Posterior Analytics* 1100–1400 in East and West", in J. Biard (ed.), *Raison et démonstration. Les commentaires médiévaux sur les Seconds Analytiques* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), pp. 11–30, at 11–14. I follow Ebbesen (here at p. 14) in disregarding the commentary on *Posterior Analytics* 2 edited as Philoponus by Wallies in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 13.3 (Berlin: Reimer, 1909) as a later product.
- 8 See Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 10.5. This is the only explicit quotation of Themistius' paraphrase. Nevertheless, even a cursory look at Eustratios' literal explanation of the text suggests that often Eustratios tacitly relies on Themistius.

The text is extremely long (270 pages in the *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* edition), maybe the most extended Byzantine commentary ever written on a classical philosophical work (or on a part of it).

Perhaps this, along with the abundance of technical language, has discouraged modern readers from approaching the text. Even Aristotle scholar Paul Moraux, who did extensive research on the commentary to detect citations from Alexander of Aphrodisias' lost commentary on the same work, dismissed the commentary as prolix, pedantic, and verbose.<sup>9</sup>

However, as it is well known, reading a Byzantine text through the eyes of the classical scholar may result in misleading judgments. That is why Moraux's evaluation of Eustratios' commentary, like many other modern evaluations of Byzantine texts, is somewhat unfair. As I anticipated, historians of eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium will find the text under discussion extremely interesting. Eustratios wrote in a time when medieval Greek readers of the aforementioned pagan philosopher Proclus were viewed with suspicion, something that makes the commentator's distinctive Neoplatonizing exegesis of Aristotle extremely interesting.<sup>10</sup> It is not by chance, then, that Eustratios' commentary has been regarded as the target of Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*.

This paper discusses Eustratios' Neoplatonism in his commentary on *Posterior Analytics* II, emphasizing causation theory, knowledge and epistemology, and metaphysics.

## 1 Causation Theory

One of the most prominent features of Eustratios' Neoplatonism is his acceptance of the Neoplatonic causation theory. This is evident from the beginning of the commentary on *Posterior Analytics* II. Following a rather traditional methodology, in the preface to his commentary the commentator addresses issues such as the subject of Aristotle's work at hand and its place within the traditional division of philosophy. Writes Eustratios:

Τεσσάρων δὲ ὄντων αἰτίων κατὰ Ἀριστοτέλην περὶ τοῦ εἰδικοῦ ὁ πλείστος λόγος αὐτῷ ἐνταυθοί, διότι καὶ τοῦτο ἐν ταῖς ἀποδείξεσι μέσον ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλείστον

9 P. Moraux, *Le Commentaire d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise aux Seconds Analytiques d'Aristote* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1979), at p. 81.

10 See n. 4.

παραλαμβάνεται. τὸ μὲν γὰρ ὑλικὸν χεῖρον τῶν αἰτίων, καὶ ἡ ἐκ τούτου γνώσις ἀμαυροτέρα, συμπαρομαρτοῦν ἔχουσα τὸ τῆς τοιαύτης αἰτίας ἀχλυῶδες τε καὶ ἀβέβαιον. τὸ δὲ γε ποιητικὸν καὶ τὸ τελικὸν ἢ ἄμφω ἐξήρηται τοῦ οὐ ἔστιν αἷτια, ἢ εἴ ποτε τούτων θάτερον ἔχεται, ταῦτὸν τῷ εἶδει ἔστι· τοῦτο δὲ ἔστι τὸ τέλος.<sup>11</sup>

Among the four Aristotelian causes, the present treatise mainly concerns form, insofar as in scientific demonstrations, the formal cause is mostly considered as the middle term. Matter is the weakest of all causes, and the related knowledge is less certain, for it carries the obscure and unstable nature of such cause. By contrast, the efficient and final cause either transcends the effect, or—anytime the second of these is present—it is identical with the form, which is the end.

According to Eustratios, Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* II primarily concerns the formal cause as the middle term in a scientific demonstration. Possibly Eustratios has in mind the discussion of the four causes in II.11, where Aristotle claims that (94a35–36) “The middle term has also been proved to be explanatory of what it is to be something.”<sup>12</sup> Indeed the problem of this chapter is that the Philosopher also mentions the other causes, thus leaving the impression that in demonstrations the middle term can sometimes be the formal cause, whereas in other instances it can be the material, efficient or final cause. By contrast, there seems to be quite an agreement among scholars that the middle term is always the form or definition (like Aristotle himself implies in *Posterior Analytics* II, chs. 8–10), even though this element is “in some cases an eternal ground of the consequent (viz. when the consequence is itself an eternal fact), in some cases an efficient or a final cause (when the consequence is an event).”<sup>13</sup> Because of this, it seems that Eustratios claims that *Posterior Analytics* II deals with form or the formal cause is a sound one.

However, this is not relevant to the purpose of my analysis, nor is Eustratios' claim that in Aristotle's theory of causation the formal and the final causes overlaps.<sup>14</sup> (*re vera* in *Physics* II.7 all causes are said to be identical with *eidos* except

11 Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 4.24–30.

12 All English translations of Aristotle's text are taken from Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, transl. J. Barnes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993<sup>2</sup>).

13 See Aristotle, *Prior and Posterior Analytics*, a revised text, with introduction and commentary by W.D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), at p. 640.

14 See e.g. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, ed. W.D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970<sup>2</sup>), 8.3.1044a32–1044b1.

matter).<sup>15</sup> This latter point is undoubtedly true. However, what strikes my attention is the commentator's claim that the efficient and final cause "transcend the effect" (ἐξήρηται τοῦ οὐ ἔστιν αἷτια).<sup>16</sup> In fact, in prop. 75 of his *Elements of Theology* the Neoplatonist Proclus wrote that "every cause properly so called transcends its resultant" (Πάν τὸ κυρίως αἷτιον λεγόμενον ἐξήρηται τοῦ ἀποτελέσματος).<sup>17</sup>

According to Proclus every cause must transcend its effect and cannot be immanent in it. The background for such a claim is that among Aristotle's four causes form and matter are only to be regarded as concomitant causes, whereas the efficient and final cause are causes properly so called, insofar as they act within the intelligible world and actual causation only concern this realm.<sup>18</sup> More importantly, the Neoplatonists did not simply accept Aristotle's four causes. They also added two new causes as a further Platonic correction to Aristotle's theory, namely the paradigmatic cause and the instrumental one, the former being a cause properly so called, the latter a concomitant one.<sup>19</sup> Eustratios is perfectly aware of this, and elsewhere in the commentary he acknowledges the existence of the paradigmatic and instrumental cause as well. However, he disguises the Platonic origin of the addition by claiming that Aristotle himself has left aside the paradigmatic and instrumental cause in light of the nature-based approach widespread in his work.<sup>20</sup> The explanation witnesses Eustratios' deep knowledge of the Neoplatonic commentators

15 Aristotle, *Physics*, ed W.D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), 2.7.198a24–27.

16 See also Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, 6, ed. G. Heylbut (Berlin: Reimer, 1892), p. 267.21–22. See Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo*, pp. 76–79.

17 Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 75, ed. E.R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963<sup>2</sup>), p. 70.28–29.

18 R.J. Hankinson, *Causes and Explanation in Ancient Greek Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 444–446; C. Steel, "Why Should We Prefer Plato's Timaeus to Aristotle's Physics? Proclus' Critique of Aristotle's Causal Explanation of the Physical World", in R.W. Sharples, A.D.R. Sheppard (eds), *Ancient Approaches to Plato's Timaeus* (London: Institute for Classical Studies, 2003), pp. 175–187; J. Opsomer, "The Integration of Aristotelian Physics in a Neoplatonic Context: Proclus on Movers and Divisibility", in R. Chiaradonna, F. Trabattoni (eds), *Physics and Philosophy of Nature in Neoplatonism* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2009), pp. 189–230; A. Falcon, *Aristotelianism in the First Century BCE: Xenarchus of Seleucia* (Cambridge / New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 158–160.

19 See e.g. Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, 3 vols, ed. E. Diehl (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903–1906), 1, p. 3.14–19; 1, p. 263.19–30; 2, p. 29.3–7. Simplicius, *In Aristotelis Physicorum libros commentaria*, ed. H. Diels, 2. vols (Berlin: Reimer 1882–1895), p. 3.16–19; 11.29–32; 316.22–29; *In Aristotelis Categorias commentarium*, ed. K. Kalbfleisch (Berlin: Reimer, 1908), p. 327.10–15.

20 Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 139.7–9: τέσσαρας δὲ αἷτίας ταύτας ἀπαριθμεῖται, τὸ ὀργανικὸν καταλιμπάνων καὶ τὸ παραδειγματικὸν διὰ τὸ πανταχοῦ φυσικεῦσθαι, τὴν

of Aristotle, for this very same explanation occurs in the commentary on *Physics* by John Philoponus, according to which Aristotle's approach to causation is that of a scholar interested in nature alone.<sup>21</sup>

Another fascinating text is found at p. 185.21–27. As the commentator comments on 11,13, 96a24–32, he notices an *aporia* in the text. Aristotle writes:

Τῶν δὴ ὑπαρχόντων αἰὲν ἐκάστῳ ἓν ἐπεκτείνει ἐπὶ πλεόν, οὐ μέντοι ἔξω τοῦ γένους. λέγω δὲ ἐπὶ πλεόν ὑπάρχειν ὅσα ὑπάρχει μὲν ἐκάστῳ καθόλου, οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄλλῳ. οἷον ἔστι τι ὃ πάσῃ τριάδι ὑπάρχει, ἀλλὰ καὶ μὴ τριάδι, ὥσπερ τὸ ὄν ὑπάρχει τῇ τριάδι, ἀλλὰ καὶ μὴ ἀριθμῷ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ περιττόν ὑπάρχει τε πάσῃ τριάδι καὶ ἐπὶ πλεόν ὑπάρχει (καὶ γὰρ τῇ πεντάδι ὑπάρχει), ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔξω τοῦ γένους· ἢ μὲν γὰρ πεντάς ἀριθμός, οὐδὲν δὲ ἔξω ἀριθμοῦ περιττόν.

Some of the items that hold something always extend further than it without going outside its kind. (I say that they extend further if they hold of it universally and also hold of something else.) E.g. there are items which hold of every triplet and also of non-triplets: existence holds of triplets and also of non-numbers; odd holds of every triplet and extends further (it also holds of quintuplets), but it does not go outside its kind-for quintuplets are numbers, and nothing outside number is odd.

Eustratios expands the text and ponders if items such as “being” and “existence” are said according to genus, species, proper, or accident. He concludes that these terms are only said according to the ten categories, not as genus, species, etc. In the same vein, the ten categories do not instantiate “being in general”, but only “being” according to each. Yet, at a certain point, it seems to me that the wording introduces non-Aristotelian elements. Here is Eustratios' comment:

πάντα γὰρ δὴ ταῦτα ἐκ τοῦ πρώτως ὄντος μετεσχηκότα τοῦ τε εἶναι καὶ τοῦ ὄντα λέγεσθαι οἰκείως ἑαυτῷ ἕκαστον αὐτῶν τὴν κλήσιν ταύτην ἀπομερίζεται, τὸ μὲν ὡς οὐσία, τὸ δ' ὡς ποσόν, τὸ δ' ἄλλο τι· πᾶν γὰρ τὸ μετέχον οἰκείως ἑαυτῷ

δὲ φύσιν προσεχῶς ἐνεργούσαν τοῖς κινητοῖς οὐδενὶ ὡς ὀργάνῳ χρῆσθαι οὐδὲ γε πρὸς τι ἀφορᾶν ὡς πρὸς προκέντημα καὶ προχάραγμα.

21 John Philoponus, *In Aristotelis Physicorum libros commentaria*, ed. H. Vitelli (Berlin: Reimer 1887–1888), p. 5.16–20: ὁ μὲν οὖν Πλάτων, ὡς εἶπον, ἔξ φησιν εἶναι τὰς τῶν ὄντων ἀρχάς, ὁ δὲ Ἀριστοτέλης τέσσαρας, ὕλην, εἶδος, ποιητικὸν αἷτιον, τελικόν· τὸ γὰρ ὀργανικὸν καὶ παραδειγματικὸν ὡς φυσιολόγος παρήκεν (οὐ γὰρ πρὸς παράδειγμα ἢ φύσιν ποιεῖ· ζωὴ γὰρ τις οὐσα οὕτω ποιεῖ, οὐχὶ δὲ γνώσις τις ὡς ὁ νοῦς).

μετέχει τῆς τοῦ μετεχομένου φύσεως. οἰκείως οὖν ἐκάστῳ ἐφαρμοζόμενον τὸ ὄν καὶ τὸ εἶναι καὶ τὸ ἐστὶν οἰκείως κατηγορούμενον λέγεται, καὶ οὔτε γένος οὔτε εἶδος οὔτε διαφορὰ οὔτε ἴδιον οὔτε συμβεβηκός.<sup>22</sup>

In fact, since all these things are said both to be and exist as beings insofar as they participate in that which is firstly Being, each of them is classified according to its respective denomination, one as substance, the other as quantity, and so on. All participants participate in the nature of the participated according to their own capacity. In this manner, existence, being, and being qualified fit according to the recipient's proper nature and are predicated accordingly (not as genus, species, difference, proper, or accident).

As I said before, “being” is not predicated according to genus, species, etc., but according to the ten categories. However, whereas this fits in with Aristotle's ontology, Eustratios' claim that each thing participates in that which is Being properly so called according to each thing's capacity and nature introduces the idea that somehow Being is a Form in the Platonic sense and that the ten categories are subordinated to Being as a Platonic form. Also, in this case it seems to me that Eustratios introduces a causation theory based upon Proclus' theory of participation developed in the *Elements of Theology* (and elsewhere), according to which participation takes place according to the nature and capacity of the participant.<sup>23</sup> We are far away from Aristotelian ontology as we know it today.

## 2 Knowledge

Knowledge is another crucial issue in Eustratios' philosophy, one that makes his allegiance to Proclus' Neoplatonism clear. I shall now present a few pieces of textual evidence supporting this view. In a doxography found in our com-

22 Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 185.21–27.

23 See e.g. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 24, p. 28.8–10: Πάν τὸ μετέχον τοῦ μετεχομένου καταδεέστερον, καὶ τὸ μετεχόμενον τοῦ ἀμεθέκτου (All that participates is inferior to the participated, and this latter to the unparticipated); prop 103, p. 92, 13: Πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν, οἰκείως δὲ ἐν ἐκάστῳ (All things are in all things, but each according to its proper nature); prop. 142, p. 124.27–29: Πᾶσι μὲν οἱ θεοὶ πάρεσιν ὡσαύτως· οὐ πάντα δὲ ὡσαύτως τοῖς θεοῖς πάρεστιν, ἀλλ' ἕκαστα κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν τάξιν τε καὶ δύναμιν μεταλαγχάνει τῆς ἐκείνων παρουσίας (The gods are present alike to all things: not all things, however, are present alike to the gods, but each order has a share in their presence proportioned to its station and capacity).



mentary concerning knowledge and concept formation in the Platonists and Aristotle, Eustratios adds his view and writes:

ἐν τῇ τάξει τῶν εἰδῶν τὰ προσεχῶς μετὰ τι μετέχει τρανότερον τοῦ προσεχῶς πρὸ αὐτῶν. ἐπεὶ οὖν ἡ ψυχὴ προσεχῶς μετὰ νοῦν, μετέχει τοῦ νοῦ μάλλον ἢ περ τὰ πόρρω τοῦ νοῦ, καὶ τούτου ἐν αὐτῇ ἀπηχήματα αἱ κοινὰ καὶ αὐτόπιστοι ἔννοιαι, δι' ὧν περ φέρει τινὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀμέσους τοῦ νοῦ ἐπιβολὰς ἀπομίμησιν, αἱ δὲ ἐξ ἀρχῆς μὲν αὐτῇ ὡς ἐμπυρεύματα ἐν αἰθάλῃ ἀποκεκρύφονται τῇ ἐπικρατεῖα τῶν χειρόνων δυνάμεων συγχεόμεναι, λέγω δὴ τῆς φυτικῆς τε καὶ ζωτικῆς, διὰ τὸ φθανούσας ταύτας ἐνεργεῖν ἐν τῷ σώματι γενεσιουργούς τε οὔσας τῷ τε σώματι προσεχῶς χορηγούσας τὴν σύστασιν, καὶ τοῦτο ἐπιτήδειον πρὸς τὰς δι' αὐτοῦ ἐνεργείας παρασκευαζούσας τῇ κρείττονι. ὧν ἐνεργουσῶν σὺν σφοδρότητι ἀπροσεκτεῖν ἑαυτῇ συμβαίνει τὴν λογικὴν ὑπὸ τῆς ἐκείνων κατασυρομένην ὁρμῆς καὶ ἀπείρως ἔτι ἔχουσιν τῆς ἐνταῦθα θεωρίας καὶ πράξεως, καὶ ποδηγίας δεομένην, ἵν' ἑαυτῇ τὴν ἐπιστήμην καὶ τὰς ἐγκειμένους ἐννοίας προβάλῃται.<sup>24</sup>

Within the hierarchy of forms that which follows immediately after something participates in a clearer manner in that which is located immediately before it. Therefore, since the soul comes immediately after the Intelligence, it participates in the Intelligence more than that which is located farther than it and has common and self-evident notions as echoes in itself of the Intelligence, by means of which the soul preserves a particular imitation of the immediate intuitions of the Intelligence. These notions are indeed like live coal covered in ash and are confused because of the predominance of the lower potencies, I mean the nutritive and vegetative ones. Since these become first apparent as they act in the body, they are related to the generation process and they contribute directly to the constitution of the body, and this fits the following purpose: these potencies make sure that the bodily operations function in a better way. [Yet] when these potencies act, it happens to the same soul that its rational part becomes vehemently inattentive; since the impulse of those potencies drags the soul, it still possesses an imperfect knowledge and practice of this world, and needs assistance in order to bring forth the science found in itself and its innate notions.

The passage at hand should be read in parallel with an earlier passage from the same commentary, where Eustratios describes common notions as “echoes” of

24 Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, 2, pp. 257.35–258.9.

the Intelligence in us (i.e. the intelligible contents in our soul that allows it to imitate the perfect knowledge of the same Intelligence), and claims that this innate knowledge is somehow inactive due to the shock of the birth. Yet, the commentator continues, if correctly stimulated, the flame of knowledge may burn in us once more, a metaphor implying that we can activate the innate knowledge in us through training or experience.<sup>25</sup> As I have argued elsewhere, here Eustratios is indebted to Proclus and his thesis that concepts assembled from the manifold particulars are somehow inferior to the innate knowledge in the soul. However, these later-born concepts—as Proclus calls them—are helpful in that they stimulate the inner knowledge of the soul.<sup>26</sup>

In what follows, I shall discuss the passages at hand in more detail:

i) Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 257.35–37:

“Within the hierarchy of forms that which follows immediately after something participates in a clearer manner of that which is located immediately before it. Therefore, since the soul comes immediately after the Intelligence, it participates in the Intelligence more than that which is located farther than it.” (ἐν τῇ τάξει τῶν εἰδῶν τὰ προσεχῶς μετὰ τι μετέχει τρανότερον τοῦ προσεχῶς πρὸ αὐτῶν. ἐπεὶ οὖν ἡ ψυχὴ προσεχῶς μετὰ νοῦν, μετέχει τοῦ νοῦ μᾶλλον ἢ περ τὰ πόρρω τοῦ νοῦ.)

This passage is taken from Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 193: Πᾶσα ψυχὴ προσεχῶς ἀπὸ νοῦ ὑφέστηκεν (“Every soul takes its proximate origin from an intelligence” [transl. Dodds]).

ii) Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 257.38–258.2:

“And [the soul] has common and self-evident notions as echoes in itself of the Intelligence, through which the soul preserves a particular imitation of the immediate intuitions of the Intelligence. These notions are indeed like live coal covered in ash and are confused because of the predomina-

25 Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 22.24–28. On this passage, see Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo*, pp. 170–172.

26 See Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 20.4–30. On this text, see Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo*, pp. 170–172. On the description of concepts resulting from abstraction from the particulars as “later-born concepts”, see C. Steel, “Breathing Thought: Proclus on the Innate Knowledge of the Soul”, in J.J. Cleary (ed.), *The Perennial Tradition of Neoplatonism* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), pp. 293–309, at 302–304.

ance of the lower potencies.” (καὶ τούτου ἐν αὐτῇ ἀπηχήματα αἱ κοιναὶ καὶ αὐτόπιστοι ἔννοιαι, δι’ ὧν περ φέρει τινὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀμέσους τοῦ νοῦ ἐπιβολὰς ἀπομίμησιν, αἱ δὲ ἐξ ἀρχῆς μὲν αὐτῇ ὡς ἐμπυρεύματα ἐν αἰθάλῃ ἀποκεκρύφονται τῇ ἐπικρατείᾳ τῶν χειρόνων δυνάμεων συγχεόμεναι.)

Here Eustratios claims that the soul has been granted by the Intelligence common and self-evident notions, echoes of the intelligible contents found in the same Intelligence.<sup>27</sup> He also compares this innate knowledge to burning coal and claims that due to the shock of the birth and the connection with bodily powers, the soul is unaware of these innate contents.<sup>28</sup>

Fire-related images are frequently present in Neoplatonic literature to describe knowledge. The Neoplatonists were paying tribute to the *Chaldean Oracles* when comparing knowledge to fire or flames.<sup>29</sup> Also, the form *epibolai*, here used for describing the immediate intuitive knowledge proper to the Intelligence, occurs frequently in Neoplatonic literature for accounting for the intuitive nature of knowledge-intellection properly so called *vis-à-vis* the non-intuitive character of discursive reasoning.<sup>30</sup> More importantly, Eustratios calls

27 See Trizio, “Neoplatonic Source-Material”, pp. 90–108 and Trizio, “Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium”, pp. 196–199. On the imagery of echo or echoes in Neoplatonism, see K. Ierodiakonou, “Metaphysics in the Byzantine Tradition”, in *Quaestio* 5(2005), pp. 67–82, at 81, nt. 30 and Trizio, “Neoplatonic Source-Material”, p. 92. See also Proclus, *In Platonis Alcibiadem*, ed. L.G. Westerink (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1954), p. 99.13–19; Proclus, *Platonic Theology*, ed. H.-D. Saffrey, L.G. Westerink (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1964–1997), 1, p. 125.3–8; Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, 129, p. 114.26–28.

28 On the Neoplatonic origin of this theory, see Steel, “Breathing”, p. 297.

29 See e.g. R.J. Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles. Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), pp. 189–190; 211.

30 See e.g. Plotinus, *Enneades*, vi.3 [44].18, ed. P. Henry, H.-R. Schwyzler (Leiden: Brill, 1951–1973), p. 117.11–12: ἡ μὲν αἴσθησις, ὅτι μὴδ’ αὐτῆς ὁ λόγος, ἀλλὰ μόνον μηνύσεις διαφορῶν ποιήσασθαι, ὁ δὲ νοῦς ἐν ταῖς αὐτοῦ ἐπιβολαῖς ἀπλαῖς καὶ οὐ λόγοις χρήται πανταχοῦ. Syrianus, *In Aristotelis Metaphysica*, ed. W. Kroll (Berlin: Reimer, 1902), p. 109.27–28: Ἐνίοτε μὲν καὶ ἐπιβολαῖς ἐχρῶντο νοεραῖς οἱ ἄνδρες, καὶ εἰκὸς ὅτι διὰ ταύτας οὐ φησιν αὐτοὺς ποτε συλλογίζεσθαι. Ammonius, *In Aristotelis Analyticorum priorum librum i commentarium*, ed. M. Wallies (Berlin: Reimer, 1899), p. 3.17–19: οὐ παρὲλθεται δὲ ἡ νοερά δύναμις τῆς ψυχῆς, ἐπειδὴ ἐκείνη οὐ διὰ συλλογισμῶν ἀλλ’ ἀπλαῖς ἐπιβολαῖς γινώσκει ἃ γινώσκει; p. 24.34–35: ἡ μὲν γὰρ πρώτη διὰ τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ νοῦ ἔλλαμψιν εἰς αὐτὴν ἐφήκουσαν ἀπλαῖς ἐπιβολαῖς γιγνώσκει ἃ γιγνώσκει. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, ed. C. Steel et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007–2009), p. 704.22–705.1: καὶ ὁ μὲν κατὰ τὴν πρώτην διαλεκτικὴν τὴν ταῖς ἀπλαῖς ἐπιβολαῖς τὰ ὄντα διαλέγουσαν, ὁ δὲ κατὰ τινὰ δευτέραν τὴν διὰ συνθέσεως καὶ λόγων ὁδεύουσαν. Καὶ ὁ μὲν ὡς νοῦς· νοῦ γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ ὄν θεωρεῖν, ἐπειδὴ καὶ τὸ πρῶτως ὄν τοῦ πρωτίστου νοῦ νοητὸν ἐστίν· ὁ δὲ ὡς ἐπιστήμη· ταύτης γὰρ ἔργον ἅμα καὶ τὰ ἀντικείμενα θεωρεῖν, καὶ τὸ μὲν ἀληθὲς ἐγκρίνειν, τὸ δὲ ψευδὲς ἀποδοκιμάζειν. Hermias, *In Platonis Phaedrum scholia*, ed. C.M. Lucarini, C. Moreschini (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), p. 85.6–7: Καθὼ δὲ ἐκ νοῦ ὑφίσταται, ἔχει τὸ νοερὸν,

the innate reasons in the soul, namely the echoes of the Intelligence or *Nous*, “common and self-evident notions” (αἱ κοιναὶ καὶ αὐτόπιστοι ἔννοιαι). Common notions derive from the Stoic vocabulary and have been integrated into Neoplatonism as synonymous with axioms or the starting point for discursive reasoning.<sup>31</sup> They also signify general conceptions formed through sense-perception and accepted by everyone, with the obvious *caveat* that, since they derive from the sensible world, these conceptions are faulty.<sup>32</sup> However, the identification found in Eustratios between the innate reasons in the soul and common notions is rare. In his commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* 6, however, the commentator gets closer to Proclus as he identifies common notions with Aristotelian concepts abstracted from sense-perception data. Writes Eustratios: “At the beginning, the soul only possesses common notions as the result of its activity and concepts that are echoes in itself of the separate Intellect” (μόνας ἔχει ἐξ ἀρχῆς τὰς κοινὰς ἐννοίας οἰκεῖα ἐνεργήματα καὶ νοήματα ἀπηχρήματὰ τινα ἐν ἑαυτῷ τοῦ ἀπλῶς ὑπάρχοντος νοῦ).<sup>33</sup>

Also, this passage equates the innate reasons in the soul as echoes of the separate Intelligence; however, here, common notions are said to be the result of the soul’s operation, as it assembles concepts made out of sense-perception

---

καθὸ ἀπλᾶς ἐπιβολαῖς καὶ οὐ διεξοδικῶς αἰρεῖ τὰ εἶδη, καθὸ καὶ συνάπτεται τῷ ὑπὲρ ἑαυτὴν νῷ; p. 89.10–15: Εἴτα ἀποστᾶσα ταύτης τῆς θείας ἐνώσεως κατήλθεν εἰς νοῦν καὶ οὐκέτι ἡνωμένως καὶ ἐν ἐνὶ εἴχε τὰ ὄντα, ἀλλὰ ἀπλᾶς ἐπιβολαῖς καὶ ὅσον θίξεσι τοῦ νοῦ αὐτῆς αὐτὰ ἦθρε καὶ ἑώρα. Ἐπειτα καὶ τοῦ νοῦ ἀποστᾶσα καὶ εἰς λογισμόν καὶ διάνοιαν κατελθοῦσα, οὐκέτι οὐδὲ ἀπλᾶς ἐπιβολαῖς αὐτὰ ἦρει, ἀλλὰ συλλογιστικῶς καὶ μεταβατικῶς καὶ ἄλλο ἐξ ἄλλου, ἀπὸ προτάσεων ἐπὶ συμπεράσματα ἐρχομένη. John Philoponus, *In Aristotelis libros De anima commentaria*, ed. M. Hayduck (Berlin: Reimer, 1897), p. 2.7–8: τοῦ δὲ νοῦ ἔργον τὸ ἀπλᾶς ἐπιβολαῖς κρειττόνως ἢ κατὰ ἀπόδειξιν ἐπιβάλλειν τοῖς πράγμασιν. Asclepius, *In Aristotelis Metaphysicorum*, ed. M. Hayduck (Berlin: Reimer, 1888), p. 374.8: ὁ γὰρ νοῦς αἰρεῖ τὰ ἀπλᾶ, τουτέστι τὰ νοητά, ἀπλᾶς ἐπιβολαῖς. See also Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, p. 704.19–705.1; *In Platonis Alcibiadem*, p. 246.15–18; *In Platonis Timaeum*, ed. E. Diehl (Leipzig: Teubner, 1904–1906), v. 2, p. 313.13–15. Needless to say, the verb *epiballein* occurs in the same context. See Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo*, pp. 145–146.

31 See e.g. Syrianus, *In Aristotelis Metaphysica*, p. 18.9–10 and 21.31–34; Proclus, *In primum Euclidis Elementorum librum commentarii*, ed. G. Friedlein (Leipzig: Teubner, 1873), p. 240. 11–14. On this topic, see A.C. Lloyd, *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 21.

32 See R.M. van den Berg, “As we are Always Speaking of them and Using their Names on Every Occasion. Plotinus, *Enneades*, 111.7 [45]: Language, Experience and the Philosophy of Time in Neoplatonism”, in F. Trabattini, R. Chiaradonna (eds), *Physics and Philosophy of Nature in Greek Neoplatonism* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2009), pp. 101–121. See also. M. Bonazzi, “The Platonist Appropriation of Stoic Epistemology”, in T.E. Pedersen (ed.), *From Stoicism to Platonism. The Development of Philosophy, 100 BCE–100 CE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 120–140.

33 Eustratios, *On Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, 6, p. 317.22–23.

data, whereas the innate reasons in the soul are said to be *noêmata*. This is undoubtedly consistent with Proclus' epistemology. In fact, in his commentary on Plato's *Parmenides* Proclus famously wrote:

οὔτε δ' οὖν τοῖς παρά τισι καλουμένοις ἐννοήμασιν εἰς ταῦτόν ἄγειν προσήκει τὰ νοήματα ταῦτα τὰ τῶν οὐσιωδῶν λόγων, καὶ ὅτι μάλιστα ἐπικοινωνήταις προσηγορίαις—ἐνεργήματα γάρ ἐστιν ἐκεῖνα ἀπὸ τῶν φαντασιῶν ἀνεγείρομενα. ("We should not, therefore, equate these thoughts arising from essential reason-principles with what are called by some 'notions' even though the terms are almost identical, for these latter are objects stimulated by sense-impression.")<sup>34</sup>

This Proclus passage is the source of Eustratios' text. Thus, apparently, readers face an inconsistency: in his commentary on *Posterior Analytics* II, Eustratios refers to the innate reasons in the soul as common notions, whereas in his commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, Eustratios speaks of common notions as concepts assembled from sense-perception data. Yet, scrupulous research into Proclus' vocabulary suggests a way out, for even this Neoplatonist seldomly uses the expression "common notions" concerning the innate reasons in the soul.<sup>35</sup> In short, I am inclined to believe that Eustratios' allegedly inconsistent terminology reflects a certain ambiguity in his beloved Neoplatonic sources.

iii) Finally, in the very end of this passage, Eustratios writes that:

"[Yet] When these potencies act, it happens to the same soul that its rational part becomes vehemently inattentive; since the impulse of those potencies drags the soul, it still possesses an imperfect knowledge and practice of this world, and needs assistance in order to bring forth the science found in itself and its innate notions." (ὡν ἐνεργουσῶν σὺν σφοδρότητι ἀπροσεκτεῖν ἑαυτῇ συμβαίνει τὴν λογικὴν ὑπὸ τῆς ἐκείνων κατασυρομένην ὁρμῆς καὶ ἀπείρως ἔτι ἔχουσιν τῆς ἐνταῦθα θεωρίας καὶ πράξεως, καὶ ποδηγίας δεομένην, ἵν' ἑαυτῇ τὴν ἐπιστήμην καὶ τὰς ἐγκειμένους ἐννοίας προβάληται.)<sup>36</sup>

34 Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 896.10–13, English translation by G.R. Morrow, J.M. Dillon (Princeton: University Press, 1987).

35 See e.g. Proclus, *In Platonis Alcibiadem*, p. 104.18–21. On this nuance, see C. Helmig, *Forms and Concepts. Concept Formation in the Platonic Tradition* (Berlin / Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 270–272. Something similar also happens in Syrianus. See A. Longo, *Siriano e i principi della scienza* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 2005), pp. 181–201.

36 Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 258.5–9.

In a purely Neoplatonic fashion, Eustratios claims that the body and its powers are an obstacle that makes it difficult for the soul to attain intellectual knowledge. Under these constraints, the soul cannot bring forth the innate reasons or notions found in itself. The occurrence here of the form *proballein*, literally “to bring forth” or “to project” is extremely important insofar as post-Iamblichean Neoplatonists consistently refer to this form to describe knowledge as *anamnesis* or recollection.<sup>37</sup> Once again, the presence of this form in Eustratios’ passage is far from coincidental.

So, is Eustratios a Neoplatonist? In a certain way, answering this question is not easy, for Eustratios wants his readers to believe he is not supporting what he deems as the Platonic view. As I said at the beginning of this chapter, the passage here under scrutiny presents the commentator’s view on how we grasp concepts as an alternative to the Platonic and the Aristotelian views.<sup>38</sup> Against Aristotle, the commentator claims that knowledge properly so-called involves more than grasping some common trait from sense-perception data. By contrast, knowledge is recollection. However, if this is the case, why does Eustratios feel he must distance himself from the Platonic view? Because accepting such a view in its entirety also entails pledging allegiance to *metempsychosis* and, in general, to the pre-existence of souls over their bodies, two doctrines incompatible with Eustratios’ Christian beliefs. By contrast, according to the commentator, the innate reasons in the soul have been placed in our soul at the time of its creation along with the body.<sup>39</sup> If this is the case, however, one cannot help but notice that despite this Christian corrective to what he defines as the Platonic doctrine, Eustratios’ support for innatism is firmly rooted in what we now call “Neoplatonism”.

True, elsewhere in this commentary Eustratios claims that the human intellect acts by imitating, insofar as possible, the divine mind and strives to become perfect by assimilating to God,<sup>40</sup> but nowhere in his philosophical commentaries is he obsessed by coloring his Neoplatonism with Christian undertones. On the contrary, in most of the cases he simply compares the imperfect human intellect with the perfect knowledge of the *Nous*, the separate Intelligence of the Neoplatonists. At times he goes even further than that and speaks of the One that exists beyond knowledge. Like when he states that, concerning knowledge, human intellect first knows things by imitating their causes, namely by

37 See Helmig, *Forms*, pp. 289–299.

38 Eustratios, *On Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 258.21–23.

39 Eustratios, *On Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 258.23–25.

40 Eustratios, *On Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 150.16–25; p. 215.1–9.

imitating the perfect knowledge of the Intelligence that contains all forms. Afterward, however, “it is allowed to go beyond the sensible world of nature, to join the divine things and to connect with the Intelligence intellectually; finally, it connects with the One that exists beyond knowledge” (ὕπὲρ τε τὴν φύσιν γίνεσθαι πέφυκε καὶ τοῖς θείοις συνάπτεσθαι τῷ τε νῷ συγγίνεσθαι νοητικῶς καὶ ἔτι τῷ ἐνὶ ὑπὲρ νόησιν).<sup>41</sup>

This is a fantastic endorsement of the late Neoplatonic theory of ascent to different stages of knowledge.<sup>42</sup> For example, that the One lies beyond the intelligible world and human knowledge is one of the key-doctrine in Neoplatonism. Furthermore, the need for the soul to unite with the One is vastly found in Neoplatonic literature. To mention just one of the best-known examples, consider, for instance, Plotinus’ emphasis on the need for the soul to unite with the One.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, in his commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* 1, Eustratios explains in a purely Proclean fashion that the union with the One takes place because there is a trace of the One itself in the soul, namely “the bloom of the intellect”.<sup>44</sup> True, Christian sources also potentially provided Eustratios with a similar vocabulary.<sup>45</sup> However, as I have argued elsewhere, when reading Eustratios’ commentaries one gets the impression that the existing similarities between pagan and Christian Neoplatonic texts allow the commentators to fill his exegesis with the vocabulary of pagan Neoplatonists.<sup>46</sup>

### 3 Metaphysics

As I demonstrated in the previous sections, the commentator’s causation theory and epistemology are imbued with Neoplatonic doctrines that in most cases hark back to Proclus’ writings. It is now time to discuss Eustratios’ meta-

41 Eustratios, *On Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 9.22–23.

42 For the expression τοῖς θείοις συνάπτεσθαι, see e.g. Hermias, *In Platonis Phaedrum scholia*, p. 89.5; 181.28; 216.26; Proclus, *In Platonis Rem publicam commentarium*, ed. W. Kroll (Leipzig: Teubner, 1899–1901), 1, p. 177.16; 2, p. 147.11; *In Platonis Timaeum commentarium*, 1, p. 223.17; 3, p. 160.12.

43 See e.g. Plotinus, *Enneades*, 111.8[30], p. 9.19–23; cf. also v.3[49], p. 14.1–6; v.6[24], p. 6.32–5.

44 Eustratios, *On Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics* 1, p. 4.37–38. See Trizio, “Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium”, pp. 199–200; Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo*, pp. 203–221.

45 See e.g. Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, ed. B.R. Suchla (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990, p. 219.10–11); Maximus Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, ed. C. Laga, C. Steel (Turnhout: Brepols, 1980–1990), v. 1, p. 27.178; v. 2, p. 55.156. see Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo*, p. 211.

46 See Trizio, “Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium”, pp. 199–200 on Eustratios’ usage of the expression “bloom of the intellect”.

physics. By “metaphysics” I mean the general view of how reality is structured. My analysis of Eustratios’ causation theory and epistemology highlighted that he believes in a sharp distinction between the sensible and the intelligible world. Causation properly-so called only takes place in the intelligible world. The same holds for knowledge: actual knowledge involves knowing the intelligible forms in the separate *Nous*. Several passages in our commentary allow expanding on these findings concerning Eustratios’ metaphysics. In what follows, I will discuss only a few of these.

In the very beginning of book 2 of his *Posterior Analytics* Aristotle writes: “The things we seek are equal in number to those we understand. We seek four things: the fact, the reason why, if something is, what something is” (Τὰ ζητούμενά ἐστιν ἴσα τὸν ἀριθμὸν ὅσαπερ ἐπιστάμεθα. ζητοῦμεν δὲ τέτταρα, τὸ ὅτι, τὸ διότι, εἰ ἔστι, τί ἐστιν).<sup>47</sup> Taking a cue from Aristotle’s introductory remarks, Eustratios develops an extremely long exegesis that casts Aristotle’s theory of science within the framework of Neoplatonic metaphysics.<sup>48</sup>

Eustratios’ interpretive strategy here is consistent with what he does elsewhere in his commentaries on Aristotle. At first, he provides readers with a primary and safe explanation of the meaning of the lemma; then, he develops his interpretation. After interpreting Aristotle’s text literally,<sup>49</sup> Eustratios explains how knowledge takes place by imitating the Intelligence and uniting with the One.<sup>50</sup> Afterward, he offers further considerations of what has already been explained “from the point of view of logical argumentations” (λογικῶς) starting from a “physical” (φυσικῶς) and “theological” (θεολογικῶς) approach.<sup>51</sup> For the sake of the record, I suspect this distinction among different levels of discourse or perspectives hearkens back to the Neoplatonic commentators of Aristotle and, more in general, the Neoplatonists. Such a distinction need not be associated only with the Iamblichean and post-Iamblichean distinction between physical and theological Platonic works but rather with the possibility of approaching the same subject according to different perspectives. While attempting to accommodate Aristotle with Plato, the physical perspective is often associated with Aristotle’s philosophy, whereas the theological one is with Plato. Among the many witnesses that may be discussed here, I would like to point out the importance of a passage from Ammonius’ commentary on Por-

47 Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 2.2, l. 89b23–25.

48 Eustratios, *On Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 7.17–11.31.

49 Eustratios, *On Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 7.17–9.20.

50 Eustratios, *On Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 9.20–25. This text has already been discussed in chapter 2 of the present paper.

51 Eustratios, *On Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 9.25–27.



phyry's *Isagoge*, where the commentator mentions the same three perspectives (the logical, the physical, and the theological). The passage reads as follows:

Λογικώτερον μὲν λέγεται κυρίως διαλαβεῖν τὸ τὰ συμβεβηκότα ζητεῖν  
τῶν πραγμάτων, φυσικῶς δὲ τὸ τὰς οὐσίας ζητεῖν, θεολογικῶς δὲ ἐστὶ  
πόθεν προήλθον ἅπαντα καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς συστάσεως ἐκάστου ζητεῖν.<sup>52</sup>

In the proper sense, what is called “to deal with in a more logical way” is to inquire into the accidents of realities; in a physical way, to inquire into substances, [and] in a theological way, to investigate whence all things have proceeded, and the principle of the constitution of each thing.

I associate precisely this theological perspective with the notion of “meta-physics” discussed in the present chapter. Eustratios at first associates the four Aristotelian causes with the four things we seek referred to by Aristotle in the lemma. The commentator concludes that the “what something is” (τί ἐστίν) corresponds to form; the “fact” (τὸ ὅτι) with matter; the “reason why” (τὸ διότι) to the final cause, and the “if something is” (εἰ ἔστι) to something “that imitates the principle whence the origin of movement comes” (τὸ ὅθεν ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως μιμούμενον), a periphrasis that in Aristotle and the commentators stands for the efficient cause.<sup>53</sup>

The commentator's primary focus is, however, on the final cause. Eustratios writes:

καὶ αὖθις ὥσπερ τὸ ἐν πρώτιστον ἀπάντων ἐστὶ καὶ ἐξηρημένον τῶν ἐξ αὐτοῦ  
προϊόντων, ἄρρητόν τε παντὶ λόγῳ καὶ ἄφραστον καὶ ἄγνωστον πάσῃ γνώσει  
καὶ ἄληπτον, αἰτία πρωτίστη διὰ πάντων χωροῦσα τῶν ἐξ αὐτῆς καὶ μηδενὸς  
τῶν μετ' αὐτὴν ἀπολειπομένη, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ ἡ τοῦ εἰ ἔστι ζήτησις πάσης  
ζητήσεως ὑπερήπλωται καὶ καθ' ἑαυτὴν πρὸ τῶν λοιπῶν τεθεώρηται καὶ ταῖς  
ἄλλαις παρέπεται, οὐκ εἶδος ζητοῦσα καθ' ἑαυτὴν, οὐκ αἷτιον, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι  
ἀπλῶς.<sup>54</sup>

- 
- 52 Ammonius, *In Porphyrii Isagogen*, ed. A. Busse (Berlin: Reimer, 1891), p. 45–5–7. English translation by M. Chase, *Ammonius. Interpretation of Porphyry's Introduction to Aristotle's Five Terms* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), p. 52. On the physical and theological perspectives, see also Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentarium*, v. 1, p. 8.4–5; v. 2, p. 91.30–31. It is worthy of mention that the logical, physical, and theological perspectives are also mentioned in the title of one of Eustratios' theological treatises written against the Armenians.
- 53 See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1.3.983a30–31. See also Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In Aristotelis Metaphysica commentaria*, ed. M. Hayduck (Berlin: Reimer, 1891), p. 22.6–7.
- 54 Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 9.35–10.2.

Furthermore, once again, just like the One exists as the most supreme of all beings and transcends its effects, and is ineffable by all language, incomprehensible, unknown by all knowledge, unintelligible, the supreme Cause that advances towards everything that comes from it and never abandons that which comes after it; so in the same way also the quest over “if something is” transcends all other questions concerning its simplicity, and must be in itself considered before the remaining ones, as it is involved in the others. In fact, [such question] does not investigate the form per se, nor the cause, but the very same Being in general.

This text assimilates the final cause, which is the most important among the previously mentioned questions, to the One through analogy. The way Eustratios describes the One pays tribute to Proclus’ *Platonic Theology*, where concerning the one, transcendent, and unparticipated Cause, the Diadochus writes:

Ἀπάντων δὴ τῶν ὄντων καὶ αὐτῶν τῶν τὰ ὄντα παραγόντων θεῶν μία καὶ ἐξηρημένη καὶ ἀμέθεκτος αἰτία προϋφέστηκεν, ἄρρητος μὲν παντὶ λόγῳ καὶ ἀφραστος, ἄγνωστος δὲ πάσῃ γνώσει καὶ ἄληπτος, πάντα μὲν ἀφ’ ἐαυτῆς ἐκφαίνουσα, πάντων δὲ ἀρρήτως προϋπάρχουσα, καὶ πάντα μὲν πρὸς ἐαυτὴν ἐπιστρέφουσα, πάντων δὲ οὕσα τέλος τὸ ἄριστον.<sup>55</sup>

Of all beings therefore, and of the Gods that produce beings, one exempt and unparticipated cause pre-exists, a cause ineffable by all language, incomprehensible, unknown by all knowledge and unintelligible, unfolding all things into light from itself, subsisting ineffably prior to [all things], and converting all things to itself, but existing as the best end of all things.

At this point, Eustratios’ strategy becomes clear. The four questions referred to by Aristotle correspond to the logical level. The physical level entails associating the four questions to the four Aristotelian causes that are explanatory of the phenomena studied by physics. The theological level entails discussing through analogy the four Aristotelian questions and causes with the causation of the One and, in general, with causation in the intelligible world.

At times, however, the commentator simply distinguishes between the causation that takes place “there” (ἐκεῖ) with what happens “here” (ἐνταῦθα). Like

55 Proclus, *Platonic Theology*, v. 3, p. 29.10–16. English translation by C. Taylor, *The Six Books of Proclus, the Platonic Successor, on the Theology of Plato* (London: A.J. Valpy, 1816) [slightly modified]. All English translation of Proclus’ *Platonic Theology* are taken from Taylor.

when he claims that, just like in the sensible world the question “what something is” (τί ἐστιν) determines and defines in the guise of a limit the essential property of each thing, so in the intelligible world the primordial opposites of “Limit” (τὸ πέρας) and “Unlimitedness” (τὸ ἄπειρον) derive from the First Cause and pre-exist that which comes afterward. In such a way, continues the commentator, “Limit” determines and defines all beings and is the cause of their constancy, unity, and consistency, whereas “Unlimitedness” is responsible for the generation process and multiplicity.<sup>56</sup> This is reminiscent of prop. 90 of Proclus’ *Elements of Theology*: “Prior to all that is composed of limit and infinitude there exist substantially and independently the first Limit and the first Infinity.” (Πάντων τῶν ἐκ πέρατος καὶ ἀπειρίας ὑποστάντων προϋπάρχει καθ’ αὐτὰ τὸ πρῶτον πέρας καὶ ἡ πρώτη ἀπειρία.)<sup>57</sup>

When presenting his theological interpretation of Aristotle’s four questions and causes, Eustratios often refers in general to what “they say”.<sup>58</sup> I argue that on all these occasions Eustratios is thinking of the Neoplatonists, particularly his beloved Proclus. The latter is, for instance, the shadow lurking behind Eustratios’ claim that just like Being in the intelligible world is a third element resulting from the mixture of Limit and Unlimitedness, so here in the sensible world the question of the “reason why” (τὸ διότι) involves a mixture between the two extremes and the middle terms within syllogisms.<sup>59</sup> Leaving aside Eustratios’ reference to the question of the “reason why” (τὸ διότι), the commentator’s discussion of Being as a mixture of Limit and Unlimitedness is taken directly from Proclus, e.g. the *Platonic Theology*, where the Diadochus writes that Being in its most fundamental sense is Limit, Unlimitedness, and Mixture in which Being itself is a third element, that is to say Mixture.<sup>60</sup>

That Eustratios had this Proclean text on his desk when composing his commentary is evident in the following passage, where the commentator develops the aforementioned analogy between Being as Mixture and Aristotle’s “reason why” (τὸ διότι):

καὶ αὖθις ὥσπερ τὸ ὄν τριαδικὸν διὰ τὴν μίξιν φασιν, ὅτι τριῶν τούτων ἐν παντὶ μικτῷ δεῖ, κάλλους ἀληθείας συμμετρίας, οὕτω δὲ καὶ ἐν τῇ τοῦ διότι ἀποδείξει

56 Eustratios, *On Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 10.9–14.

57 Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 90, p. 82.7–8.

58 Cf. e.g. Eustratios, *On Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 10.17; 10.23.

59 Eustratios, *On Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 10.19–22.

60 Proclus, *Platonic Theology*, v. 3, p. 36.12–19.

τό τε εὐσχημον τοῦ λόγου θεωρεῖται, κάλλος ὃν προσήκον αὐτῷ, καὶ τὸ ἀληθές τῶν προτάσεων, καὶ τὸ σύμμετρον τῷ ἐξ ἀνάγκης εἶναι τὰς τε προτάσεις καὶ τὸ συμπέρασμα.<sup>61</sup>

Furthermore, once again: just like they say that Being is triadic because it results from mixture (so far as in every mixture, these three things are necessary, namely beauty, truth, and symmetry), so in demonstrations that are explanatory of the “reason why” the soundness of the argument is taken into consideration, namely the beauty that belongs to such demonstration, the truth of the premises and the symmetry resulting from the essential nature of the connection between the premises and the conclusion.

I suggest comparing this passage with Proclus’ *Platonic Theology* where the Diadochus discusses *Philebus* 65a2:

Καὶ μονὰς οὖν ἐστὶ τὸ μικτόν, διότι μετέχει τοῦ ενός, καὶ δυοειδές ἐστὶ, καθ’ ὅσον ἐκ τῶν δύο προεληλύθεν ἀρχῶν, καὶ τριάς, καθ’ ὅσον ἐν παντὶ μικτῷ τριῶν τούτων δεῖ κατὰ τὸν Σωκράτην, κάλλους, ἀληθείας, συμμετρίας.<sup>62</sup>

That which is mixed therefore, is a monad, because it participates of the One; and it is dual-formed, so far as it proceeds from the two principles; but it is a triad, so far as in every mixture, these three things are necessary according to Socrates, viz. beauty, truth, and symmetry.

Clearly, this Eustratian text depends upon Proclus. What follows bears, even more, the trace of the Diadochus. In fact, at a certain point, Eustratios insists on his theological explanation of the four Aristotelian questions. This time, however, he will leave aside the One and the first principles that come right after the One and discuss the Neoplatonic notions of Being, Life, *Nous*, and Soul. However, even the way Eustratios moves onto another topic reveals his acquaintance with Neoplatonism. Eustratios writes:

εἰ δὲ βούλει, τὰ μὲν πρῶτα σιγῇ ἐάσθων ὥσπερ ἐν ἀδύτοις ἱεροῖς ἀποκεκρυμμένα, τό τε αἴτιον ἐν καὶ τὰ ἐξ ἐκείνου δεικνυόμενά τε καὶ ἐκφαινόμενα, οὐ ποιούμενα οὐδὲ παραγόμενα.<sup>63</sup>

61 Eustratios, *On Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 10.22–27.

62 Proclus, *Platonic Theology*, v. 3, p. 38.4–7.

63 Eustratios, *On Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 10.27–29.

If you wish, let us pass over in silence the first principles, things hidden in innermost holy sanctuaries, namely the one cause and the realities that the One manifests and reveals, which are neither produced nor caused.

This is an extraordinary text. Eustratios elegantly wishes to shift his focus from the One to the lower realities. However, in doing so, he provides readers with a clear glimpse of the Neoplatonic principle according to which the One and that which is around the One, namely the henads firmly established in the One (and are distinct from it only from an external point of view), are unknowable and must be approached through silence.<sup>64</sup>

Accordingly, the commentator discusses the analogy between these lower levels of reality and the four Aristotelian questions. First comes being (τὸ ὄν), writes the commentator, which is the intelligible (τὸ νοητόν), then comes life (ἡ ζωή), which is the same as knowledge (ἡ νόησις), then comes the intellect (ὁ νοῦς), which is the same of the knower (τὸ νοοῦν), finally comes the level of the soul (ἡ ψυχή).<sup>65</sup> Except for the level of the soul, this text otherwise appears to depend once again upon Proclus' *Platonic Theology*:

64 There is a tremendous number of texts that could be cited here. I shall only cite a few passages from Proclus, Eustratios' favorite authority. See e.g. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, p. 1171.5–8: δῆλον ὡς ἀπάντων τῶν τοιούτων ἐξήρηται τὸ ἓν, ἐπέκεινα ὄν καὶ ἐνεργείας καὶ σιγῆς καὶ ἡσυχίας καὶ πάντων ὁμοῦ τῶν ἐν τοῖς οὖσιν ἀνυμνουμένων στασίμων συνθημάτων. Proclus, *Platonic Theology*, v. 2, p. 58.21–24: οὕτε γὰρ εἰ αἴτιον ἐκεῖνο τῶν ὄντων οὕτε εἰ γεννητικόν, ἢ γινῶναι τοῖς δευτέροις θεμιτόν ἢ λόγῳ διελθεῖν, ἀλλὰ σιγῇ τὸ ἄρρητον αὐτοῦ καὶ πρὸ τῶν αἰτίων πάντων ἀναίτιως αἴτιον ἀνυμνεῖν; 65.11–15: καὶ ὡς θεός ἐστι θεῶν ἀπάντων, αἱ ὡς ἑνὰς ἐνάδων, καὶ ὡς τῶν ἀδύτων ἐπέκεινα τῶν πρώτων, καὶ ὡς πάσης σιγῆς ἄρρητότερον, καὶ ὡς πάσης ὑπάρξεως ἀγνωστότερον, ἅγιος ἐν ἀγίοις τοῖς νοητοῖς ἐναποκεκρυμμένος θεοῖς. Proclus, *De providentia*, ed. H. Boese (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1960), ch. 31.6–12: τῆς ψυχῆς, μηκέτι τὸ νοερὸν ἐγείρουσαν, ἀλλὰ συναφθεῖσαν τῷ ἐνί. πάντα γὰρ τῷ ὁμοίῳ γινώσκειται, αἰσθήσει τὸ αἰσθητόν, ἐπιστήμη τὸ ἐπιστητόν, νῶ τὸ νοητόν, ἐνώσει τὸ ἓν ᾧ ἡ ψυχή συναφθεῖσα ἡρμεῖ, μύσασα ταῖς καταγνώσεσι, ἀφθεγκτος γενομένη καὶ σιγήσασα τὴν ἔνδον σιγὴν. Secondary literature on this topic is equally vast. A collection of sources on silence over the first principles, is found in S. Lilla, "La teologia negativa dal pensiero Greco classico a quello patristico e bizantino", in *Helikon* 28(1988), pp. 230–280. See also the classical C. Steel, "Negatio negationis. Proclus on the Final Lemma of the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides*", in J.J. Cleary (ed.), *Traditions of Platonism: Essays in Honour of John Dillon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 351–368. On the particular status of the henads as realities which, *strictu sensu*, "are neither produced nor caused" (οὐ ποιοούμενα οὐδὲ παραγόμενα), see R. Chlup, *Proclus. An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 112–119.

65 Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 10.30–32.

Καὶ γὰρ τὸ νοητὸν μάλιστα τοῦτό ἐστιν, ἐπειδὴ νοῦς μὲν ἐστὶ τὸ γνωστικόν, ἡ δὲ ζωὴ νόησις, νοητὸν δὲ τὸ ὄν.<sup>66</sup>

For the intelligible is especially this. Since intellect indeed is that which is gnostic, life is intelligence, and being is intelligible.

Afterwards Eustratios develops the analogy between the four Aristotelian questions and Life, Being, Intellect, Soul:

τὸ μὲν οὖν εἰ ἔστι περὶ τοῦ εἶναι ζητοῦν ἀπλῶς τοῦ ἀπλῶς ὄντος ἔστιν εἰκὼν· τὸ δὲ τί ἐστὶν ἐπεὶ τὸ γνῶρισμα τοῦ ὄντος ζητεῖ καὶ ἐκεῖνο ἐκφαίνει ὥσπερ κρυπτόμενον, καὶ πρόοδος ἐκείνου εἰς τοῦμφανές ἐκ τοῦ ἀφανοῦς γίνεται, τῆς ζωῆς ὡς δυνάμεως οὔσης ἢ ἐνεργείας, δι' ἧς τὸ ὄν νοεῖται καὶ καταλαμβάνεται· τὸ δὲ εἰ ὑπάρχει τῷδε τόδε, τοῦ νοῦ ὡς ἄμφω ἑαυτῷ συνάπτοντος, νόησιν τε καὶ τὸ νοητόν, τὸ μὲν ὡς ὑποκείμενον, τὴν δὲ περὶ αὐτὸ ἢ πρὸς αὐτὸ ἀποτετινομένην. τῆς ψυχῆς δὲ τὸ διὰ τί ἐστὶν, ὅτι λόγος αὕτη ἐστὶ καὶ λόγους τῶν ὑπὸ λόγον καὶ αἰτίας τῶν ὑπ' αἰτίαν καὶ μέσα τῶν ἐμμέσων ἀναζητεῖ τε καὶ ἀνευρίσκει· ὅθεν δὴ καὶ τὸ πόθεν ποῖ κινεῖσθαι αὐτῇ ἀπὸ προτάσεων ἐπὶ τὰ συμπεράσματα.<sup>67</sup>

Thus posing the question in general terms “if something is” is an image of pure Being, whereas posing afterwards the question “what something is” addresses a token of being and reveals it as hidden. The procession coming from Being moves from unclarity to clarity, Life being a sort of power or act by means of which Being is known and grasped. The question “if something exists” as such and such involves the Intellect connecting in itself both knowledge and intelligible, the latter as subject, the former as extending around and towards it. “The reason why” concerns the Soul, for the Soul is reason and investigates and discovers the reasons that exist under the class of reason, the causes that fall under the class of cause, and the middle terms among the intermediate ones. Moreover, from whatever source and place, it is moved by itself from the premises to the conclusions.

This text must be understood within Eustratios' previous distinction among different interpretive levels. Aristotle's logic is an explanatory model valid in

66 Proclus, *Platonic Theology*, v. 3, p. 36.8–10; v. 4, p. 7.23–24; but see v. 3, pp. 1.18–2.3, where the levels of soul and body are said to participate in the divine henads after the triad Life, Being, Intellect.

67 Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, 2, pp. 10.32–11.4.

the sensible world: thus, posing the questions “if something is” and “what something is” within this logical approach only grasps an image of pure Being and a faint likeness of it. By contrast, following his Neoplatonism, the commentator implies that true Being only exists in the intelligible world.<sup>68</sup> That this is the case, it is clear from a similar passage in the same commentary where Eustratios explains in detail the existing relationship between the logical, physical, and theological approaches concerning knowledge. According to the commentator, knowledge moves from the logical level, whereby we connect premises and conclusions within syllogisms to the natural one, insofar as by considering the species of the natural beings we come to know Nature itself. Finally, while considering the species in the demiurgic reasons, we move to the one and First Cause. In the end, claims Eustratios, in these three levels knowledge works in the same way, striving for the more universal terms and causes.<sup>69</sup>

Regarding the reference to Life as that through which Being is first known, surely Eustratios has in mind Proclus’ triad of Life, Being, Intellect, and the Diadochus’ claim “that Life communicates the movement inherent in it, inasmuch as Life is the first procession or movement away from the steadfast substance of Being” (καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τῆς παρ’ ἑαυτῇ κινήσεως καὶ γὰρ ἡ ζωὴ πρώτη πρόοδος ἐστὶ καὶ κίνησις ἀπὸ τῆς μονίμου τοῦ ὄντος ὑποστάσεως).<sup>70</sup> More difficult is finding an earlier Neoplatonic passage that explains Eustratios’ claim that posing the question “if something exists” involves the Intellect or Intelligence as connecting knowledge and the intelligible. Surely in Proclus’ metaphysics (see *Elements of Theology*, prop. 167) the Primal Intelligence is identical to its thought. However, a possible explanation of this Eustratian passage involves the link with Proclus’ claim, in his commentary on *Timaeus*, that the second aspect of the Intelligence is that “connecting the intellect with the intelligible” (ἡ συνάπτουσα τῷ νοητῷ τὸν νοῦν).<sup>71</sup> What sense is meant in this account for “if something is” or “exists” questions is not immediately clear. Finally, claims

68 Unsurprisingly, Eustratios’ claim that in the sensible world one only finds “an image of pure Being” (τοῦ ἀπλῶς ὄντος ἔστιν εἰκὼν) echoes the vocabulary of the Neoplatonists. See for instance Proclus, *In Parmenidem*, p. 1229.9–13: ῥητέον δὲ ὡς εἰκὼν οὐ γίγνεται εἰκὼν, ἀλλὰ τι ἄλλο γιγνομένη ἐστὶν τῷ εἰκάζειν ὃ γίγνεται τοῦ ἑαυτῆς παραδείγματος εἰκὼν· καθ’ ὅσον γὰρ εἰκὼν ἐστὶ τοῦ ὄντος, ἔχει τὸ εἶναι τοῦτο ὅπερ δὴ καὶ λέγεται εἰκονικῶς, καὶ αἰεὶ ἐστὶν εἰκὼν ὡς κάκεῖνο αἰεὶ παράδειγμα.

69 Eustratios, *On Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 40.4–33.

70 Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 102, p. 92.8–10.

71 Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum*, v. 1, p. 244: δευτέρα δὲ ἡ συνάπτουσα τῷ νοητῷ τὸν νοῦν, συνεκτικὴν ἔχουσα καὶ συναγωγὸν τῶν ἄκρων ιδιότητα καὶ οὕσα ζωὴ καὶ δύναμις, πληροῦσα μὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ νοητοῦ τὸν νοῦν, ἐνιδρύουσα δὲ τὸν νοῦν εἰς τὸ νοητὸν.

Eustratios, the soul acts discursively, that is to say through discursive reasoning and connects in *dioti* explanation premises and conclusions by looking for the middle term.<sup>72</sup>

All the evidence suggests that Eustratios accepts the general outlines of Proclus' metaphysics. The commentator allows the existence of the One and the henads. At a lower level, he allows the existence of the intelligible world, which he describes as true Being, along with Proclus' triad of Life, Being, and Intellect. Then comes the level of the soul. But there is more: in our commentary Eustratios writes:

ἀεὶ γὰρ ταῖς καταδεεστέραις τῶν ὑποστάσεων ἡ μετουσία τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ διὰ τῶν προσεχῶς αὐτῶν προϊσταμένων παρέχεται, οἷον τοῖς σώμασι διὰ τῆς φύσεως, τῇ φύσει διὰ τῆς ψυχῆς, τῇ ψυχῇ διὰ τοῦ νοῦ, τοῦτ' αὖ διὰ τῆς ζώης, ταύτῃ διὰ τοῦ ὄντος.<sup>73</sup>

In fact, for the weaker hypostases participating in the Good always takes place through the levels that come right before them, like Nature for the bodies, Soul for Nature, Intellect for Soul, Life for Intellect and Being for Life.

This is a summary of participation among different levels of reality discussed at length by Proclus in his *Platonic Theology*.<sup>74</sup> Even the expression "participation in the Good" (ἡ μετουσία τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ) reflects Proclus' vocabulary very closely.<sup>75</sup>

Elsewhere in his commentary, Eustratios also refers to Proclus' theory of whole and parts and the idea that wholes are unparticipated monads that generate a plurality of terms coordinated with them.<sup>76</sup> However, whereas this latter view is ascribed to "the followers of Plato" in the guise of a doxography, the present paper suggests that the commentator identifies his own position with that of the Platonists.

72 On the soul acting discursively, see Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, 6, p. 303.16–26. On the Neoplatonic flavor of this doctrine, see Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo*, pp. 155–165.

73 Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 254.6–9. On this text, see Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo*, pp. 90–91.

74 For this scheme, see L. Siorvanes, *Proclus: Neo-Platonic Science and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp. 123–125.

75 See e.g. Proclus, *Platonic Theology*, v. 2, p. 36.6; p. 56.5; v. 3, p. 64.9.

76 Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, 2, p. 195.26–36. On Proclus' whole and parts theory, see Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 67, p. 67.1–2. I discussed this passage at length in Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo*, pp. 87–90.



#### 4 Conclusions

In my conclusive remarks I would like to address two issues, namely Eustratios' position within eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantine Neoplatonism and the importance of the Byzantine commentators on Aristotle in the Greek Middle Ages.

Regarding the first issue, the main character in the Byzantine reception of Neoplatonism and Proclus is noticeably the consul of the philosophers, Michael Psellos (d. after 1076). After Zervos' 1920 consequential *Un philosophe néoplatonicien du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle: Michel Psellus*, the consul of the philosophers was granted the title of a steady reader of Proclus and that of a true Byzantine Neoplatonist.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, Michael himself famously elected Proclus as the highest peak ever reached by ancient philosophy. Furthermore, Michael's writings are rife with excerpts, citations, and references of all sorts to this Neoplatonist.<sup>78</sup> Yet, recent research shows that Psellos' use of Proclus needs to be qualified: at times, Michael produces personal notes with excerpts from Proclus; on other occasions, he uses Proclus' vocabulary for his theological writings, or he relies on Proclus for his view on literature and authorship.<sup>79</sup> Finally, he often harshly criticizes Proclus' paganism as incompatible with Christianity.<sup>80</sup> In short, it is unclear whether or not Michael fully endorsed any of Proclus' tenets in metaphysics or epistemology.

By contrast, in light of what has been said in the present paper, I suggest shifting our attention from Psellos to Eustratios. The latter is one of the most significant medieval readers of Proclus, one who heavily relied on Proclus to present his views on causation, concept-formation, and metaphysics. In short, I argue that our commentator is the crucial figure in what has been called the "Proklosrenaissance" in Byzantium.<sup>81</sup>

77 C. Zervos, *Un philosophe néoplatonicien du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle: Michel Psellus. Sa vie, son œuvre, ses luttes philosophiques, son influence* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1920).

78 On the breadth of Psellos' scholarship on Proclus, see D.J. O'Meara, "Michael Psellos", in Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus*, pp. 165–181.

79 See S. Papaioannou, *Michael Psellos: Rhetoric and Authorship in Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 88–128.

80 On this array of approaches to Proclus, see G. Miles, "Psellos and his Traditions", in S. Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 79–102. See also J. Robinson, "'A Mixing Cup of Piety and Learnedness': Michael Psellos and Nicholas of Methone as Readers of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes. Vol. 2. Translations and Acculturations* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2020), pp. 56–93.

81 The expression first appears in G. Podskalsky, "Nikolaos von Methone und die Proklosrenaissance in Byzanz", in *Orientalia christiana periodica* 42(1976), pp. 509–523.

In this regard, I would like to mention a few words on the potential link between Eustratios of Nicaea and Nicholas of Methone. As previously mentioned, according to the editor of Nicholas' *Refutation*, Athanasios D. Angelou, Nicholas challenges Eustratios' Neoplatonism, precisely in his commentary on *Posterior Analytics* II.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, identifying Eustratios as Nicholas' target is fascinating. As Angelou has promptly suggested, at first glance Eustratios' consistent appropriation of Proclean texts and doctrines is unparalleled in the Middle Byzantine period, and because of this a link with Nicholas would seem obvious. However, is it so? Did Nicholas have in mind Eustratios when writing his *Refutatio Procli*? Even though that may seem disappointing, I have doubts about such a connection. Here is why.

First, the chronology of Eustratios' philosophical commentaries does not fit in with Nicholas' *floruit*. As far as I know, there is no precise dating for the composition of Eustratios' commentary, but all the evidence suggests the early twelfth century as a reasonable guess. As anticipated above, Nicholas composed his *Refutatio Procli* around the mid-twelfth century, some forty years after the commentary on *Posterior Analytics* II. Since Nicholas addresses contemporary readers of Proclus, I find it hard to imagine that he is reacting to a work written four decades earlier.

Second, recent scholarship on Nicholas suggests that in rejecting Proclus' metaphysics the bishop of Methone addresses contemporary theological debates,<sup>83</sup> whereas Eustratios' commentary hardly counts as a text addressing theological matters. True: Eustratios was condemned in 1117, but on that occasion the synod condemned his Christology, not his Neoplatonism. It is worth recalling that Eustratios' philosophical commentaries were written after the request of his contemporaries (i.e., the *Commentary on Posterior Analytics* II) and Princess Anna Komnene (*Commentaries on Nicomachean Ethics* I and VI). These texts were not meant to circulate outside these circles and cannot be regarded as official theological documents aiming at establishing one or more dogmata.

Third, in his philosophical commentaries Eustratios does not exclusively focus on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*. Surely, he cites from the *Elements*, but he also dwells on a vast array of other Proclean works like the *Com-*

82 See Angelou, "Introduction", pp. lv–lxii (and above footnote 1).

83 See J. Robinson, "Proclus as Heresiarch: Theological Polemic and Philosophical Commentary in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation* (*Anaptyxis*) of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in S. Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 103–136; M. Trizio, A. Gioffreda, "Nicholas of Methone, Procopius of Gaza, Proclus of Lycia", in Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus*, Vol. 2, pp. 94–135, at 105–114.

*mentary on the Parmenides*, the *Platonic Theology*, and the *Commentary on Alcibiades 1*. In short, Proclus' *Elements of Theology* does not play any specific role in Eustratios' ambitious project of commenting on Aristotle through the looking glass of Proclus. That is why it is unlikely that, when writing the *Refutatio Procli*, Nicholas had the Metropolitan of Nicaea as his target in mind.

Concerning the second issue—namely the place and importance of Eustratios as a commentator in Byzantine intellectual history—in a recent paper, Dimitri Gutas and Niketas Siniossoglou wrote that the Byzantines did not produce philosophical works worthy of the name. In particular, the authors harshly dismissed the Byzantine Aristotelian commentators as mere scholars, writers who simply repeated what Aristotle said without adding anything new because medieval Greek commentators were oppressed by hordes of ignorant monks ready to charge them with heresy.<sup>84</sup> Leaving aside the fact that, just like the Byzantines, Medieval Islamic and Latin Christian philosophers (and *mutatis mutandis*, the philosophers living in pre-modern societies) were also not granted unlimited and undisputed intellectual freedom, this paper proves that Gutas' and Siniossoglou's hasty dismissal of the Byzantine commentary tradition is questionable. The case of Eustratios' creative and passionate adoption of Proclus demonstrates that the Byzantine Aristotle commentators deserve scholarly attention. Eventually, Eustratios was condemned in 1117, but his condemnation was due to his alleged subordinationism in Christology. His Neoplatonic commentaries of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* I and VI and of *Posterior Analytics* II were not involved in the trial against our commentator. The time has come for scholars to carefully read the commentaries on Aristotle produced by Eustratios and others in the Greek Middle Ages in order to avoid the generalizations and prejudices of the past.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

- Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In Aristotelis metaphysica commentaria*, ed. M. Hayduck, Berlin, Reimer, 1891.
- Ammonius, *In Aristotelis analyticorum priorum librum I commentarium*, ed. M. Wallies, Berlin, Reimer, 1899.

84 D. Gutas, N. Siniossoglou, "Philosophy and 'Byzantine Philosophy'", in A. Kaldellis, N. Siniossoglou (eds), *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 271–295, at 294.

- Ammonius, *In Porphyrii Isagogen*, ed. A. Busse, Berlin, Reimer, 1891.
- Anna Comnena, *Alexias*, ed. D.R. Reinsch, A Kambylis, Berlin / New York, De Gruyter, 2001.
- Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, ed. W.D. Ross, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1970<sup>2</sup>.
- Aristotle, *Physics*, ed. W.D. Ross, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1950.
- Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, translated with a commentary by J. Barnes, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2002<sup>2</sup>.
- Aristotle, *Prior and Posterior Analytics*, ed. W.D. Ross, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1949.
- Asclepius, *In Aristotelis Metaphysicorum*, ed. M. Hayduck, Berlin, Reimer, 1888.
- Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. G. Heylbut, Berlin, Reimer, 1892.
- Eustratios, *On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, ed. M. Hayduck, Berlin, Reimer, 1907.
- Hermias, *In Platonis Phaedrum scholia*, ed. C.M. Lucarini, C. Moreschini, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2012.
- John Philoponus, *In Aristotelis libros de anima commentaria*, ed. M. Hayduck, Berlin, Reimer, 1897.
- John Philoponus, *In Aristotelis physicorum libros commentaria*, ed. H. Vitelli, Berlin, Reimer, 1887–1888.
- Maximus Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, ed. C. Laga, C. Steel, Turnhout, Brepols, 1980–1990.
- Nicholas of Methone, Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου / *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas' life and works by A.D. Angelou, Athens / Leiden, The Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984.
- Proclus, *De providentia*, in *Tria Opuscula (De providentia, De libertate, De malo) latine Guillelmo de Moerbeka vertente et graece ex Isaacii Sebastocratoris*, ed. H. Boese, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1960.
- Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, ed. E.R. Dodds, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963<sup>2</sup>.
- Proclus, *In Platonis Alcibiadem*, ed. L.G. Westerink, Amsterdam, North-Holland, 1954.
- Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, ed. C. Steel et al., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007–2009.
- Proclus, *In Platonis Rem publicam commentarii*, ed. W. Kroll, Leipzig, Teubner, 1899–1901.
- Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, 3 vols, ed. E. Diehl, Leipzig, Teubner, 1903–1906.
- Proclus, *In primum Euclidis elementorum librum commentarii*, ed. G. Friedlein, Leipzig, Teubner, 1873.
- Proclus, *Platonic Theology*, ed. H.D. Saffrey, L.G. Westerink, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1964–1997.
- Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, ed. B.R. Suchla, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1990.

Simplicius, *In Aristotelis Categorias commentarium*, ed. K. Kalbfleisch, Berlin, Reimer, 1908.

Simplicius, *In Aristotelis Physicorum libros commentaria*, ed. H. Diels, 2. vols, Berlin, Reimer 1882–1895.

### *Secondary Sources*

Arabatzis, G., “Blâme du philosophe. Éloge de la vraie philosophie et figures rhétoriques: Le récit d’Anne Commène sur Jean Italos revisité”, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 95/2(2003), pp. 403–415.

Bonazzi, M., “The Platonist Appropriation of Stoic Epistemology”, in T.E. Pedersen (ed.), *From Stoicism to Platonism. The Development of Philosophy, 100 BCE–100 CE*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 120–140.

Chase, M., *Ammonius. Interpretation of Porphyry’s Introduction to Aristotle’s Five Terms*, London, Bloomsbury, 2020.

Chlup, R., *Proclus. An Introduction*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Ebbesen, S., “The *Posterior Analytics* 1100–1400 in East and West”, in J. Biard (ed.), *Raison et démonstration. Les commentaires médiévaux sur les Seconds Analytiques*, Brepols, Turnhout, 2015, pp. 11–30.

Falcon, A., *Aristotelianism in the First Century BCE: Xenarchus of Seleucia*, Cambridge / New York, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Giocarinis, K., “Eustratios of Nicaea’s Defense of the Doctrine of Ideas”, in *Franciscan Studies* 12(1964), pp. 159–204.

Gutas, D., Siniossoglou, N., “Philosophy and ‘Byzantine Philosophy’”, in A. Kaldellis, N. Siniossoglou (eds), *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 271–295.

Hankinson, R.J., *Causes and Explanation in Ancient Greek Thought*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998.

Helmig, C., *Forms and Concepts. Concept Formation in the Platonic Tradition*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2012.

Ierodiakonou, K., “Metaphysics in the Byzantine Tradition”, in *Quaestio* 5(2005), pp. 67–82.

Lilla, S., “La teologia negativa dal pensiero Greco classico a quello patristico e bizantino”, in *Helikon* 28(1988), pp. 230–280.

Lloyd, A.C., *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990.

Longo, A., *Siriano e i principi della scienza*, Naples, Bibliopolis, 2005.

Majercik, R.J., *The Chaldean Oracles. Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Leiden, Brill, 1989.

Mariev, S., “Neoplatonic Philosophy in Byzantium”, in Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism*, pp. 1–29.

Mariev, S., (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2017.

- Mercken, H.P.F., "The Greek Commentators on Aristotle's *Ethics*", in R. Sorabji (ed.) *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence*, Ithaca NY, Cornell, 1990, pp. 407–443.
- Miles, G., "Psellos and his Traditions", in Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism*, pp. 79–102.
- Morau, P., *Le Commentaire d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise aux Seconds Analytiques d'Aristote*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1979.
- Morrow, G.R., Dillon, J.M., *Proclus. Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, Princeton, University Press, 1987.
- O'Meara, D.J., "Michael Psellos", in S. Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus. From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2014, pp. 165–181.
- Opsomer, J., "The Integration of Aristotelian *Physics* in a Neoplatonic Context: Proclus on Movers and Divisibility", in R. Chiaradonna, F. Trabattini (eds), *Physics and Philosophy of Nature in Neoplatonism*, Leiden / Boston, Brill, 2009, pp. 189–230.
- Papaioannou, S., *Michael Psellos: Rhetoric and Authorship in Byzantium*, Cambridge, Cambridge, University Press, 2013.
- Podskalsky, G., "Nikolaos von Methone und die Proklosrenaissance in Byzanz", in *Orientalia christiana periodica* 42(1976), pp. 509–523.
- Rigo, A., Trizio, M., "Eustratius of Nicaea: An Hitherto Unknown 'Master of Rhetors' in Late Eleventh Century", in C. Dendrinos, I. Giarenis (eds), *Bibliophilos, Books and Learning in the Byzantine World*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2021, pp. 359–368.
- Robinson, J., "'A Mixing Cup of Piety and Learnedness': Michael Psellos and Nicholas of Methone as Readers of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*" in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes. Volume 2. Translations and Acculturations*, Leiden, Brill, 2020, pp. 56–93.
- Siorvanes, L., *Proclus: Neo-Platonic Science and Philosophy*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1996.
- Steel, C., "Breathing Thought: Proclus on the Innate Knowledge of the Soul", in J.J. Cleary (ed.), *The Perennial Tradition of Neoplatonism*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 1997, pp. 293–309.
- Steel, C., "Negatio negationis. Proclus on the Final Lemma of the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides*", in J.J. Cleary (ed.), *Traditions of Platonism: essays in honour of John Dillon*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1999, pp. 351–368.
- Steel, C., "Why Should We Prefer Plato's *Timaeus* to Aristotle's *Physics*? Proclus' Critique of Aristotle's Causal Explanation of the Physical World", in R.W. Sharples, A.D.R. Sheppard (eds), *Ancient Approaches to Plato's Timaeus*, London, Institute for Classical Studies, 2003, pp. 175–187.
- Taylor, C., *The Six Books of Proclus, the Platonic Successor, on the Theology of Plato*, London, A.J. Valpy, 1816.
- Trizio, M., "Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium", in S. Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Pro-*

*clus. From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 182–215.

Trizio, M., “From Anne Komnene to Dante: The Byzantine Roots of Western Debates on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*”, in J. Ziolkowski (ed.), *Dante and the Greeks*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2014, pp. 105–139.

Trizio, M., “Neoplatonic Source-Material in Eustratios of Nicaea’s commentary on Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*”, in C. Barber, D. Jenkins (eds), *Medieval Greek Commentaries on the Nicomachean Ethics*, Leiden / Boston, Brill, 2009, pp. 71–109.

Trizio, M., *Il neoplatonismo di Eustrazio di Nicea*, Bari, Pagina, 2016.

van den Berg, R.M., “As we are Always Speaking of Them and Using their Names on Every Occasion. Plotinus, *Enneades*, 111.7 [45]: Language, Experience and the Philosophy of Time in Neoplatonism”, in F. Trabattoni, R. Chiaradonna (eds), *Physics and Philosophy of Nature in Greek Neoplatonism*, Leiden / Boston, Brill, 2009, pp. 101–121.

Zervos, C., *Un philosophe néoplatonicien du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle: Michel Psellus. Sa vie, son œuvre, ses luttes philosophiques, son influence*, Paris, E. Leroux, 1920.

**PART 2**

***The Refutation and Nicholas' Other Works***







# Standards of Argument in Nicholas of Methone and Proclus: Comparing the *Elementatio theologica* with Nicholas' Attempts to Disarm It

Jan Opsomer

KU Leuven

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this contribution is to compare the argumentative method of Nicholas of Methone and that of Proclus in the *Elementatio theologica* and to evaluate the philosophical effectiveness of his polemic. I thus refrain from examining its historical aims and effectiveness. This is not to say the historical context can be fully ignored. Hellenic philosophy, and in particular the Platonism of figures like Iamblichus and Proclus, exerted a strong attraction on certain Byzantine intellectuals of Nicholas' day. Interest in Proclus had been revived about a century earlier by Michael Psellos, and later by his student John Italos, by Eustratios of Nicaea and Isaac Sebastocrator. These thinkers introduced Neoplatonic ideas into Christian speculations about God and the Trinity, thus posing a threat to Christian theological orthodoxy as Nicholas understood it. Specialists of Byzantine intellectual history agree that Christian thinkers were Nicholas' primary target.<sup>2</sup> When he was attacking Proclus, Nicholas was also, or primarily, polemicizing against *them*. This already appears from the full title of

<sup>1</sup> This text is part of a project that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. [885273]—AdvGr PlatoViaAristotle).

<sup>2</sup> See also Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas' life and works by A.D. Angelou (Athens / Leiden, The Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984), *Prooemium*, p. 2, 6–7; ch. 63, p. 65, 25–27; G. Kapriev, *Philosophie in Byzanz* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), p. 216; M. Trizio, "Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium", in S. Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus. From Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 203–208; J. Robinson, "Proclus as Heresiarch: Theological Polemic and Philosophical Commentary in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation* (*Anaptyxis*) of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in S. Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 106–107. I especially refer the reader to various other contributions in this volume.

the work: *Explication of the Elements of Theology of Proclus of Lycia the Platonic philosopher: that those who read this book might not be seized by its seemingly compelling persuasion and be tempted against the true faith.*<sup>3</sup>

The intellectual history of Nicholas' environment, however, is not the focus of this article. I would maintain that despite this historical context the work formally is an attack on Proclus, and it deserves to be judged also on this basis. After all, Nicholas could just as well have attacked the views of his contemporaries directly. Instead, he disguises his aims by attacking Proclus, whom he even directly addresses (e.g. *Refutation*, 10, 15.1). Nicholas seeks to undermine his opponent's authority by sniggering at his alleged mistakes, questioning his intelligence, and scorning him. Nicholas recognized that one specific work by Proclus exercised a strong pull on some of his contemporaries and therefore deemed it worthy of his efforts. He specifically highlights the persuasive force of the demonstrations it provides (hence the word *πειθανάγκη* in the title). This explains why Nicholas professes to engage with the *Elements of Theology* on an argumentative level, commenting not just on the doctrines but also on the arguments. He engages in an attack on all fronts: he seeks to undermine the authority of Proclus by means of attacking his person, questioning his intelligence, and ridiculing him. And he attempts to refute the elements of the Hellenic-Platonic worldview and the arguments supporting it.

It is important to point out that Nicholas' *Explication* deals with a specific text, not with Proclus' philosophy in general. Hence it should be measured against that text, that is, not just against its doctrinal contents but also against its argumentative standards. Hence we should ask ourselves whether Nicholas' treatment of the text can be considered philosophically effective against Proclus' *stoicheiosis* of his Platonic views on god and the gods.

There is one common type of argument found in Nicholas that I shall ignore. It can be summarised as: "what Proclus says here does not agree with the doctrine of the Trinity"—what he means is: "with *my* or *our* interpretation of the Trinity, which also happens to be the only correct way of conceptualising the Trinity." From a philosophical perspective, this is not a very interesting strategy.

3 Νικολάου Ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου τοῦ Λυκίου πλατωνικοῦ φιλοσόφου πρὸς τὸ μὴ συναρπάζεσθαι τοὺς ἀναγινώσκοντας ὑπὸ τῆς ὑποφαινομένης αὐτῇ πειθανάγκης καὶ σκανδαλίζεσθαι κατὰ τῆς ἀληθοῦς πίστεως (ed. Angelou, p. 1, 1–6 title). The translations from this work are by Joshua Robinson. References are to the page and line numbers from the Angelou edition, preceded by the number of the proposition (or alternatively to the *Prooemium*). For the *Elements of Theology*, I cite the translation by E.R. Dodds and use the page and line numbers of his edition, in Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, ed. and tr. E.R. Dodds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963<sup>2</sup>).

All Proclus would have to reply, in an imaginary dialogue, is that he neither believes in the Christian Trinity nor in the authorities on which the doctrine rests, and that's it.

## 2 The Argumentative Model of the *Elements of Theology*

The *Elements of Theology* are inspired, in part, by the argumentative model presented by the manuals of geometry.<sup>4</sup> Proclus was very familiar with the *mos geometricus*. In several other works he mentions the geometric method and, more importantly, he is the author of a commentary on the first book of Euclid's *Elements*. A work modelled on the geometric manuals is meant to stand on its own. It is almost, to appropriate a concept developed in the work itself, an *autoteles hypostasis*, in the sense of an object that has all the resources it needs within itself. There is, however, one important qualification, to which I will return later. The fact that Proclus' treatise is modelled after a specific literary genre, the manuals of geometry, has important implications. Not only does this literary genre require certain stylistic features and a certain organisation of the philosophical content into a system of theorems and proofs, with occasional corollaries, it also comes with a very specific argumentative model. According to this model, the author is not allowed to bring in assumptions from outside: each theorem requires a demonstration, and the demonstrations can only make use of premises that have been proved earlier in the work. Later theorems can be justified exclusively on the basis of earlier proofs and theorems.

Such a demonstrative system, however, would need starting points. In geometrical manuals, these are provided in the form of definitions, axioms, common notions, postulates, or hypotheses—the nomenclature is not very stable, and the textual transmission of the key terms is uncertain.

Be that as it may, such lists are conspicuously absent from Proclus' text. The title of the work is immediately followed by the first theorem and its proof. A closer study of the first theorems and proofs reveals, however, that Proclus' *modus operandi* here consists in teasing out the theorems from a very limited

4 In this section I summarise the conclusions of what I have examined in "Organiser la philosophie selon ses éléments. Structures argumentatives dans les *Éléments de Théologie*", in G. Aubry, L. Brisson, P. Hoffman, L. Lavaud (eds), *Les Éléments de théologie de Proclus: Interprétations, réceptions antiques et modernes* (Paris: Hermann, 2021), pp. 135–176, and adumbrated in "Proclus' *Elements of Theology* and Platonic dialectic", in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of causes. Volume 3. On Causes and the Noetic Triad* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2022), pp. 17–36.

number of concepts, whose meanings and mutual relations are gradually being articulated. Such concepts are “one”, “many”, “whole”, “part”, “participation”, “to bring forth”, “goodness”, “priority”, “self-sufficiency”, “need”, “to strive”, “cause”, “sameness”, “difference”. Proclus moreover implicitly distinguishes between “one” as expression of cardinality (1) and as denoting unity, that is, the lack of internal division. He also needs the expression “X-itself”: applied to “one” its meaning is that the One-itself (τὸ αὐτόέν) is that which is one and nothing but one. Apart from elementary concepts, there are also the elementary propositions stating relations between these concepts. The proposition expressing the fundamental relation between one and many, for instance, states that the one is not many; the relation between whole and part is expressed by the statement that the whole is greater than the part. As to participation, Proclus does not explicate the sense of the term as denoting an asymmetric relation, but rather *argues* that the relation, applied to theological realities, must be asymmetric.<sup>5</sup> The argument in the first ten or so<sup>6</sup> propositions completely depends on these elementary concepts and their relations. Progressively, Proclus derives new concepts, for instance “the unified” (prop. 4), from the most basic concepts, and further theorems from the fundamental propositions.

From other works, such as the *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, the *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, the *Commentary on Plato's Cratylus*, the *Commentary on Euclid*, and the *Platonic Theology*, we know that Proclus considers the propositions “the one is not many” and “the whole is greater than the part” as indemonstrable axioms. The basic concepts are designated as axioms of theology<sup>7</sup> and called common notions in those works (the first term refers to their position in the structure of a science; the second to our epistemic access to them).<sup>8</sup> The terms “common notion” and “axiom” are exactly what one finds in the lists at the beginning of a geometric manual, but in the *Elements of Theology* Proclus remains silent about them.

Yet in this work, too, he appeals to these concepts and premises, using them implicitly as common notions and axioms. Their function is double: they

5 Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, 5, 6.7–19.

6 Since these concepts are articulated gradually, it is not possible to draw a clear borderline here.

7 “Theology” is Proclus’ term, but we could just as well call this science first philosophy or metaphysics.

8 Cf. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, ed. C. Steel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007–2009), VI, 1092.15–26 [= 1092.18–33 ed. C. Luna, A.-P. Segonds (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2007–2011)], on the indemonstrable principle ὅτι τὸ μὴ πολλὰ εἶναι τὸ ἓν. And *Elements of Theology*, 1, 2.12 (τὸ δὲ ἐκ πάντων ἐκάστου πλέον); *In primum Euclidis Elementorum librum commentarii*, ed. G. Friedlein (Leipzig: Teubner, 1873), p. 196, 17–18 (ἀξίωμα γὰρ καὶ ὅτι τὸ ὅλον τοῦ μέρους μείζον).

enable us to understand, and hence also to develop, the arguments, and they serve to provide the justification of those very basic arguments. They are not, however, mere Aristotelian endoxic principles.<sup>9</sup> Proclus rather thinks that the rational soul directly inherits them from Intellect.<sup>10</sup> This intellectual content is infallibly true and thus builds the stable starting points for our discursive reasoning. For these arguments, we draw upon our intimate, pre-discursive knowledge of reality. The type of reasoning developed in the *Elements of Theology* corresponds quite closely to what Plato in the *Republic*, and Proclus in the *Commentary on the Republic*, describe as dialectic: the highest science, but still a science that proceeds discursively, disclosing the highest realities and tracing their origin back to an unhypothetical principle. The implicit idea is that the first propositions are immediately based upon the common notions, and hence are certain.

Many readers, including Nicholas, have thought that the first proposition immediately introduces the One, that is, the Neoplatonic first principle of reality. The proposition in question could be rendered literally as “every plurality in some way participates the One” (πάν πλῆθος μετέχει πῆ τοῦ ἐνός). A closer look at the proof for this proposition, however, shows that this cannot be what is meant. The author makes a general point about the relation between unity and plurality, stating that there can be no pure plurality, since every plurality needs to partake of unity. Hence it is far preferable to translate τοῦ ἐνός as “oneness” or “unity”. The idea is indeed that there can be no pure manifold, a manifold that in no way participates oneness. For any multitude ultimately must needs consist of units. It is only with the fifth proposition that we arrive at the conclusion that the one that is a pure unity, and nothing but unity, exists and is unique. This “one” is indeed *the* One, the first principle of reality. With the seventh proposition Proclus starts an elaborate argument that shows that the One is productive of reality and is identical with the primary Good, that is, that at which the entire reality produced by the One is directed and on which it depends for its goodness.

9 See Nicholas’ appeal to “common notions” in *Refutation*, 50, 55.14, by which he means something like an Aristotelian *endoxon*. See also 43, 51.19–20; 51, 55.24–25.

10 Cf. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, v, 980.3–981.23 ed. Steel (980.5–981.28 ed. Luna/Segonds); 1025.21–28 ed. Steel (1025.25–34 ed. Luna/Segonds); *In Platonis Cratylum*, ed. G. Pasquali (Leipzig: Teubner, 1908, rep. Stuttgart, 1994) 3.1–12; *Théologie platonicienne*, ed. and tr. H.D. Saffrey, L.G. Westerink (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968–1997), 1.9, 35.19–36.3; *In primum Euclidis Elementorum*, 42.12–15; 44.14–24. Or as Proclus’ teacher, Syrianus, puts it (*On Aristotle’s Metaphysics* 13–14, 91.2–4, trans. J. Dillon, D. O’Meara [London: Duckworth, 2006]): “Since proofs derive from principles higher than them, the simplest intuitions or axioms derive from Intellect, and from these in turn, when compounded together, the whole variety of the Forms comes to be within us.”

An obvious objection to this interpretation is that any Platonist reading the beginning of the *Elementatio theologica* would unfailingly understand that Proclus is speaking about the first One. How should we address this objection? It is true that the first theorem can indeed be applied to the first One. Yet to start reading the text in that vein is to misunderstand how the text and the literary genre it belongs to function. Readers respecting the rules of the *mos geometricus* should set aside any Platonic convictions that they may have. They are supposed to bracket their belief that the first principle of reality is the One. They should instead start from their common notions and see where they lead, following the argument. Once they have reached the conclusion that the One-Good exists, they may return to the first theorem and see that it also applies to the first principle.

Nicholas does not play by these rules. He immediately takes the first theorem to be about the Platonic God. Insofar as one is looking at the deeper meaning of the text, he is even right about this. What is more, one could even argue that his basic intuition is right: the first theorem is also about what *he* thinks is the first God. In this sense, but only in this sense, is he justified to think it is about the Trinity; and his fear that it threatens the very structure of the Trinity and undermines this core doctrine is vindicated.

### 3 Nicholas of Methone's Approach to the *Elements of Theology*

Does Nicholas consider the specificity and the exigencies of the argumentative model of Proclus' text? The answer is negative. His anti-Proclean tract does not show him to be terribly worried about the constraints posed by the geometric approach. Either Nicholas is not aware of them at all, or he deliberately ignores them. Obviously, it was clear to him that the text was intended to convey an impression of rigorous logic. Already the title makes this clear, as do his remarks in the proem.<sup>11</sup> Repeatedly he mentions Proclus' use of logical argumentation. He seems particularly delighted when he has managed to point out an inconsistency or a seeming inconsistency,<sup>12</sup> not only because that is something bad for any text, but also because it strikes at the heart of what Proclus aimed to do. Nevertheless, Nicholas' neglect of the argumentative model of the *stoicheiosis* damages his argument in important respects.

11 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation, Proœm.*, 2.10–11; 3.24–25.

12 E.g. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 14, 19.27; 20, 27.12; 21, 28.30; 109, 105.34–35; *Proœm.*, 4.11.

To be sure, Nicholas was under no compulsion to respect the rules of the *mos geometricus*. He is not writing a manual in the geometric style and is in no way committed to their argumentative standards. Nor is he bound by the laws of *this* literary genre. He is writing a polemical tract, and the rules of polemic are the only rules he needs to worry about. There is no superordinate, objective standard by which he is supposed to be “fair” to Proclus. In the ethics of argumentation, fairness counts as an argumentative virtue: do not avail yourself of means that you deny of your adversary. But why would a polemicist embrace this virtue? Well, it may at least be advantageous to seem to be fair while refuting them. After all, the author wants to persuade his intended audience and in order to do so he would need at least to be perceived as taking Proclus’ arguments seriously. Fairness, or its appearance, would then have an instrumental value. If his arguments are recognisably eristic or sophistic, he is more likely to fail in the eyes of his intended audience. At one point, he addresses the latter as “you, worshipper of the Triad” (*Refutation*, 99.6–7, σὺ [...] ὁ τῆς τριάδος προσκυνητής). *Proskynesis* does not need to exclude rational argument, even if the kind of rationality does not always meet the standards of twenty-first century scholarship.

The polemicist, whose aim it is to refute the arguments and claims of their adversary one by one, needs to engage in textual exegesis. And this is, to an extent, what Nicholas does. Any act of exegesis needs to appeal to some form of the principle of charity, because without charity, not even an elementary understanding is possible.<sup>13</sup> But polemical charity does not have to go very far. Modern readers of Nicholas have remarked that he does not seem to be very charitable to Proclus.<sup>14</sup> Again, for a polemicist that may not be too bad. He merely has to see to it not to overdo it.

However, if we look at Nicholas’ text from the perspective, not of historical success, but of philosophical effectiveness, the standards must be set higher. If we want to examine whether Nicholas offers a philosophically effective refutation of his adversary, we should first make sure that he has understood his opponent correctly. Understanding the argumentative model underlying Proclus’ text, so I claim, is necessary for an adequate understanding of the text.

I shall examine the arguments from the perspective of a critical student of Proclus: someone who has a fair understanding of the intricacies of Proclus’

13 Cf. J. Opsomer, “Sollte man den Platonismus wohlwollend interpretieren? Philosophische Historiographie und das Prinzip der wohlwollenden Interpretation”, in M. Quante (ed.), *Geschichte—Gesellschaft—Geltung* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2014), pp. 945–958.

14 Cf. Trizio, “Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium”, p. 206: “Nicholas is more interested in rejecting Proclus’ view as incompatible with Christian truths than in delving more deeply into Proclus’ thought.”



manner of argumentation and reads his arguments with the charity assumed by their author. Would or should Proclus have been impressed by the appeal to some presumed revelations of an atheist sect, by someone who wrote extensive commentaries on such religious texts, or by an author who pilfered texts and ideas Proclus could have recognised as his own, and passed them off as his, assuming a fake identity? (I am talking, of course, of Dionysius the Areopagite.) To pose the question in these terms is to answer it. One could object that it is rather obvious that Proclus would not recognise foreign authorities, but that this points to a glaring weakness of his own position: Proclus's own philosophical system stands and falls on the reliance on authoritative figures and texts of a similar nature, but merely of a different tradition. However, since we are not dealing with an attempted refutation of Proclus' commentaries or of a work such as the *Platonic Theology*, but instead of the peculiar work that is his *Elementatio theologica*, this objection has no real force here. For it is the very idea of a *stoicheiosis* in the manner of the geometers that it stands on its own and does not rely on any textual authorities.

#### 4 Starting Points

In the manuals of geometry, arguments rely on earlier theorems, whereas the first theorems and arguments rely on starting points that need to be stated explicitly in lists of hypotheses, common notions, postulates, or axioms (the terminology is not stable, as I have explained). Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, though largely using this argumentative model presented in this literary genre, does not provide any such list. As I have argued above, his argument in the first propositions relies on a common understanding of the meaning of certain key concepts—stemming from ordinary language and not specific to any philosophical school—and a basic understanding of relationships between them. From other works we know that Proclus thinks of them as common notions to which we have intellectual, that is intuitive, access—but that is not essential for our purposes here. Proclus is at any rate careful not to bring in any stronger philosophical assumptions. Whether he is successful in avoiding this completely is again a different matter. Nicholas is not unaware of the requirement that no unwarranted assumptions are to be introduced into a philosophical discussion. Maybe he even associates this requirement with the specific nature of the *Elements of Theology*, but we cannot be certain of that. An indication could be that he occasionally argues that *even* Proclus brings in undemonstrated assumptions.<sup>15</sup>

15 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation* 139, 129.26–28: “See therefore that *even* this one makes

While for Proclus the starting points of his demonstration were the common notions (*koinai ennoiai*), introduced in a manner that is both subtle and implicit, Nicholas states his starting points unambiguously. Occasionally, mostly in the first part of his treatise, he tries to overthrow Proclus' arguments by pointing out (alleged) logical fallacies, inconsistencies or unwarranted assumptions. Yet his most important strategy is to try to refute Proclus by means of starting points that *Nicholas* considers to be commonly accepted. More in general, Nicholas situates the starting points of his argument in the Christian revelation—needless to say that it is a revelation not recognised by his opponent (but recognised, for sure, by his intended audience): “But we, taking the principles of our demonstrations from above, from the very Being, Life, and Truth who said: *I am he who is* [Ex. 3:14], and again, *I am the Life and the Truth* [Jn. 14:6].”<sup>16</sup> He moreover refers to what he mistakes for common sense beliefs, a mistake that is perfectly understandable in the light of his indoctrination (to be understood in a neutral sense). In the same vein, in his discussion of proposition 116 Nicholas cites *Romans* 1:22, on the wisest of the Greeks being foolish, a quip originally designed as an instrument of defence for a small religious sect and used profitably ever since as a means to shore up the flock of the worshippers. In the present context Nicholas uses the quotation to support his claim that the purportedly wise Proclus is in fact a fool because he does not acknowledge the self-evident and commonly accepted view that it is possible for two natures to come together in one hypostasis.<sup>17</sup> This is a rhetorical exaggeration.

---

his initial assumption without demonstration—he says, ‘We say there are divine bodies.’” (“Ορα γοῦν ὅτι καὶ οὗτος ἀναποδείκτως τὸ ἐν ἀρχῇ αἰτηθὲν λαμβάνει· καὶ γὰρ φησι· σώματα θεῖα εἶναι φαμεν, J. Robinson’s translation slightly modified, in J. Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone’s Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th Century Byzantium*. A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Graduate Program in Medieval Studies, Notre Dame (Indiana), 2014). Nicholas’ criticism on this specific point is not quite justified, for ten propositions earlier Proclus had *argued* that there must be divine bodies (*Elements of Theology*, 129, p. 114, 28–29). Nicholas utters the same type of criticism on a few other occasions: 14, p. 21, 23–24: Οὗτος δὲ καὶ τὸ ἀκίνητον ἀναποδείκτως ἐν τοῖς οὖσι παρεισάγει τὸ ἐν ἀρχῇ αἰτούμενος. See also 79, p. 82.1–23: ὁ δὲ τὸ ἐν ἀρχῇ αὐτοῦ αἰτηθὲν ἀναποδείκτως λαμβάνει τὸ τελείαν εἶναι τὴν ἐνοῦσάν τῳ δύναιμι, καίτοι προειπὼν ἀτελὲς εἶναι τὸ ὑφεστὼς ἐν ἄλλῳ.

16 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation* 105, 102.2–5: ἡμεῖς δὲ ἄνωθεν λαμβάνοντες τῶν ἀποδείξεων τὰς ἀρχάς, ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ τοῦ ὄντος, τῆς ζωῆς, τῆς ἀληθείας, τοῦ εἰπόντος· ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν, καὶ πάλιν· ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια, κτλ.

17 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 116, 113.15–19, 21–22: ὁ δὲ σοφὸς καὶ δύο ὑποστάσεις εἶναι φησι ἕκαστον τῶν αὐτοῦ θεῶν, οὐθ’ ὅπως ἀπλοῦν ἔτι τηρήσῃ τὸν θεὸν ἐπιδόμενος οὔτε τὸ πᾶσι δηλὸν καὶ κοινὸν ὁμολόγημα συνιδῶν ὅτι δύο μὲν φύσεις εἰς μίαν ὑπόστασιν συνελθεῖν οὐκ ἄδύνατον. [...] οὕτως οἱ τῶν Ἑλλήνων σοφοὶ φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ ἐμωράνθησαν [Rom. 1:22]. (“And

The postulate that two natures can be present in one hypostasis may have been common in Nicholas' theological circles, but it is certainly not a view that is self-evident or common to all humankind.

The doctrinal point made on the basis of a doctrinally specific terminological distinction is not unlike another distinction Nicholas makes, namely that between "natural" (φυσικῶς) and "demiurgic" (δημιουργικῶς) production, that is, between "begetting" (γεννάω) and "bringing forth" (παράγω).<sup>18</sup> Yet here the point is not entirely reducible to an idiosyncrasy of Trinitarian speculation: Nicholas makes the point that in the case of procreation, the cause and the product are alike in nature, whereas for Proclus all production entails diminution.<sup>19</sup> Nicholas could therefore be said to make an observation about our common knowledge about procreation in order to establish a finer theological point, which could be relevant for Proclus. However, it is not correct to state that Proclus falls prey to terminological confusion. It is rather the case that Proclus, and Neoplatonists in general, *refuse* to conceptualise theological production on the model of natural procreation. Instead, he maintains that, as far as theology is concerned, every producing cause is superior to its effects (prop. 7).

## 5 Authorities and Pseudo-Authorities

The *mos geometricus* is impersonal in more than one way: not only is the author meant to remain invisible; the genre forbids the appeal to authorities and the use of assumptions derived from them in the demonstrations. It is therefore striking that Nicholas' refutation is the opposite in both respects: not only does he regard Proclus as an opponent whom he names and shames *ad nauseam* (addressing him, with malign irony, as "the sage" (ὁ σοφός)),<sup>20</sup> he also very frequently cites his own authorities (primarily the Scriptures, Dionysius the

---

the wise man says that each of his gods is also two hypostases, neither devoting himself so that he might preserve God simple, nor acknowledging the postulate that is clear and common to all that [it is] not impossible that two natures come together into one hypostasis. [...] Thus the wise among the Greeks, *saying themselves to be wise, became foolish.*")

18 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 18, 24.22–25.2; 26, 35.32–16, 36.3–7.

19 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 18, 24.30–33.

20 See also Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, *Prooemium*, 3.15–17: ὁ πολὺς οὗτος τὴν ἕξω σοφίαν καὶ μηδενὶ τῶν πρωτείων παραχωρεῖν νεανιεύμενος Πρόκλος. His is a pseudo-wisdom: οὗτος γὰρ οὐκ Ἀριστοτέλει μόνον καὶ Πλάτῳ, Πυθαγόρᾳ τε καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις συνοργιάσας σοφοῖς ἐν τοῖς τῆς ψευδωνύμου σοφίας δόγμασιν (*Refutation*, 17–19).

Areopagite, and Gregory of Nazianzus) in order to combat Proclus' views, thus disregarding the rules of Proclus' game.

Proclus may have intended the *Elements of Theology* as a text that abstains from appealing to any external authorities, but Nicholas considers this document as the offspring of the entire Hellenic wisdom tradition, a sophistic<sup>21</sup> attempt to defend the pagan impious pseudo-wisdom, compared to the tower of Babel, with the apparent coherence of logical demonstrations, as he says in no ambiguous terms in his proem to the text.<sup>22</sup>

Had Proclus ever been able to read what his opponent wrote about the *Elements of Theology*, there is no doubt that he would have been underwhelmed by a name and title such as "Gregory the Theologian". And he certainly would have been scandalised if he had ever found out what the so-called Dionysius the Areopagite had done with his work (a forgery of which Nicholas was unaware). The crucial point, however, is not that Proclus would not recognise these authorities, but rather that an exercise such as the *Elements of Theology* requires that its author and readers refrain from any appeal to authority—except the authority of reason. The common notions to which Proclus implicitly appeals are inherent to reason and are held to be of a completely different nature than *endoxa*, the consensus among scholars and scientists, the agreement of the many, or the revelation in holy books of every stripe.

Hence, even the appeal to the authority of Plato and Aristotle, used against Proclus, misses the point. Nicholas' reason for citing Plato and Aristotle at all lies probably in the fact that he must have realised that the authorities he usually cites would (while not failing to make an impression on his intended readership) have lacked the power to convince. Who better to cite, then, than Plato? This is precisely what Nicholas does when he tries to refute proposition 85, according to which "all that perpetually comes to be, has an infinite potency of coming to be." Nicholas surmises that a Platonist ought not ascribe power to "becoming" when Plato denies that "becoming" has being.<sup>23</sup> Nicholas does not just ignore that Plato has, in his later ontology (think of the *Timaeus*, the *Parmenides*, or the *Philebus*), overcome the crude dichotomy between being

21 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation, Proœm.*, 2.4; 3.1; 3.10.; 7, 12.5; 94, 93.14; 178, 156.17.

22 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation, Proœm.*, 3.1–4.2.

23 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 95, 88.1–3: εἰ τὸ γινόμενον οὐκ ἔστι κατὰ τὸν Πλάτωνα, πῶς ἂν τὸ γινόμενον λέγοιτο δύναμιν ἔχειν καὶ οὐ μᾶλλον ἀδυναμίαν, καθὼς μὴ ὄν· ἢ γὰρ δύναμις ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας πρόεισιν, οὐκ οὐσία δὲ τὸ μὴ ὄν. ("And furthermore, if *what comes to be* is not, according to Plato, how would *that which comes to be* be said to *have power* and not rather lack of power, since it is not; for power proceeds from substance, but non-being is not substance.")

and becoming, but also that, with a proposition such as this, Proclus actually develops a distinction that is more refined than the initial distinctions from which he started. Incidentally, this is a common pattern that we observe in this polemic, as we will see in more detail below. It is part of Proclus' textual strategy first to establish the fundamental doctrinal distinctions, and then to qualify them by developing more refined distinctions or by formulating exceptions.<sup>24</sup> In such cases, Nicholas is wont to cite the original distinction in order to find Proclus guilty of inconsistency. In Nicholas' defence, one could say that Proclus could often have explained more clearly in what manner two propositions that seem to be inconsistent can in fact be reconciled. Had Nicholas been more charitable, however, he could have looked more carefully for an interpretation that would avoid the inconsistency. Of course, this does not fit the polemicist's strategy. At any rate, more to the point than a defence of Proclus based on a more nuanced interpretation, is to state that no proposition of the *Elements of Theology* can be refuted by an appeal to any other thinker, or indeed not even to another work by Proclus.

Nicholas is even more explicit in his comments on proposition 72, which states that in composite beings that have a hylomorphic structure—or structures analogous to hylomorphic composition—the substrate is caused by principles that are superior to the principles that cause the formal aspect. The substrate is, as it were, prepared by higher causes so as to receive the forms that stem from causes lower than those. In the corollary, Proclus states that (prime) matter is produced directly by the One, whereas body and soul are produced by causes below the One. From this Nicholas incorrectly infers that Proclus thinks that matter is more venerable than body or soul. And this, he says, goes against the teaching of Plato.<sup>25</sup>

24 A case in point is Nicholas' remark on the relation between props. 109 and 110. Cf. Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation*, p. 349, n. 934. Dodds explains that prop. 110 qualifies prop. 109 in order to make it consistent with the corollary of prop. 62: Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, p. 256.

25 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 72, 74.3–9: Διὰ δὲ τοῦ πορίσματος καὶ ἄκων ὁ σοφὸς συνελάνεται κρείττω λέγειν τὴν ὕλην τῶν εἰδῶν, εἴπερ ἡ μὲν ἐκ τοῦ ἐνὸς ὑπέστη, τὰ δὲ ἐκ τοῦ ὄντος ὥστε ἡ τὸ ὄν κρείττον τοῦ ἐνὸς καὶ ὑπέρτερον, εἴπερ τὰ εἶδη κρείττω τῆς ὕλης, ὅπερ οὗτος οὐ βούλεται, ἡ τὸ ἐν τοῦ ὄντος ὑπέρτερον καὶ ἡ ὕλη κρείττων τῶν εἰδῶν, ὁ τοῖς πάντων τῶν σοφῶν δόγμασιν ἡναντίωται καὶ αὐτοῦ Πλάτωνος, οὗ διάδοχος οὗτος εἶναι αὐχεῖ. ("Through the corollary, and unwillingly, the wise man is forced to say that the matter is superior to the forms, if indeed the former subsists from the One, and the latter from Being; so that either Being is superior to and higher than the One, if indeed the forms are superior to matter, which indeed he does not want to say, or the One is higher than Being, and matter is superior to the forms, which is opposed to the teachings of all the wise, and even of Plato himself, whose Successor he boasts himself to be.")

A special case are the occasions where Nicholas appeals to Aristotle. The case is special because Nicholas himself adopts a broadly Aristotelian position in ontological issues: he regards time and, analogously, also eternity, as non-substantial, that is, as accidental;<sup>26</sup> and he appears to be a nominalist in the question of universals,<sup>27</sup> which he even claims are non-beings. While I do not consider Aristotle himself to be a nominalist, there can be no doubt the nominalism which we find in Nicholas is broadly Aristotelian in inspiration. Along the same lines, Nicholas denies that limit and the unlimited are hypostatic substances, as they are mere relations beheld in beings (οὐκ οὐσίαι τινές εἰσιν ὑφεστῶσαι ἀλλὰ σχέσεις τινές τοῖς οὖσιν ἐνθωρούμεναι),<sup>28</sup> and even says they are nothing (πέρας καὶ ἀπειρίαν, τὰ μὴδὲν ὄντα).<sup>29</sup> The last statement surely goes far beyond Aristotle. When citing Aristotle against Proclus, Nicholas delights in the idea that he is citing a thinker who should enjoy a high epistemic authority for Proclus, just as he does for himself, at least in the epistemic domain in question<sup>30</sup> (as a matter of fact, Proclus is often critical of Aristotle, as Nicholas could have known had he carefully studied other works by him, for instance the *Timaeus Commentary*).<sup>31</sup> In agreement with his own nominalist reading of Aristotle, Nicholas approvingly cites an expression that triggers associations

26 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 87, 89.17–19: ἔστι δὲ ἡμῖν ὁ χρόνος συμβεβηκός (ποσὸν γάρ τι, καθὼς καὶ πᾶσιν ἡ γοῦν τοῖς ἀκριβεστέροις σοφοῖς δοκεῖ), καὶ ὁ αἰὼν ἄρα πρὸς τὰ αἰώνια λόγον ἐπέχει συμβεβηκός. (“And time is for us an accident—for it is a certain quantity, just as also seems true to all the wise, or at any rate to the more precise—, then in relation to the eternal things eternity holds the role of an accident.”) Cf. Aristotle, *Categories*, 6, 4b20–25. For number and quantity, see Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 62, 64.1–3.

27 In his comments on proposition 68, Nicholas considers the whole in the part, the whole from the parts, and the corresponding parts to be mere relations—referring to the categories, but without naming Aristotle—i.e. “bare relations beheld in other subjects” and being nothing without their subjects (Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 68). See also *Refutation*, 60, 63.1–3; 66, 68.20–22; 67, 69.17–20.

28 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 93, 92.15–16.

29 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 102, 99.4.

30 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 14, 19.23–28: Ἐν τῷ παρόντι προβλήματι οὐκ Ἀριστοτέλει μόνον καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις σοφοῖς ἀντιφθέγγεται, πᾶν τὸ ἐν λέγων καὶ τὸ πᾶν τῷ καθόλου ὄντι προσνέμων ἐκείνων τοῦτο μὴ βουλομένων (τὸ γὰρ πᾶς, φησὶν ἐν τῷ Περὶ ἐρμηνείας Ἀριστοτέλης, οὐ τὸ καθόλου σημαίνει), ἀλλὰ καὶ ἑαυτῷ μάχεται τὸναντίον ἅπαν οὐ δεῖξαι βούλεται προβαλλόμενος (“In the present proposition he not only contradicts Aristotle and the other wise men, by saying all being, and assigning the ‘all’ to the universal being, even though these [words] do not mean this—for ‘all,’ says Aristotle in *On Interpretation* [17b12], does not signify the universal—, but he also fights himself, propounding what is entirely opposite to the things which he wishes to demonstrate” [trans. Robinson, slightly modified].)

31 On Nicholas’ possible knowledge of the *Commentary on the Timaeus*, see Robinson, “Proclus as Heresiarch”, p. 108. I surmise that, if Nicholas had access to this work, his knowledge of it would have remained superficial.

with the latter's critique of Platonic ontology when he argues that Proclus' distinction of grades of intellects and souls are bare concepts (ψιλὰ μόνον εἰσὶν ἐννοήματα) and, "as Aristotle would agree, mere chatter" (καί, ὡς ἂν Ἀριστοτέλης συμφήσειε, τερετίσματα).<sup>32</sup> In other works, he uses the same term, τερετίσματα, to denounce the Platonic ontology.<sup>33</sup> The use of this derogatory term in this context can be traced back to Aristotle, who had thus qualified the theory of Forms in the *Posterior Analytics*.<sup>34</sup> In late antiquity, it was apparently used by those who interpreted the *Categories* as pertaining to *post rem* universals, as Philoponus informs us.<sup>35</sup> This suggests that Nicholas' ontology is close to nominalist interpretations of Aristotle's *Categories* and of the critique of Plato's theory of Forms. A reason for this stance, apart from the historical reasons, may be that if one were to consider universals and, in particular, relations as having hypostatic reality, the Trinity would be even more crowded than it already is with just the three persons.

## 6 Nicholas' Concerns

Nicholas' principal criterion for judging philosophical views appears to be piety. In essence, Nicholas sees Proclus' work as an attack on piety.<sup>36</sup> However, on a rare occasion wherein Nicholas agrees with something Proclus says, he applauds him—Εὖγε, εὖγε (116.12)—and praises the theorem as pious. Before we become all too enthusiastic because of his magnanimity, I should add that

32 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 184, 160.18–23.

33 Nicholas of Methone, *Oratio*, 6, in *Adversus Soterichum Antiochiae patr.*, ed. A. Demetrakopoulos ('Εν Λειψία: τύποις Βγάνδου, 1866), p. 324, 9–19; Trizio, "Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium", p. 207; Robinson, "Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation*", p. 435, n. 1135.

34 Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora*, 1.22, 83a32–34: Τὰ γὰρ εἶδη χαίρετω· τερετίσματα γὰρ ἔστι, καὶ εἰ ἔστιν, οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸν λόγον ἔστιν. ("We can say goodbye to the Forms. They are nonny-noes, and if there are any they are nothing to the argument.", transl. J. Barnes, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002<sup>2</sup>)

35 John Philoponus, *In Aristotelis Categorias*, ed. A. Busse (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1898), p. 167, 12–17: Ἐκ τούτου τοῦ ῥησιδίου ὑπέλαβόν τινες τῶν ἐξηγητῶν τὸν σκοπὸν εἶναι τῶν κατηγοριῶν περὶ νοημάτων μόνων· ὁ γὰρ Ἀριστοτέλης, φασί, γένη μόνα οἶδε τὰ ὑστερογενῆ καὶ ἐννοηματικά· τὰ γὰρ καθόλου, φησὶν αὐτὸς ἐν τῷ Περὶ ψυχῆς, ἢ οὐδὲν ἔστιν ἢ ὕστερον, τὰ δὲ πρὸ τῶν πολλῶν οὐδ' ὅλως βούλεται εἶναι, ἀλλὰ τερετίσματα αὐτὰ λέγει καὶ φλυαρίας περιττάς; *In Aristotelis Analytica posteriora*, ed. M. Wallies (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1909) p. 242, 14–16: Τερετίσματα δὲ καλοῦνται τὰ προδιαψηλαφήματα τῶν κιθαρῳδῶν τὰ ἀναρθρα δοκιμασίας ἔνεκεν τῆς ἀπηχίσεως τῶν χορδῶν γινόμενα, ὡς ἂν εἰ ἔλεγεν 'οἱ περὶ τῶν ἰδεῶν λόγοι ῥημάτων εἰσὶ μόνων ψιλῶν, διανοίας κενοί'.

36 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, *Proœm.*, 3.21: τὸν κατὰ τῆς εὐσεβείας ζῆλον.

Nicholas immediately adds that Proclus must have stolen the thought in question from the great Dionysius (the modern reader will certainly appreciate the irony).<sup>37</sup>

In the context of this polemic, piety appears to amount primarily to the following four, closely related, issues:<sup>38</sup>

1. The view that God is unknowable and ineffable.
2. Orthodoxy regarding the Trinity.
3. The rejection of polytheism in favour of what Nicholas thinks is monotheism.
4. The doctrine that the Trinity creates everything else directly, without mediation.

Proclus' *Elements of Theology* poses a serious threat on all four fronts.

1. His arguments lead him to make positive assertions about what the first principle is and does.
2. His emphasis on the absolute unity of the first principle, and the argumentative rigour with which he shows this, make the idea of a Triad as highest deity questionable.
3. The system defended in the *Elements of Theology* posits a plurality of divinities,
4. ... who are all causes that together produce a complex reality.

Of all perceived threats, the most worrying, from Nicholas' perspective, appears to lie in the prohibition to state that the One-itself, τὸ αὐτόν, is at the same time three. Our text's emphasis on the unknowability of the divine seems to be there merely in order to shield the doctrine of the Trinity from critical questioning. Strangely enough from a non-partisan perspective, it has not prevented Nicholas from making strong claims about the internal structure of the Trinity and about its causal role toward the rest of reality.

I shall now examine some points in more detail, restricting myself to the actual polemic, rather than the doctrine Nicholas espouses. Nicholas' text contains in addition a great deal of doctrinal exposition, where he explains to his readers what "we" believe.

37 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 112, 117.23–29.

38 My four points lists nicely maps onto the list of Robinson, "Dionysius against Proclus", p. 250, who gathers these points under two headings.



## 7 The Unknowability of God

The first thing to be said is that, in a polemic, the same standards should apply in evaluating both sides. Nicholas considers God to be unknowable and ineffable.<sup>39</sup> However, despite his protestations to the contrary, his repeated assertions relative to the Trinity state certain features of it, no less than what happens when Proclus says that the first principle is one, is a cause, and is good. One could argue that when Proclus identifies the One with the Good, he is referring to what the first principle is *from the perspective of the reality that depends on it*. It is obvious, however, that the *Elements of Theology* is a much less apophatic text than some other works by Proclus. To be sure, also in the *Elements of Theology*, Proclus asserts the unknowability of the gods, in particular that of the first God. Notwithstanding this theorem, which comes rather late in the work (*Elements of Theology*, 123), Proclus does call the first principle one (*Elements of Theology*, 5, 6.20–21), good (*Elements of Theology*, 8), and cause (*Elements of Theology*, 11). But did Proclus perhaps change his mind when he gave more strongly apophatic accounts, for instance in the seventh book of the *Commentary on the Parmenides* or the third book of the *Platonic Theology* (chs. 7–9)? That is unlikely, I believe. The absence of a strong apophatic bent from the *Elements of Theology* can be explained in a different manner. It resides in the very nature of the geometric model of metaphysics. The *Elements of Theology* is a work of propositions and proofs. It is all about certain statements and supporting them by means of an *apodeixis*. In other words, the work by definition proceeds discursively and scientifically; its goal is to make certain pronouncements on the divine causes of reality. Had Nicholas paid closer attention to the formal character of the work, he might have realised that it only presents one, restricted, way of approaching theological issues. The *Elements of Theology*, despite its flaws, displays greater logical rigour, but is less sophisticated than the *Platonic Theology* and the *Commentary on the Parmenides*. At the risk of engaging in circular reasoning, I would say that this can be explained by the very nature of the work, because it adopts the formal paradigm of the *mos geometricus*.

This notwithstanding, Nicholas has a point when he says that Proclus is not completely consistent: if he really means what he says about God's ineffability and unknowability of the first principle, he should refrain from ascribing causal power, oneness, and goodness to him or it. One could of course retort: *tu quoque*! But this does not exonerate Proclus.

39 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 8, 13.2; 118, 114.14–16.

## 8 Knocking Down the Attack on the Trinity

Nicholas is convinced that it was an important part of the actual purpose of Proclus' work to attack the doctrine of the Trinity, and that he starts his attack with the very first proposition. Accordingly, Proclus' fundamental criticism of the Trinity would be that it is not one.<sup>40</sup> Nicholas states this view very clearly in his introductory remarks (*Refutation, Proœm.*, 4.3–15): with the first theorem Proclus says that "every plurality in some way participates the One" (πάν πλῆθος μετέχειν πῆ τοῦ ἑνός); in the fifth proposition he makes the even stronger statement that "multitude participates the One in every way" (καὶ πάντῃ μετέχειν τὸ πλῆθος τοῦ ἑνός), which "obviously" also means that "the One is participated in every way by the plurality" (ὥς ὑπὸ τοῦ πλῆθους πάντῃ δηλονότι μετεχομένου τοῦ ἑνός); but in the twenty-fourth proposition he claims that "the first One, which is one alone, is in every way unparticipated" (πάντῃ ἀμέθεκτον εἶναι τὸ πρῶτον ἓν, καὶ ὁ μόνον ἓν ἐστίν), that is, neither participated by any plurality nor by any "one". This, Nicholas says, amounts to a clear contradiction by which Proclus overturns himself: the same thing is supposed to be both participated and unparticipated. Nicholas here highlights what he thinks is most important in Proclus' work and why Proclus is wrong. The assumption about Proclus' intention is, however, groundless:<sup>41</sup> there is no indication in the work of any polemical intent against the Christians<sup>42</sup> (that is not to say that the *effect* of

40 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 26, 35.13–14.

41 Cf. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, p. 188.

42 Scholars have been able to detect only a few, hostile, allusions to the Christians in Proclus' works: cf. H.-D. Saffrey, "Allusions anti-chrétiennes chez Proclus, le diadoque platonicien", in *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et théologiques* 59.4(1975), pp. 553–563; H.-D. Saffrey, "Le thème du malheur des temps chez les derniers philosophes néoplatoniciens" in M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, G. Madec, D. O'Brien (eds), ΣΟΦΙΗΣ ΜΑΙΗΤΟΡΕΣ. "Chercheurs de sagesse." *Hommage à Jean Pépin* (Paris: Institut d'Études augustiniennes, 1992), pp. 421–431; Ph. Hoffmann, "Un grief antichrétien chez Proclus: l'ignorance en théologie", in A. Perrot (ed.), *Les Chrétiens et l'hellénisme: Identités religieuses et culture grecque dans l'Antiquité tardive* (Paris: Éditions Rue d'Ulm, 2012), pp. 161–197; C. Luna, A.-P. Segonds, "Proclus de Lycie", in R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*. Vol. v. *De Paccius à Rutilius Rufus*, 2<sup>o</sup> partie-vb, *De Plotina à Rutilius Rufus* (Paris: CNRS Éditions 2012), pp. 1549, 1554, 1622–1623; R. Lamberton, "The invisible adversary: Anti-Christian polemic in Proclus's *Commentary on the Republic of Plato*", in S. Weissler, N. Thaler (eds), *Strategies of polemics in Greek and Roman philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 230–238. I see no instances in which Proclus engages in the critique of specific theological doctrines. As to the *Elements of Theology*: the character of the work forbids naming philosophical colleagues and opponents. Nonetheless, there are some traces of polemical intent, all directed at fellow Hellenic Platonists, most notably the final proposition, which is clearly directed against Plotinus' theory of the undescended soul (prop. 211).

Proclus' analysis of plurality and unity could not be detrimental for the theological positions Nicholas holds). As I have argued before, the first proposition is not even about the Neoplatonic One but is a general statement about the relation between plurality and unity.

The perceived contradiction between the One being participated and unparticipated is at the heart of Nicholas' argument.<sup>43</sup> Again, it rests on a misunderstanding. Proclus argues that each plurality *in some way* participates unity (*Elements of Theology*, 1), and that there can be no plurality that *in no way* participates unity (*Elements of Theology*, 5, 4.25).<sup>44</sup> He indeed continues that any multitude participates unity *in every way* (*Elements of Theology*, 5, 6.2–3).<sup>45</sup> Then, he asks himself whether the reverse is true: does every “one” participate plurality? He argues that this leads to a vicious regress and concludes that there must be one “one” for which this is not the case. This is the One-itself. Thus the regress is blocked (*Elements of Theology*, 5, 6.7–21). From these arguments it cannot be inferred that every plurality, or any plurality, participates in the first One, the One-itself. Hence, when Proclus later introduces the unparticipated (*Elements of Theology*, 23–24) and argues, or demonstrates, that the first One is unparticipated (*Elements of Theology*, 116), he creates no inconsistency. Every plurality needs to participate in unity (*Elements of Theology*, 1), but there is no need that this unity be the absolute One. Depending on the ontological rank of the participant, there will always be some other form of unity—some henad, being the participated manifestation of the One—that does the job.

Unparticipated is in some sense a relative<sup>46</sup> term: an entity is unparticipated with respect to the series dependent from it, and *qua* unparticipated does

43 See, e.g. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 24, 32.32–33; 63, 65.5–8; 69, 70.12–13.

44 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 5, 9.30–33: Σημείωσαι ὅτι ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ θεωρήματι ἔδειξεν, ὅτι πῇ μετέχει τοῦ ἐνός τὸ πλῆθος· νῦν δὲ συνάγει ὅτι πάντῃ. καὶ ἴσως λέγοι ἂν ὅτι τὸ μὲν ἐν οὐ πάντῃ μετέχεται, μᾶλλον γὰρ ἀμέθεκτόν ἐστι, τὸ δὲ πλῆθος πάντῃ ἀντὶ τοῦ καθ' ὅλον ἑαυτὸ μετέχει τοῦ ἐνός. (“Note that in the first proposition he showed that the multitude *in some way* participates the One; but now he infers *in every way*. And perhaps he would say that the One is not participated in every way, for, on the contrary, it is unparticipated, but that the multitude participates the One *in every way*, that is, in its entirety.”)

45 “In every way” here means (*Elements of Theology* 5, 4.32–6.2) that the plurality participates in unity in that it is *one* plurality, and that every constituent part of it is also a unity (i.e. a unit). The difference in wording (πάντῃ) with proposition 1 (πῇ) is unfortunate, but does not imply a doctrinal change, let alone an inconsistency. To prove proposition 1, it was sufficient to show that each plurality participates oneness in at least one respect.

46 P.A. Meijer, “Participation in Henads and Monads in Proclus' *Theologia Platonica* III, Chs. 1–6”, in E.P. Bos, P.A. Meijer (eds), *On Proclus and his Influence in Medieval Philosophy* (Leiden / New York / Köln: Brill, 1992), p. 83; L.M. De Rijk, “Causation and Participation

not participate in anything higher. But the same thing can be a participant *qua* caused by a higher principle (*Elements of Theology*, 24; 99). The first One, however, is unparticipated in an absolute sense. I do not think that there is any view to which Proclus is committed that would compel him to admit that the first One is also participated.<sup>47</sup> Nicholas, however, thinks that Proclus is hopelessly confused in this regard. Hence, he assumes that Proclus' view is that the One is both participated and unparticipated. This may also be why he does not take him seriously when Proclus claims that "every god is participable, except the One" (*Elements of Theology*, 116), and therefore wrongly thinks that there is a class of unparticipated henads.<sup>48</sup> The idea that God is both participated and unparticipated is fine for Nicholas, because he thinks it can be applied without detriment to the Trinity (*Refutation*, 116, 113.6–11).

Attempting to refute the first few, but crucial propositions, it is Nicholas' strategy to show that neither the theorems themselves nor their demonstrations force us to abandon the view of the Trinity that he espouses: "This third chapter, too, is not at all against our faith" (*Refutation*, 3, 7.17–18: Οὐδὲν οὐδὲ τὸ τρίτον τοῦτο κεφάλαιον πρὸς τὴν καθ' ἡμᾶς πίστιν, trans. slightly modified). This is also conspicuous in his discussion of the fourth proposition: Nicholas is not at all interested in the newly introduced concept of the "unified"; he merely argues that there are no consequences for Trinitarian doctrine.<sup>49</sup>

Stating that your views withstand an attack is one thing, showing it quite another. Let us see how well Nicholas fares.

---

in Proclus. The Pivotal Role of Scope Distinction in his Metaphysics", in Bos, Meijer (eds), *On Proclus and his Influence*, pp. 1–34.

47 This remains true, even if one considers the statement in the *Commentary on the Republic*, according to which the unparticipated is *in some sense* also participated. Cf. Proclus, *In Platonis Rem publicam*, ed. W. Kroll, F.O. Hultsch (Leipzig: Teubner, 1899–1901) x, 1.260.5–8: ἐπεὶ καὶ τὰ ἀμέθεκτα φαίης ἂν μετέχεσθαι πως, ἀλλ' ὥς μεταδιδόντα ἑαυτῶν, καὶ τὰ μετεχόμενα ὄντα καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχοντα, οὐχ ὥς τὰ ἀμέθεκτα, ἀλλ' ὥς ἁῖδια καὶ αὐτά (Proclus is talking about Forms).

48 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation* 108, 104.18–22; 109, 106.12–19. The diagrams on pp. 104, 106, and 108 moreover show what Nicholas means when in the text quoted from the introduction (*Proem.* 4.3–15) he speaks of "first, second, and third".

49 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation* 4, 8.11–13: οὐδὲν οὖν οὐδὲ τοῦτο τὸ κεφάλαιον πρὸς τὴν ὑπερ-γνωμένην καὶ ὑπερούσιον τριάδα, οὔτε μὴν ἡ τοῦτου ἀπόδειξις εἰς ἐκείνην προχωρεῖ. ("This chapter, too, therefore is not at all against the super-unified and supersubstantial Triad, nor indeed does the demonstration of it reach to that" [transl. Robinson, slightly modified]). See also *Refutation, Proem.* 4.19–20: Ἰστέον τοιγαροῦν, ὅτι τὰ περὶ ἑνὸς καὶ πλήθους τοῦτ' ἀποδεικνύμενα οὐδὲν τὸ παράπαν ἡμῖν εἰς τὸ περὶ τῆς ὑπερτάτου τριάδος προσίσταται, κτλ. ("And one must know that the things demonstrated by him concerning one and multitude are not at all set against us in regard to the doctrine of the highest Trinity, etc.")

The first time he mentions the attack on the Trinity, Nicholas begins by citing<sup>50</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite, who says:

- a) that the Trinity is *both* one *and* three,
- b) that it is *neither* one *nor* three, because it transcends every “one” and every “three”, that is, because it transcends number, and it transcends every word and concept.

The first statement (a) seems to constitute a violation of the principle of non-contradiction (PNC) insofar as one is not three. The first (a) conjoined with the second (b) seems to produce two further violations, in the form of two further tokens of the same two propositions: Trinity is one and Trinity is not one; Trinity is three and Trinity is not three. In the second statement (b) the terms one and three are plainly said to be numbers, so that maybe the combination with the first (a) statement does not deliver violations of PNC, provided that in (a) the terms have different meanings. But that still leaves us with (a) itself, which violates PNC if one accepts that one is not three. We are here in apophatic territory. If no concept or word is applicable to the Trinity, we cannot say anything about it. Yet Pseudo-Dionysius does and must be thinking that he is pronouncing words that mean *something*. After all, he does not say that the Trinity is four and five and neither four nor five.

Be that as it may, we should look at what Nicholas states in his own name, while explaining Dionysius’ words.<sup>51</sup> Nicholas starts by saying that the Triad is what “we” agree is God and that this is the same thing as “monad” and “one” (4.28–29). Hereby he confirms the functional equivalence of the Triad and what Proclus talks about when he talks about the One. Having established that they are somehow talking about the same thing, he argues that by saying “it is one”

50 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation, Proæm.* 4.21–24. Cf. (Ps.-)Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, ed. B.R. Suchla (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990), 13.3, 980C–981A.

51 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation, Proæm.*, 4.28–5.3: τριάς οὖν ἡμῖν ἡ θεότης ὁμολογεῖται καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ μονὰς καὶ τὸ ἓν καὶ οὕτε τὸ τριάς εἶναι ἀρνέϊται τὸ εἶναι τὸ ἓν οὕτε τὸ εἶναι τὸ ἓν ἀρνέϊται τὸ εἶναι τριάς, ἀλλ’ ἐξ ἑκατέρου μᾶλλον ἑκάτερον οὕσα βεβαιούται. τριάς μὲν γάρ ἐστιν, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἀριθμῷ μετρομένη, ἀλλ’ ἡ πάσης τριάδος ὑποστάτις καὶ ἀριθμὸν πάντα μετροῦσα, διὸ οὐδὲ τριάς ὑπαριθμῶς, ἵνα καὶ πλῆθος λησθῇ, ἀλλὰ τριάς ἡ μία καὶ μόνη καὶ ταῦτα οὐ κατὰ μετοχὴν τοῦ ἐνός (ὑπαριθμία γὰρ τὰ τοιαῦτα καὶ τῷ πλήθει σύστοιχα), ἀλλ’ ὡς αὐτὸ τὸ ἓν. (“We confess therefore that the divinity is a triad and that the same is a monad and the One; its being three does not deny its being the One, nor does its being the One deny its being three, but rather from both it is confirmed to be both. For it is three, not as being measured by number, but as one who gives substance to every three, and measures every number; wherefore it is not a countable three, so that it could also be called a multitude, but three, the one and only, and not by participation in the One (for such participants are countable, coordinate with the multitude), but as being itself the One.”) The argument is repeated in his comment on the first proposition: Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 1, 5.18–24.

we, i.e. the Christians, do not say “it is not three”, and that by saying “it is three” we do not say “it is not one”. On the contrary, by affirming it is one, we confirm that it is three and by affirming it is three we confirm that it is one. He explains that the word “triad” here does not stand for what is measured by number, but rather for that which gives substance to every three and to every number. Hence the Triad is not a countable three and is not a multitude *because* the triad is not a countable number. It is *one single* triad, and this (i.e. its being only one in cardinality and its being unique) it does not owe to a participation in unity, but rather to the fact that it *is* the One-itself (4.29–5.3).

With these words Nicholas identifies the Triad with the One-itself of proposition 5 (*Elements of Theology*, 5, 6.20–21), which is nothing but one and does not participate in unity (*Elements of Theology*, 5, 6.20–21; 2, 2.15). It is, in other words, not the kind of plurality that was the subject of proposition 1 and the participant mentioned in proposition 2, which is both one and not-one, but rather that which is “nothing else besides its own unity, a bare ‘one’” (*Elements of Theology*, 2, 2.18).

To what extent is Nicholas’ argument successful? Insofar as we take “triad” to be just a name that denotes no plurality, but is instead a name for “unity”, Nicholas’ point stands, even though “triad” is a bizarre name for something that is a bare unity. But even so, another problem remains. God is called *both* triad and monad, or both three and one—a claim repeated throughout the work. Moreover, the names monad and triad (or three and one) do not denote exactly the same thing. And the ascription of two different characters to it inevitably introduces duality.<sup>52</sup> God would then fall short of the absolute unity that Proclus, but more to the point, Dionysius and Nicholas would like him to have. The duality in question is not unlike that of the Plotinian or Proclean Intellect: although there its thinking and its being thought are meant to coincide, there remains a duality because what it means to think is not the same thing as what it means to be thought. For this reason, Intellect, despite being a unity, cannot be the One-itself, just like, I would add, the Trinity, despite being one, cannot be what Proclus means by the One-itself.

The problem is compounded by the fact that the Trinity, not unsurprisingly, consists of *three* things: Father, Son, and Spirit.<sup>53</sup> This complicates the problem, as it gives us a supplementary reason to think that the Trinity is internally multiple—which we could already have inferred from its appellation, “Triad”.

52 See also Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 5, 8.30–9.5, *et passim*.

53 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 1, 6.27–7.2, *et passim*. In order to confirm their unity, he appeals to the scriptural authority, citing John 10:30 at *Refutation*, 18, 25.16–17: ἐγώ, φησί, καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ἓν ἐσμεν.

Occasionally, Nicholas even admits that “we, too” *count* the persons in the Trinity, but that we do not understand what differentiates them.<sup>54</sup> Thereby he seems to undermine his initial defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, according to which “three” does not stand for anything countable.

In his discussion of the first proposition, Nicholas explicates the structure of Proclus’ argument, commenting that Proclus combines division with “the axiom of contradiction” (1, 5.29, τὸ τῆς ἀντιφάσεως ἀξίωμα = PNC). Nicholas, however, claims<sup>55</sup> that the laws of logic and demonstration, including PNC, do not apply when talking about God.<sup>56</sup> Hence, he argues, we should admit that our intellect<sup>57</sup> is incapable of grasping the One. Giving up “every sensation, every intellection, every scientific and logical method, together with our very intellectual power” (6.24–25: πᾶσαν αἴσθησιν, πᾶσαν νόησιν, πᾶσαν ἐπιστημονικὴν καὶ λογικὴν μέθοδον μετ’ αὐτῆς τῆς νοερᾶς ἡμῶν δυνάμεως), we should abandon ourselves and “become wholly of God”. Obviously, if God can only be intuited by an abdication of reason, the entire project of a theological *stoicheiosis* would be pointless. Nicholas resorts to an apophatic approach in order to protect the Trinity from rational critique,<sup>58</sup> but he conveniently does so only when it suits him. It does not prevent him either from making assertions about God<sup>59</sup> or from saying that Proclus is wrong. But actually, that road would have to be barred for him.

54 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 115, 112.4–8: καὶ μηδὲ πολλοὶ λεγέσθωσαν ἀλλ’ εἷς, ὥσπερ ἄρα καὶ ἡμεῖς τρία ἀριθμοῦντες, πατέρα καὶ υἱὸν καὶ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, ἓνα φαμέν τὰ τρία θεόν, ὅτι μηδὲν ἔχομεν εἰπεῖν, ᾧ τὰ τρία κατὰ τὴν φύσιν τῆς θεότητος διαφέρουσιν ἀλλήλων καίπερ ὄντα τρία κατὰ τὰς ὑπο τῆς θεότητος διαφέρουσιν ἀλλήλων καίπερ ὄντα τρία κατὰ τὰς ὑποστατικὰς ιδιότητας. Also in other passages, Nicholas clearly counts the three persons. See, e.g., 41, 50.50.24. Nicholas reasons (31.8–11) that the three persons do not differ by their being (τῷ εἶναι), but only in their mode of being (22: τῷ πῶς εἶναι), but, according to Proclus’ argument, this would certainly amount to too much differentiation. In that case they could not constitute a strong unity, and certainly not an absolute unity. They would rather be a unified.

55 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 1, 6.2–6: δῆλον οὖν ὡς τὸ ἐν ἐκεῖνο τὸ τοῦ ἐνὸς προεξηρημένον τοῦ ἀντιδιηρημένου καὶ συντεταγμένου τῷ πλήθει οὐ συμπαρείληπται τῇ ἀποδείξει, ἐπεὶ καὶ καθόλου πάσης ὑπερανέστηκε διαιρέσεώς τε καὶ ἀποδείξεως· καὶ πρὸς ἐκεῖνο καὶ τὸ τῆς ἀντιφάσεως διαπίπτει ἀξίωμα. (“Therefore it is clear that the One which pre-transcends the one that is distinguished-by-opposition-to and co-ranked with the multitude—that One is not comprehended by the demonstration, since it transcends every division and demonstration; and in relation to it even the law of non-contradiction falls apart.”)

56 For Nicholas’ restriction of the scope of PNC, see Robinson, “Nicholas of Methone’s *Refutation*”, p. 89; Robinson, “Dionysius against Proclus”.

57 This is also true for higher intellects: see Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, *Proem.* 4.26–27.

58 Cf. Robinson, “Dionysius against Proclus”.

59 The doctrine must be accepted on the authority of revelation. Cf. Nicholas of Methone,

As Carlos Steel<sup>60</sup> has shown, Proclus is careful *not* to abandon PNC when talking in a scientific, discursive way about the One, not even in his *Commentary on the Parmenides*. And Proclus certainly does not give it up in the *Elements of Theology*, whose very method is based upon this principle of logic. Even negative theology as Proclus understands it—which is to be distinguished from Pseudo-Dionysius' version—does not force one to reject PNC. This need not concern us here, however, as negative theology is not relevant in the context of the *Elements*.

Commenting on the second proposition—"All that participates unity is both one and not-one"—Nicholas explains<sup>61</sup> that the triad is one and not-one, but not in virtue of participating unity. He thus denies the converse of Proclus' second theorem. God is one, not because of participation in unity; and God is not-one, but not in the sense that he merely participates oneness. God is rather One and Triad in a manner that super-transcends multitude. These claims can only be made sense of, I think, if one either abandons PNC or denies the very meaning of the terms plurality, one, and three. Nicholas, however, thinks that Proclus' arguments can only work in case one considers the parts and wholes in question as *actually divided*: "This wise man seems to advance the argument of his demonstration as if concerning something divisible, reducing to impossibility the thesis that the One-in-itself could be both one and not-one, since then the One would be a part of the pair of elements, which indeed is the one and not-one; but, according to us, the One-in-itself is called both one and not-one, yet it is not called thus as if it is divided into the one and the not-one, as one thing and another, etc."<sup>62</sup>

---

*Refutation*, 114, 111.3–4: ταῦτα δὲ οὐκ οἴκοθεν αὐτοὶ λέγομεν ἀλλὰ παρ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ νιοῦ μαθόντες. Rational examination here has its limits: cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 115, 112.4–8.

60 C. Steel, "Beyond the principle of contradiction? Proclus' *Parmenides* and the origin of negative theology", in M. Pickavé (ed.), *Die Logik des Transzendentalen. Festschrift für Jan A. Aertsen zum 65. Geburtstag* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), pp. 581–599. Cf. Proclus, *In Parmenidem*, 726.8–18; 1041.6–9 ed. Steel.

61 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 2, 7.5–8: Εἰ καὶ ἓν φαμεν εἶναι τὴν τριάδα καὶ οὐχ ἓν, ἀλλ' ὅτι οὐτως ὡς μετοχῇ μὲν τοῦ ἑνὸς ἓν οὖσαν, οὐχ ἓν δὲ ὡς μὴ αὐτὸ τὸ ἓν οὖσαν· οὐ γὰρ ἄλλό τι παρὰ ταύτην ἐκείνο τὸ ἓν ἄλλ' αὐτὴ ἐστὶ καὶ τριάς καὶ μονάς ὑπερεξηρημένη καὶ παντὸς πλήθους καὶ πάσης μονάδος. ("If we say that the Triad is both one and not-one, nevertheless we say this not as though it is one by participation in the one, and not-one because it is not itself the one, for that 'One' is not something other than this [Triad], but the same is both Triad and Monad, super-transcending every multitude and every monad.") Cf. Robinson, "Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation*", p. 172, n. 393: "Correcting Angelou's text from A, folio 8r".

62 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 4, 8.17–22: "Εοικεν ὁ σοφὸς οὗτος ὡς περὶ μεριστοῦ τίνος προ-ἀγειν τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀποδείξεως, εἰς ἀδύνατον ἀπάγων τὸ εἶναι τὸ αὐτοῦ ἓν τε καὶ οὐχ ἓν, ὡς ἄρα



This piece of reasoning agrees with his criticism that Proclus is unable to conceive divine realities without thinking about them in bodily terms.<sup>63</sup> Nicholas is convinced he can get away simply by denying that the Triad is actually divided (8.24: τὴν τριάδα φαμέν οὐ μερίζοντες). This is a serious underestimation of the force of the arguments: they apply to any duality or multiplicity, even if it is merely conceptual. As soon as two terms are predicated of the same entity and their meaning is not completely identical, the arguments about multiplicity apply. And this appears to be the case in Nicholas' account of Trinity, which contains several persons and therefore also relations between them. There seem to be just a few options left: either to allow for plurality (which for him amounts to the nefarious polytheism he tries to combat); or to say that there is a first God within the Trinity, to which the two other members are subordinated; or to accept a One above the Trinity; or, finally, to remain silent and forsake reason.

## 9 Concluding Remarks

I have focused on Nicholas of Methone's defence of the Trinity, which needed to confront Proclus' denial of a plurality that is not preceded by the purest conceivable unity. Nicholas' polemic, however, is much broader than that. He rejects Proclus' hierarchic structure of the divine realities, because he wants to deny at all costs that there is more than one God. His God is not only a Triad, but is the One, Being, and Intellect in one.<sup>64</sup> The causal actions of these different principles are, according to Nicholas, combined in one and the same God who directly creates the entire Reality.

In many instances, especially in the second half of the work, Nicholas often merely *states* how things are,<sup>65</sup> without looking closer at Proclus' argument and without paying attention to distinctions he makes. More could be said about flaws in his polemics. For instance, he takes certain terms (e.g. ἐνέργεια, κίνησις)<sup>66</sup> in a sense different from Proclus', arguing against Proclus as if he were

---

τοῦ ἐνὸς μέρους ὄντος τοῦ συναμφοτέρου, ὅπερ ἐστὶ τὸ ἐν καὶ οὐχ ἓν· ἀλλὰ τὸ καθ' ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς λέγεται μὲν καὶ ἐν καὶ οὐχ ἓν, οὐχ οὕτως δὲ ὡς μερίζεσθαι εἰς τὸ ἐν καὶ τὸ οὐχ ἓν ὡς ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο κτλ.

63 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 61, 63.15–21 See also 23, 32.13–17.

64 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 34, 44.6–7.

65 E.g. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 116, 113.6–7; 137, *et passim*.

66 Cf. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, 17 and 83: reversion is considered as a motion, which allows Nicholas to claim that Intellect is self-moved just like the soul is.

using the words as Nicholas intends them. He does likewise for the notion of reversion, which he simply redefines.<sup>67</sup> Needless to say that this is not very convincing.

At other occasions, he manages to point out real difficulties in Proclus' doctrines. An example would be his comments on the notions of the self-sufficient and the self-constitutive (τὸ αὐτάρκες, τὸ αὐθυπόστατον): Nicholas points out that Proclus fails to explain how the same thing can bring itself about completely and be caused by something else.<sup>68</sup> This may not be an unsurmountable problem for the doctrine of the *authypostaton*, but arguably Proclus should have done more to clarify the concept so as to dispel this ambiguity. Modern interpreters wrestle with the same issues, but also succeed in presenting solutions that are based on a more sophisticated understanding of conceptual distinctions and their relations.<sup>69</sup> As a polemicist, Nicholas also needs to be an exegete of the author who is his target.<sup>70</sup> Regrettably, his exegesis is consistently not of the best quality, as we have seen. This is one of the reasons why Nicholas of Methone's refutation of Proclus fails to be philosophically convincing. Another reason is that he refuses to engage with Proclus' text on its own terms. Despite occasionally discussing the demonstrative structures of Proclus' text, Nicholas in general ignores the argumentative standards underlying the *Elements of Theology* and, as far it comes to refutation, his own argumentative standards are rather poor.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

Aristotle, *Categoriae et Liber de interpretatione*, ed. L. Minio-Paluello, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963.

Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, translated with a commentary by J. Barnes, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2002<sup>2</sup>.

67 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 47, 47.2–3.

68 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 40, 49.14–17.

69 For the self-constituted, see J. Whittaker, "The historical background of Proclus' doctrine of the αὐθυπόστατα", in H. Dörrie (ed.), *De Jamblique à Proclus* (Vandœuvres / Genève: Fondation Hardt, 1975), pp. 193–237; C. Steel, "Conversion vers soi et constitution de soi selon Proclus", in A. Charles-Saget (ed.), *Retour, repentir et constitution de soi* (Paris: Vrin, 1998), pp. 161–175; C. Steel, "Substantia stans per essentiam suam: Proclus et l'auteur du *De causis* sur les êtres qui se constituent eux-mêmes", in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes. Vol. 3. On Causes and the Noetic Triad* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2022), pp. 37–59.

70 See, e.g., his treatment of prop. 112, 109.3–21.

- (Ps.-)Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, ed. B.R. Suchla, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1990, pp. 107–231.
- John Philoponus, *In Aristotelis Categorias*, ed. A. Busse, Berlin, G. Reimer, 1898.
- John Philoponus, *In Aristotelis Analytica posteriora*, ed. M. Wallies, Berlin, G. Reimer, 1909.
- Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Soterichum Antiochiae patr.*, ed. A. Demetrakopoulos, Ἐν Λειψίῳ, τύποις Βιγάνδου, 1866.
- Nicholas of Methone, Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου / *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas' life and works by A.D. Angelou, Athens / Leiden, The Academy of Athens Athens / Brill, 1984.
- Proclus, *In primum Euclidis Elementorum librum commentarii*, ed. G. Friedlein, Leipzig, Teubner, 1873.
- Proclus, *In Platonis Rem publicam*, ed. W. Kroll, F.O. Hultsch, Leipzig, Teubner, 1899–1901.
- Proclus, *In Platonis Cratylum*, ed. G. Pasquali, Leipzig: Teubner, 1908, rep. Stuttgart, 1994.
- Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. and transl. E.R. Dodds, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963<sup>2</sup>.
- Proclus, *Théologie platonicienne*, ed. H.-D. Saffrey, L.G. Westerink, 6 vols, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1968–1997.
- Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, ed. C. Steel, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007–2009.
- Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, ed. C. Luna, A.-P. Segonds, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2007–2011.
- Syrianus, *On Aristotle's Metaphysics 13–14*, trans. J. Dillon, D. O'Meara, London, Duckworth, 2006.

### **Secondary Sources**

- E.P. Bos, P.A. Meijer (eds), *On Proclus and his Influence in Medieval Philosophy*, Leiden / New York / Köln, Brill, 1992.
- Calma, D., (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of causes*. Volume 3. *On Causes and the Noetic Triad*, Leiden / Boston, Brill, 2022.
- De Rijk, L.M., “Causation and Participation in Proclus. The Pivotal Role of Scope Distinction in his Metaphysics”, in Bos, Meijer (eds), *On Proclus and his Influence*, pp. 1–34.
- Hoffmann, Ph., “Un grief antichrétien chez Proclus: l'ignorance en théologie”, in A. Perrot (ed.), *Les Chrétiens et l'hellénisme: Identités religieuses et culture grecque dans l'Antiquité tardive*, Paris, Éditions Rue d'Ulm, 2012, pp. 161–197.
- Kapriev, G., *Philosophie in Byzanz*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2005.
- Lamberton, R., “The invisible adversary: Anti-Christian polemic in Proclus's *Comment-*

- ary on the Republic of Plato", in S. Weissler, N. Thaler (eds), *Strategies of polemics in Greek and Roman philosophy*, Leiden, Brill, 2016, pp. 230–238.
- Luna, C., Segonds, A.-P., "Proclus de Lycie", in R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*. Vol. v. *De Paccius à Rutilius Rufus*, 2<sup>e</sup> partie-vb, *De Plotina à Rutilius Rufus* (Paris: CNRS Éditions 2012), pp. 1546–1657.
- Meijer, P.A., "Participation in Henads and Monads in Proclus' *Theologia Platonica* III, Chs. 1–6", in Bos, Meijer (eds), *On Proclus and his Influence*, pp. 65–87.
- Opsomer, J., "Sollte man den Platonismus wohlwollend interpretieren? Philosophische Historiographie und das Prinzip der wohlwollenden Interpretation", in M. Quante (ed.), *Geschichte—Gesellschaft—Geltung* (Deutsches Jahrbuch Philosophie, Band 8), Hamburg, Felix Meiner, 2014, pp. 945–958.
- Opsomer, J., "Organiser la philosophie selon ses éléments. Structures argumentatives dans les *Éléments de Théologie*", in G. Aubry, L. Brisson, P. Hoffman, L. Lavaud (eds), *Les Éléments de théologie de Proclus: Interprétations, réceptions antiques et modernes*, Paris, Hermann, 2021, pp. 135–176.
- Opsomer, J., "Proclus' *Elements of Theology* and Platonic dialectic", in Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of causes*. Volume 3, pp. 17–36.
- Robinson, J., "Proclus as Heresiarch: Theological Polemic and Philosophical Commentary in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation* (*Anaptyxis*) of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in S. Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2017, pp. 103–135.
- Robinson, J., *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th Century Byzantium*. A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Graduate Program in Medieval Studies, Notre Dame (Indiana), 2014.
- Saffrey, H.-D., "Allusions anti-chrétiennes chez Proclus, le diadoque platonicien", in *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 59.4(1975), pp. 553–563.
- Saffrey, H.-D., "Le thème du malheur des temps chez les derniers philosophes néoplatoniciens" in M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, G. Madec, D. O'Brien (eds), *ΣΟΦΙΗΣ ΜΑΙΗΤΟΡΕΣ. "Chercheurs de sagesse". Hommage à Jean Pépin*, Paris, Institut d'Études augustiniennes, 1992, pp. 421–431.
- Steel, C., "Conversion vers soi et constitution de soi selon Proclus", in A. Charles-Saget (ed.), *Retour, repentir et constitution de soi*, Paris, Vrin, 1998, pp. 161–175.
- Steel, C., "Beyond the principle of contradiction? Proclus' *Parmenides* and the origin of negative theology", in M. Pickavé (ed.), *Die Logik des Transzendentalen. Festschrift für Jan A. Aertsen zum 65. Geburtstag*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2004, pp. 581–599.
- Steel, C., "*Substantia stans per essentiam suam*: Proclus et l'auteur du *De causis* sur les êtres qui se constituent eux-mêmes", in Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of causes*. Volume 3, pp. 37–59.

- Trizio, M., “Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium”, in S. Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus. From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 182–225.
- Whittaker, J. (1974) “The historical background of Proclus’ doctrine of the ἀϋθυπόστατα”, in H. Dörrie (ed.), *De Jamblique à Proclus*, Vandœuvres / Genève, Fondation Hardt, 1975, pp. 193–237.

# A Relativistic Approach to Proclus: Nicholas of Methone's Critique of the *Elements of Theology* § 67–74 (on Parts and Wholes)

Arthur Oosthout

KU Leuven

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

One of the main points of attraction of Neoplatonic philosophy for Byzantine thinkers in the eleventh and twelfth centuries CE was its treatment of the theory of universals. Writers such as John Italos and Eustratios of Nicaea leaned heavily on certain Neoplatonic thinkers in conceiving of the nature of universals. An important aspect of Neoplatonic theories of universals was the notion that a universal functioned in some sense like a whole, with the individuals constituting its parts. This equation of universality with wholeness can be found in Porphyry's *Sententiae* and *Isagoge*, and is especially prevalent in the writings of Proclus. It should come as no surprise, then, that Byzantine thinkers who were looking to incorporate Neoplatonic thought into their theory of universals took recourse to those passages of Proclus in which the philosopher developed the notions of whole and part. The main source for Proclus' mereological views was in this regard undoubtedly *The Elements of Theology*, specifically propositions 67 through 69 of that work (a passage which remains instrumental in modern readings of Proclean mereology).<sup>2</sup>

- 
- 1 The research for this paper was made possible by PDM-funding provided by the Internal Funds KU Leuven (grant no. PDMt2/22/004). I thank Sokratis-Athanasios Kiosoglou for giving me some sage advice on how to approach Nicholas' work, Jonathan Greig for showing me how to further expand my study of the material and for sharing with me a number of his forthcoming papers on Nicholas, Jan Opsomer for allowing me access to his contribution in this same volume as well, and Alberto Kobec for helping to iron out some of the conceptual distinctions I raise in this study. Lastly, I thank Henri Oosthout for his assistance with some of the translations (all translations of the Greek texts are my own unless stated otherwise).
  - 2 Proclus' mereological views are developed in more detail in the following section. The ways in which Byzantine thinkers employed the mereological sections of the *Elements of Theology* to bolster their theories of universals are discussed in more detail in section 5.1.

Given the relative popularity of these specific propositions in Byzantine circles, they must have been especially vexing to Nicholas of Methone. Indeed, the Byzantine critic makes every effort to dismantle Proclus' views in the chapters of his *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology* which focus on these propositions.<sup>3</sup> In the introduction to his critical edition of Nicholas' work, Athanasios Angelou singles out these chapters and summarizes them as follows:

An interesting controversial point in post-Psellian philosophical discussions must have been the triad of subordination: whole-before-the-parts, whole-of-the-parts and whole-in-the-part. Italos had applied it in true Neoplatonic fashion to the discussion of genus as an ὅλον. [...] Nicholas objected to this doctrine of ὅλον because it can mislead you to believe that there is such a thing as a whole καθ' αὐτό outside the deity, which alone can be said to be a whole-before-the-parts and can be at the same time present in every part. All the rest—and by that he probably meant the γέννη—are nothing but mental constructs, ἐννοηματικά καὶ ἀνυπόστατα. What are called wholes are only relations, not things; they fall under the category of πρὸς τι.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, Nicholas objected to the realist approach his contemporaries took to universals, since the Neoplatonic notion of the universal (which is also a principle of its individuals) would lead its students to a polytheistic worldview. In order to abolish these pesky universals, Nicholas banishes Proclus' entire mereology to the Aristotelean category of relation (πρὸς τι). As a result, all wholes and all parts are reduced to accidents.

Reducing the whole to an accidental relation has metaphysical consequences that go beyond creating a nominalist view of universals. Despite their tendency to conflate universals and wholes, the Neoplatonic thinkers were well aware that the whole as a philosophical concept encompasses more than just

3 The English title of Nicholas' work is taken from Angelou's critical edition. Note however, as Robinson points out, that the original Greek title (Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου) can also be translated with the more neutral "Explication of the *Elements of Theology* of Proclus, the Platonic philosopher", and that Nicholas is not exclusively polemical in his commentary, despite his overall negative views on Proclean philosophy; see J. Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th-century Byzantium*, PhD thesis (Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2014), p. 75; and, e.g., Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*, ed. A.D. Angelou (Athens / Leiden: The Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984), § 3, p. 7, l. 15–24.

4 Angelou, "Introduction", in Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, pp. lxi–lxii.

the universal.<sup>5</sup> It does not, therefore, suffice to conclude, as Angelou does, that Nicholas' criticism of the *Elements of Theology* § 67–69 amounts to a polemic against existent universals. As I shall show, Nicholas attempts to overturn *every* aspect of Proclus' views on parts and wholes. In some cases, he touches upon real problems in Proclus' metaphysics. In other cases, he conflates, misrepresents, or misinterprets Proclus' arguments. Ultimately, however, Nicholas' criticism is not merely destructive, but also points to an alternative approach to parts and wholes that is meant to stand firm where Proclus' approach (supposedly) failed. Whether this new approach actually holds up in the face of scrutiny is revealed in the final sections of the paper.

## 2 Proclus' Theory of Parts and Wholes

The central idea of *Elements of Theology* § 67–69 is the notion that “every wholeness is either before the parts, composed of parts, or in the part.”<sup>6</sup> This tripartite division of the concept of the whole constitutes one of Proclus' “triades transversales”, which “ne sont pas restreintes à un niveau déterminé du réel, mais traversent un grand nombre d'échelons.”<sup>7</sup> It is, in other words, a conceptual model which can be used to describe many of the intelligible levels of reality that the Neoplatonic philosophers conceived of in between our material reality and the ultimate first principle, the One or the Good. In this regard, the three types of wholes taken together function much like Proclus' triad of participation (the unparticipated, the participated, and the participant).<sup>8</sup> Yet whereas the triad of participation is universally applicable in Proclean meta-

5 See, e.g., Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. and tr. E.R. Dodds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963<sup>2</sup>), 74, as discussed in sections 4 and 5.2.

6 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 67, p. 64, l. 1–2: Πᾶσα ὁλότης ἢ πρὸ τῶν μερῶν ἐστὶν ἢ ἐκ τῶν μερῶν ἢ ἐν τῷ μέρει. A brief overview of Proclus' theory of wholes and parts will suffice for the purposes of this study; the summary given here is based on A. Oosthout, “A Wholesome Trinity. Proclus on the transcendence of whole over part”, in *Ancient Philosophy* 42/2(2022), pp. 515–536. Other overviews of this topic can be found in, e.g., D. Baltzly, “Mereological Modes of Being in Proclus”, in *Ancient Philosophy* 28/2(2008), pp. 395–411, and in P. d'Hoine, “Totalité et participation dans les *Éléments de Théologie*”, in G. Aubry, L. Brisson, P. Hoffman, L. Lavaud (eds), *Les Éléments de théologie de Proclus: Interprétations, réceptions antiques et modernes* (Paris: Hermann, 2021), pp. 177–219.

7 D'Hoine, “Totalité et participation”, p. 178.

8 For which see Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 23. For the parallel between the triad of participation and the triad of wholeness, see Dodds, *Proclus. The Elements of Theology*, p. 237, though note also that d'Hoine, “Totalité et participation”, has pointed out a number of problems which arise from this parallel.



physics, the triad of wholeness is given a specific starting point in the procession of Neoplatonic hypostases. Proclus distils from his exegesis of Plato's *Parmenides* the notion that there is an intelligible Platonic principle of Wholeness-itself (ἀντοολότης), from which all wholes derive their distinctive character (ιδιότης).<sup>9</sup> This distinctive character includes the property of being eternal, since Proclus believes that Plato's *Parmenides* and *Timaeus* provide parallel descriptions of the intelligible realm, and from his particular exegesis of those dialogues it follows that the intelligible Wholeness is also the intelligible principle Eternity.<sup>10</sup>

In his magnum opus, the *Platonic Theology*, Proclus explains that the intelligible Wholeness produces emanations or images of itself which are participated by inferior entities in the lower hypostases or levels of reality (as is true for every intelligible principle in the Neoplatonic metaphysics). The intelligible Wholeness is a triad consisting of a transcendent henad, a being-aspect which participates in this henad, and a productive power which connects the two other terms of the triad. As a result of this triadic structure, the images that flow forth from the intelligible Wholeness take after one of the three constituents of their originative triad: the transcendent *whole before the parts* mirrors the henad of Wholeness-itself, the immanent *whole composed of parts* mirrors the power of Wholeness-itself by connecting a given set of parts to its transcendent cause, and *the whole in the part* is a manifestation of the whole in an individual part and thus mirrors the participating being-aspect of Wholeness-itself.<sup>11</sup>

These three types of wholeness can take many forms, and as a result show up in a variety of philosophical contexts throughout Proclus' exegetical works, from the creation and constitution of the World Soul in Plato's *Timaeus* to the way in which an individual shares in the "whole" of its respective universal. In contrast, the description Proclus gives of the three kinds of wholeness in the *Elements of Theology* is extremely concise: there he defines the three terms and their interrelation without any reference to the internal structure of Wholeness-itself as described in the *Platonic Theology*, although the principle itself is summarily defined as the ultimate whole before the parts in the sixty-

9 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 69 p. 64, l. 30–32, and p. 66, l. 6–10 (cf. 99 p. 88, l. 24–27), and *Théologie platonicienne*, ed. and tr. H.-D. Saffrey, L.G. Westerink (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968–1997), vol. 3 p. 86, l. 18–19; Oosthout, "A Wholesome Trinity", p. 524.

10 Proclus, *Théologie platonicienne*, vol. 3, ch. 25 and 27 (cf. *Elements of Theology*, 52); Oosthout, "A Wholesome Trinity", p. 524; cf. J. Opsomer, "Deriving the Three Intelligible Triads from the *Timaeus*", in A.-P. Segonds, C. Steel (eds), *Proclus et la Théologie platonicienne* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2000), p. 363 n. 50.

11 Proclus, *Théologie platonicienne*, vol. 3, p. 88, l. 12–p. 89, l. 9; Oosthout, "A Wholesome Trinity", pp. 525–526.

ninth proposition. He likewise provides not even one of the many examples of the ways in which these wholes can manifest in his metaphysics. Because of this conciseness, scholars who take the *Elements of Theology* as the baseline for their understanding of Proclus' views on parts and wholes often struggle to fully comprehend these views.<sup>12</sup> As we shall see, Nicholas too is one of the readers whose focus on the *Elements of Theology* occasionally narrows his understanding of Proclus.

### 3 Nicholas' Primary Criticism: The Heresy of Proclean Polytheism

Before we delve into the particulars of Nicholas' rejection of Proclus' wholes and universals, it is important to bring before our mind's eye the basic criticisms which inform the whole of Nicholas' *Refutation of the Elements of Theology*. As Joshua Robinson has shown, these criticisms generally can be referred to two main sources of conflict between Proclus and Nicholas.<sup>13</sup> First there is the disagreement on the nature of the first principle (the One or the Good for Proclus; the One, God, or the Trinity for Nicholas). For Proclus, this principle is an absolute unity which transcends all plurality and, as Gerd Van Riel notes, "all positive determination".<sup>14</sup> In Nicholas' eyes, such a conceptualization of the first principle goes against the doctrine of the Trinity, which is naturally three-as-one rather than a strict one-over-many (though it is also the latter relative to the plurality of creation). Nicholas also rather oddly accuses Proclus of failing to consider the ineffability of the divine principle, though this is most likely a consequence of his lack of familiarity with Proclean works outside of the *Elements of Theology*, in which Proclus' own affinity for apophatic theology is much more apparent.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Oosthout, "A Wholesome Trinity", pp. 516–518, 526–527, and 532.

<sup>13</sup> J. Robinson, "Dionysius Against Proclus: the Apophatic Critique in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation of the Elements of Theology*", in D.D. Butorac, D.A. Layne (eds), *Proclus and his Legacy* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), p. 250.

<sup>14</sup> G. Van Riel, "The One, the Henads, and the Principles", in P. d'Hoine, M. Martijn (eds), *All From One. A Guide to Proclus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 76.

<sup>15</sup> J. Robinson, "Proclus as Heresiarch. Theological Polemic and Philosophical Commentary in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation (Anaptyxis)* of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in S. Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 108–109; cf., e.g., Nicholas, *Refutation*, prologue p. 4.24–25. For a succinct explanation of why the *Elements of Theology* is less openly apophatic in its description of the One than some of Proclus' other works, see J. Opsomer, "Standards of Argument in Nicholas and Proclus" in this same volume.

The second disagreement revolves around the nature of the One's production, which is to say, around the choice between a metaphysics based on creation or a metaphysics based on emanation.<sup>16</sup> The latter view of metaphysics, which is adopted by Proclus, assumes that additional divine principles flow forth from the first one and in turn contribute to the production of all beings that are inferior to them. In this respect, Proclus is openly polytheistic, and his position on this matter obviously draws nothing but disapproval from the devoutly monotheistic Nicholas. The latter is committed strongly to the view that the Trinity is the sole productive principle, which "produces all other things absolutely".<sup>17</sup>

### 3.1 *God is the Only Transcendent Whole ...*

As a result of the latter disagreement between Proclus and Nicholas, the former's principle of Wholeness-itself, mentioned explicitly in the sixty-ninth proposition of the *Elements of Theology*, is entirely incompatible with the latter's belief system. It should come as no surprise, then, that Nicholas' response to Proclus' threefold definition of the whole in *Elements of Theology* § 67 opens with an affirmation of the Trinity's status as the sole principle of creation.

We have already said<sup>18</sup>—and said truly—that the One, i.e., the Divine itself, is "the Whole before all", which "pre-includes all things", encompasses them "in a causal manner", and holds them together according to one impartible and indivisible wholeness, [and] which is observed in all things which are in any way called "wholes" as being present without relation, since it is indivisibly divided and participated in an unparticipated manner both by the wholes which are composed of parts, and by the wholes which are observed in each of the parts, inasmuch as these [parts] themselves have parts as well, whose instances of wholeness are solely relations in things, since they are observed [in things] which are in some way related to one another but are not themselves things.<sup>19</sup>

16 Robinson, "Dionysius Against Proclus", p. 250.

17 Robinson, "Dionysius Against Proclus", p. 250.

18 Nicholas, *Refutation*, 66, p. 68, l. 19–20: "Ὅλον πρὸ πάντων καὶ ἐν πᾶσι θεωρούμενον καὶ πάντα προέχον καὶ περιλαμβάνον αἰτιωδῶς ῥητέον τὸ θεῖον.

19 Nicholas, *Refutation*, 67, p. 69, l. 3–11: Εἴπομεν ἤδη καὶ ἀληθῶς εἶπομεν τὸ ἐν εἶναι, τουτέστι τὸ θεῖον αὐτό, τὸ πρὸ πάντων ὅλον, τὸ πάντα προέχον καὶ περιέχον αἰτιωδῶς καὶ συνέχον κατὰ μίαν ἀμέριστον καὶ ἀδιαίρετον ὁλότητα, ὃ καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ὁπωσοῦν λεγομένοις ὅλοις ἐνθεωρεῖται παρὸν ἀσχετῶς, μεριζόμενον ἀμερίστως καὶ μετεχόμενον ἀμεθέκτως ὑπὸ τε τῶν ἐκ τῶν μερῶν ὅλων, ὑπὸ τε τῶν ἐν ἐκάστῳ τῶν μερῶν θεωρουμένων, ὥς καὶ αὐτῶν ἐχόντων μέρη, ὧν αἱ ὁλότητες σχέσεις μόνον εἰσὶν ἐν πράγμασιν, ἔχουσί πως πρὸς ἀλλήλα θεωρούμεναι, οὐκ αὐταὶ οὖσαι πράγματα.

In Nicholas' eyes, Proclus is not wrong *per se* in stating that there is a whole before the parts. However, for the Neoplatonic philosophers this transcendent whole manifests itself in multiple distinct productive principles: first in the intelligible and divine Wholeness-itself, and then in subsequent transcendent principles which imitate Wholeness-itself (e.g., the transcendent essence of the World Soul or the universal as transcendent over its respective individuals). For Nicholas, there can obviously be only one transcendent principle: the Trinity. Following pseudo-Dionysius, he reinterprets Proclus' independent principles as different names for one and the same God.<sup>20</sup> There is one Whole Before the Parts, and only one. To remove the possibility of any independently subsisting principle of wholeness, Nicholas subsequently claims that all instances of wholeness in creation are merely relations (σχέσεις). Here he means "relation" specifically in the Aristotelean sense, not in a more general one, as is made clear in his response to Proclus' next proposition. There Nicholas explains that "the whole in the part and the whole composed of parts, and furthermore the parts related to each of these as well, are referred to the category of relation (ὑπὸ τὴν πρὸς τι κατηγορίαν) and are nothing of themselves but bare relations considered in other substrates."<sup>21</sup>

We should understand Nicholas' reduction of all non-divine wholes and parts to relations within the context of the earlier propositions of the *Elements of Theology*. Proclus, as stated, takes Wholeness to be a self-subsistent intelligible principle in which lower beings participate. In this respect, the whole has a unique character (ιδιότης) which is reflected in each of its manifestations. For Proclus this distinctive character is eternity: earlier in his *Elements of Theology*, he argued that eternal things are at the same time whole, and that as a result the intelligible Wholeness and the intelligible Eternity are one and the same principle.<sup>22</sup> Nicholas' response to that earlier proposition was likewise to dismantle the principle of Eternity by reducing the concept to an accidental predication. To this end, he there takes from proposition 54 of the *Elements of Theology* Proclus' own analogy between time and eternity, an analogy which revolves around the fact that both are measures: time of things in the sensible realm of becoming, eternity of things in the intelligible realm of being.<sup>23</sup> Having reiterated this analogy, Nicholas proceeds to argue that time is not the cause (αἴτιος) of the

20 Robinson, "Proclus as Heresiarch", p. 113 and *ibidem* n. 45.

21 Nicholas, *Refutation*, 68, p. 69, l. 23–26: Τὸ ἐν τῷ μέρει ὅλον καὶ τὸ ἐκ τῶν μερῶν ὅλον, ἔτι δὲ καὶ τὰ πρὸς ἑκάτερα τούτων μέρη ὑπὸ τὴν πρὸς τι κατηγορίαν ἀνάγονται καὶ καθ' αὐτὰ οὐδὲν εἰσιν εἰ μὴ σχέσεις ψιλὰι ὑποκειμένοις ἑτέροις ἐνθεωρούμεναι.

22 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 52, p. 50, l. 7–23; cf. n. 10 above.

23 Nicholas, *Refutation*, 52, p. 56, l. 5–6; Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 54, p. 52, l. 8–10.

sensible substances it measures, and should thus be considered as accidental (συμβεβηκός) to those substances, specifically as falling under the Aristotelean category of quantity (τὸ ποσόν). Eternity also falls under this category because of Proclus' analogy between it and time.<sup>24</sup> Given that Proclus equates eternity with wholeness, it makes sense for Nicholas to employ the same argument he used against Proclus' description of time and eternity in his current criticism of the way in which Proclus defines whole and part.

### 3.2 ... All Other Things Are Just Parts

Taken on its own, however, Nicholas' reference to the Aristotelian categorial scheme is somewhat confusing, since his disagreement with Proclus does not revolve around the placement of the concept "whole" in a categorial scheme. What Nicholas objects to is Proclus' claim that instances of wholeness, and especially those which function as principles, can be *self-subsistent* and thus independent from the Trinity. In response to this heretical claim, one could argue that the creatures created by God obtain from their Creator a substantial form and that they are whole by virtue of this God-given form,<sup>25</sup> while denying that their property of "being whole" derives from a self-subsistent principle of Wholeness as Proclus does. In other words, one could claim that *immanent* wholeness is linked to a thing's substance without it deriving from some independently existing *transcendent* wholeness. However, Nicholas rejects even such instances of immanent wholeness in his critique. Shortly after the previously cited passage from chapter 67, he names corporeal entities such as bodily parts (e.g., the head, the hand, or the foot) as examples of things which exist only in relation to the body as a whole or to their own parts.<sup>26</sup> In this regard, Nicholas' definition of the whole goes against not only that of Proclus but also that of Aristotle. Although the latter admits in his *Categories* that bodily parts such as the head or the hand could perhaps be defined as relative terms—in the sense that one could ask the question: "To whom does a head belong?"—, he

24 Nicholas, *Refutation*, 52, p. 56.6–13; cf. 87, p. 89, l. 14–20, for which see also Opsomer, "Standards of Argument in Nicholas and Proclus".

25 The idea that a thing's wholeness is linked to its substantial form is, in fact, what Aristotle himself argues for in *Metaphysics*, Z, 1041b, albeit without the reference to a divine principle.

26 Nicholas, *Refutation*, 67, p. 69, l. 15–17: ὅλον δέ τι αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ ἢ μέρος οὐδὲν οὔτ' ἐστὶν οὔτε λέγεται, ἀλλ' ἢ κεφαλὴ τυχὸν ὅλη πρὸς τὰ ἑαυτοῦ μέρη ἢ χεὶρ ἢ πούς ὅλος ἢ ἄλλο τι τῶν ἐκ μερῶν ὁσονοῦν συντεθειμένων. ("but some whole itself by itself or a part [itself by itself] neither exists nor is said to exist; instead a head happens to be whole in relation to its parts, or a hand or a foot or some other of the things which are composed out of any number of parts happens to be whole.")

nevertheless argues that one should consider them to be parts of the substance (“*What* is a head?”) and thus as things which do not fall under the category of relation.<sup>27</sup>

Nicholas doubles down on his view of the whole-as-relative in his criticism of the last of Proclus’ three propositions concerning the three kinds of whole, proposition 69. Here the Byzantine critic makes use of a subtle but apparent contradiction in the way Proclus phrases his proof for that proposition. In order to prove that any immanent wholeness, i.e., any compound out of parts, exists by virtue of participation in a transcendent whole before the parts, Proclus posits the following argument: “If the whole is composed of parts, it is whole as being affected by [wholeness] (for the parts, having become one, are affected by the whole because of their unification), and it is a whole in parts which are not whole.”<sup>28</sup> Nicholas notices that the subject of the verb “to be affected by” (πεπονθέναι) changes from “the whole” to “the parts”, and uses this as an argument to accuse Proclus of contradicting himself.

And see this as well: after he set out to show that “the whole composed of parts participates in the wholeness before the parts”<sup>29</sup> and that [this whole] itself “is affected by the whole”, he says against this that “*the parts* are affected by the whole because of their unification”. Now, if the parts are unified and are affected by the whole and participated in this manner in the wholeness before the parts, what need is there of the mediating whole in the parts? No, it is clear how a whole of this manner neither exists in general nor subsists nor participates in the Unparticipated.<sup>30</sup>

Nicholas’ argument in these lines is somewhat ironic: he accuses Proclus of mixing up his terms, changing his argument from “the compound *as a whole*

27 Aristotle, *Categories*, 8a. An important factor in Aristotle’s argument is the fact that for a thing to be defined as a relative term, it must be related to *something else* (*Cat.* 6a). Since bodily parts do not exist naturally outside of their body, they do not qualify for Aristotle’s definition of the category of relation *stricto sensu*.

28 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 69, p. 64, l. 26–28: εἰ γὰρ ἐκ μερῶν ἐστι, πεπονθὸς ἐστὶ τὸ ὅλον (τὰ γὰρ μέρη ἐν γενόμενα τὸ ὅλον διὰ τὴν ἔνωσιν πέπονθε), καὶ ἔστιν ὅλον ἐν μὴ ὅλοις τοῖς μέρεσι.

29 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 69, p. 64, l. 24–25: Πάν τὸ ἐκ τῶν μερῶν ὅλον μετέχει τῆς πρὸ τῶν μερῶν ὁλότητος.

30 Nicholas, *Refutation*, 69, p. 70, l. 30–p. 71, l. 2: “Ὅρα δὲ κάκεινο ὅτι τὸ ἐκ μερῶν ὅλον προθέμενος δεῖξαι τῆς πρὸ τῶν μερῶν μετέχον ὁλότητος καὶ αὐτὸ πεπονθὸς τὸ ὅλον, ἀντὶ τούτου τὰ μέρη φησὶ πεπονθέναι τὸ ὅλον διὰ τὴν ἔνωσιν. εἰ οὖν τὰ μέρη ἦνῳται καὶ πέπονθε τὸ ὅλον καὶ μετέσχεν οὕτω τῆς πρὸ τῶν μερῶν ὁλότητος, τί δεῖ τοῦ μεσιτεύοντος ὅλου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς μέρεσιν; ἢ δῆλον ὡς οὐδὲ ἔστιν ὅλως τοιοῦτον ὅλον οὐδὲ ὑφίσταται οὐδὲ μετέχει τοῦ ἀμεθέκτου.

participates in the whole before the parts” to “the compound as a collection of parts participates in the whole before the parts”. Yet Nicholas appears to mix up Proclus’ terminology as well: in the first sentence of this passage, he focuses on the supposedly superfluous nature of the whole *composed of parts*, yet in the second one he names the whole *in the part(s)* as superfluous. It should be noted, however, that Nicholas is likely referring to Proclus’ aforementioned statement, in which the Neoplatonic philosopher described the whole composed of parts as a “whole in parts which are not whole”, i.e., as the immanent unifying principle of a collection of parts. In other words, Nicholas here does not refer to Proclus’ third kind of whole (the whole in the part) specifically, though the terminology does not quite allow him to avoid this possible confusion.

Nevertheless, Nicholas’ goal in this passage is obvious: the only self-subsistent whole is God, and in all other cases where we call something “whole”, we are only really describing sets of parts which participate in the Trinity, sets to which we can *per accidens* ascribe their relation to each of the individual parts. This reveals a fundamental difference between the views of Nicholas and those of Proclus that again goes beyond the question of the existence of multiple distinct divine principles. When discussing the ontological distinction between a whole and its parts, one can take one of two approaches, as Plato showed in his *Theaetetus*. There Socrates asks the titular interlocutor to determine whether someone who knows the syllable ΣΩ also automatically knows the letters Σ and Ω. Two options are considered. On the one hand, the fact that the letters Σ and Ω are not composites like ΣΩ is—the syllable is a set of {Σ, Ω}, whereas Σ is not itself a set but merely an element—leads the interlocutors to conclude that the syllable as a whole is somehow distinct from the collection of letters. On the other hand, the fact that the syllable is entirely represented by the set {Σ, Ω} leads the interlocutors to the conclusion that the syllable as a whole is nothing other than the sum of the letters.<sup>31</sup>

Plato touches upon a fundamental issue in the metaphysics of identity, which remains unsolved to this day. The most famous example of this problem is undoubtedly the ship of Theseus: when the Athenians preserved the ship of their great hero by replacing each of the ship’s components once it had worn down, did their continual replacement of parts ultimately change the ship as a whole?<sup>32</sup> In more technical terms, modern philosophers have discussed whether composition is “unrestricted”—i.e., a whole is nothing more

31 Plato, *Theaetetus*, 203a–205a.

32 Plutarch, *Vitae parallelae*, ed. K. Ziegler, H. Gärtner (München: K.G. Saur, 2000), vol. 1, p. 20, l. 13–20. Donald Baxter gives an alternative example: if one divides a stretch of land into six parcels and sells the individual parcels to six different buyers, do the buyers automat-

than the sum of its parts, and any given set of things is automatically a whole—or whether it is “restricted”—i.e., there is some metaphysical or ontological principle which determines which sets of parts constitute an ontologically distinct unity.<sup>33</sup> Both Platonists and Peripatetics were generally of the opinion that composition is restricted, in the sense that the whole has a certain essence or substance that the parts, when considered by themselves, do not possess: the substance of the syllable is not identical to the substance of its letters, nor is the substance of a human being identical to the substance of his or her head.<sup>34</sup> The main difference between an Aristotelian view on restricted composition and a (Neo-)Platonic one is the fact that, in the former school of thought, the whole is distinct from its parts but still immanent in them, whereas for the adherents of the latter the whole is not only distinct from its parts but also *transcends* them.<sup>35</sup>

By contrast, Nicholas uses Proclus’ switch from “the whole is affected by wholeness” to “the parts are affected by wholeness” to argue for the opposite view: that in creation there are only sets of parts. For if the parts *qua* parts can participate perfectly well in the whole before the parts (and for Nicholas there is only one of these transcendent wholes, namely the Trinity), then there is no need to posit any intermediate forms of wholeness that can be considered to belong to substance. Yet subscribing to this view has consequences for one’s ontology which remain unspoken in Nicholas’ critique. When David Lewis gave his support to the view of “unrestricted composition”, he argued that “*whenever* there are some things, there exists a fusion of those things” (my italics).<sup>36</sup> If there is no principle of wholeness which determines when a set

---

ically possess collective ownership of the land as a whole? D. Baxter, “Identity in the Loose and Popular Sense”, in *Mind* 97/388(1988), p. 579.

33 For the term “unrestricted composition”, see, e.g., D. Lewis, *Parts of Classes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 74. For “restricted composition”, see, e.g., K. Koslicki, *The Structure of Objects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 173.

34 Although Plato does not give a straight answer in the *Theaetetus* to the question he raises there, Verity Harte has shown that other dialogues, such as the *Philebus*, the *Sophist*, and the *Timaeus*, indicate his support for the view that the whole is not just the sum of its parts; V. Harte, *Plato on Parts and Wholes. The Metaphysics of Structure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 167–266. Although Aristotle’s list of definitions of “whole” in *Metaphysics* Δ, 1023b–1024a includes both ontologically distinct composites and sets which are just the sum of their respective parts, he generally envisions substantial compounds as distinct from their parts, as is clear from passages like the aforementioned *Metaphysics* Z, 1041b–passage; cf. Koslicki, *The Structure of Objects*, pp. 126–162, and particularly pp. 153–154.

35 Oosthout, “A Wholesome Trinity”, pp. 532–533; see also section 2 above.

36 Lewis, *Parts of Classes*, p. 74.



of things becomes an ontologically distinct compound, then *any* given set of things can be considered a whole. This includes sets whose status as wholes might be counterintuitive.

It is no problem to describe an unheard-of fusion. It is nothing over and above its parts, so to describe it you need only describe the parts. Describe the character of the parts, describe their interrelation, and you have *ipso facto* described the fusion. The trout-turkey in no way defies description. It is neither fish nor fowl, but it is nothing else: it is part fish and part fowl. It is neither here nor there, so where is it?—Partly here, partly there. That much we can say, and that's enough. Its character is exhausted by the character and relation of its parts.<sup>37</sup>

Although Nicholas does not explicate whether his radical revision of Proclean mereology functions along similar lines, his arguments imply that this is a logical consequence. If one assumes that in creation there are no substances which can be considered part or whole in their own right, only things which accidentally relate to other things either as parts or wholes, then, for example, a duo consisting of a trout and a turkey is whole in the exact same way that the trout is whole. The trout has an accidental relation to the set {trout, turkey} as part to whole and an accidental relation to its fins as whole to part. One could attempt to argue that the relation between a body and its parts is different from the relation between a set and its members, but this makes little difference for the substance of the trout. If wholes and parts are purely accidental relations, then any distinction between the composite body of a trout and the Lewisian trout-turkey is also a purely accidental distinction.

#### 4 Solving the Supposed Contradictions of Proclus' Mereology ... Almost

Unfortunately for us, Nicholas does not develop his ideas in ways which allow us to fully elucidate these matters. His primary goal remains the critique of Proclus. As a result, his criticisms of the flaws in Proclus' mereology are much more clearly sketched than the alternative theory we discussed above. In fact, as Jan Opsomer points out in his own contribution to this volume, Nicholas goes to great lengths to bring to light contradictions in the *Elements of Theology*, often

---

37 Lewis, *Parts of Classes*, p. 80.

with little regard for interpretative constraints such as the principle of charity.<sup>38</sup> For example, the previously discussed terminological mix-up of which Nicholas accuses Proclus is preceded by a lengthy criticism of Proclus' description of the whole before the parts, and specifically of the main statement in proposition 69: "Every whole composed of parts participates in the wholeness before the parts."<sup>39</sup> Given that Proclus considers the whole before the parts to be an *unparticipated* principle, it is obviously difficult to imagine how a lower being can participate in it. Nicholas in turn states that one should consider the Trinity to be the only viable candidate for the title of whole before the parts, since he has already claimed that it is both unparticipated and participated at the same time.<sup>40</sup>

Slightly further on, in his commentary on *Elements of Theology* § 73, Nicholas brings forth another contradiction that is specific to Proclus' conceptualization of part and whole. In *Elements of Theology* § 73 and § 74, Proclus establishes the placement of Wholeness-itself within the metaphysical scheme of successive intelligible principles around which Neoplatonic philosophy revolves. More specifically, he argues that Wholeness-itself must be inferior to, and thus more particular than, the principle of Being, yet superior to and more universal than the Platonic Forms. That the principle of Being transcends Wholeness-itself is shown by the fact that only some of the existent entities in the universe are wholes, while others are parts and only parts. If the roles were reversed and Wholeness transcended Being, every being would automatically participate in Wholeness as well, and thus there would be no existent thing which would not also be a whole.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, the Platonic Forms are ranked below Wholeness in the hierarchy of principles, since any given thing which can be divided into any given kind of parts is called a whole, whereas the Platonic Form is specifically a universal which is divided into individuals (εἶδος δὲ τὸ εἰς πλείω τὰ καθέκαστα ἤδη τεμνόμενον).<sup>42</sup>

A quick note of clarification is necessary on this last point. Neoplatonic philosophers like Proclus believe, as Dirk Baltzly points out, that there is "some

38 Opsomer, "Standards of Argument in Nicholas and Proclus".

39 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 69, p. 64, l. 24–25: Πᾶν τὸ ἐκ τῶν μερῶν ὅλον μετέχει τῆς πρὸ τῶν μερῶν ὁλότητος.

40 Nicholas, *Refutation*, 23, p. 31, l. 26–p. 32, l. 17, and 69, p. 69, l. 30–p. 70, l. 7; cf. 180, p. 157, l. 7–9. The full scope of Nicholas' arguments against the Proclean concept of the unparticipated and his subsequent argument for the unparticipated-participated Trinity requires no further investigation here, since it is already extensively documented in Robinson, "Dionysius Against Proclus", pp. 257–265.

41 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 73, p. 70, l. 5–9.

42 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 74, p. 70, l. 17–21.

intimate connection between the two distinctions [of whole/part and universal/particular].<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, the overlap between the concepts of the universal and the genus results in the genus being considered as a whole as well, which in turn means that the Neoplatonists consider species to be parts of genera. Examples of this conceptualization of the genus as a whole are present already in Plotinus,<sup>44</sup> but the clearest explanation of this notion can be found in Porphyry's writings. When he enumerates in his *Isagoge* the ways in which genera, species, and individuals are predicated of one another, Porphyry describes the three terms as a series of wholes and parts. "The genus is some kind of whole, the individual a part, and the species is both whole and part. But the species is part *of* another, whereas it is whole not *of* another but *in* others: it is the whole in the parts."<sup>45</sup>

Similarly, when Porphyry adapts Plotinus' vision of a universal Intellect which encompasses more particular beings in such a manner that each being is conceptually distinct from yet also fully mixed up in the incorporeal Intellect, he uses the Aristotelian term "composed of like parts" (ὁμοιομερής) to describe the way in which the universal Intellect (ὀλικώτερος νοῦς) is present in the particular intellect (μερικώτερος νοῦς) and vice versa.<sup>46</sup> Note that, when Neoplatonic philosophers describe genus and species or universal and particular as whole and part, they are envisioning the genus as the transcendent principle of an extensional set which includes each of the species, not the genus as part of the definition of the species.<sup>47</sup> Thus, Proclus defines the Form as a kind of whole in his *Elements of Theology*, because *qua* participated it is akin to an extensional set of which each of the Form's individual participants is a member.

43 Baltzly, "Mereological Modes of Being", p. 206, n. 492.

44 See, e.g., Plotinus, *Enneads*, 6.2.2, l. 12–26.

45 Porphyry, *Isagoge et in Aristotelis Categorias commentarium*, ed. A. Busse (Berlin: Reimer, 1887), p. 8, l. 1–3: ὅλον γάρ τι τὸ γένος, τὸ δὲ ἄτομον μέρος, τὸ δὲ εἶδος καὶ ὅλον καὶ μέρος, ἀλλὰ μέρος μὲν ἄλλου, ὅλον δὲ οὐκ ἄλλου ἀλλ' ἐν ἄλλοις· ἐν γὰρ τοῖς μέρεσι τὸ ὅλον. Note, however, as Lloyd has rightly pointed out, that Porphyry makes no distinction between class membership and class inclusion in this succession of wholes and parts; A.C. Lloyd, *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 44.

46 Porphyry, *Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes*, ed. E. Lamberg (Leipzig: Teubner, 1975), 22 p. 13, l. 13–16. For further analysis of this passage and of Proclus' response to Porphyry on this matter, see A. Oosthout, "The problem of (in)divisible intellect in Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, 180. Proclus and Porphyry on the relativity of the incorporeal whole", in *Études platoniciennes* 17(2022): <https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesplatoniciennes.2653>.

47 For the distinction between these two types of parthood relations between a genus and its species, see Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Δ, 1023b. For the Neoplatonic notion of the genus as a transcendent principle, see, e.g., Lloyd, *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism*, pp. 64–68 and 83–87.

Nicholas attacks Proclus' placement of Wholeness-itself in between Being and the Forms on both fronts. First, he explains why Proclus cannot postulate the existence of a principal Wholeness independent from the principle of Being. He does so both on the basis of Proclus' initial suggestion that Being transcends Wholeness, and on the basis of Proclus' subsequent proof. Against Proclus' initial suggestion, he argues that, if the principle of Being instantiates both wholes and parts (albeit indirectly in the case of the former), then the whole "*qua* distinguished opposite the part" (ὡς ἀντιδιηρημένον τῷ μέρει) would itself be a *part* of being.<sup>48</sup> Although Nicholas does not fully elaborate this argument, he appears to be using against Proclus the Neoplatonic equation of the genus or the universal with a kind of whole. If, after all, being is a genus with "whole" and "part" as its species, then according to Neoplatonic logic being would be a whole *qua* genus and "whole" and "part" would be its parts *qua* species. Such a conclusion is obviously absurd, given that the "whole" Proclus is talking about here is the ultimate principle of all wholes, Wholeness-itself. It cannot be a part of some larger whole.

Nicholas then moves on to the proof of Proclus' seventy-third proposition, and attempts to fortify his argument by pointing to apparent contradictions in Proclus' phrasing.

But let us look at the proof of this as well. "For the whole," he says, "is composed of existing parts",<sup>49</sup> and again he says: "Every whole is a whole of parts",<sup>50</sup> and thus: "If there is no part, there also cannot be the whole".<sup>51</sup> Although these things are nicely said about the whole composed of parts, this man takes them as common about the whole before the parts as well and so believes that he proves that the Whole is different from Being and that Being is more universal (ὀλικώτερον) than the Whole, and he loses perspective by obviously contradicting himself like this in saying that something is "more whole" (ὀλικώτερον) than the Whole.<sup>52</sup>

48 Nicholas, *Refutation*, 73, p. 75, l. 19–21.

49 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 73, p. 68, l. 3–4: ἐκ γὰρ μερῶν ὄντων ἐστὶ τὸ ὅλον.

50 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 73, p. 70, l. 2–3: πᾶν γὰρ ὅλον μερῶν ἐστὶν ὅλον.

51 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 73, p. 70, l. 3–4: μὴ ὄντος οὖν τοῦ μέρους, οὐδὲ τὸ ὅλον εἶναι δυνατόν.

52 Nicholas, *Refutation*, 73, p. 75, l. 30–p. 76, l. 5: Ἀλλ' ἴδωμεν τούτου καὶ τὴν ἀπόδειξιν· ἐκ γὰρ μερῶν ὄντων, φησὶν, ἐστὶ τὸ ὅλον, καὶ πάλιν καὶ πᾶν ὅλον, φησὶν, μερῶν ἐστὶν ὅλον, καὶ μὴ ὄντος οὖν μέρους οὐδὲ τὸ ὅλον εἶναι δύναται. ταῦτα περὶ τοῦ ἐκ μερῶν ὅλου καλῶς λεγόμενα οὗτος κοινὰ καὶ περὶ τοῦ πρὸ τῶν μερῶν παραλαμβάνει καὶ δεικνύειν οὕτω νομίζει τὸ ὅλον ἕτερον εἶναι τοῦ ὄντος καὶ τὸ ὄν ὀλικώτερον τοῦ ὅλου καὶ οὕτω φανερώς ἀποπολογῶν ἐν τῷ λέγειν ὀλικώτερόν τι τοῦ ὅλου ἀναισθητεῖ.

As Nicholas tries to show, Proclus apparently believes that *every* whole is a whole composed of parts, even though the principle Wholeness-itself is supposed to be the whole *before* the parts. However, Nicholas' rendition of Proclus in these lines ignores a vital distinction the Neoplatonic philosopher makes in his proof. In the first line quoted by Nicholas, Proclus' statement that "the whole is composed of existing parts" constitutes an existential quantification but not necessarily a universal one (Eric Dodds notably translated the line without the definite article: "for a whole must be composed of existent parts").<sup>53</sup> Here Proclus uses the preposition ἐκ to indicate that for some wholes (but not necessarily for *all* wholes), it is true that they are composed of parts. In the second statement, "every whole is a whole of parts", Proclus does start from a universal quantification but notably foregoes the preposition ἐκ. In other words, this universal statement about the whole's connection to parthood does not specifically describe being composed of parts. Nicholas does not account for these differences between the two statements in his critique. Furthermore, his citation of Proclus' second statement pertinently omits the second half of that sentence. The full statement of Proclus is: "Every whole is a whole of parts, *insofar as it exists either before them* (πρὸ αὐτῶν) *or in them* (ἐν αὐτοῖς)."<sup>54</sup> In actuality, Proclus takes care specifically to circumvent the issue which Nicholas lays at his feet. He avoids universal quantification (πᾶν ὅλον) when describing the whole composed of parts, and when he does use universal quantification to state that every whole is "of parts" (μερῶν), he immediately adds that the genitive (or the dative) can be accompanied by "before" (πρό) and "in" (ἐν) as well.<sup>55</sup>

Nicholas' unfair and incomplete representation of Proclus' argument in this passage is particularly unfortunate, because the criticism he tries to raise against the Neoplatonic philosopher is not invalid in itself. Although Proclus takes great care not to mix up the whole before the parts and the whole composed of parts in his *Elements of Theology*, he does use his mereological terms in the loose manner of which Nicholas accuses him in other works. For example, although Proclus here makes a clear distinction between the whole before the parts and the whole composed of or in the parts, and clearly links the former kind of whole to the transcendent Wholeness-itself, in the *Platonic Theology* he describes Wholeness-itself in a way that implies that it is actually composed of parts rather than transcendent over them. As mentioned before, Proclus describes Wholeness-itself as a triad of one, power, and being. The notion that

53 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, p. 69.

54 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 73, p. 70, l. 2–3: πᾶν γὰρ ὅλον μερῶν ἐστὶν ὅλον, ἢ ὡς πρὸ αὐτῶν ὃν ἢ ὡς ἐν αὐτοῖς.

55 I thank Jan Opsomer for pointing out to me this flaw in Nicholas' critique.

the whole has oneness and being as its properties derives from the discussion of the one in Plato's *Parmenides*.<sup>56</sup> However, Proclus follows the letter of Plato's text a bit too closely. Because the *Parmenides* of Plato's dialogue describes the oneness- and being-properties of the one as its parts, Proclus states: "Now then, the second intelligible triad is called the intelligible Wholeness, and *its parts* are the one and being."<sup>57</sup> This is precisely the problem which Nicholas claims to discern in the *Elements of Theology*, namely that the ultimate whole before the parts is described as a whole *composed of parts*. The ambiguity of the distinction between Proclus' three kinds of wholes only increases in subsequent manifestations of wholeness, since those are often different kinds of wholes at the same time by virtue of their different relations (in a general sense) to other Neoplatonic principles. The Living Being on which the Demiurge bases the sensible cosmos in Plato's *Timaeus*, for example, is characterized in the *Platonic Theology* as the composite multiplicity which participates in the transcendent unity of Wholeness-itself, by virtue of its status as an inferior principle relative to Wholeness-itself, but described in the *Timaeus Commentary* as the transcendent whole before the parts in which the composite sensible cosmos participates.<sup>58</sup>

All of this means that Nicholas could have provided a much stronger version of his current argument against Proclus' theory of the three kinds of wholes, had he studied Proclus' *Platonic Theology* and *Timaeus Commentary* instead of focusing his efforts on an incorrect (or purposefully unfair) reading of the *Elements of Theology* itself. The lack of a reference to Proclus' other works is understandable, given that there is no sign that Nicholas had access to these works or read them in any detail if he did. He does not seem to have known of the *Platonic Theology*, and it is also unlikely that he studied the *Timaeus Commentary* to an extent that would allow him to point out the potential issues

56 Plato, *Parmenides*, 142c–143a.

57 Proclus, *Théologie platonicienne*, vol. 3, p. 87, l. 8–9: Καλεῖται τοίνυν ἡ δευτέρα τριάς ὁλότης νοητή, μέρη δὲ αὐτῆς τὸ ἓν καὶ τὸ ὄν (...). Cf. Oosthout, "A Wholesome Trinity", p. 524.

58 Oosthout, "The problem of (in)divisible intellect in Proclus", ch. 3, p. 32, and ch. 4, p. 36. For Wholeness-itself as a whole before the parts, see also Proclus, *Théologie platonicienne*, vol. 3, ch. 27, and Opsomer, "Deriving the Three Intelligible Triads", p. 363. For the Living Being from the *Timaeus* as the composite multiplicity subordinate to Wholeness-itself, see also Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*, ed. G. Van Riel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), vol. 4, p. 14, l. 8–15. For the Living Being as the whole before the parts superordinate to the sensible cosmos, see Proclus, *In Timaeum Commentaria*, vol. 2, p. 321, l. 17–p. 322, l. 2, D. Baltzly, "The World Soul in Proclus' *Timaeus Commentary*", in C. Helmig (ed.), *World Soul—Anima Mundi. On the Origins and Fortunes of a Fundamental Idea* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), pp. 293–294, and Oosthout, "A Wholesome Trinity", pp. 530–531.

in Proclus' theory which I summarized here.<sup>59</sup> The faulty representation of the exact *Elements*-passage to which he responds is inexcusable, however, and only serves to hamper Nicholas' critique even further. Had he looked beyond the particulars of Proclus' phrasing (or studied that phrasing in more detail), he might have been able to point to a real flaw in Proclus' theory of self-subsistent wholeness. Nicholas ultimately sticks to a more simplistic argument: it makes no sense to claim that something is more universal than the first universal, more whole than the first whole.

## 5 Rejecting the Proclean Theory of Universals

Despite Nicholas' misgivings about the way in which Proclus uses the Greek terms for whole and universal, he does not oppose the fundamental notion that the universal is a particular kind of whole. In fact, his worries about the heretical influence of Proclus' ideas were at least in part inspired by the efforts of his Byzantine predecessors and contemporaries to reintroduce and revitalize the Neoplatonic whole-as-universal, as Angelou pointed out.<sup>60</sup> One could claim, in fact, that Nicholas' *Refutation of the Elements of Theology* is aimed as much against some of his Byzantine contemporaries as it is aimed against Proclus himself, if not more so. This becomes especially clear when we turn to the second of Proclus' propositions on the placement of Wholeness-itself in his metaphysical scheme: proposition 74, in which Proclus argues that the whole is a more universal concept than the Form-as-universal.

### 5.1 Nicholas' Realist Opponents

Although it is not immediately clear from Nicholas' text who exactly succumbed to the heretical influence of Proclus,<sup>61</sup> a number of likely candidates can be indicated. A full and detailed overview of the Byzantine discussions on the nature of universals and the way in which the reception of Neoplatonic thought shaped those discussions falls outside the scope of this paper. Instead, a short summary of recent scholarship on this matter will suffice.

59 Robinson, "Proclus as Heresiarch", pp. 108–109 shows that, outside of the *Elements of Theology*, the only works of Proclus to which Nicholas might have had access were the *Alcibiades Commentary* and the *Timaeus Commentary*. However, Opsomer argues in "Standards of Argument in Nicholas and Proclus" that, even if Nicholas did have access to the *Timaeus Commentary*, his engagement with that text was most likely minimal.

60 For which see the introduction to this paper.

61 J. Greig, "Reason, Revelation, and Sceptical Argumentation in 12th- to 14th-Century Byzantium", in *Theoria* 88/1(2022), pp. 176–177.

Michael Psellos' reintroduction of Proclean thought into Byzantine circles must have been vexing to someone like Nicholas in general. However, Robinson has convincingly argued that Psellos' affinity for Proclus was not strong or uncritical enough to make him a prime example of the type of misguided fan of Proclus of whom Nicholas warns in the prologue of his *Refutation*.<sup>62</sup> In fact, Robinson points out that Psellos criticizes Neoplatonic views on transcendent universals from an Aristotelian perspective, an argumentative strategy that Nicholas is quite fond of himself.<sup>63</sup>

The views on universals espoused by Psellos' pupil Italos were a much more likely source of Nicholas' worries, as Angelou pointed out in his introduction. Katerina Ierodiakonou has indeed argued that Italos employed the three kinds of wholes defined in Proclus' *Elements of Theology* in order to fortify a Porphyrian doctrine of universals.<sup>64</sup> It should be noted that, despite his affinity for Proclean thought, Italos remained a "moderate realist",<sup>65</sup> since he argued that immanent universals exist merely *per accidens* (though he did believe in the *per se* existence of transcendent universals).<sup>66</sup>

The views of Italos' own pupil, Eustratios of Nicaea, must have appeared equally misguided to Nicholas. As Stephen Gersh has shown, Eustratios introduces the three kinds of wholes of Proclus into his commentaries on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Prior Analytics* in order to navigate between the Pla-

62 J. Robinson, "'A Mixing Cup of Piety and Learnedness': Michael Psellos and Nicholas of Methone as Readers of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes*. Volume 2. *Translations and Acculturations* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 89–90; Nicholas, *Refutation*, prologue p. 1, l. 15–p. 2, l. 12. For a more general overview of Psellos' interaction with Proclus' writings, see D. O'Meara, "Michael Psellos", in S. Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus. From Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 165–181.

63 Robinson, "A Mixing Cup of Piety and Learnedness", pp. 69–70. See also Opsomer, "Standards of Argument in Nicholas and Proclus", where it is rightly pointed out that Nicholas' conceptualization of Aristotelean thought as a useful weapon against Neoplatonism rather oversimplifies the manner in which the two schools of thought actually interacted. For a comparison between Nicholas' strongly anti-Proclean use of Aristotle and Aristotle's reception by other Byzantine scholars, see M. Trizio, "Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium", in Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus*, p. 207.

64 K. Ierodiakonou, "John Italos on Universals", in *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 18(2007), pp. 238–240; cf. Trizio, "Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium", pp. 185–186 for a succinct overview for Italos' use of the three kinds of wholes in general.

65 Ierodiakonou, "John Italos on Universals", p. 247.

66 Ierodiakonou, "John Italos on Universals", pp. 243–246. Trizio, "Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium", p. 185, similarly argues that Italos did not simply take Proclus' views for his own.



tonic notion of a transcendent formal principle and the Aristotelean notion of an abstracted universal.<sup>67</sup> Although Eustratios refrains from positing independent causal principles as Proclus does, moving instead towards a “more overtly Christian Platonism” by placing the Platonic Ideas in the mind of the divine Creator,<sup>68</sup> he nevertheless appears to prefer a Platonically realist conception of embodied universal forms over the Aristotelean notion of an abstracted universal. This Platonic conception of the embodied form is explicitly linked to Proclus’ notion of the whole in the part.<sup>69</sup> There are, in other words, indeed really subsistent universals *in* particular beings.

A final target for Nicholas’ nominalist critique of Proclean universals may have been his direct contemporary, Ioanne Petritsi. Out of all of the thinkers mentioned here, Petritsi was perhaps the most openly kind to Proclean thought. As Lela Alexidze has noted, Petritsi firmly subscribed to Proclus’ view that the various productive principles were independent, self-constituted hypostases.<sup>70</sup> It is unclear, however, whether Petritsi’s translation of and favourable commentary on the *Elements of Theology* preceded Nicholas’ critical commentary of the same text or whether Petritsi’s work was written after Nicholas.<sup>71</sup>

To sum up, we may refer to Linos Benakis’ summary of the Byzantine debate on the nature of universals: the Byzantine thinkers subscribed to a realist notion of universals, one which was in large part inspired by the theory of universals espoused in the Neoplatonic school of thought, albeit with some Christian flourishes such as the placement of the Platonic Ideas in the thinking of God.<sup>72</sup>

67 S. Gersh, “Universals, Wholes, *Logoi*: Eustratios of Nicaea’s Response to Proclus’ *Elements of Theology*”, in Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus*. Volume 2, pp. 33–34.

68 Gersh, “Universals, Wholes, *Logoi*”, pp. 50–51 and cf. p. 31.

69 Gersh, “Universals, Wholes, *Logoi*”, pp. 36 and 49–50; cf. Trizio, “Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium”, p. 199. For Proclus’ original conception of the universal as embodied form, see C. Helmig, “Die atmende Form in der Materie. Einige Überlegungen zum ἔνυλον εἶδος in der Philosophie des Proklos”, in M. Perkams, R.M. Piccione (eds), *Proklos. Methode, Seelenlehre, Metaphysik* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 259–278 and P. d’Hoine, “«Ceux qui acceptent des Idées de toutes choses»: sur l’interprétation de *Parménide* 130b3–e4 dans l’Antiquité tardive”, in *Philosophie antique* 10(2010), pp. 242–243.

70 L. Alexidze, “Ioanne Petritsi”, in Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus*, pp. 232 and 241. See also Alexidze’s chapter “Nicholas of Methone and Ioane Petritsi on Intellect” in this volume.

71 Alexidze, “Ioanne Petritsi”, p. 242.

72 L. Benakis, “Τὸ πρόβλημα τῶν γενικῶν ἐννοιῶν καὶ ὁ ἐννοιολογικὸς ρεαλισμὸς τῶν Βυζαντινῶν”, in *Φιλοσοφία* 8–9(1978–1979), pp. 31–340; cf. Ierodiakonou, “John Italos on Universals”, p. 231.

## 5.2 *A Successful Critique of Realism?*

When Nicholas turns to Proclus' argument for conceiving of the universal Form as a specific kind of whole, he immediately distances himself from the Proclus-derived realism of his contemporaries: "The notional form is either nothing, according to us (καθ' ἡμᾶς), being situated in mere conception (ψιλῇ ἐπινοίᾳ), or it subsists before the many, according to you (κατὰ σέ) (...)." <sup>73</sup> Nicholas thus commits himself to a nominalist view of universals, <sup>74</sup> and subsequently deconstructs the view of his Proclean opponent(s). Proclus' own argument in this proposition for the statement that the universal Form is not whole without qualification, but rather a specific kind of whole, has two horns: the aforementioned suggestion that division into individuals is a specific kind of mereological division, and the remark that individual beings are wholes but not universals. <sup>75</sup> Nicholas' criticism in turn revolves around one argument which focuses on the transcendent universal and a twofold criticism regarding the particular individual.

Since the transcendent Form or universal "subsists before the many" in Proclus' thought, it cannot be a whole, Nicholas argues, for Proclus seemingly wants every whole to be composed *of* its parts, not to exist before them. <sup>76</sup> Here Nicholas reaffirms the criticism he used against the ranking of Being above Wholeness-itself in *Elements of Theology* §73. Unfortunately for him, this means that his current argument rests on the same misreading of Proclus which we distilled from his commentary there, i.e., Nicholas' failure to either notice or acknowledge Proclus' distinction between some wholes existing *out of* parts (ἐκ μερῶν) and all wholes being things *of* parts (μερῶν).

Nicholas' argument against Proclus' notion that individuals are wholes as well revolves around the status of these individuals as particulars. First, he claims that the individual or "form that is contemplated with matter" (τὸ δὲ μετὰ τῆς ὕλης θεωρούμενον) completes things which exist only individually or *per part* (τὰ κατὰ μέρος), and "thus it would be right that it be called 'part' rather than 'whole'." <sup>77</sup> Second, he links this criticism to Proclus' arguments by stating that "of the thing of which [Proclus] previously stated that it is not a whole *qua* part, he now says that it is whole *qua* individual, so that the whole and the

73 Nicholas, *Refutation*, 74, p. 76, l. 11–12: Εἶδος τὸ μὲν ἐννοηματικὸν ἢ οὐδὲν ἐστὶν καθ' ἡμᾶς ψιλῇ ἐπινοίᾳ κείμενον ἢ πρὸ τῶν πολλῶν κατὰ σέ ὑφέστηκε (...).

74 On Nicholas' nominalism in general, see Opsomer, "Standards of Argument in Nicholas and Proclus".

75 For the latter claim, see Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 74, p. 70, l. 17–18.

76 Nicholas, *Refutation*, 74, p. 76, l. 12–14.

77 Nicholas, *Refutation*, 74, p. 76, l. 14–16: τὸ δὲ μετὰ τῆς ὕλης θεωρούμενον καὶ συμπληρωτικὸν ἐκάστου τῶν κατὰ μέρος, μέρος μᾶλλον ἢ ὅλον δικαιοῖτ' ἂν ὀνομάζεσθαι.

part are the same thing.”<sup>78</sup> This criticism is built on the assumption that “part” and “whole” are exclusive markers in Proclean philosophy, and that the designation of something as a part automatically excludes the possibility that it is also a whole and vice versa.<sup>79</sup> A critique of this kind works well from Nicholas’ perspective, since it is one which his alternative notion of wholes and parts as accidental relations neatly avoids (after all, the accidental relation between the genus and the set of individuals of which it consists would not be substantially different from the relation between the individual and the set of bodily parts of which it is composed, as we speculated earlier).

However, Nicholas again falls short in his recapitulation of Proclus’ original ideas. The crux of the Byzantine’s twofold argument is the suggestion that Proclus first proclaims the individual to be just a part in *Elements of Theology* § 73, but then contradictorily proclaims it to be a whole in § 74. Yet of those two claims, *only* the second one is actually supported by Proclus. The individual is indeed whole according to Proclus, but the things which exist merely *qua* part (ἡ μέρος) are not individual bodies but bodily parts. The Neoplatonic philosopher explicates this distinction in his *Timaeus Commentary*. More specifically, in the third book of that commentary, Proclus distinguishes two types of sensible beings, each of which is in turn divided into wholes and parts. The universal type of being (ὅλικόν) refers to the cosmos as a whole (ὅλον ὅλικόν) and its universal and everlasting parts (μέρη ὀλικά), such as the four elements, the heavenly spheres, and the like. The particular or individual type of being (μερικόν) refers to the mortal individual as a whole (ὅλον μερικόν) and its individual body parts (μέρη μερικά).<sup>80</sup> It is these body parts, not the individuals themselves, which are “just parts” (μέρη γάρ ἐστι μόνον) according to Proclus. In contrast, “the particular living beings are wholes in a partial manner, for in these a third kind of wholeness [after the two universal kinds wholeness mentioned above] is present, albeit with the distinctive character of a part.”<sup>81</sup>

78 Nicholas, *Refutation*, 74, p. 76, l. 18–19: “Ὁ προλαβὼν εἶπεν, ἡ μέρος μὴ εἶναι ὅλον, τοῦτο νῦν, ἡ ἄτομον ὅλον εἶναι φησιν, ὡς τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ ὅλον εἶναι καὶ μέρος. The Proclean antecedents for these claims are *Elements of Theology*, 73, p. 68, l. 33–p. 70, l. 1, and 74, p. 70, l. 17–18, respectively.

79 Cf. Nicholas, *Refutation*, 108, p. 104, l. 34–p. 105, l. 1.

80 Proclus, *In Timaeum Commentaria*, vol. 3, p. 85, l. 16–p. 87, l. 7; cf. Baltzly, “Mereological Modes of Being”, pp. 401–402, G. Van Riel, “Proclus on Matter and Physical Necessity”, in R. Chiaradonna, F. Trabattoni, (eds), *Physics and Philosophy of Nature in Greek Neoplatonism* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p. 249, and J. Opsomer, “The Natural World”, in d’Hoine, Martijn (eds), *All From One*, pp. 144–148.

81 Proclus, *In Timaeum Commentaria*, vol. 3, p. 86, l. 4–6: τὰ δὲ μερικά ζῶα ὅλα ἐστὶ μερικῶς· τρίτη γὰρ ὁλότης ἐν τούτοις, ἀλλὰ μετὰ τῆς μερικῆς ιδιότητος·

Multiple scholars have noted that the particular living being *qua* “whole in a partial manner” is a fitting example of the third kind of whole, the whole in the part. To summarize, these scholars have suggested that, if the transcendent Platonic Form is the universal before the individuals, and the universal as an extensional set of individuals is the whole composed of parts, then the individual is a whole in the part, insofar as it is a really subsistent whole yet *qua* individual is nothing more than a member of the extensional set of the universal (though there has been some disagreement on whether it is the specific form of the individual, e.g., Socrates, or the specific manifestation of the universal, e.g., humanity, which constitutes the whole in the particular).<sup>82</sup> Thus, when Proclus states that some things exist only as parts and not as wholes in *Elements of Theology* § 73, he has in mind only the bodily parts of a corporeal individual, whereas in describing the whole *qua* individual in § 74, he gestures towards the fact that the individual as a whole is an image of its transcendent genus. Nicholas’ critique does not account for this important distinction.

Here Nicholas’ presumable lack of familiarity with Proclus’ broader oeuvre cripples his arguments against the Neoplatonic philosopher. Whereas before he missed the opportunity to strengthen a potentially promising critique of Proclus, here he ascribes to Proclus a view that is simply disproven by the latter’s writings outside of the *Elements of Theology*. Yet Nicholas’ polemic in this chapter seems to be motivated by more than simple unfamiliarity with the views of his opponent. After all, his line of argument only applies to Proclean thought if one applies Nicholas’ nominalist reconceptualization of wholeness to it. That is to say, one could accuse Proclus of erroneously calling the individuals whole when they are in actuality just parts of universal genera if one reduced Proclus’ whole in the part to a non-subsistent accident as Nicholas did in his criticism of *Elements of Theology* § 67–68. In other words, Nicholas is implicitly criticizing his caricature of Proclus’ school of thought rather than the school of thought itself. After all, if one refuses the aforementioned condition (and this is obviously what Proclus would do), Nicholas’ criticism fades away.

82 Baltzly, “Mereological Modes of Being”, p. 405 has suggested that the whole in the part refers to Porphyry’s notion of the “atomic form” (Porphyry, *Isagoge*, p. 7, l. 19–21) such as Socrates’s distinctive characteristics. I am more inclined to follow the interpretation of d’Hoine, however, since he has shown in “Ceux qui acceptent des Idées de toutes choses”, pp. 207–210, that Proclus denies that individual characteristics derive from transcendent formal principles (cf., e.g., Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*, vol. 5, p. 86, l. 23–p. 87, l. 15); the embodied form in a particular individual is instead a manifestation of the genus, such as the humanity in Socrates. D’Hoine has subsequently argued in “Totalité et participation”, p. 218, convincingly in my opinion, that this individually manifested universal is the whole which exists in a partial manner.

## 6 The Inconsistencies of Nicholas' Own Mereology

Having criticized the details of Proclus' account of really subsistent universals (to various degrees of success), Nicholas returns to the crux of his critique. The many transcendent wholes defined by Proclus are nothing but mere conceptions (ψιλλῇ ἐπινοίᾳ), and the Neoplatonic philosopher should have recognized that there is only one universal before the many things in creation: the Trinity. Nicholas emphasizes this point again in his comments on the seventy-fourth proposition of the *Elements of Theology*, and subsequently explains how this one universal creates all of the particulars of creation.

What is left as the whole before the parts but that which we claim to be the same as the Being and the One before all things, the Cause which produces all things? From this also matter pre-subsists, whatever it is, and the forms are cojoined with it, proceeding as certain illuminations from there and being combined with things which are relatively whole (ὀλικωτέροις),<sup>83</sup> but somewhat imperfect, because of their need of the perfection from these [illuminations]. And so each of the composites of matter and form is completed and becomes some whole composed of the first parts, matter and form, and then of the parts into which they can be divided, which are themselves also composed of matter and form. Thus “in the beginning God created”, according to the God-seeing Moses, not a matter without quantity, unqualified, and bereft of any idea, but “the heaven and the earth”<sup>84</sup> and the cosmic elements remaining in between these.<sup>85</sup>

Nicholas goes on to describe the way in which the remaining three elements, water, air, and fire, came to be in between the ether and the earth.<sup>86</sup> He then

83 The term ὀλικώτερον would normally be translated as “more universal” (this is also the sense in which Proclus regularly employs it), but this seems unlikely to be Nicholas' intended meaning here given his previous insistence on a nominalist approach to universals.

84 Gen. 1:1.

85 Nicholas, *Refutation*, 74, p. 76, l. 26–p. 77, l. 4: τί λοιπὸν τὸ πρὸ τῶν μερῶν εἰ μὴ ὅπερ ἡμεῖς φαμεν ταὐτὸν εἶναι τῷ πρὸ πάντων ὄντι τε καὶ ἐνί, τῷ ποιητικῷ πάντων αἰτίῳ, ἐξ οὗ καὶ ἡ ὕλη, ἥτις ποτέ ἐστι, προϋφίσταται καὶ τὰ εἶδη ταύτης ἐπισυνίσταται οἷον ἐλλάμψεις τινές ἐκεῖθεν προΐοῦσαι καὶ τοῖς ὀλικωτέροις μέν, ἀτελεστέροις δέ, διὰ τὸ δεῖσθαι τῆς ἐκ τούτων τελειώσεως ἐπισυντιθέμεναι. καὶ οὕτως ἕκαστον τῶν ἐξ ὕλης καὶ εἶδους συνθέτων ἀποτελεῖται καὶ ὅλον τι γίνεται ἐκ μερῶν πρώτων μὲν ὕλης καὶ εἶδους, ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ τῶν εἰς ἃ διαιρεῖσθαι δύναται καὶ αὐτῶν ἐξ ὕλης καὶ εἶδους συντεθειμένων. οὕτως ἐν ἀρχῇ κατὰ τὸν θεόπτην Μωσῆν ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς οὐχ ὕλην ἄποσον, ἄποιον πάσης ἰδέας ἐστερημένην ἀλλὰ τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὰ μεταξὺ τούτων λοιπὰ κοσμικὰ στοιχεῖα.

86 Nicholas, *Refutation*, 74, p. 77, l. 4–8; cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 31c–32a, and A.E. Taylor, *A com-*

explains how, after God had created these five elements on the first day of creation,

(...) in the following days until the sixth he thus fulfilled the whole cosmos from these, adding in sequence the more perfect creatures to the less perfect ones. So matter, forms, and all beings have come to be from the one productive Cause which exists before all, and all beings are both all wholes and all parts—in relation to one another, obviously—, and all are forms and nothing is formless: none of the sensible things, and even more so none of the intelligible ones.<sup>87</sup>

An interesting aspect of Nicholas' account of creation is the critic's apparent unease with the hylomorphism of the Aristotelean and Neoplatonic schools of thought. Although Nicholas acknowledges that all things are made out of form and matter, he seems unwilling to commit to a clear definition of matter itself. In fact, he pointedly rejects the notion that God created a material substrate before the rest of creation, arguing instead that nothing is formless (οὐδὲν ἀνείδεον) and that no created being is free from the influence of "the forms", by which Nicholas means the divine Ideas of beings in the mind of God.<sup>88</sup> As a result of this, Nicholas argues that the first creation of God is not some formless substrate, but instead a set number of hylomorphic composites, i.e., the five elements, out of which all other hylomorphic composites are composed. These subsequent composites are all wholes and parts of one another, insofar as their wholeness or parthood is determined by their relation to any other composite created by God (πρὸς ἄλλο δηλαδὴ καὶ ἄλλο).

This fits with Nicholas' earlier remark that even bodily composites should be classed under the Aristotelian category of relation. The hylomorphic indi-

---

*mentary on Plato's Timaeus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), pp. 93–96 (though note that, in Plato's mathematical explanation for the placement of additional elements in between the two extreme terms, the total number of elements is four rather than five). For Nicholas' views on the five elements, see also Angelou, "Introduction", in Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, pp. xli–xlii.

87 Nicholas, *Refutation*, 74, p. 77, l. 8–14: τούτων δὲ κατὰ τὴν πρώτην εἴτουν μίαν ἡμέραν προῦποστάντων οὕτως ἐν ταῖς ἐξῆς μέχρι τῆς ἑκτῆς ἐκ τούτων τὸν ὅλον συνεπλήρωσε κόσμον τοῖς ἀτελεστέροις ἐπισυνείρων τὰ τελεώτερα. οὕτω καὶ ὕλη καὶ εἶδη καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄντα ἐκ τοῦ πρὸ πάντων ὄντος ἑνὸς ποιητικοῦ γέγονεν αἰτίου, καὶ ὄντα πάντα εἰσὶ καὶ ὅλα πάντα καὶ μέρη πάντα, πρὸς ἄλλο δηλαδὴ καὶ ἄλλο, καὶ εἶδη πάντα καὶ οὐδὲν ἀνείδεον οὐδὲ τῶν αἰσθητῶν τούτων, πολλῶ γέ μάλλον τῶν νοητῶν.

88 For Nicholas' views on the divine Ideas see J. Greig, "Nicholas of Methone on Divine Ideas: Between Proclus and the Early Byzantines" in this volume; cf. C. Terezis, L. Petridou, "The Theory on 'Eide' According to Nicholas of Methone", in *Vox Patrum* 68(2017), pp. 556–559.

vidual Arthur is whole only insofar as he is a set of {head, torso, ... body part<sub>n</sub>}. Conversely, Arthur is a part insofar as he is a member of, e.g., the set of created beings, {created thing<sub>1</sub>, created thing<sub>2</sub>, ... Arthur, ... created thing<sub>n</sub>}.<sup>89</sup> The same holds for each of Arthur's body parts, which are *per accidens* members of the set "Arthur" but at the same time also themselves *per accidens* sets either of smaller body parts or of elements.

Nicholas' suggestion that there is no material substrate in itself can be traced back to the Cappadocian father Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>90</sup> In contrast to his Neoplatonic contemporaries, who presumed that a fully passive material substrate lay at the base of all production by the divine principle(s) (though not in a dualist sense; the substrate itself also derives from the first principle),<sup>91</sup> Gregory subscribed to the notion that matter itself consists of certain intelligible qualities, such as size, colour, resistance, and so on.<sup>92</sup> In Gregory's words, all of these qualities "are in themselves bare conceptions and objects of thought. None of these is in itself matter, but when they assemble, matter comes to be."<sup>93</sup> Nicholas' emphasis on the notion that any created matter is already shaped by forms (forms which, it should be remembered, are entirely nominalist conceptions outside of the divine mind of God) can thus be understood

89 If one takes Nicholas' noncommittal mereology to its logical Lewesian extreme (see section 4 above), one could even claim that Arthur is a member of the nominalist genus 'human' in the same accidental way he is a physical member of the created cosmos.

90 Terezis, Petridou, "The Theory on 'Eide' According to Nicholas", p. 563. I thank Jonathan Greig for pointing out to me the connection between Nicholas' views and those of Gregory.

91 G. Van Riel, T. Wauters, "Gregory of Nyssa's 'Bundle Theory of Matter'", in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 28/3(2020), pp. 396–397. A discussion of the extent to which Gregory does or does not deviate from the Aristotelean view of matter and form can be found in J. Greig, "The 'Bundle Theory' in Gregory of Nyssa's *In hexaemeron*", in J. Zachhuber, A. Marmodoro (eds), *Gregory of Nyssa: On the Hexaëmeron. Text, Translation, Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

92 For this view see the following passages: Gregory of Nyssa, *De anima et resurrectione*, ed. A. Spira (Leiden: Brill, 2014), ch. 124M, p. 93, l. 14–p. 94, l. 15; *De officio hominis*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris: Migne, 1857–1866), ch. 24, 212D–213C; *In Hexaemeron*, ed. H.R. Drobner (Leiden: Brill, 2009), ch. 7, p. 15, l. 10–p. 16, l. 11.

93 Gregory, *In Hexaemeron*, ch. 7, p. 15, l. 10–p. 16, l. 11: (...) ἃ πάντα μὲν καθ' ἑαυτὰ ἔννοιαί εἰσι ψιλαὶ καὶ νοήματα. οὐ γάρ τι τούτων ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ ὕλη ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ συνδραμόντα πρὸς ἀλληλα ὕλη γίνεται (Terezis, Petridou, "The Theory on 'Eide' According to Nicholas", p. 563 cite these same lines in their analysis of Nicholas' *Refutation*). Whether Gregory fully commits to a reduction of matter to intelligible qualities has been a source of debate among scholars, for a summary of which see A. Marmodoro, "Gregory of Nyssa on the creation of the world", in A. Marmodoro, B.D. Prince (eds), *Causation and Creation in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 96–100.

as a continuation of Gregory's idea that "the ὑποκείμενον is a pre-formed material substrate (ultimately reducible to the elements) that underlies individual beings."<sup>94</sup>

Yet Nicholas' mereological account of creation is hampered by its adherence to precisely the hylomorphic framework from which Gregory attempted to distance himself. Despite his insistence on rejecting the notion of a formless material substrate, Nicholas returns to the classical Aristotelean account of hylomorphism, according to which form and matter are in some sense parts of the composite substance.<sup>95</sup> In fact, he notably remarks that God first creates the hylomorphic composite *qua* composed of matter and form (ἐκαστον ... ὅλον τι γίνεται ἐκ μερῶν πρώτων μὲν ὕλης καὶ εἴδους) and subsequently brings into being the series of hylomorphic things which are all wholes and parts relative to one another (e.g., Arthur, Arthur's head, Arthur's eye, and Arthur's base elements). The mereological relativity of the latter type of things obviously cannot apply to the hylomorphic composite in itself or to its parts (in relation to what are the form and the matter wholes, for example?). It is difficult to see how Nicholas could claim that the composite nature of the hylomorphic composite is merely one of its accidental properties when its base definition is that it has matter and form as its parts.

There are two ways out of this conundrum. On the one hand, one could throw Nicholas' accusations of inconsistency towards Proclus back in his face. Our criticism of Nicholas would then be that the combination of a Gregorian pre-formed matter with the notion of wholeness and parthood as mere relations on the one hand and a definition of the hylomorphic being as fundamentally composed of matter and form as its parts on the other constitute a flat contradiction on Nicholas' part. Such a contradiction would not be unprecedented, since scholars have noted that Nicholas occasionally makes contradictory claims in other passages of his *Refutation* as well. Regarding the subject of self-constitution in Proclus, for example, Michele Trizio has noted how,

(...) eager to refer the notion of self-constitution to God alone, Nicholas does not realize—or is not interested in admitting—that there is no contradiction between deriving from something and being self-constituted in Proclean metaphysics. Yet, Nicholas still concedes that the soul is self-constituted in the same way that Aristotle regards substance as self-subsistent vis-à-vis the accidents.<sup>96</sup>

94 Van Riel, Wauters, "Gregory of Nyssa's 'Bundle Theory of Matter'", p. 415.

95 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Δ, 1023b.

96 Trizio, "Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium", p. 206.



Despite the attractive irony of catching Nicholas in the act of committing the same mistakes he finds in Proclus, a proponent of this reading of our current passage might find themselves the victim of irony as well, for this reading foregoes the principle of charity with respect to Nicholas in a similar way to the critic's occasional unfairness to his Proclean source.

The other, more charitable solution would be the one offered by Christos Terezis and Lydia Petridou, who argue that Nicholas is merely making some "technical 'maneuvers' to make easier the research processes", which is to say that Nicholas merely makes a conceptual distinction between the "parts" of hylomorphic beings (matter and form) and does not claim that they are metaphysically distinct entities. Nicholas' definition of the "first parts" (πρῶτα μέρη) of creation could then be explained away as a purely conceptual notion rather than a metaphysical one (though Terezis and Petridou add that such a maneuver is "epistemologically risky").<sup>97</sup>

Although this reading of the passage is more adequately charitable than simply accusing Nicholas of contradicting himself, I find that it is not entirely convincing. After all, Nicholas does not commit himself explicitly to a Gregorian view in which matter is simply a bundle of intelligible qualities, nor does he take the easy solution of simply avoiding talking about form and matter as "parts" of created beings. He also does not make a clear distinction between form and matter as parts of the hylomorphic composites and hylomorphic composites as parts of one another (he only distinguishes them according to logical or temporal priority). Instead, he seems uncertain in his description of matter, unwilling to commit to the Neoplatonic model of the generated cosmos as built on a passive substrate and the formal influences which flow down into that substrate, yet at the same time unable to let go entirely of the notion of matter as a self-subsistent thing. The clearest indication of Nicholas' unease regarding this subject is the fact that he implicitly refers to matter as a metaphysically independent entity at the start of our current passage (ἡ ὕλη [...] προϋφίσταται), but also adds the qualification "whatever it is" (ἥτις ποτέ ἐστι). In the end, it seems likely that Nicholas does want to reduce the form-matter distinction to a conceptual one in the way Terezis and Petridou suggest, but for some reason he cannot free himself of that metaphysical framework entirely. In this respect, Nicholas' views on created beings mirror his views on their origins as Ideas in the mind of God. As Jonathan Greig points out in his chapter of this book, there too we encounter the problem of "a notional distinction between [God's knowledge of himself and God's knowledge of the

97 Terezis, Petridou, "The Theory on 'Eide' According to Nicholas", p. 562.

divine Ideas]”, whereby the way in which “the two are distinct in God is not fully addressed by Nicholas.”<sup>98</sup>

## 7 Concluding Remarks

Elsewhere in this volume, Opsomer remarks that Nicholas’ exegesis of the *Elements of Theology* varies in quality, as the Byzantine critic bounces back and forth between imprecise renditions of Proclus’ arguments and insightful indications of actual problems in the thought of the Neoplatonic philosopher.<sup>99</sup> As we have seen, this variation in quality is present at every level of Nicholas’ critical analysis of Proclus’ theory of wholes and parts. If, for example, one accepts the metaphysical assumptions which underlie the monotheistic worldview of someone like Nicholas, then it is perfectly sensible to place the whole before the parts on the level of God, rather than attributing some independent subsistence to a Platonic principle of wholeness as Proclus does. The jump from denying that the divine principle of wholeness has an independent subsistence in the Neoplatonic sense to denying that wholeness is a substantial property of something in general is rather less obvious. And yet Nicholas equates Proclean subsistence with the Aristotelean notion of substance and simply reduces any and all forms of wholeness outside of the Trinity to the Aristotelean category of relation, including those of such earthly substances as corporeal individuals, which are no longer principles of wholeness even for Proclus, only participated instances of it.<sup>100</sup>

The same can be said for Nicholas’ study of Proclus’ writings and the way in which he distills presumable contradictions from those writings. Nicholas has a point in stating, for example, that Proclus paradoxically describes the Neoplatonic principle of Being in terms of universality, given that the universal is defined as a specific kind of whole, which is in turn a specific kind of being. It is thus counterintuitive to describe the Neoplatonic divine principle Being as “more whole” or “more universal” than the principle Wholeness-itself or the transcendent universals that are the Platonic Forms, both of which are

98 Greig, “Nicholas of Methone on Divine Ideas”.

99 Opsomer, “Standards of Argument in Nicholas and Proclus”.

100 Opsomer, “Standards of Argument in Nicholas and Proclus”, p. 152, suggests that Nicholas’ strict reduction of all relations to accidents is in fact informed by worries about the unity of the Trinity rather than worries about the ontological status of Its creations: “A reason for this stance, apart from the historical reasons, may be that if one were to concern universals and in particular relations as having hypostatic reality, the Trinity would be even more crowded than it already is with just the three persons”.

entirely subordinate to Being. Here, then, Proclus' insistence on an independently existent Platonic principle of Wholeness hurts his arguments, because it does not allow for the broad semantic and philosophical range with which he applies terms such as "whole" and "part" in his writings. And yet the way in which Nicholas puts forward this criticism is less than satisfactory, both in the lack of references to Proclean passages outside of the *Elements of Theology*, which occasionally causes what would have otherwise been preventable misinterpretations of Proclus on Nicholas' part, and in the clumsy citations from the *Elements of Theology* itself, which remove any pretense of precision or charity from Nicholas' exegesis.

The same can be said for Nicholas' own mereological suggestions. His support for the view that the whole is nothing beyond the sum of its parts is sound and remains a feasible and supported approach to mereology even in contemporary philosophy (as exemplified by philosophers such as Lewis). Likewise, the notion that wholeness is relative rather than determined by some metaphysical essence avoids the kinds of problems which Lewis raised against contemporary philosophers who presumed that only some things can be considered to be "whole".<sup>101</sup> Nicholas' arguments concerning the nature of matter are also sound, and build naturally on the conceptualization of matter which Gregory of Nyssa had already put forward. And yet Nicholas' alternative mereology, which is supposedly fit to supplant Proclus', remains frustratingly vague in certain crucial respects. Nicholas gives no indication that he thought through the consequences of suggesting that wholes are simply sums of parts (which participate in God's illuminations) in the way someone like Lewis has done. In a similar vein, he refrains from committing fully to the Gregorian conceptualization of the formed substrate and instead affirms the classical view of hylomorphic beings as composites of form and matter, without making it fully clear whether this distinction is a purely conceptual one or one which has a basis in actual metaphysics.

Despite all of this, Nicholas' relativistic interpretation of parts and wholes is more expansive than has been previously suggested. Although Proclus' use of mereology to describe the nature of universals, which inspired many of Nicholas' Byzantine predecessors and contemporaries, is an important factor in Nicholas' own exegesis of the relevant propositions of the *Elements of Theology*, it is far from the only subject under review. Like Proclus, Nicholas recognizes that the universal is merely one kind of whole. For this reason, reducing only transcendent genera to relations would not have sufficed to stave off the poly-

---

101 Cf. Lewis, *Parts of Classes*, p. 81.

theistic influence of the *Elements of Theology*. A simple expression of the fact that universals are mere conceptions is not enough. *All* wholes must be reduced to accidental relations, so that the Trinity might rightly be recognized as the One True Whole. To this end, Nicholas fashions a multifaceted analysis of part-hood and wholeness, one which not only critiques the suggestions of Proclus but also points to an alternative way to understand what it means to be whole. Unfortunately, he is not able to bring his criticisms and ideas together into a fully realized whole.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

- Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis*, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris, 1857–1866 (= PG 44), pp. 124–256.
- Gregory of Nyssa, *In Hexaemeron (Opera Exegetica in Genesim, Pars I)*, ed. H.R. Drobner, Leiden, Brill, 2009.
- Gregory of Nyssa, *De anima et resurrectione (Opera Dogmatica Minora, Pars III)*, ed. A. Spira, Leiden, Brill, 2014.
- Nicholas of Methone, Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου / *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas' life and works by A.D. Angelou, Athens / Leiden, The Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984.
- Plutarch, *Vitae parallelae*, Vol. 1 Fasc. 1, ed. K. Ziegler and H. Gärtner, München and Leipzig, K.G. Saur Verlag, 2000.
- Porphry, *Isagoge et in Aristotelis Categorias commentarium*, ed. A. Busse, Berlin, Reimer, 1887.
- Porphry, *Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes*, ed. E. Lamberz, Leipzig, Teubner, 1975.
- Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. and tr. E.R. Dodds, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963<sup>2</sup>.
- Proclus, *Théologie platonicienne*, ed. and tr. H.D. Saffrey, L.G. Westerink, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1968–1997.
- Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*, ed. G. Van Riel, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022.

### Secondary Sources

- Alexidze, L., “Ioanne Petritsi”, in Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus*, pp. 229–244.
- Alexidze, L., “Nicholas of Methone and Ioane Petritsi on Intellect”, in this volume, pp. 69–90.
- Baltzly, D., “Mereological Modes of Being in Proclus”, in *Ancient Philosophy* 28/2(2008), pp. 395–411.

- Balztly, D., "The World Soul in Proclus' *Timaeus Commentary*", in C. Helmig (ed.), *World Soul—Anima Mundi. On the Origins and Fortunes of a Fundamental Idea*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2020, pp. 289–308.
- Baxter, D., "Identity in the Loose and Popular Sense", in *Mind* 97/388(1988), pp. 575–782.
- Benakis, L., "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῶν γενικῶν ἐννοιῶν καὶ ὁ ἐννοιολογικὸς ρεαλισμὸς τῶν Βυζαντινῶν", in *Φιλοσοφία* 8–9(1978–1979), pp. 311–340.
- Calma, D., (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes. Volume 2. Translations and Acculturations*, Leiden, Brill, 2020.
- D'Hoine, P., "«Ceux qui acceptent des Idées de toutes choses»: sur l'interprétation de *Parménide* 130b3–e4 dans l'Antiquité tardive", in *Philosophie antique* 10(2010), pp. 227–254.
- D'Hoine, P., "Totalité et participation dans les *Éléments de Théologie*", in G. Aubry, L. Brisson, P. Hoffman, L. Lavaud (eds), *Les Éléments de théologie de Proclus: Interprétations, réceptions antiques et modernes*, Paris, Hermann, 2021, pp. 177–219.
- Dillon, J.M., "Dionysius the Areopagite", in Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus*, pp. 111–134.
- Gersh, S. (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus. From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 111–134.
- Gersh, S., "Universals, Wholes, *Logoi*: Eustratios of Nicaea's Response to Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus. Vol. 2*, pp. 32–55.
- Greig, J., "Nicholas of Methone on Divine Ideas: Between Proclus and the Early Byzantines", in this volume, pp. 201–232.
- Greig, J., "Reason, Revelation, and Sceptical Argumentation in 12th- to 14th-Century Byzantium", in *Theoria* 88/1(2022), pp. 165–201.
- Greig, J., "The 'Bundle Theory' in Gregory of Nyssa's *In hexaemeron*", in J. Zachhuber, A. Marmodoro (eds), *Gregory of Nyssa: On the Hexaëmeron. Text, Translation, Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).
- Harte, V., *Plato on Parts and Wholes. The Metaphysics of Structure*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Helmig, C., "Die atmende Form in der Materie. Einige Überlegungen zum ἔνυλον εἶδος in der Philosophie des Proklos", in M. Perkams, R.M. Piccione (eds), *Proklos. Methode, Seelenlehre, Metaphysik*, Leiden, Brill, 2009, pp. 259–278.
- P. d'Hoine, M. Martijn (eds), *All From One. A Guide to Proclus*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Ierodiakonou, K., "John Italos on Universals", in *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 18(2007), pp. 231–247.
- Koslicki, K., *The Structure of Objects*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Lewis, D., *Parts of Classes*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1991.
- Lloyd, A.C., *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998.
- Marmodoro, A., "Gregory of Nyssa on the creation of the world", in A. Marmodoro, B.D. Prince (eds), *Causation and Creation in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 94–110.

- Matula, J., "Nicholas of Methone", in H. Lagerlund (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy. Philosophy between 500 and 1500*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2011, pp. 881–883.
- Niarchos Constantine, G., "Nicholas of Methone's Criticism on Proclus' Theory of Participated or Unparticipated Intelligence (Nous)", in *Φιλοσοφία* 13–14(1983–1984), pp. 324–345.
- O'Meara, D., "Michael Psellos", in Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus*, pp. 165–181.
- Oosthout, A., "A Wholesome Trinity: Proclus on the transcendence of whole over part", in *Ancient Philosophy* 42/2(2022), pp. 515–536.
- Oosthout, A., "The problem of (in)divisible intellect in Proclus' *El. Theol.* 180. Proclus and Porphyry on the relativity of the incorporeal whole", in *Études platoniciennes* 17(2022), doi.org/10.4000/etudesplatoniciennes.2653.
- Opsomer, J., "Deriving the Three Intelligible Triads from the *Timaeus*", in A.-P. Segonds, C. Steel (eds), *Proclus et la Théologie platonicienne*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2000, pp. 351–372.
- Opsomer, J., "Standards of Argument in Nicholas of Methone and Proclus: Comparing the *Elementatio theologica* with Nicholas' Attempts to Disarm It", in this volume, pp. 139–166.
- Opsomer, J., "The Natural World", in d'Hoine, Martijn (eds), *All From One*, pp. 139–166.
- Robinson, J., *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th Century Byzantium*. A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Graduate Program in Medieval Studies, Notre Dame (Indiana), 2014.
- Robinson, J., "Dionysius Against Proclus: the Apophatic Critique in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation of the Elements of Theology*", in D.D. Butorac, D.A. Layne (eds), *Proclus and his Legacy*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2017, pp. 249–269.
- Robinson, J., "Proclus as Heresiarch: Theological Polemic and Philosophical Commentary in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation (Anaptyxis)* of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in S. Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2017, pp. 103–135.
- Robinson, J., "A Mixing Cup of Piety and Learnedness': Michael Psellos and Nicholas of Methone as Readers of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus*. Volume 2, pp. 56–93.
- Taylor, A.E., *A commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1928.
- Terezis, C., L. Petridou, "The Theory on 'Eide' According to Nicholas of Methone", in *Vox Patrum* 68(2017), pp. 551–568.
- Trizio, M., "Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium", in Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus*, pp. 182–225.
- Van Riel, G. and T. Wauters, "Gregory of Nyssa's 'Bundle Theory of Matter'", in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 28/3(2020), pp. 395–421.

- Van Riel, G., "Proclus on Matter and Physical Necessity", in R. Chiaradonna, F. Trabattoni, (eds), *Physics and Philosophy of Nature in Greek Neoplatonism*, Leiden, Brill, 2009, pp. 231–257.
- Van Riel, G., "The One, the Henads, and the Principles", in d'Hoine, Martijn (eds), *All From One*, 2016, pp. 73–97.

# Nicholas of Methone on Divine Ideas: Between Proclus and the Early Byzantines

Jonathan Greig

HU Berlin / KU Leuven

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The topic of “divine ideas” is well-known throughout medieval philosophy and theology, insofar as it was invoked to account for how God knows creatures throughout eternity and produces them on the basis of his knowledge. The notion, of course, finds its roots in Plato’s theory of the Forms or “Ideas” (ἰδέαι), posited to account for the true cause or reason for the essential structure of each particular being;<sup>2</sup> for instance, each individual tree finds its true cause in the intelligible Form explaining all trees, “Tree-itself”. In the Christian context this notion of the Ideas is expanded to include particular creatures, not just creatures or beings of a particular type (like the tree example), while the Ideas become associated with thoughts in the mind of God.<sup>3</sup> Hence, God produces

1 I would like to thank Joshua Robinson, Lela Alexidze, and István Perczel, as well as Carlos Steel, Jan Opsomer, Arthur Oosthout, and Sokratis-Athanasios Kiosoglou for their immensely helpful comments and feedback with earlier versions of this paper and some of the ideas therein. This study and the resulting paper was generously supported by the European Research Council (within the framework of the project *Neoplatonism and Abrahamic Traditions* [NeoplAT], grant ref. ERC\_CoG\_771640) and the Research Foundation—Flanders (FWO) (within the framework of the project *Substance and the Sensible World between Pagan Platonism and Early Byzantine Christians*, grant ref. 3H210442), alongside the Austrian Academy of Sciences (Institut für Mittelalterforschung), KU Leuven (De Wulf-Mansion Centre for Ancient, Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy), and HU Berlin (Institute für Klassische Philologie).

2 Among various examples, see Plato, *Phaedo*, 96a–102a (esp. 100b–e); on the notion of “cause” in relation to the Forms in this context, see D. Sedley, “Platonic Causes”, in *Phronesis* 43/2 (1998), pp. 114–132.

3 Among other early Christian sources for the notion of Forms as ideas or rational principles (λόγοι) in the mind of God, see Philo of Alexandria, *De opificio mundi* 19–20, as well as Origen, *Commentarii in evangelium Ioannis* 1.19.114. The idea recurs in various pagan Middle Platonists, as especially Alcinous, *Didaskalion* x.3. See further G. Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy 80 BC to AD 250: An Introduction and Collection of Sources in Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 147–183 (esp. pp. 158–159 on Philo) and G. Karamanolis, *The Philosophy of Early Christianity* (London: Routledge, 2021<sup>2</sup>), pp. 85–86.



creatures based on his own thoughts, or reasons, concerning each particular creature—not just each *kind* of creature. One may associate this position most with the entrenched disputes between Franciscans and Thomists of the 13th-/14th-centuries CE who both attempted to reconcile the simplicity of God's being with the plurality of ideas (i.e. *rationes*, λόγοι, ἰδέαι, etc.) according to which God produces the varying kinds of beings in the cosmos.<sup>4</sup>

Although not well studied in recent scholarship, the notion of the divine ideas also brought about great interest in the later Byzantine intellectual world, especially in the aftermath of John Philoponus' critique of Proclus' view of the universe's eternity. In this period one sees not so much the problem of squaring simplicity with the plurality of ideas in God, but rather how God can eternally hold and think the divine ideas without simultaneously producing for all eternity, if one holds that God can produce being simply by his thinking. This indeed appears to have been one of the main problems in the background of Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology* (Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου), particularly in the propositions discussing divine causality.

With this in mind, I would like to look at Nicholas' commentary on Proposition 76 in Proclus' *Elements*, where Nicholas discusses "the ideas of beings which pre-exist in God" (ἰδέας τῶν ὄντων ἐν τῷ θεῷ προϋφεστώσας) in the context of God's production of changeable entities. Though the discussion in this and other passages is relatively brief, we can see in outline Nicholas' conception of the relation between God, the divine ideas, and created beings. In looking at Nicholas, we can also see aspects of earlier Byzantine arguments based on the divine ideas and a creationist response to eternalist positions, seen for instance in pagans like Proclus or Christian heretics like Origenists of the 5th–6th centuries CE. For this paper, I would like to look at two particular early Byzantines, Maximus the Confessor (~580–662 CE) and John Philoponus (~490–570 CE), in the background to Nicholas. As we will see, Nicholas adapts his language for the divine ideas from Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (~5th–6th centuries CE), while emphasizing a creationist account of the ideas that is notably lacking in Ps.-Dionysius' account. Here, Maximus plays one potential influence, insofar as he interprets Ps.-Dionysius' framework within a creationist context, in responding to Origenists. In turn, Philoponus' own, earlier response

4 See I. Zavattero, "In Augustine's Footsteps. The Doctrine of Ideas in Franciscan Thought", in J.F. Falà, I. Zavattero (eds), *Divine Ideas in Franciscan Thought (x11th–x1vth Century)* (Canterano: Aracne editrice, 2018), pp. xi–xxvii; C.A. Vater, *Divine Ideas: 1250–1325*, PhD dissertation, Washington, DC, Catholic University of America, 2017, and more generally the collection of Falà, Zavattero (eds), *Divine Ideas in Franciscan Thought*.

to Proclus plays some role in Maximus' use of Ps.-Dionysius, while elements of Philoponus' reply may be found in Nicholas (as well as certain, notable contrasts, as we will see).

## 2 Nicholas on Prop. 76: The "Ideas of Beings", Eternalism, and the Divine Will

The main text where Nicholas discusses the divine ideas in God is in his commentary on Prop. 76 in Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, where Proclus claims that "all that comes to be from an unmoved cause has an unchanging subsistence, while all that comes to be from a moved cause, a changeable subsistence."<sup>5</sup> In effect Proclus argues that all beings that either have an eternal existence or an existence that changes (i.e. a temporal existence) come from causes that themselves are correspondingly eternal and unmoved (for eternal beings) or in motion themselves (for temporal beings). What particularly concerns Nicholas is the first half of the proposition, where, in making the first claim, Proclus argues that the unmoved cause, as eternal, must also produce an eternal effect:

For if the maker is entirely unmoved, it produces its secondary [effect], not through motion, but by its own being (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι) from itself. And if this is the case, it contains the effect which comes from it, as concurrent with its own being. And if this is so, then while it may exist, it produces. But it exists always: therefore, it brings to existence always that which is after it, so that the latter comes to be always from it and always exists, attaching that which is always by its own procession to that which is always by [its cause's] perpetual activity.<sup>6</sup>

In this passage, Proclus presents two means by which causes produce or "make" (τὸ ποιοῦν): either "through motion" (διὰ κινήσεως) or "by [the cause's] own being" (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι). One finds this latter phrase, αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι, often repeated in Proclus' understanding of causality for the higher levels of being, where the

5 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 76, l. 1–2: πᾶν μὲν τὸ ἀπὸ ἀκινήτου γινόμενον αἰτίας ἀμετάβλητον ἔχει τὴν ὑπαρξιν· πᾶν δὲ τὸ ἀπὸ κινουμένης, μεταβλητὴν. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

6 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 76, l. 3–8: εἰ γὰρ ἀκινήτόν ἐστι πάντῃ τὸ ποιοῦν, οὐ διὰ κινήσεως, ἀλλ' αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι παράγει τὸ δεύτερον ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, σύνδρομον ἔχει τῷ ἑαυτοῦ εἶναι τὸ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, ἕως ἄν ᾗ, παράγει. αἰεὶ δὲ ἔστιν· αἰεὶ ἄρα ὑφίστησι τὸ μετ' αὐτό· ὥστε καὶ τοῦτο αἰεὶ γίνεται· ἐκείθεν καὶ αἰεὶ ἔστι, τῷ ἐκείνου αἰεὶ κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν συνάψαν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ κατὰ τὴν πρόοδον αἰεὶ.

effect receives its character from the cause which embodies that character to a higher degree: in other words, the effect is by derivation what the cause is in its own being.<sup>7</sup> This is ultimately related to Proclus' principle of causal synonymy, where the effects mirror their cause's nature:<sup>8</sup> for instance, bodies which are determined by motion presuppose a cause which is identified with motion in itself—in other words, souls which are self-moved. In turn, higher principles, like intellects, which are unmoved by their nature, necessitate a cause which is also unmoved in itself—in other words the One, or more proximately, Being.<sup>9</sup> One can see how Proclus argues in Prop. 76 that changeable effects (like bodies) require a cause which is itself in motion (like souls), while unchanging effects (like intellects) require a cause which is itself unmoved (like Being).

As it turns out, this notion of causal synonymy becomes a problem for Nicholas. Much of Nicholas' commentary on Prop. 76 is aimed against the eternalist implications of Proclus' framework, particularly when Proclus argues that both unmoved and unchanging causes eternally, or always (ἀεί), bring about their effects. In *De aeternitate mundi* we find Proclus arguing for the cosmos' eternity in the work's fourth argument—effectively an elaboration on Prop. 76's argumentative structure.<sup>10</sup> In the first third of the argument, Proclus specifies the distinction between unchanging causes and causes which produce “through motion” (διὰ κινήσεως): unchanging causes produce “by [their] own being (αὐτῷ

7 See Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 18, esp. l. 16–18: λείπεται ἄρα τὸ μὲν εἶναι πρῶτως ὁ δίδωσι, τὸ δὲ δευτέρως ὁ τὸ διδόν ἐστιν, ἐν οἷς αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι θάτερον ἐκ θατέρου χορηγείται. The juxtaposition between causation in this latter sense and “through motion” (διὰ κινήσεως) goes back to Prop. 26, where Proclus claims that every productive cause (τὸ παρακτικόν) “produces the next and all subsequent [beings] while remaining steadfast in itself” (cf. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 26: Πάν τὸ παρακτικόν αἴτιον ἄλλων μένον αὐτὸ ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ παράγει τὰ μετ' αὐτὸ καὶ τὰ ἐφεξῆς). In the proposition, Proclus considers a counter-factual case where the One produces its effects through motion: if this were so, the One would necessarily change from being one to losing its oneness, since motion implies change. Hence, the One—and all productive causes like the One—remain in their own nature while they produce.

8 See e.g. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 28: “Every producer brings to existence things like to itself before the unlike” (πάν τὸ παράγον τὰ ὅμοια πρὸς ἑαυτὸ πρὸ τῶν ἀνομοίων). On this principle of synonymy, see J. Greig, *The First Principle in Late Neoplatonism: A Study of the One's Causality in Proclus and Damascius* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), pp. 90–97; see also J. Opsomer, “A Much Misread Proposition from Proclus' *Elements of Theology* (Prop. 28)”, in *The Classical Quarterly (New Series)* 65/1 (2015), pp. 433–438.

9 See Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 14 and 20.

10 For the surviving fragment of Proclus' argument, see John Philoponus, *Contra Proclum*, p. 55, l. 25–p. 56, l. 26. On Proclus' *De aeternitate mundi*, see H.S. Lang, A.D. Macro, *On the Eternity of the World (De aeternitate mundi)*, Proclus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), esp. pp. 50–51 on the fourth argument.

τῷ εἶναι), without making a transition from producing to not producing, or from not producing to producing; for if it did make such a transition, it would undergo a change [...] and if it underwent a change, it would not be unmoving.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, if the effects do not initially exist, and then come to exist, the cause would change from “not producing” to “producing”—implying the cause’s imperfection. As Proclus draws out later in the proof, if the cause of the cosmos is unmoved, and if it is also perfect (τέλειον), then it must perpetually produce, and hence its effect—the cosmos—must also be perpetually produced. *Mutatis mutandis*, if the cosmos came to be in time, then the cosmos’ cause must be imperfect (ἀτελές).<sup>12</sup> Hence, if the cause is unmoved and eternally remains a cause, its effect must also be eternal, even if also in perpetual motion.

We see Nicholas effectively respond to this kind of argument when he critiques the inference of the cause’s nature from its effects: for Nicholas, God as the first cause is incomprehensible (ἀκατάληπτον), and *a fortiori* that God’s power and activity are equally incomprehensible.<sup>13</sup> On the one hand Nicholas clears the ground by claiming that one cannot make an inference about the world’s nature, and more so God’s nature, based on reason alone. Nicholas then asserts that anything that “comes to be” (τὸ γινόμενον), in any sense, by its

11 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum*, p. 55, l. 26–p. 56, l. 6 (trans. Chase, slightly modified): εἰ γὰρ τὸ ποιοῦν ἀκίνητον, ἀμετάβλητόν ἐστιν, εἰ δὲ ἀμετάβλητον, αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι ποιεῖ μὴ μεταβαίνειν ἐκ τοῦ ποιεῖν εἰς τὸ μὴ ποιεῖν μηδὲ ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ποιεῖν εἰς τὸ ποιεῖν· μεταβαίνειν γὰρ ἔξει μεταβολὴν αὐτὴν τὴν ἐκ θατέρου μετάβασιν εἰς θάτερον, εἰ δὲ ἔξει μεταβολὴν, οὐκ ἂν εἴη ἀκίνητον.

12 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum*, p. 56, l. 10–26.

13 Nicholas of Methone, *Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου / Refutation of Proclus’ Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas’ life and works by A.D. Angelou (Athens / Leiden, The Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984), 76, l. 1–4: “That whose being is incomprehensible, the power and activity of this [principle, *scil.* God] are also incomprehensible, so that both the creation and its manner are incomprehensible; foolish is he who investigates ‘the how’ and tries to subject this to demonstration. But that the divine is incomprehensible is agreed upon by all” (trans. Robinson, slightly modified). (Οὗ τὸ εἶναι ἀκατάληπτον, τοῦτου καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ ἐνέργεια ἀκατάληπτος, ὥστε καὶ ἡ ποιήσις καὶ ὁ κατ’ αὐτὴν τρόπος· καὶ μάταιος ὁ τὸν τοιοῦτον τρόπον περιεργαζόμενος καὶ ἀποδίδει ὑπάγειν πειρώμενος, ὅτι δὲ ἀκατάληπτον τὸ θεῖον πᾶσιν ἀνωμολόγηται.) Nicholas’ strategy of arguing based on unknowability reflects a general trend in Byzantine intellectual authors towards employing skeptical argumentation in relation to the possibility of any certainty in reason apart from revelation: on this see J. Greig, “Reason, Revelation, and Sceptical Argumentation in 12th- to 14th-Century Byzantium”, in *Theoria* 88 (2022), pp. 165–201. On Nicholas’ apophaticism in contrast to that of Proclus, see J. Robinson, “Dionysius Against Proclus: The Apophatic Critique in Nicholas of Methone’s *Refutation of the Elements of Theology*”, in D. Layne, D. Butorac (eds), *Proclus and His Legacy* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 249–270.

own nature implies change from non-being to being, and *vice versa*, unless the “goodness of the Creator holds [that being] together (συνέχει) and preserves it in being”.<sup>14</sup> From this, Nicholas concludes:

It is then better (ἄμεινον) to attribute both the manner of creation (ποιήσεως) and the persistence or change of things that have come into being or have been created to the intention (βουλήματι) of the Creator, who defines according to his will (θέλημα) the manner of creation, the measures of its persistence, and the order (τάξιν) and change into one another of the things made [...].<sup>15</sup>

Nicholas here infers from the case of God “holding together” a being, which would otherwise not continue to exist without God’s action, that it is then “better” (ἄμεινον) to attribute such holding together, alongside change and creation generally, to God’s intention (βούλημα) or will (θέλημα). Nicholas eventually contrasts the attribution to the will with Proclus’ attribution of production to the cause’s own being (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι)<sup>16</sup>—in other words, God’s production by willing is ἄμεινον than by God’s mere being. But before this, one can already see one reason why Nicholas rejects the attribution of the creation of beings to God’s being: if the divine nature is incomprehensible, *a fortiori* attributing production to the divine nature is incomprehensible. This establishes the foundation for Nicholas rejecting Proclus’ attribution of the production of beings to the cause’s own being, i.e. αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι.

The rest of Nicholas’ commentary on Prop. 76 hinges on the will as the main basis of all creation. For Nicholas, Proclus errs greatly when, by “rejecting the divine will, and determining by the Creator’s mere being (τῷ εἶναι μόνῳ) the production of what comes into being, [he] seems to introduce creation as involuntary (ἀκούσιον) for the Creator.”<sup>17</sup> Just as Proclus distinguishes causation

14 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation* 76, l. 5–8 (translation from J.M. Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone’s Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th century Byzantium*. A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Notre Dame (Indiana), 2014).

15 Trans. Robinson, modified; Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation* 76, l. 8–13: ἄμεινον οὖν τῷ βουλήματι τοῦ ποιούντος ἀνατιθέναι τὸν τε τρόπον τῆς ποιήσεως καὶ τὴν διαμονὴν εἴτε μεταβολὴν τῶν γεγεννημένων εἴτουν πεποιημένων ὀρίζοντος κατὰ τὸ ἑαυτοῦ θέλημα καὶ τὸν τρόπον τῆς ποιήσεως καὶ τὰ μέτρα τῆς διαμονῆς καὶ τὴν τάξιν καὶ τὴν εἰς ἄλλα μεταχώρησιν τῶν πεποιημένων [...].

16 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation* 76, l. 17 ff.

17 Trans. Robinson, slightly modified; Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation* 76, l. 15–18: οὗτος δὲ

“through motion” and “by [the cause’s] own being” (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι), Nicholas also distinguishes between causation by willing (θέλημα) and by the cause’s “mere being” (τῷ εἶναι μόνῳ, like Proclus’ αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι). We may initially ask: why is production being “involuntary”, or αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι, a problem for Nicholas?

We find an implied answer just afterward, when Nicholas ties the goodness of God’s causation to willing: the divine nature “created all things because of goodness, and that it did so, therefore, having willed to create, and not unwillingly, lest, with the denial of will, it should be denied goodness as well.”<sup>18</sup> Here we find perhaps a difference in first principles held between Proclus and Nicholas. For Nicholas, since the expression of the cause’s goodness is no longer tied to the cause’s nature, but rather to its “will”, production from the cause’s being alone (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι) cannot explain the goodness of either the cause or its effect; instead it is only in the cause’s explicit willing, rather than “involuntary” causation, that the goodness of the cause is expressed.<sup>19</sup> Hence one can see Nicholas’ claim: if willing is not affirmed in God, neither can goodness, since willing and goodness are linked to each other for Nicholas.

Readers of Proclus will recognize a subtle but important contrast here. Elsewhere in the *Elements of Theology*, Proclus emphasizes the goodness of productive causes, simply in their subsistence (ὑπάρξις)<sup>20</sup>—especially the highest

---

τὸ θεῖον θέλημα παραιτούμενος καὶ τὴν παραγωγὴν τοῦ γινομένου τῷ εἶναι μόνῳ τοῦ ποιούντος ἀφορίζμενος ἀκούσιον ἔοικε τῷ ποιούντι τὴν ποιήσιν εἰσάγων.

- 18 Trans. Robinson; Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation* 76, l. 25–27: δι’ ἀγαθότητα πάντα ποιῆσαι, ὥστε καὶ θελήσαν, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἄκον, ἵνα μὴ τῷ μὴ θελήσει συναρνηθῇ καὶ τὴν ἀγαθότητα.
- 19 One sees this in Nicholas’ commentary on the adjoining Prop. 77, when he critiques and modifies Proclus’ claim that all things which exist in potentiality are brought to actuality by a prior principle already existing in actuality. Nicholas takes Proclus’ claim to mean that the first principle, or God, is the actuality of all beings in themselves, which he ends up denying in *Refutation* 77, l. 17–21 (trans. Robinson): “But we say that neither potentially nor actually is the divine all things, but transcendentally and causally, and that, being itself creator of the matter too, it forms from this the individuals according to the pre-determinations of the beings in itself, or the divine wills.” (ἡμεῖς δὲ τὸ θεῖον φαμεν πάντα εἶναι οὔτε δυνάμει οὔτε κατ’ ἐνέργειαν ἀλλ’ ὑπερεχόντως καὶ κατ’ αἰτίαν, αὐτὸ δὲ ὃν καὶ τῆς ὕλης δημιουργόν, ἐκ ταύτης εἰδοποιεῖν τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστα κατὰ τοὺς ἐν αὐτῷ τῶν ὄντων προορισμοὺς ᾗτοι τὰ θεῖα θελήματα.) Nicholas’ claim against construing God and the divine ideas as the “actuality” (ἐνέργεια) of creatures further underlines the detachment between God’s being (as well as the divine ideas’ being in God) and that of created beings. This in turn would make sense of Nicholas tying God’s causality to the will, rather than simply to God’s *nature* in itself.
- 20 Here I translate ὑπαρξις in Proclus as “subsistence” rather than “existence”, since Proclus tends to use ὑπαρξις in a more restricted sense to indicate the specific, primary existence of an entity in itself (e.g. Soul-itself rather than the property “soul” in a body), whereas

causes, the One and the henads—without attaching the attribute of willing as an essential aspect of that goodness, or at least the expression of that goodness.<sup>21</sup> The *Elements* has no occurrence of θέλημα, while only three variations of βούλ- show up in the work, two of which refer either to productive causes in general (Prop. 7)<sup>22</sup> or to the henads, as gods, in their capacity as the measure (μέτρον) of beings (Prop. 117).<sup>23</sup> The latter case is especially instructive, insofar as the henad, as entirely unitary (ἐνιαῖον), “intends (βούλεται) to measure and delimit the things in which it would be present, and by its power to bring such a being [which is undefined] into definition.”<sup>24</sup> Notably Proclus identifies the henad in itself, as a divine first cause,<sup>25</sup> with that which “intends”: in other words, one finds no distinction between one and the other. One can see this also earlier in Prop. 13, where Proclus argues that every principle characterized as “good” (ἀγαθόν), including the Good-itself, unifies and “conserves and holds together” (σωστικόν καὶ συνεκτικόν) all beings.<sup>26</sup> No distinct factor outside the Good’s mere presence brings about its effect. From what we have seen above, the eternalist implication of this causal framework is ultimately what Nicholas seeks to attack when he identifies will, and not “mere being”, as the main factor in God’s causality of creation.

It is within this frame that Nicholas discuss the “divine ideas” in connection with God’s will, as the cause of created beings:

For this reason, Dionysius, who is divine and great in divine things, when speaking of the pre-existing ideas of beings (ιδέας τῶν ὄντων) in God, calls these “the divine and good wills” (τὰ θεῖα καὶ ἀγαθὰ θελήματα). And clearly God produces nothing among beings “by his very being” (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι), [i.e.] without willing, so as also “to have concurrently with his own being

---

Proclus uses ὑπόστασις to indicate existence in a generic, loose sense (i.e. the term may indicate a self-subsistent entity [= ὑπαρξίς] or a property that inheres in another entity, or e.g. evil as a “*parhypostasis*”). On this, see C. Steel, “‘Υπαρξίς chez Proclus”, in F. Romano, D.P. Taormina (eds), *Hyparxis e hypostasis nel Neoplatonismo* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1994), pp. 79–100, and Greig, *The First Principle*, p. 80, n. 27.

21 Cf. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 119 and esp. 13.

22 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 7, l. 23.

23 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 117, l. 5; see also 134, l. 10, where all things desire (βούλεται) the Good.

24 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 117, l. 4–6: τὸ δὲ ἐνιαῖον μετρεῖν καὶ περατοῦν, οἷς ἂν παρῇ, βούλεται, καὶ περιάγειν εἰς ὅρον τὸ μὴ τοιοῦτον κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ δύναμιν.

25 Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem commentaria*, ed. C. Steel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007–2009), VI, 1048.1–5.

26 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 13, l. 3–8.

the [being] produced from him”,<sup>27</sup> but all things are posterior to his unoriginate subsistence; only his begetting of the Son and “projecting” of the Spirit is “by his very being” (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι), and for this reason these are co-unoriginate and co-eternal and con-substantial with the Begetter and Projector. “Involuntary” (ἀκουσίου) has no place there, but [God produces beings] by one will common to the three [persons], insofar as the goodness of the Begetter and Projector, of the Begotten, and of the Projected, is one and common.<sup>28</sup>

Here we find Nicholas’ positive, articulated response to Proclus when he connects the “ideas of beings” to God’s “wills” or “intentions” (θελήματα) (here quoting Ps.-Dionysius’ *De divinis nominibus* v.8) and makes a two-fold distinction in God’s causality: between (1) God producing “by his own being” (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι) and (2) God producing by the “one common will” (ἐνὶ θελήματι καὶ κοινῷ) of the three Trinitarian persons. Intriguingly, Nicholas does not excise Proclus’ concept of αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι but instead classifies the production of the Son (the “Begotten”) and the Holy Spirit (“the Projected”) as αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι. Hence God in the capacity of the Father (or “Projector/Begetter”) eternally produces the Son and Spirit without willing, in juxtaposition to the production of created beings by “the one will common to the three [persons]”, i.e. the Father, Son, and Spirit. In this sense, Nicholas does not have a problem with the notion of necessitated causality within the Trinity, and accepts Proclus’ notion of causality αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι, except with this difference: whereas Proclus distinguishes the subsistences (ὑπάρξεις) of the gods which produce their distinct, lower effects αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι, it appears that Nicholas preserves the subsistence (ὑπάρξις) of God as one while considering the Son and Spirit to be “consubstantial” (ὁμοούσια) with the Father as their cause, i.e. as not distinct in subsistence—at least in Proclus’ sense.<sup>29</sup> While certain questions could be

27 Cf. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 76, l. 5 (which Nicholas quotes here): σύνδρομον ἔχειν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ εἶναι τὸ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ.

28 Trans. Robinson, modified; Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation* 76, l. 27–37: ὅθεν ὁ θεῖος καὶ τὰ θεῖα πολὺς Διονύσιος ἰδέας τῶν ὄντων ἐν τῷ θεῷ προῦφαστώσας τὰ θεῖα λέγει καὶ ἀγαθὰ ταῦτα θελήματα. αὐτῷ δὲ τῷ εἶναι, μὴ θέλων, δηλαδὴ παράγει τῶν ὄντων οὐδέν, ὥς καὶ σύνδρομον ἔχειν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ εἶναι τὸ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ παραγόμενον, ἀλλὰ πάντα τῆς αὐτοῦ ἀνάρχου ὑπάρξεως ὕστερα, μόνον δὲ αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι γεννᾷ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ μόνον προβάλλει τὸ πνεῦμα, ὅθεν καὶ συνάναρχα ταῦτα καὶ συναΐδια καὶ ὁμοούσια τῷ γεννῶντι καὶ προβάλλοντι, οὐδ’ ἐκεῖ τοῦ ἀκουσίου χώραν λαμβάνοντος, ἀλλ’ ἐνὶ θελήματι καὶ κοινῷ τῶν τριῶν, καθὸ καὶ ἡ ἀγαθότης μία καὶ κοινή τοῦ μὲν γεννῶντός τε καὶ προβάλλοντος, τοῦ δὲ γεννωμένου, τοῦ δὲ προβαλλομένου.

29 One can, of course, see the inheritance of language from the Council of Chalcedon (451AD) to refer to the Son, alongside the Spirit, as “consubstantial” (ὁμοούσιος) with the



raised about how Nicholas sees Trinitarian procession and causation,<sup>30</sup> for now it is enough to point out that Nicholas accepts the notion that God causes αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι.

The more pertinent question is how Nicholas understands the “one common will” (ἐνὶ θελήματι καὶ κοινῷ), which he implicitly equates with the many “ideas of beings”: in what way is this distinct from that which is “by [God’s] own being” (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι)? Presumably Nicholas would not want to make a hard distinction between the two notions, in the way that creatures are distinct from God, while he would concede the co-eternity of the ideas with God. And yet Nicholas still seems to argue for a kind of ontological distinction between the ideas, as the “common will”, and God’s being (especially with the inner-procession of the three persons).

Nicholas’ distinction recurs in his reply to Prop. 167,<sup>31</sup> where Proclus argues that the first Intellect thinks itself alone, while all subsequent intellects after the first think both themselves and their prior causes, i.e. the higher intellects above themselves.<sup>32</sup> One of the main problems this presents for Nicholas’ Christian framework is that the angels are intellects, while God is also intellect, yet all created beings, including the angels as created intellects, do not know

---

Father; on the philosophical and theological background behind the term in this period, see J. Zachhuber, *The Rise of Christian Theology and the End of Ancient Metaphysics: Patristic Philosophy from the Cappadocian Fathers to John of Damascus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 103–110.

30 One may wonder how Nicholas understands the nature of the Trinitarian persons and their procession when it is “God” which is the implicit subject for both the production of creatures (lines 29–30: αὐτῷ δὲ τῷ εἶναι, μὴ θέλων, δηλαδὴ παράγει τῶν ὄντων οὐδέν) and the production of the Son and Spirit (lines 32–33: μόνον δὲ αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι γεννᾷ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ μόνον προβάλλει τὸ πνεῦμα)—suggesting that the subject, “God”, is (rather?) the person of the Father. On the one hand this might suggest subordinationism, i.e. the Son and Spirit as posterior to “God” (i.e. the Father) in the same way creatures are. On the other hand, Nicholas’ qualification in the later lines 35–37 (ἀλλ’ ἐνὶ θελήματι καὶ κοινῷ τῶν τριῶν [...]), with the production of creatures by “the begetter and projector”, alongside “the begotten” and “the projected”, implies a different subject for the production of creatures (i.e. the three divine persons) from that of the production of the Son and Spirit (i.e. the Father alone). I wish to thank Dirk Krausmüller for raising this question.

31 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 167, l. 1–4: “Every intellect (νοῦς) thinks itself, but the very first intellect thinks itself alone, and intellect and intelligible are one in the latter [first intellect], whereas each subsequent intellect simultaneously thinks itself and the intellects before it, and by this the intelligible is in one respect the same [as it], in another respect [the intelligible] is that from which it is [*scil.* its prior].” (πᾶς νοῦς ἑαυτὸν νοεῖ· ἀλλ’ ὁ μὲν πρῶτιστος ἑαυτὸν μόνον, καὶ ἐν κατ’ ἀριθμὸν ἐν τούτῳ νοῦς καὶ νοητόν· ἕκαστος δὲ τῶν ἐφεξῆς ἑαυτὸν ἅμα καὶ τὰ πρὸ αὐτοῦ, καὶ νοητόν ἐστι τούτῳ τὸ μὲν ὅ ἐστι, τὸ δὲ ἀφ’ οὗ ἐστιν.)

32 For more on intellect for Nicholas, see Lela Alexidze’s chapter in this volume.

God in himself.<sup>33</sup> Nicholas modifies Proclus' claim and argues that angels, as lower intellects, cannot think of God in the same way that they think themselves: they can only know God in a lower way compared to the way they know themselves.<sup>34</sup> This distinction in turn leads to another interesting, if initially puzzling claim, about how God thinks himself and the beings he produces:

However, [God] does not think (νοεῖ) only Himself, but He also thinks all the beings of which He Himself is cause; for if [He did] not also [think] these things, He would not think Himself as cause of these, which indeed is absurd; therefore He thinks also these, except in a way that is superior to the way these beings [think] themselves.<sup>35</sup>

At first glance, one might think this is just polemical hair-splitting from Nicholas. Proclus later in Prop. 170 claims that every intellect thinks all things (πᾶς νοῦς πάντα ἅμα νοεῖ), while in Prop. 173 he claims that all intellects are "the same as both the things before [them] and the things after [them]—the latter by causality, the former by participation":<sup>36</sup> in other words, the intellect would think its effects in the same way it thinks itself. Yet this is perhaps the exact issue at hand, as we saw in the framework set out by Nicholas in his reply to Prop. 76, above: God cannot produce created beings simply "by his own being" (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι), but can only do so by his will (ἐνὶ θελήματι καὶ κοινῷ). Nicholas' reply to Prop. 167 effectively brings out this distinction, when he claims it is

33 See Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 167, l. 18–21, who appeals to Matthew 11:27 where Christ says that no one knows the Son except the Father: for Nicholas this implies that no knowledge of the divine nature is possible for created beings.

34 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 167, l. 25–29 (trans. Robinson, modified): "And the divine intellects think themselves as they are, but they think the things above them not as these are but in a lesser way, and they think the things after themselves as well, although [as] over which the things themselves are, functioning as mediators and ministers of the divine pre-thinking; and for this reason this would not be called a 'return to the inferior' [cf. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 167, l. 7–11]." (οἱ δὲ θεῖοι νόες νοοῦσι μὲν ἑαυτοὺς ὡς εἰσι, νοοῦσι δὲ καὶ τὰ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦς, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς ἐκεῖνά εἰσι ἀλλ' ἡττόνως, νοοῦσι δὲ καὶ τὰ μετ' αὐτοῦς, ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ ὃ ταῦτά εἰσι, τῆς θείας προνοίας μεσίται καὶ διάκονοι χρηματίζοντες ὅθεν οὐδὲ τοῦτο ῥηθείη ἂν πρὸς τὸ χειρὸν ἐπιστροφή.) Nicholas here and elsewhere calls the angels "divine intellects", albeit disagreeing with Proclus in saying they are divine by nature, but rather by grace (cf. *Refutation*, 165, 28–34): on this topic, see J. Greig, "Soul and Deification in Proclus, Nicholas of Methone, and the Palamite Controversy", in S. Wear, C. O'Brien (eds), *Platonic Principles* (Steubenville, OH: Franciscan University Press, forthcoming).

35 Trans. Robinson, lightly modified; Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 167, l. 4–7: ἀλλ' οὐδὲ μόνον ἑαυτὸν νοεῖ ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄντα, ὧν αὐτός ἐστιν αἴτιος· εἰ γὰρ μὴ καὶ ταῦτα, οὐδ' ἂν ἑαυτὸν νοῇ ὡς τούτων αἴτιον, ὅπερ ἄτοπον· νοεῖ ἄρα καὶ ταῦτα, πλὴν ἀλλὰ κρείττονως ἢ περ αὐτά ἐαυτά.

36 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 173, l. 1–3: Πᾶς νοῦς νοερώς ἐστι καὶ τὰ πρὸ αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ μετ' αὐτόν· τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶ κατ' αἰτίαν, ὅσα μετ' αὐτόν, τὰ δὲ κατὰ μέθεξιν, ὅσα πρὸ αὐτοῦ [...].

not enough for God to know himself without qualification, but rather he must know himself *qua* cause of created beings.

One can see this in Nicholas' subsequent reply to Prop. 169, where Nicholas follows up his earlier Prop. 167 claim by concluding that "intellect (νοῦς) and intelligible (νοήτων) are not the same, nor therefore is intellection (νόησις) the same as these two, but all intellection is proper to the intellecting agent and sometimes is superior to the things intellected, and other times inferior."<sup>37</sup> In this Nicholas is responding to Proclus' argument in the proposition that intellect, its intelligible object (νόητων), and the activity of intellection (νόησις) are all identical with each other, even while Being, as the intelligible object, pre-exists Intellect. This is perhaps one time where Nicholas' critique touches on not just a dispute between a Christian and pagan framework, but also a philosophical issue in Proclus' theory. As it turns out, Proclus' successor, Damascius, also critiques the thesis that intellect and the intelligible are identical (ταύτων) with each other and makes a similar claim to Nicholas' argument that the activity of intellection (νόησις) is proper to the thinking agent rather than the object of its thought. For Damascius, just as for Nicholas, the object of knowledge is relative to the knower's mode of being, while the knower and the object known remain ontologically distinct in themselves.<sup>38</sup> In any case, this may make sense of Nicholas' initially puzzling claim that God must think his effects, as their cause, distinctly from thinking himself without qualification.<sup>39</sup>

37 Trans. Robinson, modified; Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 169, l. 1–3: 'Εδείξαμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἑαυτὸν μόνον νοεῖ ὥστε οὐδὲ ταῦτὸν νοῦς καὶ νοητόν, οὐδ' ἄρα ἡ νόησις ταῦτὸν ἀμφοῖν, ἀλλ' οἰκεία μὲν πᾶσα τῷ νοοῦντι, τῶν δὲ νοουμένων ἢ μὲν κρείττων, ἢ δὲ χείρων, [...]. See Lela Alexidze's chapter for a more detailed analysis of this in comparison with Petritsi's interpretation of Proclus on intellect.

38 See Damascius, *De Principiis* 11, 149.12–20 and 158.8–16. Cf. S. Gertz, "Knowledge, Intellect and Being in Damascius' *Doubts and Solutions Concerning First Principles*", in *Ancient Philosophy* 36/2 (2016), pp. 479–494 and, in the context of causality, Greig, *The First Principle*, pp. 120–137, esp. pp. 125–128.

39 There is a further parallel to Damascius in Nicholas' commentary on Prop. 169. In the second half of his response (lines 5–19), Nicholas argues against Proclus' claim that intellect is unmoved (ἀκίνητος). For Nicholas, the divine intellect is moved (κινεῖσθαι) both in the Trinitarian procession of persons, and also in producing beings: "And in another way [the beyond-intellect (ὁ ὑπέρνοος)] would be said to move by the overflowing of its goodness in producing and holding together and returning beings to itself and in simply providing" (trans. Robinson; Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation* 169, l. 6–9: λέγοιτο δ' ἂν καὶ ἄλλως κινεῖσθαι τῇ ὑπερχύσει τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ἀγαθότητος ἐν τῷ παράγειν καὶ συνέχειν καὶ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐπιστρέφειν τὰ ὄντα καὶ τῷ ἀπλῶς προνοεῖν.) Although Damascius does not use the terminology of motion (κινεῖσθαι, κίνησις), he speaks in similar terms of the cause "departing from itself" in causing its effect: "For the producer departs from itself and distinguishes the produced thing from itself: it therefore gives distinction to itself and to [the produced

Nicholas' reply to Prop. 174 helps to further clarify the reason for this distinction. In the proposition, Proclus claims that "every intellect gives rise to its consequents by intellection: its producing is in intellection, and its intellection is in producing." Nicholas here disputes Proclus' identity claim and maintains that intellection in itself entails knowledge of beings, whereas Being-itself is responsible for the production of beings:

Therefore, as Intellect [i.e. the very first and beyond-intellect Intellect (τὸν πρώτιστον μόνον καὶ ὑπέρνοον νοῦν)] thinks all the things after it, and as Being it causes these to subsist from itself and makes [them] to be, and its intellection is making and [its] making is intellection. But it intellects the things after it more greatly than they are—in a way proper for itself, that is—according as it even makes by intellection, and, since it is both transcendent Intellect and the Being before all things, it also thinks itself as Being and pre-being, wherefore it is not said to make itself; for Being, or rather pre-Being (τὸ προόν), is not made, and since it has nothing before itself, it would not be said either to make or to think anything before itself.<sup>40</sup>

In his commentary on Prop. 174, Nicholas pushes back against Proclus' claim that "every" intellect creates when it thinks. One problem is that the angels, as intellects, do not create beings, but rather they "transfer the divine participations" (τὰς θείας διαπορθμεύουσι μετοχάς):<sup>41</sup> in this sense, the angels only convey

---

thing].” (Damascius, *De Principiis* II, 158.1–4: τὸ γὰρ παράγον ἀφίστησιν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ διακρίνει ἅφ’ ἑαυτοῦ τὸ παραγόμενον· αὐτὸ ἄρα διδωσι καὶ ἑαυτῷ καὶ ἐκείνῳ τὴν διάκρισιν). Although arguing from different contexts, there may be a similar thought process between Nicholas and Damascius: insofar as God, or the cause, produces its effect, the cause must necessarily contextualize itself in relation the emergence of its effects. In the case of Nicholas, this kind of distinction would seem to go together with his creationism. For more on Nicholas' argument the intellect as unmoved, see in this volume Joshua Robinson's chapter, "The Motion of the Fertile One in Nicholas of Methone and Earlier Sources".

40 Trans. Robinson, modified; Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation* 174, l. 20–27: ἡμῖν δὲ τὸν μὲν πρώτιστον μόνον καὶ ὑπέρνοον νοῦν ὁμολογοῦσι σύνδρομον ἔχειν τῇ νοήσει τὴν ποίησιν εὐδρόμος ὁ λόγος προχωρεῖ καὶ ἀπρόσκοπος, ἐπειδὴ καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν φαμεν εἶναι νοῦν τε ὑπέρνοον καὶ ὃν ὑπερούσιον. οὐκοῦν καὶ ὡς μὲν νοῦς νοεῖ πάντα τὰ μετ’ αὐτόν, ὡς δὲ ὢν ὑφίστησι ταῦτα παρ’ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ εἶναι ποιεῖ, καὶ ἔστιν αὐτοῦ ἡ νόησις ποίησις καὶ ἡ ποίησις νόησις. ἀλλὰ καὶ νοεῖ τὰ μετ’ αὐτὸν κρειττόνως ἢ περ εἰσίν, οἰκείως δηλαδὴ ἑαυτῷ, καθὼ καὶ ποιεῖ τῇ νοήσει, αὐτὸς δὲ ὢν καὶ νοῦς ὑπέρτατος καὶ ὃ ὢν πρὸ πάντων νοεῖ καὶ ἑαυτὸν ὡς ὄντα τε καὶ προόντα, διὸ οὐδὲ ποιεῖν ἑαυτὸν λέγεται· οὐ ποιεῖται γὰρ τὸ ὢν, μᾶλλον δὲ τὸ προόν, πρὸ αὐτοῦ δὲ μηδὲν ἔχων οὔτε ποιεῖν τι πρὸ αὐτοῦ οὔτε νοεῖν λέγοιτ’ ἂν.

41 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation* 136, l. 8–15.

God's causality, while in themselves, as pure intellects, they do not cause or create beings. One can see Nicholas' motivation to disassociate Intellect from the production of beings: instead, it is the principle, Being, rather than Intellect, that is responsible for this. Hence, God is the sole creator of beings in his capacity as Being-itself (αὐτὸ τὸ ὄν), "or rather the pre-Being" (μᾶλλον δὲ τὸ πρόν). Proclus' Prop. 174 for Nicholas can only refer to God as a special case, inasmuch as God is both αὐτὸ τὸ ὄν/τὸ πρόν and νοῦς/ὑπέρνοος, where the two coincide (σύνδρομον) in God, while the concepts of αὐτὸ τὸ ὄν and νοῦς are distinct in themselves.

Overall, Nicholas is cautious to emphasize a distinction in God between (1) God's knowledge of himself (and the divine persons' knowledge of each other), alongside the essential production of the Son and Spirit from the Father; and (2) God's knowledge of created beings as the "divine ideas", which Nicholas relates to the "one, common will" (θέλημα) of the divine persons. While these appear to be two really distinct objects, Nicholas sees the two implying each other in the case of God: God's knowledge of himself implies knowledge of beings, and God's knowledge of beings implies knowledge of himself; and even while Nicholas claims that there is a distinction between God's thinking and producing beings (especially in light of distinguishing between God-as-Intellect and God-as-(pre-)Being, above), Nicholas also affirms that God's "intellection is making and [its] making is intellection". Yet it is still noteworthy that Nicholas denies that God's knowledge of himself is unqualifiedly identical with the "divine ideas" (i.e. Ps.-Dionysius' "wills"), or that God's knowledge of himself necessitates knowledge of beings in the same way. We thus find a notional distinction in Nicholas between the two, although how this distinction is to be understood is not spelled out by Nicholas.

### 3 Nicholas' Predecessors on the Divine Ideas: Ps.-Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor, and John Philoponus

As we saw above, Nicholas draws on Ps.-Dionysius for his articulation of the divine ideas contained in God, and based on which God creates beings. However, Nicholas' interpretation of Ps.-Dionysius is mediated by a concern for creationism—a concern, it should be noted, not present or explicit in Ps.-Dionysius himself. As will become apparent, Nicholas' reading of Ps.-Dionysius involves a concern imported from other, earlier Byzantine figures, of which Maximus the Confessor and John Philoponus are two witnesses, if not possible influences, for Nicholas. But first we should briefly look at Ps.-Dionysius in himself.

### 3.1 *Nicholas' Initial Source for the Divine Ideas in Ps.-Dionysius*

In the commentary on Prop. 76, Nicholas' reference to Ps.-Dionysius' terminology for "pre-determinations" and "wills" in God goes back to the *De divinis nominibus* v, where Ps.-Dionysius discusses the attribute of being as it pertains to God, and how God functions as the cause of beings. In *De divinis nominibus* v.8, after expressing how God is the direct cause of all intellects, souls, and material beings, Ps.-Dionysius goes on to show in what way God is a paradigm for the different kinds of beings:

But we say that the paradigms [of beings] are the being-producing and unifying *logoi* which have pre-existed in God, which theology calls both divine pre-determinations (προορισμούς) and good wills (ἀγαθὰ θελήματα), which are delimiting and productive of beings, according to which what is beyond being (ὁ ὑπερούσιος) both pre-determines and produces all beings.<sup>42</sup>

Ps.-Dionysius' language of the paradigms of beings which function as "pre-determinations" and "good wills" should be familiar from Nicholas' commentary. One may initially think that Ps.-Dionysius' ascription of the paradigms of beings (in the same way as the divine ideas) to the divine "wills" and "pre-determinations" is the same kind of argument we see in Nicholas. However, it is striking that Ps.-Dionysius does not appear to be worried about making an explicit distinction between the "wills" in God and God's thoughts—much less between God's being and his producing. For instance, earlier in *De divinis nominibus* 1.5, Ps.-Dionysius claims that "by his own being (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι) [God] is the cause of all beings" and that "this existence [i.e. God's] by being is productive of the universe".<sup>43</sup> Yet this contrasts with what we saw in Nicholas earlier, where God's causality αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι only refers to the production of the Trinitarian persons—not the production of created beings. Instead, Ps.-Dionysius seems to take the same formula that Proclus does in ascribing the causality of beings to God's being in himself (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι), without qualification.

42 Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, ed. B.R. Suchla (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990), v.8, p. 188, l. 6–10: παραδείγματα δὲ φαμεν εἶναι τοὺς ἐν θεῷ τῶν ὄντων οὐσιοποιούς καὶ ἐνιαίως προϋφαστῶτας λόγους, οὓς ἡ θεολογία προορισμούς καλεῖ καὶ θεῖα καὶ ἀγαθὰ θελήματα, τῶν ὄντων ἀφοριστικά καὶ ποιητικά, καθ' οὓς ὁ ὑπερούσιος τὰ ὄντα πάντα καὶ προώρισε καὶ παρήγαγεν.

43 Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, 1.5, p. 117, l. 11–15: Ἐπειδὴ δὲ ὡς ἀγαθότητος ὑπαρξίς αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι πάντων ἐστὶ τῶν ὄντων αἰτία, τὴν ἀγαθαρχικὴν τῆς θεαρχίας

One might, indeed, wonder whether Ps.-Dionysius' position is any different from Proclus' own position. If anything, it is tempting to see Ps.-Dionysius as tacitly accepting Proclus' eternal emanative position: God's mere existence alone, regardless of any distinct volition or operation, brings about all beings. All the more striking is the absence in Nicholas' commentary of Ps.-Dionysius' own use or interpretation of the term, αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι, to describe God's causality of beings. Hence, it may well be possible that Nicholas tries to safeguard Ps.-Dionysius' statement against the "emanative" interpretation that he recognizes in Proclus' formulation of causation by the cause's mere being (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι).

In any case, it seems clear that Nicholas appeals to a distinct anti-eternalist argument in his interpretation of the divine wills from Ps.-Dionysius—one reflecting a concern notably lacking in Ps.-Dionysius. Nicholas' concern is not unique: the concern over an eternalist view of the world was commonplace among Byzantines up to Nicholas' time, seen for instance one century before Nicholas in the Byzantine philosopher, John Italos.<sup>44</sup> While tracing these proximate sources in Nicholas is a *desideratum*, here I would like to look at two early sources for this kind of anti-eternalist interpretation of Ps.-Dionysius that appears in Nicholas: proximately Maximus the Confessor and, behind Maximus' arguments, John Philoponus. As we will see, Maximus' understanding of the divine ideas in Ps.-Dionysius is mediated by Philoponus' creationist framework. To understand Maximus, we should also look at Philoponus, whose strategy of arguing against Proclus, in turn, is worth comparing with Nicholas' own.

### 3.2 *Maximus the Confessor: Mediating Ps.-Dionysius' Divine Wills within a Creationist Context*

We see Maximus' interpretation of Ps.-Dionysius' *De divinis nominibus* v.8 in *Ambiguum* 7, when Maximus refers to the principles (*logoi*) of created beings as "pre-determinations" (προορισμούς) and "divine wills" (θεία θελήματα),<sup>45</sup> much in the same way that Nicholas does. Like Nicholas, Maximus uses Ps.-Dionysius' framework in the context of an anti-eternalist critique—albeit, for Maximus, against the Origenist notion of the eternal pre-existence of the soul.<sup>46</sup> For Max-

---

πρόνοιαν ἐκ πάντων τῶν αἰτιατῶν ὑμνητέον. Ἐπεὶ καὶ περὶ αὐτὴν πάντα καὶ αὐτῆς ἕνεκα, 'καὶ αὐτὴ ἐστὶ πρὸ πάντων, καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῇ συνέστηκεν'.

44 See below, pp. 227–229.

45 Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum*, 7, sect. 24, l. 1–3 (= PG 91, 1085A).

46 See Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum*, 7, sect. 2, l. 5–12 (= PG 91, 1069A–B). For an analysis of this passage and what kind of target (Origenist and/or otherwise) that Maximus

imus, against the Origenist stance, creatures do not *in themselves* pre-exist creation in God, but rather the *logoi* of creatures exist in God before their emergence.<sup>47</sup> It is in this context that we see a particular creationist argument put forward by Maximus, when he argues that God eternally wills the production of beings “in actuality” (κατ’ ἐνέργειάν) while creatures exist in potentiality rather than simply in actuality:

By truth itself, that which belongs to all beings is in him and by him, even while all things themselves—both beings which are and beings which will be—are not brought into being at the same time with their *logoi*, nor with their being known by God. Rather, every being is brought into being at the right moment according to the wisdom of the creator, being created in a manner fitting to their *logoi* and by receiving being in actuality in themselves. [Such is the case] since God is always a creator in actuality (ὁ μὲν ἀεὶ κατ’ ἐνέργειάν ἐστι δημιουργός) while beings exist in potentiality but not yet in actuality, because what is unlimited and what has been limited do not belong together.<sup>48</sup>

Here Maximus emphasizes that creatures are not “brought into being with their *logoi*”, or principles, even though God has and thinks the *logoi* throughout eternity. Instead, the distinction between potentiality (δύναμις) and actuality (ἐνέργεια) obtains for creatures, as such, while God “always” (ἀεὶ) exists, in such

---

have had in mind, see P. Sherwood, *The Earlier “Ambigua” of Saint Maximus the Confessor and His Refutation of Origenism*, in *Studia Anselmiana* 36(1955), pp. 72–92; S. Gersh (ed.), *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 219–220; and J. Greig, “Proclus’ Reception in Maximus the Confessor, mediated through John Philoponus and Dionysius the Ps.-Areopagite: A Case Study of *Ambiguum* 7”, in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes, Volume 3. On Causes and the Noetic Triad* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), pp. 120–126.

47 It is striking how both Maximus and Nicholas use Ps.-Dionysius against the eternalist arguments, broadly construed, of their opponents, i.e. Origenists and Proclus respectively. Of course, the kind of “eternalism” each directly critiques is distinct: for Maximus it is the eternal pre-existence of the soul (held by Origenists), and for Nicholas it is the eternal pre-existence of the whole cosmos (held by Proclus).

48 Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum*, 7, sect. 19, l. 3–12 (= PG 91, 1081A–B): ὡς ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ παρ’ αὐτῷ ὄντων αὐτῇ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ τῶν πάντων, καὶ εἰ αὐτὰ τὰ πάντα, τὰ τε ὄντα καὶ τὰ ἐσόμενα οὐχ ἅμα τοῖς ἑαυτῶν λόγοις ἢ τῷ γνωσθῆναι ὑπὸ θεοῦ εἰς τὸ εἶναι παρήχθησαν, ἀλλ’ ἕκαστα τῷ ἐπιτηδεῖω καιρῷ κατὰ τὴν τοῦ δημιουργοῦ σοφίαν πρεπόντως κατὰ τοὺς ἑαυτῶν λόγους δημιουργούμενα καὶ καθ’ ἑαυτὰ τὸ εἶναι τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ λαμβάνη. ἐπειδὴ ὁ μὲν ἀεὶ κατ’ ἐνέργειάν ἐστι δημιουργός, τὰ δὲ δυνάμει μὲν ἐστίν, ἐνεργείᾳ δὲ οὐκ ἔτι· ὅτι μηδὲ οἷόν τε τῶν ἅμα εἶναι τὸ ἄπειρον καὶ τὰ πεπερασμένα.



a way that the distinction does not obtain for him.<sup>49</sup> In turn, this makes possible the eternity of God possessing the *logoi* of beings—insofar as they exist always (ἀεί) in God—with the created beings existing eternally in themselves, since they first exist potentially (δυνάμει).

At the same time, Maximus qualifies in what way God possesses and knows the *logoi*. On the one hand the *logoi* are identified with God, so that God knows himself in knowing the *logoi*. On the other hand, it is notable that Maximus does not say that God knows beings by unqualifiedly knowing himself, but rather that God knows beings in the following way:

[...] we say that [God] knows beings as his own, proper wills (ὡς ἴδια θελήματα), and they [i.e. the so-called “disciples of Pantainos”] added the following reasonable statement of the account: for if (1) [God] has made all things by will—and no one denies the statement—and if (2) it is always pious and right to say that God knows his own will, and (3) [God], as willing, has made each of the things that have come to be, then God therefore knows beings just as his own wills (ἴδια θελήματα), since, as willing, he has made beings.<sup>50</sup>

Again, using Ps.-Dionysius’ language of “wills” (θελήματα), Maximus argues that God knows beings through knowing his own, proper wills (ἴδια θελήματα), which solves the difficulty of how God can know creatures without knowing them by sensation or intellect: for, as Maximus concedes just beforehand, God does not know beings in the manner of beings themselves (κατὰ τὰ ὄντα)—i.e.

49 Comparing with Philoponus, it is noteworthy how Philoponus in *Contra Proclum* p. 76, l. 27, describes God’s possession and thinking of the *logoi* as αἰδίως (“everlasting”, “perpetual”, etc.), while for Maximus God’s possession and thinking of the *logoi* is αἰεί (“always”). Although explicating this difference goes beyond the confines of this chapter, we can briefly note that this potentially reflects a difference in Philoponus’ and Maximus’ conceptions of eternity: Philoponus, later in *Contra Proclum* p. 114, l. 19–p. 116, l. 1, describes eternity as a measure of eternal beings, which should be conceived as a “certain breath” (τι πλάτος) and “extension” (παράτασιν τινα) that stretches alongside the eternal beings themselves. On this, see K. Verrycken, “John Philoponus”, in L.P. Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 748–749. By contrast, Maximus seems to accept implicitly the conception of eternity as at a point with his description of God’s existence as αἰεί.

50 Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum*, 7, sect. 24, l. 13–20 (= PG 91, 1085A): ([...] ὡς ἴδια θελήματα γινώσκειν αὐτὸν τὰ ὄντα φαμέν), προσθέντες καὶ τοῦ λόγου τὸ εὐλογον· εἰ γὰρ θελήματι τὰ πάντα πεποίηκε, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀντρεῖ λόγος, γινώσκειν δὲ τὸ ἴδιον θέλημα τὸν Θεὸν εὐσεβὲς τε λέγειν αἰεὶ καὶ δίκαιόν ἐστιν, ἕκαστον δὲ τῶν γεγονότων θέλων πεποίηκεν, ἄρα ὡς ἴδια θελήματα ὁ Θεὸς τὰ ὄντα γινώσκει, ἐπειδὴ καὶ θέλων τὰ ὄντα πεποίηκεν. Numbering added by me.

neither by sensation (αἰσθητικῶς) nor intellectually (νοερῶς)—since he transcends all beings.<sup>51</sup> Given this restriction, Maximus still allows knowledge in God, although not in an intellectual way (νοερῶς) but inasmuch as God possesses wills, or intentions (θελήματα), for the beings in question.<sup>52</sup>

If we look back at Nicholas' discussion of the divine ideas in his response to Proclus, we can see aspects of Maximus' framework in the background that potentially illuminate Nicholas' own framework. In particular, we saw Nicholas emphasize a distinction between God in himself and the ideas of beings by which God produces beings. We also see a similar emphasis in Maximus emphasizing that God knows beings "as his own wills" (ἴδια θελήματα) rather than just in unqualifiedly knowing himself or in producing created beings "by his own being" (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι). Similarly to Nicholas, Maximus does not use the language of God producing beings αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι, but rather that of God producing by means of the "wills" or *logoi* which exist eternally in God.<sup>53</sup> Once again, this contrasts with Ps.-Dionysius' conflation of God's causality of beings as "by his own being" (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι) with the "pre-determinations" and "wills" belonging to God. In Maximus, as in Nicholas, one finds an emphasis that God produces beings in a respect distinct from merely his own being: namely in terms of the "wills" (θελήματα).

51 Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum*, 7, sect. 24, l. 1–13 (= PG 91, 1085A): "In the same way, the disciples of Pantainos (who became the teacher of the great Clement [who wrote the] *Stromateis*) also say that they are called by Scripture 'divine wills'. For when they were approached by some of those who boast in their secular learning, and [were asked] how Christians believe that God knows beings (τά ὄντα)—since each believed [God knows] intelligible beings in an intellectual way, and sensible beings by sensation—they answered that God neither knows sensible things by sensation nor intelligible things in an intellectual way (for it is not possible, as the argument demonstrated, for that which is beyond beings to apprehend beings according to the mode of beings (κατά τὰ ὄντα), but we say that [God] knows beings as his own wills (ὡς ἴδια θελήματα)) [...]" (ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ οἱ περὶ Πάνταινον, τὸν γενόμενον καθηγητὴν τοῦ Στρωματέως μεγάλου Κλήμεντος, "θεῖα θελήματα" τῇ Γραφῇ φίλον καλεῖσθαι φασι. "Ὅθεν ἐρωτηθέντες ὑπὸ τινων τῶν τὴν ἔξω παιδευσιν γαύρων, πῶς γινώσκουν τὰ ὄντα τὸν Θεὸν δοξάζουσιν οἱ Χριστιανοί, ὑπεκρίνοντο ἐκείνων νοερῶς τὰ νοητὰ καὶ αἰσθητικῶς τὰ αἰσθητὰ, γινώσκουν αὐτὸν τὰ ὄντα ἀπεκρίναντο μῆτε αἰσθητικῶς τὰ αἰσθητὰ μῆτε νοερῶς τὰ νοητὰ (οὐ γὰρ εἶναι δυνατόν, ἐστὶν ὁ ἀποδεικνύς λόγος, τὸν ὑπὲρ τὰ ὄντα κατὰ τὰ ὄντα τῶν ὄντων λαμβάνεσθαι, ἀλλ' ὡς ἴδια θελήματα γινώσκουν αὐτὸν τὰ ὄντα φαμέν) [...].)

52 The thought behind Maximus' phrasing is likely little different from Proclus' view of the henads' knowledge of beings: see e.g. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 121 (esp. lines 14–18), which argues that the henads, as gods, possess providence by virtue of pre-containing Intellect and thus pre-containing all forms of knowledge pertaining to beings (cf. Prop. 134).

53 It is also noteworthy that the phrase αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι or variations of the phrase in its causal context, as seen in Ps.-Dionysius or Proclus, does not show up anywhere in Maximus' corpus.

In turn, the emphasis on God producing in terms of “will” or “wills” is correlated with beings which contingently exist: as Maximus argues, beings exist “in potentiality but not yet in actuality” (τὰ δὲ δυνάμει μὲν ἔστιν, ἐνεργείᾳ δὲ οὐκ ἔτι), while God “exists always as creator in actuality” (ἀεὶ κατ’ ἐνέργειάν ἐστι δημιουργός). Though Nicholas does not use the language of actuality and potentiality, Maximus’ distinction between God and created beings in terms of actuality and potentiality would correspond with Nicholas’ claim that beings produced by God are not “concurrent” with God’s own being (σύνδρομον ἔχειν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ εἶναι τὸ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ παραγόμενον). Just as in Maximus, this mode of contingent production depends on God’s causation by will (θελήματι).

### 3.3 *John Philoponus: A Background to Maximus, and a Similar Anti-Eternalist Critique of Proclus*

While there are other sources in the background to Maximus’ creationist argument in his interpretation of Ps.-Dionysius,<sup>54</sup> one particular, possible influence behind this argument in Maximus is John Philoponus.<sup>55</sup> We see this kind of argument in Philoponus’ response to Proclus’ fourth argument in the *De aeternitas mundi*,<sup>56</sup> when Philoponus argues that God does not produce beings “involuntarily”—a key premise in Nicholas’ response to Prop. 76:<sup>57</sup>

54 For example, Basil of Caesarea, *In Hexaemeron*, I, p. 17, l. 17b–c, argues that conceiving of God as an eternal creator would imply that creation took place spontaneously (αὐτομάτως), without choice (ἀπροαιρέτως), implying that creation must come about rather through will. On this see Karamanolis, *The Philosophy of Early Christianity*, pp. 80–83. For a discussion on creationist vs. eternalist/emanationist arguments between early Christians and Platonists/Aristotelians, see B. Gleede, *Platon und Aristoteles in der Kosmologie des Proklos* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009) and B. Gleede, “Endorsing a Cliché: On Liberty and Necessity in Christian and Neoplatonist Accounts of Creation”, in J.D. Turner, K. Corrigan, P. Wakefield (eds), *Religion and Philosophy in the Platonic and Neoplatonic Traditions: From Antiquity to the Early Medieval Period* (Sankt Augustin: Academia-Verlag, 2012), pp. 277–294.

55 For comparisons of Philoponus and Maximus on anti-eternalist arguments, see M. Varlamova, “Philoponus’ Dispute Against the Eternity of the World and Its Influence on the Byzantine Philosophy”, in *Scrinium* 13(2017); G. Benevich, “John Philoponus and Maximus the Confessor at the Crossroads of Philosophical and Theological Thought in Late Antiquity”, in *Scrinium* 7–8/1 (2011), pp. 102–130 (esp. pp. 123–124); T. Shchukin, “Matter as a Universal: John Philoponus and Maximus the Confessor on the Eternity of the World”, in *Scrinium* 13 (2017), pp. 361–382; and “Proclus’ Reception in Maximus the Confessor, Mediated through John Philoponus and Dionysius the Ps.-Areopagite: A Case Study of *Ambiguum* 7”, in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes, Volume 3: On Causes and the Noetic Triad* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), pp. 135–149.

56 From Philoponus, *Contra Proclum*, p. 57, l. 1 onward.

57 Although Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 76, l. 34, noticeably uses the word, ἀκούσιον,

For God does not bring his creations into existence by an involuntary (ἀβουλήτῳ) necessity of nature in the way that the sun illuminates and fire heats as soon as they are present by an involuntary necessity of nature. The cause of all things is above all necessity, for which reason it is not at all necessary that whatever is thought by God should exist simultaneously with the thought.<sup>58</sup>

One of Philoponus' main points in this passage is that God's possession of the principles, or reasons (*logoi*), of beings does not, in itself, entail that their products are necessitated or come to be. Before this passage, Philoponus refers to an example of a shipwright and builder who possess the principles for building the ship or house, yet need not always be building their respective products.<sup>59</sup> The example of the sun/fire then becomes the very opposite to the example of the shipwright or builder with their products. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Philoponus' sun/fire example directly hearkens back to a standard Platonist analogy for causation, seen in Plato's *Republic* VI with the

---

instead of ἀβούλητον in Philoponus' case in *Contra Proclum*, p. 78, l. 12, perhaps implying different dimensions of involuntariness: e.g. in the former case, being constrained (in contrast to what is ἐκούσιον, i.e. from one's being), while in the latter case, unwished or un-willed (in contrast to what is βούλητον, i.e. what is wished).

- 58 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum*, p. 78, l. 11–17 (trans. Share, modified): οὐ γὰρ ἀβουλήτῳ φύσεως ἀνάγκη, ὥς ὁ ἥλιος ἅμα τῷ παρῆναι φωτίζει καὶ τὸ πῦρ θερμαίνει, οὕτω καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἀνάγκη φύσεως ἐκὼν καὶ ἄκων εἰς τὸ εἶναι παράγει τὰ δημιουργούμενα· ὑπέρτερον γὰρ ἀνάγκης ἀπάσης τὸ πάντων αἴτιον. ὅθεν οὐ πάντως ἅμα τῇ περὶ τίνος τοῦ θεοῦ νοήσει καὶ τὸ νοούμενον εἶναι ἀνάγκη.
- 59 Cf. Philoponus, *Contra Proclum*, p. 36, l. 27–p. 37, l. 8 (trans. Share, modified): “A shipwright and a builder may be in possession of the *logoi* [i.e. principles] for [building] a ship or a house but not yet be creating [anything] based on them. The being of such *logoi* consists in their being thoughts of a certain kind, but when the creator acts in accord with them, they become paradigms as a consequence [of that]. If, then, the generated beings based on them do not in every case immediately follow upon [the existence of] creative *logoi*, nothing prevents the world from not always existing even if the creative *logoi* for the world are eternal.” (ἐπεὶ καὶ ναυπηγὸν καὶ οἰκοδόμον ἐνδέχεται νεὼς τίνος ἢ οἰκίας τοὺς λόγους ἔχοντα μὴπω δημιουργεῖν κατ’ αὐτούς· τὸ μὲν γὰρ εἶναι τοῖς τοιούτοις λόγοις ἐν τῷ νοήσεσσι τινὰς αὐτούς εἶναι ὑφέστηκεν, παρακολουθεῖ δὲ αὐτοῖς τὸ παραδείγμασιν εἶναι, ὅταν κατ’ αὐτούς ὁ δημιουργὸς ἐνεργήσῃ. εἰ οὖν μὴ πάντως ἅμα τοῖς δημιουργικοῖς λόγοις ἔπεται καὶ τὰ κατ’ αὐτούς γινόμενα ἀποτελέσματα, οὐδὲν κωλύει τῶν δημιουργικῶν τοῦ κόσμου λόγων αἰώνιων ὄντων μὴ αἰεὶ εἶναι τὸν κόσμον.) It is worth comparing this passage with Ps.-Dionysius’ ascription in *De div nom.* v.8 (above) of the “paradigms” of beings to the divine “wills” (θελήματα) and “pre-determinations” (προορισμοί): while Ps.-Dionysius simply relates the two sides of wills/pre-determinations and paradigms, Philoponus emphasizes that it is only *when* God wills the actual creation of beings that the *logoi* in God become paradigms (παραδείγματα).

sun's analogy to the Good,<sup>60</sup> and extended to Neoplatonist descriptions of the Good's, or One's, production of beings.<sup>61</sup> Philoponus' negative interpretation of the sun/fire metaphor becomes a motif for later Byzantines, like Nicholas, to describe rather the *dis*-analogy to God's causality of beings, where heat results immediately from the presence of fire, and in turn light results necessarily from the sun's presence. Instead, Philoponus uses examples of rational agents like the shipwright and builder to describe God's causality, where they are said to "project" or "bring forward" (προφέρειν) the soul's thoughts into the outside world, whether in speech or physical actions.<sup>62</sup> In cases like this, one then finds a two-step process: (1) the possession of the *logoi*, and (2) the *logoi* being brought forward or "projected" in production.

Philoponus applies this to God, but also draws a contrast to the human examples:

For [God] everlastingly (ἀιδίως) possesses the thoughts (νοήσεις) and principles (λόγους) of beings, according to which indeed he is a creator, in exactly the same way, and does not become different in any respect whether he produces or does not produce. For generally, it is not right to say that capacity (ἐξιν) and activity (ἐνεργεῖαν) are different [things] in the case of God: the two are one and the same thing and difference arises in the sphere of that which participates [in God].<sup>63</sup>

In this last line Philoponus emphasizes the unchangeability of God's being by denying any distinction between God's capacity and activity to produce: while the distinction obtains in the created world, capacity and activity are the same

60 Plato, *Republic*, vi, 507c–509b.

61 A noteworthy example is Plotinus' principle that all entities possess an internal and external activity: for instance, the fire possesses its internal activity, as constitutive of its essence, while its external activity lies in heat as its exterior product or effect: see e.g. Plotinus, *Enneads*, v.1.3, l. 6–12. Plotinus applies this principle to the One's production of Intellect, and Intellect's production of Soul, and so on. On this see E.K. Emilsson, *Plotinus* (London / New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 48–57; and in comparison with Proclus' principle of causation αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι, see C. D'Ancona Costa, "Plotinus and Later Platonic Philosophers on the Causality of the First Principle", in L.P. Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 356–385, esp. pp. 361–362.

62 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum*, p. 77, l. 10–15.

63 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum*, p. 76, l. 26–p. 77, l. 3 (trans. Share, modified): τὰς γὰρ νοήσεις καὶ τοὺς λόγους τῶν ὄντων αἰδιῶς κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχει, καθ' οὗς καὶ δημιουργός ἐστιν, οὐδὲν ἀλλοιότερος ἐκ τοῦ ποιεῖν ἢ μὴ ποιεῖν γινόμενος· ὅλως γὰρ οὐδὲ διαφέρειν ἐπὶ θεοῦ ἔξιν τε καὶ ἐνεργεῖαν λέγειν θεμιτόν· ἔστιν γὰρ ταῦτόν ἄμφω, περὶ δὲ τὸ μετέχον ἢ διαφορὰ γίνεσθαι.

(ταῦτόν) in God.<sup>64</sup> On the flip side: the change between possession (ἔξις)—much less potentiality (δύναμις)—and actuality (ἐνέργεια) characterizes beings in a way that it does not for God, who both possesses the *logoi* of beings and wills their production from eternity. If we put this line of argument together with Philoponus' claim that beings are not produced by God "involuntarily" (ἀβουλήτῳ), this suggests that the production of beings characterized by potentiality involves volition. In turn, this implies that the actuality that characterizes God's being, which is necessary, must be distinct from the kind of actuality that characterizes God's volition behind the temporal production of beings: in other words, Philoponus, like Maximus, recognizes that there must be a distinction which affirms the eternity of God's being and the contingency of the production of beings—even if God's willing this contingent production is eternal.

One can see a possible influence of Philoponus' argument in Maximus' distinction between God, the *logoi*, and created beings.<sup>65</sup> First, just as Maximus emphasizes that God's eternal thinking of the principles (*logoi*) of beings does not necessitate their actual existence, so Philoponus argues against the notion that God's eternal thinking of beings necessitates their production. Both Philoponus and Maximus argue that God exists as an eternal creator, either as complete (in Philoponus: ὁ θεὸς αἰεὶ τέλειός ἐστιν πάντων δημιουργός)<sup>66</sup> or as in actuality (in Maximus: ὁ [...] αἰεὶ κατ' ἐνέργειάν ἐστι δημιουργός).<sup>67</sup> In turn, both employ the distinction between potentiality (δύναμις), or capacity (ἔξις), and actuality (ἐνέργεια) to characterize creatures in contrast to God: in the case of Maximus, creatures exist "in potentiality but not yet in actuality" (τὰ δὲ δυνάμει μὲν ἐστίν,

64 At face value this is somewhat puzzling: Philoponus' arguments suggest that some form of distinction exists in God, even though one cannot disentangle a distinct stage for a capacity that is not also in act in God, insofar as God is outside time. This reflects a tension in reading Philoponus, one which Koenraad Verycken (2010) recognizes when he argues that it would seem that "a separate divine volition, distinct from God's eternal will to create the world, is needed in order to bring about the real existence of the world, which would be incompatible with the immutability of God's willing activity" (p. 747). At least it is clear that Philoponus denies that there is a real distinction between capacity and act in God, although, as we have seen in Nicholas, he does not show how there may still be a distinction in God between the two while still affirming unity in God. For now, it is enough to point out that Philoponus provides a mechanism to understand God's possession of the *logoi* as distinct from God's activity of producing, and the type of transition between the two.

65 Cf. Philoponus, *Contra Proclum*, p. 76, l. 26–p. 77, l. 3 and above, n. 50. See also Varlamova, "Philoponus' Dispute", pp. 396–398.

66 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum*, p. 76, l. 21–22.

67 Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, 7, sect. 19, l. 9–10.

ἐνεργείᾳ δὲ οὐκ ἔτι);<sup>68</sup> in the case of Philoponus, capacity (ἐξίς) and actuality (ἐνέργεια) differ for creatures (“that which participates in God”), while both are the same in God (ἔστιν γὰρ ταὐτὸν ἄμφω).<sup>69</sup> For both, the change from potentiality, or capacity (ἐξίς), to actuality obtains for the domain of creatures, while God eternally thinks, and wills, the generation of beings without implying eternal production.

Where we do find one difference is in how this argument is employed. Philoponus, in the passage’s context, employs this distinction to argue that there is no change between capacity and actuality in God, insofar as God produces creatures in time. Maximus, by contrast, uses the distinction to argue for the fact of creatures’ contingent existence in contrast to God, while he does not explicitly argue against change in God—even though the denial of change is implied in Maximus’ assertion that God is a creator in actuality. Still, both Byzantines maintain the same point that God’s possession of the *logoi* of beings, like the shipwright possessing the idea of the ship, does not necessitate the actual, eternal production of beings. Instead, the distinction between the divine ideas and created beings allows for a way to articulate how God possesses divine ideas without necessitating their simultaneous instantiation. Philoponus’ defense of the position that God possesses the *logoi* of beings without their necessary, concurrent production can thus be seen in Maximus the Confessor’s own position that God possesses the *logoi* of creatures, while creatures in themselves are conditioned by their potential existence in time. In turn, we can see how this argument makes its way to Nicholas.

### 3.4 *Assessing the Relation between Maximus the Confessor and John Philoponus in Nicholas*

If we look back at Nicholas’ framework, adapted from Ps.-Dionysius, we can see certain aspects made clearer from looking at Maximus and Philoponus in the background. For instance, Nicholas’ distinction of the “ideas of beings” (ιδέας τῶν ὄντων) apart from what belongs to God’s own being from Prop. 76 shows the possible influence of Maximus’ distinction between the *logoi* contained in God and God’s own eternal being: in both cases we find the emphasis on the contingency of the principles of beings in God, where God’s eternal being does not necessitate the eternal production of creatures. Although Ps.-Dionysius calls the principles in God “wills”, it is in Maximus that we find the emphasis on the

68 Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum*, 7, sect. 19, l. 10–11.

69 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum*, p. 76, l. 21–22.

contingent temporality of beings produced through God's "wills", or *logoi*: an aspect reflected in Nicholas' distinction between God's production of beings as "by will" (θελήματι) apart from what is "by God's own being" (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι).

In addition, Nicholas' argument in Prop. 167 that God knows beings not through intellection unqualifiedly, but through specifically thinking of beings as their cause, mirrors Maximus' argument that God knows beings also not through intellection but rather in virtue of the distinct wills or intentions (θελήματα) in God. Although Nicholas accepts intellection in God in contrast to Maximus' denial of intellection,<sup>70</sup> one nevertheless finds a parallel in how Nicholas and Maximus qualify God's knowledge of beings in the same way—i.e. only in terms of the principles contained in God. Although Maximus seems little concerned with the pagan philosophical context in contrast to Philoponus, one nevertheless finds the survival of an anti-Proclean distinction in Maximus between God's own being and God's knowledge of beings.

So far this section has looked at Maximus as an influence in Nicholas' creationist interpretation of Ps.-Dionysius on the divine ideas, and it has considered Philoponus, in turn, as an influence in Maximus. While we have already seen certain parallels between Nicholas and Philoponus, as mediated through Maximus, it is worth briefly comparing the argumentative strategies of Philoponus and Nicholas in their respective rejections of Proclus' eternalist framework. As we saw in the *Elements'* Prop. 76, Proclus argues that unchanging causes produce unchanging effects, and that if an unchanging cause were to produce a changing effect, this would implicate the cause in change; hence, the cause must be changeless. Philoponus' response to Proclus is to reject the notion that change obtains in God by the production of contingent beings: capacity and actuality are the same in God, even if they are different in created beings.<sup>71</sup>

In Nicholas' response to Prop. 76, we see a somewhat different response. Nicholas' argument hinges on two aspects: (1) that "the manner of the creation, and the persistence or change of things that have come into being (γεγεννημένων) or have been created (πεποιημένων), [should be attributed] to the purpose (βουλήματι) of the Creator."<sup>72</sup> And (2) that the goodness of the divine cause is expressed only by willing—whereas not to attribute willing to the divine

70 Cf. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum*, 7, sect. 24, l. 13–20 (= PG 91, 1085A), and p. 218 above.

71 Cf. Philoponus, *Contra Proclum*, p. 77, l. 10–15, and p. 221, above.

72 Trans. Robinson; Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 76, l. 8–11: ἄμεινον οὖν τῷ βουλήματι τοῦ ποιοῦντος ἀνατιθέναι τὸν τε τρόπον τῆς ποιήσεως καὶ τὴν διαμονὴν εἴτε μεταβολὴν τῶν γεγεννημένων εἴτουν πεποιημένων (...).



cause would fail to express the cause's goodness. Nicholas, in effect, does not appear to address Proclus' charge that God is implicated in change by affirming God as the cause of changeable beings: instead Nicholas attributes change to God's willing, or purpose (βούλησις), rather than God's "own being" (τῷ εἶναι μόνῳ).<sup>73</sup> On the one hand it seems that Nicholas would follow Philoponus in denying that change obtains in God—at least change which pertains to creation. On the other hand, unlike Philoponus, he does not maintain that God is unmoved (*akinêton*): elsewhere, Nicholas critiques Proclus' attribution of being unmoved to God, affirming instead that God is preeminently self-moving, rather than unmoved.<sup>74</sup> However, in Nicholas' reply to Prop. 76, this aspect does not come up (as one might expect), but instead he appears to sidestep the issue by assigning the causation of created, changeable beings to God's βούλησις. Nicholas might perhaps respond to Proclus differently from Philoponus in this way: change does not obtain in God, as creating changeable beings, since changeability is assigned rather to God's will or purpose—but this does not implicate God's own being (τῷ εἶναι μόνῳ). Perhaps this also goes together with the opening lines of Nicholas' commentary on Proposition 76 that God's being (and thereby creation) is "incomprehensible" (ἀκατάληπτον)—an additional argument one does not see emphasized in Philoponus. This different strategy from Philoponus would be one point against the possibility that Nicholas adapted Philoponus' refutation of Proclus.

Still, certain aspects of Philoponus' framework may find a parallel, if not influence, in Nicholas. For instance, Philoponus emphasizes the superiority of causality by willing rather than without willing—one of the main premises in Nicholas' response to Proclus.<sup>75</sup> In turn, Philoponus' emphasis on the contingency of beings produced by God's willing, based on their *logoi* in God, can also be found in Nicholas (and Maximus, as noted above) when he argues against beings as "concurrent" (σύνδρομον) with God's being.<sup>76</sup> It may well be that these kinds of arguments were common by, or just prior to, Nicholas' time (e.g. in John Italos, as we will see below). In any case, we can see in Philoponus—and

73 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 76, l. 15–18: "But Proclus, rejecting the divine will, and determining by the mere being (τῷ εἶναι μόνῳ) of the Creator the production of what comes into being, seems to introduce the creation as involuntary (ἀκούσιον) for the Creator." (trans. Robinson) (οὗτος δὲ τὸ θεῖον θέλημα παραιτούμενος καὶ τὴν παραγωγὴν τοῦ γινομένου τῷ εἶναι μόνῳ τοῦ ποιούντος ἀφορίζόμενος ἀκούσιον ἔοικε τῷ ποιοῦντι τὴν ποιήσιν εἰσάγων.)

74 See e.g. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 14, l. 54–60. On Nicholas' notion of God as self-moving, see Joshua Robinson's chapter in this volume.

75 See earlier n. 58.

76 Cf. above, pp. 208–210.

by proxy, Maximus—two witnesses to an anti-eternalist argument which can be seen—at least aspects of it—in Nicholas’ use of Ps.-Dionysius in his own response to Proclus: a context which, again, Ps.-Dionysius in himself appears little concerned with.

#### 4 Conclusion: Nicholas’ Creationist Account of the Divine Ideas amidst the Byzantine Concern against Eternalism

In Sect. 1 we looked in depth at Nicholas’ understanding of the divine ideas as the means by which God produces created beings. One curious aspect in Nicholas’ argument, seen especially in his response to Proposition 167, is his distinction between God thinking himself and thinking of created beings as their cause. This can be related together with his two-fold distinction in causality, from his response to Proposition 76: God causes either (1) “by his own being” (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι), i.e. in the production of the Trinitarian persons, or (2) by the “one, common will” (ἐνὶ θελήματι καὶ κοινῷ) of the Trinitarian persons, i.e. in the production of created beings. Finally we also see a two-fold distinction in his response to Proposition 174, between God thinking created beings, as Intellect-itself, and God producing beings, as Being-itself. These distinctions can be seen as Nicholas’ attempt to distinguish how God can eternally possess the *logoi* or divine ideas for all created beings, while only contingently producing beings in time: all in contrast to Proclus, for whom God’s, or the gods’, possession of the principles of beings is simultaneous with the eternal production of those beings (as seen, again, in Prop. 76).

In Sect. 2 we looked at two particular early Byzantines as possible influences Nicholas’ creationist argument: proximately to Nicholas, Maximus the Confessor, and in the background to Maximus, John Philoponus. As noted, where Ps.-Dionysius equates God’s production of beings αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι with the divine ideas or “wills” (θελήματα), it is in Maximus that we find an implicit distinction between the two: i.e. God produces on the basis of the *logoi*, which he eternally possesses, while producing beings which are contingent by their nature. The same distinction we find in Philoponus in the background, for whom the production of changeable, contingent beings does not impute change in God—against Proclus’ claim to the contrary. One can see aspects of these arguments in the background to Nicholas’ response to Proclus and his use of Ps.-Dionysius’ notion of the divine ideas.

Why Nicholas himself is concerned with eternalism in his articulation of the divine ideas, outside the earlier context of Philoponus and Maximus, is not entirely clear. Although this paper’s focus is on the early Byzantine sources

behind Nicholas' articulation, another important, more proximate context for Nicholas may be the middle Byzantine, Komnenian-era controversy surrounding John Italos and his ecclesial condemnation in 1082—some 70–80 years before Nicholas' *Refutation*. Although explicitly aimed at Italos, the synodal condemnations appear to be a more wide-ranging, general critique of various ancient philosophical theses, like metempsychosis, the denial of the soul's immortality, and, more pertinently, the eternity of matter and created beings.<sup>77</sup> The picture is more varied with Italos himself: in texts like *Quaestio* 71, Italos appears, rather, to critique the idea of the pre-existence of matter and the eternity of the world, while re-using arguments *for* the world's eternity from Proclus and Aristotle. Among a barrage of arguments, Italos argues that the first cause's production of beings “by choice” (προαιρέσει), rather than “by nature” (φύσει), implies that it does not produce eternally.<sup>78</sup> In this Italos appears to refer to Philoponus' argument distinguishing the eternal actuality of the creator from the actuality of the created being, as we saw above.<sup>79</sup> Although both Italos and the ecclesial condemnation are several decades removed from Nicholas' time, the proximity of this kind of argument against the eternity of the world—and the awareness of these kinds of arguments which triggered Italos'

77 On the latter, see the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy* in J. Gouillard, *Le Synodikon de l'Orthodoxie: Édition et commentaire*, Paris, Éditions E. de Boccard, 1967, p. 59, l. 198–202. For a discussion of the condemnations in this period, see M. Trizio, “Trials of Philosophers and Theologians under the Komnenoi”, in A. Kaldellis, N. Sinisioglou (eds), *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), esp. pp. 463–464.

78 John Italos, *Quaestiones*, 71, l. 54–57: “[And when they say that] if the universe is corruptible, then the cause of the world is diminished in dignity, let them tell us whether the cause creates by an act of will or by nature. If it creates only by an act of will, then its nature is not such that it is eternally creating. If it creates by nature, too, then, so also the next one and so on, and the regress will stop at something everlasting, after which there is no [other] everlasting [entity]” (trans. Kraft–Perczel, lightly modified). (εἰ δ' ὅτι φθειρομένου τοῦ παντός τῆς ἀξίας ἡλάττωται τὸ τοῦ κόσμου αἷτιον, λεγέτωσαν πότερον προαιρέσει ἢ φύσει ποιεῖ. εἰ μὲν οὖν προαιρέσει μόνον, οὐκ αἰεὶ πέφυκε ποιεῖν· εἰ δὲ καὶ φύσει, καὶ τὸ μετ' ἐκεῖνο ἄρα, καὶ ἔτι τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο, καὶ στήσεται ἡ κάθοδος μέχρι τινὸς αἰδίου, μεθ' ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν αἰδίον.) Italos here implicitly refers to Plato and his “successors” when speaking of “they” (οἱ ἀπὸ Πλάτωνος): cf. lines 29–32. Italos eventually argues that the corruptibility of created things lies in its matter in the subsequent lines (58–70), implicitly preserving the first cause's dignity (cf. the end of Proclus' fourth argument in *De aeternitas mundi* in Philoponus, *Contra Proclum*, p. 55, l. 16–22). On this passage see A. Kraft, I. Perczel, “John Italos on the Eternity of the World: A New Critical Edition of *Quaestio* 71 with Translation and Commentary”, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 111/3 (2018), pp. 696–699.

79 See Kraft, Perczel, “John Italos on the Eternity of the World”, p. 698, referencing Philoponus, *Contra Proclum*, p. 46, l. 3–p. 49, l. 8; cf. also *Contra Proclum*, p. 76, l. 26–p. 77, l. 3, discussed earlier.

condemnation—may well have been fresh on Nicholas' mind, perhaps in connection with the linking of Proclus with contemporary heresy in Nicholas' time.<sup>80</sup>

Given this, various questions still remain. For instance, it is still not clear how one should understand the kind of "simultaneity" of the divine ideas in God—which are only contingently produced—and the causality of the divine persons, "in" or as God—which are necessarily and eternally produced: if Nicholas conceives of God as 'intellect'—or rather in his words, "pre-Intellect", following Ps.-Dionysius' language—how does one understand the unity of God as intellect, while maintaining the distinction between divine ideas and the divine nature/persons in itself/themselves? While this question cannot be answered here for now, we can see that Nicholas defends a creationist account of the divine ideas, and in doing so continues a trend from earlier Byzantines which we can see traced back, at least, to Maximus the Confessor and John Philoponus.

## Bibliography

### *Primary Sources (Editions and Translations)*

- Alcinous, *Albinos. Épitome* (= *Didaskalion*), ed. P. Louis, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1945.  
 Basil of Caesarea, *Homélie sur l'Hexaéméron* (= *In hexaemeron*), ed. S. Giet, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1949.  
 Damascius, *Traité des premiers principes* (= *De principiis*), ed. L.G. Westerink, trans. J. Combès, 3 vols., Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1986–1991.  
 John Italos, *Quaestiones quodlibetales*, ed. P. Joannou, Ettal, Buch-Kunstverlag, 1956.  
 John Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum*, ed. H. Rabe, Leipzig, Teubner, 1988 (repr. Hildesheim, Olms, 1963).  
 Maximus the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, 2 vols., trans. N. Constas, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2014.  
 Maximus the Confessor, *Opera* (= *Ambigua*), ed. J.P. Migne (*Patrologia Graeca* 91), Paris, 1865.

80 One sees this explicitly in the *Refutation's* prologue, l. 17–26. To what degree Nicholas is directly responding to Italos and/or Italos' teacher, Michael Psellos, rather than to a contemporary nearer his time, is unclear; however, see J. Robinson, "A Mixing Cup of Piety and Learnedness': Michael Psellos and Nicholas of Methone as Readers of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes, Volume 2: Translations and Acculturations*, (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 56–93, for some indicators that Nicholas may be directly responding to Psellos.

- Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*, ed. A.D. Angelou, Leiden, Brill, 1984.
- Origen, *Commentaire sur saint Jean* (= *Commentarii in evangelium Ioannis*), ed. C. Blanc, 5 vols., Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1966–1992.
- Philo of Alexandria, *De opificio mundi*, ed. L. Cohn, Berlin, Reimer, 1896.
- Plato, *Opera* (= *Phaedo*), ed. E.A. Duke et al., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Plato, *Rempubicam* (= *Republic*), ed. S.R. Slings, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Plotinus, *Opera* (= *Enneades*), ed. P. Henry, H.-R. Schwyzer, 3 vols., Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Proclus, *De aeternitate mundi*, see Lang, M. below.
- Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed., trans. E.R. Dodds, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963.
- Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem commentaria*, ed. C. Steel, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007–2009.
- Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, ed. B.R. Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum* I, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1990.

### Secondary Sources

- Benevich, G., "John Philoponus and Maximus the Confessor at the Crossroads of Philosophical and Theological Thought in Late Antiquity", in *Scrinium* 7–8/1(2011), pp. 102–130.
- Boys-Stones, G., *Platonist Philosophy 80BC to AD 250: An Introduction and Collection of Sources in Translation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- D'Ancona, C., "Plotinus and Later Platonic Philosophers on the Causality of the First Principle", in L.P. Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 356–385.
- Emilsson, E.K., *Plotinus*, London, New York, Routledge, 2017.
- Falà, J.F., I. Zavattero (eds), *Divine Ideas in Franciscan Thought (xiii<sup>th</sup>–xiv<sup>th</sup> Century)*, Canterano, Aracne editrice, 2018.
- Gersh, S., *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition*, Leiden, Brill, 1978.
- Gertz, S., "Knowledge, Intellect and Being in Damascius' *Doubts and Solutions Concerning First Principles*", in *Ancient Philosophy* 36/2(2016), pp. 479–494.
- Gleede, B., *Platon und Aristoteles in der Kosmologie des Proklos*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2009.
- Gleede, B., "Endorsing a Cliché: On Liberty and Necessity in Christian and Neoplatonist Accounts of Creation", in J.D. Turner, K. Corrigan, P. Wakefield (eds), *Religion and Philosophy in the Platonic and Neoplatonic Traditions: From Antiquity to the Early Medieval Period*, Sankt Augustin, Academia-Verlag, 2012, pp. 277–294.
- Gouillard, J., *Le Synodikon de l'Orthodoxie: édition et commentaire*, Paris, Éditions E. de Boccard, 1967.

- Greig, J., *The First Principle in Late Neoplatonism: A Study of the One's Causality in Proclus and Damascius*, Leiden, Brill, 2021.
- Greig, J., "Reason, Revelation, and Sceptical Argumentation in 12th- to 14th-Century Byzantium", in *Theoria* 88(2022), pp. 165–201.
- Greig, J., "Proclus' Reception in Maximus the Confessor, Mediated through John Philoponus and Dionysius the Ps.-Areopagite: A Case Study of *Ambiguum* 7", in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes, Volume 3: On Causes and the Noetic Triad*, Leiden, Brill, 2022, pp. 117–167.
- Greig, J., "Soul and Deification in Proclus, Nicholas of Methone, and the Palamite Controversy", in S. Wear, C. O'Brien (eds), *Platonic Principles*, Steubenville, OH: Franciscan University Press, forthcoming.
- Karamanolis, G., *The Philosophy of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed., London, Routledge, 2021.
- Kraft, A., I. Perczel, "John Italos on the Eternity of the World: A New Critical Edition of *Quaestio* 71 with Translation and Commentary", in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 111/3(2018), pp. 659–720.
- Lang, H.S., A.D. Macro, *On the Eternity of the World (De aeternitate mundi)*, Proclus, Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2001.
- Opsomer, J., "A Much-Misread Proposition from Proclus' *Elements of Theology* (Prop. 28)", in *The Classical Quarterly (New Series)* 65/1(2015), pp. 433–438.
- Robinson, J., "Dionysius against Proclus: The Apophatic Critique in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation of the Elements of Theology*", in D. Layne, D. Butorac (eds), *Proclus and His Legacy*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2017, pp. 249–270.
- Robinson, J., "'A Mixing Cup of Piety and Learnedness': Michael Psellos and Nicholas of Methone as Readers of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes, Volume 2: Translations and Acculturations*, Leiden, Brill, 2020, pp. 56–93.
- Shchukin, T., "Matter as a Universal: John Philoponus and Maximus the Confessor on the Eternity of the World", in *Scrinium* 13(2017), pp. 361–382.
- Sedley, D., "Platonic Causes", in *Phronesis* 43/2(1998), pp. 114–132.
- Sherwood, P., *The Earlier Ambigua of Saint Maximus the Confessor and His Refutation of Origenism*, Rome, Orbis Catholicus, Herder, 1955.
- Steel, C., "'Υπαρξίς chez Proclus", in F. Romano, D.P. Taormina (eds), *Hyparxis e hypostasis nel Neoplatonismo*, Florence, Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1994, pp. 79–100.
- Trizio, M., "Trials of Philosophers and Theologians under the Komnenoi", in A. Kaldellis, N. Sinissioglou (eds), *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 462–476.
- Varlamova, M., "Philoponus' Dispute Against the Eternity of the World and Its Influence on the Byzantine Philosophy", in *Scrinium* 13(2017), pp. 383–399.
- Vater, C.A., *Divine Ideas: 1250–1325*, PhD dissertation, Washington, DC, Catholic University of America, 2017.

- Verrycken, K., "John Philoponus", in L.P. Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, Vol. 2, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 733–755.
- Zachhuber, J. *The Rise of Christian Theology and the End of Ancient Metaphysics: Patristic Philosophy from the Cappadocian Fathers to John of Damascus*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Zavattero, I., "In Augustine's Footsteps. The Doctrine of Ideas in Franciscan Thought", in Falà, Zavattero, *Divine Ideas in Franciscan Thought*, pp. xi–xvii.

## The Motion of the Fertile One in Nicholas of Methone and Earlier Sources

*Joshua M. Robinson*

Dumbarton Oaks Library / Harvard University

Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation* of Proclus' *Elements of Theology* primarily interests two fairly distinct modern audiences. On the one hand, it attracts the attention of scholars of Proclus who are interested in the interpretation and critical examination of his arguments, as well as his reception by later authors.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, it engages the attention of scholars who study the intellectual currents of the middle Byzantine period, especially the period extending from Michael Psellos' career in the 11th century until Nicholas' death in the mid-12th century. These intellectual currents include both philosophical discussions that owe much to Psellos' revival of philosophical learning, and also theological disputes, some concerned with issues purely internal to the Greek-speaking church, and some concerned with the errors of the Latins.<sup>2</sup> The second audience thus finds in Nicholas' polemic against Proclus echoes of theological concerns in his other works, which themselves reflect the prevailing theological discussions of his time. Readers of Proclus, however, are likely to be disappointed with Nicholas, for while his work takes the form of a commentary, it seldom illuminates the many difficulties of Proclus' thought; while Nicholas does make arguments intended to refute Proclus, the informed reader of Proclus will generally find these arguments unpersuasive, since they so often rely on misunderstandings of Proclus or on theological premises that Proclus did not share.

While one certainly can examine Nicholas alongside Proclus, looking for insights into Proclus' text and for refutations of his arguments (or, instead, for Nicholas' failure to deepen our understanding of Proclus or to show flaws in

1 See S. Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus: from Antiquity to Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

2 For a discussion of Psellos' use of Proclus as a possible motivation for Nicholas' *Refutation*, see J. Robinson, "A Mixing Cup of Piety and Learnedness": Michael Psellos and Nicholas of Methone as Readers of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes. Volume 2: Translations and Acculturations* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).



his logic), and there are undoubtedly insights to be gained through such an approach, in this paper I propose a different and, in some ways, more fruitful approach. Instead of attempting to measure Proclus against Nicholas' specific arguments at the local syllogistic level or, conversely, to measure Nicholas' critique by the internal standards of Proclus' thought, i.e., to evaluate his arguments on Proclus' own terms, it is possible to inquire after the internal logic of Nicholas' own theological vision, and to attempt to indicate the systematic features of this vision. Elsewhere I have discussed aspects of Nicholas' interpretation of Proclus, as do other contributions within this volume.<sup>3</sup> Nicholas is clearly an unsympathetic reader, and frequently misinterprets Proclus. Here, however, rather than evaluating Nicholas' interpretation and criticism of Proclus in the light of Proclus' own thought, my aim instead is to elucidate certain central and systematic features of Nicholas' thought and to show how we can understand him as having a more or less coherent system whose principles largely determine his response to each of Proclus' propositions. My hope is that a clear exposition of how Proclus and Nicholas diverge in their most basic assumptions and intuitions will better equip us to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their respective visions and, by extension, of Neoplatonic and Christian thought more generally.

One may say, of course, that Nicholas simply opposes Proclus with Christian doctrine, and this is true. Yet he does so with his own specific emphases, emphases that are not uniformly shared by other patristic and Byzantine sources. It is these distinctive emphases, or some of them at least, that I would like to highlight here. If we think of Nicholas as implicitly having a "counter-*Elements*", we may to some extent simply identify this with the Christian creed. Yet important aspects of Nicholas' response are not explicable in such generic terms. The distinctive emphases of Nicholas' *Refutation* represent a creative development and reworking of various patristic themes, and thus I devote a portion of this paper to situating Nicholas' thought in relation to the patristic sources that, whether acknowledged or not, seem to contribute something to his thought.<sup>4</sup>

I have elsewhere shown how one of Nicholas' prominent strategies is to invoke Dionysius' emphasis on divine mystery and transcendence as a way of

3 J. Robinson, "Proclus as Heresiarch: Theological Polemic and Philosophical Commentary in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation* (*Anaptyxis*) of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in S. Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017).

4 By far his most important patristic influences are Gregory of Nazianzus and Dionysius, but besides these he cites Basil by name, and one can also detect the presence of Nemesius of Emesa, John of Scythopolis, John of Damascus, Photius, and perhaps Maximus the Confessor.

defending the doctrine of the Trinity against Proclus' system (with its apparently unitarian first principle), which he regards as an exercise in rationalistic hubris.<sup>5</sup> While the role of Dionysian apophaticism for Nicholas remains prominent in this exposition, I focus here on Nicholas' ideas about divine motion and fecundity (or fertility = γονιμότης). Nicholas signals the particular importance of these ideas by placing them at the end of his prologue to the *Refutation*, which is a fitting starting point for our inquiry.

Nicholas' prologue can be divided into five sections. In the first section, Nicholas expresses his astonishment that some of his fellow Christians are fascinated by Proclus and have thereby fallen into heresy. "For this reason", he announces,

I took care lest many of our contemporaries suffer that fate (as many, that is, as deem worthy of study the chapters by Proclus of Lycia called *Theological Elements*), and I knew that I must indicate, after diligently fixing my mind on them, the opinion in each chapter that is contrary to the divine faith, providing also some refutation so as to unmask the elaborate lie that eludes most people, hidden as it is in elegance.<sup>6</sup>

After a second section (2.13–31) in which he invokes divine aid for his endeavor, contrasting divine wisdom with the foolishness of merely human wisdom, Nicholas develops an elaborate typology in the third section (3.1–4.2), according to which Proclus' *Elements of Theology* is like a new Tower of Babel, with propositions for its bricks and logic for its mortar. In the fourth section (4.3–18), Nicholas comments on a few specific features of Proclus' text, beginning with the first proposition, which he regards as an attack on the Christian Trinity.

5 J. Robinson, "Dionysius against Proclus: the Apophatic Critique in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation of the Elements of Theology*", in D. Butorac, D. Layne (eds), *Proclus and His Legacy* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017). In the same article I discuss the complications and ironies that such a Dionysian critique involves, given Dionysius' own significant debt to Proclus' philosophy, which itself includes an apophatic dimension.

6 Nicholas of Methone, Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου / *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas' life and works by A.D. Angelou (Athens / Leiden: The Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984), *Proem.*, 2.7–12: ὅπερ ἵνα μὴ πάθωσι καὶ τῶν νῦν πολλοὶ προνοούμενος, ὅσοι τὰ Πρόκλου τοῦ Λυκίου κεφάλαια σπουδῆς ἄξια κρίνουσιν, ἅπερ αὐτῷ Θεολογικῇ Στοιχείωσις ἐπιγράφεται, δεῖν ἔγνων ἐπιμελῶς αὐτοῖς τὸν νοὺν ἐπιστήσας τὸ καθ' ἕκαστον αὐτῶν πρὸς τὴν θείαν πίστιν ἀντίδοξον ἐπισημῆνασθαι μετὰ καὶ τινος ἐλέγχου τὸ μεμηχανημένον καὶ τῇ κομψείᾳ ὑποκρυπτόμενον καὶ τοὺς πολλοὺς οὕτω διαφεύγον ψεύδος ἀνακαλύπτοντος.

In the fifth and final section, Nicholas begins to articulate some of the main themes of his response to Proclus. This section merits close attention, for it expresses concisely several of Nicholas' fundamental themes. We will consider this fifth section now in two parts. The first subsection (4.19–5.3) introduces the Dionysian aspect of Nicholas' critique, and the second subsection (5.3–15) integrates the themes of divine fecundity and self-movement into this Dionysian framework, connecting both themes to a famous statement in Gregory of Nazianzus' *Oration* 29:

For one must know that the things demonstrated by him concerning one and multitude do not at all give offense to us in regard to the doctrine of the highest Trinity, since, to speak as does the great Dionysius, that which is worshipped by us is *both one and three* and *neither one nor three*, since it is *beyond every one and every multitude*, seeing that it is in fact even *superior to number*, and *transcends every word and every concept*.<sup>7</sup> For, truly, that which is revered would not be beyond us if it were captured by our intellect and reason; yet it escapes not only *our* intellect, but even all the supercelestial beings, which are also intellects, since they are also named "intellectual substances".<sup>8</sup> We confess therefore that the divinity is a Trinity and that the same is a monad and the One; its being three does not negate its being the One, nor does its being the One negate its being three, but rather, from both it is confirmed to be both. For it is three, not as being measured by number, but as what gives substance to every three and measures every number; for this reason it is not a countable three, so that it could also be called a multitude, but is the one and only Trinity, and not by participation in the One (for such a three is countable and belongs to the same order as the multitude), but as being itself the One.<sup>9</sup>

7 A paraphrase of (Ps.-) Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus*, ed. B.R. Suchla (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990), 13.3 (228.17–229.14; 980C–981A).

8 A Dionysian expression.

9 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation, Proem.*, 4.19–5.3: 'Ιστέον τοιγαροῦν, ὅτι τὰ περὶ ἑνὸς καὶ πλήθους τούτῳ ἀποδεικνύμενα οὐδὲν τὸ παράπαν ἡμῖν εἰς τὸ περὶ τῆς ὑπερτάτου τριάδος προσίσταται, ὁπότε κατὰ τὸν μέγαν εἰπεῖν Διονύσιον καὶ ἓν ἐστὶ καὶ τρία τὸ παρ' ἡμῶν πρεσβευόμενον καὶ οὔτε ἓν οὔτε τρία ὡς ὑπὲρ πάν ἐν καὶ πάν πλήθος ἄτε δὴ καὶ ἀριθμοῦ κρείττον καὶ πάντα λόγον καὶ πᾶσαν ἔννοιαν ὑπερανестηκός. ἡ γὰρ ἂν οὐδὲν εἶχεν ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς τὸ σεμνόν, εἰ νῶ καὶ λόγῳ ἡμετέρῳ κατελαμβάνετο· τὸ δὲ οὐ τὸν ἡμέτερον μόνον διαφεύγει νοῦν ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντας τοὺς ὑπερουρανίους καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο νόας ὄντας, καθὼ καὶ νοεραὶ οὐσαὶ κατονομάζονται. τριάς οὖν ἡμῖν ἡ θεότης ὁμολογεῖται καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ μονὰς καὶ τὸ ἓν καὶ οὔτε τὸ τριάς εἶναι ἀρνεῖται τὸ εἶναι τὸ ἓν οὔτε τὸ εἶναι τὸ ἓν ἀρνεῖται τὸ εἶναι τριάς, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἑκατέρου μᾶλλον ἑκάτερον οὐσα βεβαιοῦται. τριάς μὲν γάρ ἐστιν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀριθμῶ μετρομένη, ἀλλ' ἡ πάσης τριάδος ὑποστάτις καὶ ἀριθμὸν πάντα μετροῦσα, διὸ οὐδὲ τριάς ὑπαρίθμιος,

Again, it is the One, yet it is not sterile nor by any means unmoved; rather, since it itself is the cause of all fecundity and motion, for this reason it is the fecund-in-itself and the unique and very first self-moved, lest it be deprived of the best things that are derived from it. For if it is sterile, whence comes fecundity for others, and if it is unmoved, whence comes motion? For otherwise one must grant that something else is the cause of these qualities, and in this case the cause of all things would not be one; but if, on the contrary, the cause of all things is both one and fecund, then it must also be self-moved. *Because of this*, says Gregory the Theologian, *the monad from the beginning moved toward a dyad and at the trinity came to a halt*. Since then, this one is both fecund and self-moved, for this reason it is also three, and since it is three (though not in a countable way, but as the ground of all number), on account of this it is also one; or rather, let us say that the unique and supersubstantial Three itself is the same as the One itself.<sup>10</sup>

Nicholas thus argues that since motion and fecundity are positive features of the created order—that since they are among “the best things that derive” from the One, they must, in a transcendent manner, be “precontained”, in the One itself. If the One, by what we might call a “creative fecundity”,<sup>11</sup> brings into being creatures that themselves possess fecundity, then the One must itself possess not only a creative fecundity, but also a “natural fecundity”, i.e. a fecundity

---

ἵνα καὶ πλήθος λεχθῇ, ἀλλὰ τριάς ἢ μία καὶ μόνη καὶ ταῦτα οὐ κατὰ μετοχὴν τοῦ ἐνός (ὑπαρίθμια γὰρ τὰ τοιαῦτα καὶ τῷ πλήθει σύστοιχα), ἀλλ' ὡς αὐτὸ τὸ ἐν.

- 10 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation, Proæm.*, 5.3–15: πάλιν ἔστι μὲν τὸ ἐν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἄγονον οὐδὲ πᾶμπαν ἀκίνητον, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τὸ πάσης αἰτίου γονιμότητος καὶ κινήσεως, διὸ καὶ τὸ καθ' αὐτὸ γόνιμον καὶ τὸ μόνον καὶ πρῶτιστον αὐτοκίνητον, ἵνα μὴ τῶν ἐξ αὐτοῦ καλλίστων ἀποστερηταί. εἰ γὰρ ἄγονον, πόθεν τοῖς ἄλλοις ἢ γονιμότης, καὶ εἰ ἀκίνητον, πόθεν ἡ κίνησις; ἢ γὰρ ἄλλο τι δοτέον εἶναι τὸ τούτων αἴτιον καὶ οὕτως οὐχ ἔν ἂν εἴη τὸ πάντων αἴτιον, καὶ εἰ τὸ πάντων αἴτιον ἐν καὶ γόνιμον, αὐτὸ καὶ αὐτοκίνητον ἀνάγκη εἶναι. διὰ τοῦτο μονάς, φησὶν ὁ Θεολόγος Γρηγόριος, ἀπ' ἀρχῆς εἰς δυάδα κινήθεισα μέχρι τριάδος ἔστη. διότι γοῦν ἐν καὶ τοῦτο γόνιμόν τε καὶ αὐτοκίνητον, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ τρία, καὶ διότι τρία (καὶ ταῦτα οὐχ ὑπαρίθμια ἀλλ' ὑποστατικά παντός ἀριθμοῦ), διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἐν, μᾶλλον δὲ αὐτὸ τὸ ἐν καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ τριάς ἢ μόνη καὶ ὑπερούσιος.

- 11 See Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 7, 11.1–6: “(...) this wise man in his demonstration simply uses “fecundity” for “production”; yet production and fecundity are not the same; rather, the natural fecundity according to which the Son and Spirit derive from the Father, being of the same nature with him, is one thing, and the *demiurgic and creative* [fecundity] by which all things derive from the Father and the Son and the Spirit is something else” (emphasis mine). (...) παραλαμβάνει ὁ σοφὸς οὗτος τὴν γονιμότητα ἀντὶ τῆς παραγωγῆς· οὐκ ἔστι δὲ ταῦτόν παραγωγή καὶ γονιμότης, ἀλλὰ ἄλλη μὲν ἡ φυσικὴ γονιμότης, καθ' ἣν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ὁ υἱὸς καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα, τῆς αὐτῆς ἐκείνῃ φύσεως ὄντα, ἄλλη δὲ ἡ δημιουργικὴ καὶ ποιητικὴ, καθ' ἣν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος τὰ ὄντα πάντα.)

internal to itself that is the paradigm or transcendent pattern of the natural fecundity in creatures and that is, it would seem, the foundation of the creative act itself.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, if the One by its own creative movement is the source and cause of creatures that are capable of movement, then it must somehow originate and prefigure this movement by containing motion within itself as “self-motion”. In the climactic line of the prologue Nicholas binds together these two ideas of divine fecundity and divine self-motion with the words of Gregory of Nazianzus’s *Oration* 29: “Because of this, the monad from the beginning moved toward a dyad and at the Trinity came to a halt.” According to Nicholas, the divine fecundity made manifest in the begetting of the Son and the proceeding of the Spirit may be understood as an eternal self-motion, the principle and paradigm of all creaturely motion, and especially of creaturely self-motion. I will return shortly to the particular significance of creaturely self-motion.

Whereas Nicholas began the final paragraph of the prologue by enlisting Dionysian apophaticism in defense of the Trinity, contending that the Trinity transcends our concepts of oneness and threeness, he ends the prologue with a kind of analogical argument for the Trinity as the transcendent source or paradigm of all created fecundity and motion. Nicholas’ appeal to Gregory is situated within a Dionysian dialectic between the apophatic and cataphatic approaches that Nicholas, like Dionysius, always sees as complementary modes of thinking about God. Not content with employing the apophatic side of this dialectic to safeguard the Trinity against the encroachments of what he regards as Proclus’ rationalism, Nicholas pairs this negative argument with a positive argument for the superiority of Trinitarian doctrine over what he regards as the sterile pagan alternative, the unmoved monad.

The stark contrast between this idea of divine self-motion and Proclus’ way of seeing things is made quite clear in Nicholas’ comments upon Prop. 14, where Proclus presents a hierarchy in which the “unmoved” has the highest rank, followed by the “self-moved” in the middle (the level of soul), and the “other-moved” at the bottom (the level of body). Whereas Proclus, following a long tradition, placed the “unmoved” at the top of the hierarchy, Nicholas argues that the predicate “unmoved” does not, strictly speaking, apply to anything that exists: only what does not exist at all can be described as entirely without movement. Unlike Proclus, who divides reality into the unmoved and the moved, with a further subdivision of the latter into the self-moved and the other-moved, Nicholas instead places the fundamental division between the self-moved and the other-moved. The category of “self-moved” applies in the

---

12 This is not a claim Nicholas makes explicitly, but it seems implicit.

strict sense to the Trinity alone, and thus the category of “other-moved” extends to everything else, i.e. to everything that God has brought into being and that is thus “other-moved” in its origin.<sup>13</sup> Within this latter category Nicholas makes a further division between what is “secondarily” or “relatively” self-moved (τά δευτέρως αὐτοκίνητα), namely angels and rational souls presumably, and what is exclusively other-moved, namely bodies:

(...) the entirely unmoved is, according to the precise and true account, that which in no way at all exists; all bodies whatsoever are other-moved, and the bodiless substances [i.e. angels and rational souls] are participants in the self-motion that we call self-determination, receiving this from the first self-moved and self-subsistent substance, which, according to Gregory the Theologian, as *Monad from the beginning naturally moved toward a dyad and at the Trinity came to a halt*. Creatively moving by excess of goodness, [this first self-moved substance] produces all beings, both those which are self-moved in a relative fashion, and those which are other-moved. One must in all cases qualify movement in accordance with the things that are moved: just as one must speak naturally of natural things, so also one must speak super-naturally of super-natural things.<sup>14</sup>

One can detect the Dionysian way of thinking in this last statement, which emphasizes the ambiguity or polyvalence of terms relating to motion. Nicholas goes on to criticize Proclus for lacking such nuance, appealing to Aristotle along the way:

He understands “motion” without distinction, although this *is said in various ways*,<sup>15</sup> and he understands “unmoved” without distinction, though this too is said in two ways: as superior to motion, and as inferior to

13 In contrast with Maximus, for whom creation is the precondition of motion. See *Ambiguum* 7.

14 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 14, 20.7–22: καὶ ὅλως μὲν ἀκίνητον κατὰ τὸν ἀκριβῆ τε καὶ ἀψευδῆ λόγον τὸ μηδαμῇ μηδαμῶς ὄν, ἑτεροκίνητα δὲ τὰ σώματα πάντη πάντως, αὐτοκίνητοι δὲ αἱ ἀσώματοι οὐσίαι, τῆς αὐτοκινήσεως, ἣν ἡμεῖς φαμεν αὐτεξουσιότητα, μετέχουσαι ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης αὐτοκινήτου καὶ αὐθυπάρκτου οὐσίας, ἣτις κατὰ τὸν Θεολόγον Γρηγόριον ὡς μονὰς ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς εἰς δυάδα φυσικῶς κινηθεῖσα μέχρι τριάδος ἔσται, δημιουργικῶς δὲ δι’ ὑπερβολὴν ἀγαθότητος κινουμένη παράγει πάντα τὰ ὄντα, τὰ τε δευτέρως αὐτοκίνητα καὶ τὰ ἑτεροκίνητα. ἀνάλογον δὲ πάντως ῥητέον τοῖς κινουμένοις τὴν κίνησιν· ὥσπερ τῶν φυσικῶν φυσικὴν οὕτω δὴ καὶ τῶν ὑπερφύων ὑπερφυῆ.

15 See Aristotle, *Physics*, 4, 227b3: Μία δὲ κίνησις λέγεται πολλαχῶς.

motion, in the sense of privation. In this way then, although he wished to beguile through equivocal words, we show that he overturns himself rather than others.<sup>16</sup>

Nicholas is here rather unfair to Proclus, who of course was able to make and grasp fine distinctions, to say the least. Nicholas does avail himself of the two ways in which “unmoved” may be said, for while in this chapter he denies that the first cause is unmoved, in later chapters he is prepared to apply the predicate “unmoved” to God, provided it be understood in the superior sense. Thus, in chapter 16, he states,

And from these things it is clear, in fact, that the divine moves and reverts all things to itself, insofar as it is named the highest object of desire and longing. And moving all things, but moved by nothing else but itself alone, perhaps it alone may be called both unmoved and self-moved.<sup>17</sup>

So, it turns out that Nicholas admits a sense in which God is “unmoved”, namely, that he is not moved by anything else. And, of course, for Nicholas God’s proper self-motion has nothing to do with locomotion. But he has told us that the terms “motion” and “unmoved” both have more than one meaning, and so we also find that he sometimes applies the term “unmoved” to bodies, using the word in a lower sense simply to mean that they cannot move themselves.<sup>18</sup> Later in the same chapter Nicholas summarizes his position again:

16 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 14, 20.28–33: ὁ δὲ καὶ τὸ ὄν ἀδιαφόρως λαμβάνει συμπεριλαμβάνων τῷ παντὶ καὶ τὸ πρῶτον ὄν, ὃ καὶ ἀκίνητον εἶναι βούλεται, καὶ τὴν κίνησιν, καίτοι πολλαχῶς λεγομένην, καὶ τὸ ἀκίνητον. καὶ τοῦτο γὰρ διχῶς λέγεται· τὸ μὲν ὡς κρείττον κινήσεως, τὸ δὲ ὡς χεῖρον καὶ κατὰ στέρησιν. καὶ οὕτω διὰ τῶν ὁμωνύμων φωνῶν σοφίζεσθαι θέλων, πρὸ τῶν ἄλλων ἑαυτὸν ἀνατρέπων ἀλίσκεται.

17 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 16, 23.16–20: καὶ τούτων δὴ δῆλον ὅτι τὸ θεῖον πάντα κινεῖ καὶ ἐπιστρέφει πρὸς ἑαυτὸ, καθὼ καὶ ἀκρότατον ἐφετὸν τε καὶ ὀρεκτὸν ὀνομάζεται. πάντα δὲ κινουὶν παρὰ μηδενὸς δὲ κινούμενον ἑτέρου εἰ μὴ παρ’ ἑαυτοῦ μόνον, εἰκότως ἂν καὶ μόνον ἀκίνητον καὶ αὐτοκίνητον ὀνομάζοιτο. See also Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 25: “(...) this principle, which moves creatively and providentially for the production and preservation and well-ordered existence of these, while remaining substantially unmoved and unchanged in itself”. And Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 26: “the One, while remaining in itself unmoved, brings forth [effects] from its own substance that are similar, or rather, identical in nature with itself (...)”.

18 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 80, 83.9–13: “If in itself the body is unmoved, and the unmoved as unmoved is impassible, how then is body passible in itself? But that in itself it is unmoved is clear; for if there were no mover, then it would not at any time be moved.

we confess that [the first being] is, properly speaking, self-existent and self-moved. It moves and makes and preserves all the other beings, transforming them as it pleases, granting to some, after being other-moved, also to be self-moved, but assigning to others only to be other-moved.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, only the creator is self-moved in the proper sense. All creatures are fundamentally other-moved, but some creatures are also self-moved in a derivative or qualified sense. Self-motion in a creature is ontologically posterior to its original “other-motion”, i.e. its being brought into existence. “Self-moved” in the proper sense coincides with “unmoved” in the sense of “unmoved by anything else”. “Other-moved” coincides with “unmoved” in the sense of “not able to move itself”,<sup>20</sup> and “entirely unmoved” applies only to the non-existent.

Gregory’s famous statement in *Oration* 29, “the Monad from the beginning moved toward dyad and at Trinity came to a halt”, is probably Nicholas’ primary source and inspiration for conceiving of the Trinity in terms of motion. Yet several passages in Dionysius must also have contributed to Nicholas’ interest in the ideas of divine motion generally and of divine self-motion in particular.

---

And so they rightly think it is called ‘other-moved’, since in itself it is not able to be moved.” (Εἰ τὸ σῶμα καθ’ αὐτὸ ἀκίνητον, τὸ δὲ ἀκίνητον, ἢ ἀκίνητον, ἀπαθές, πῶς καθ’ αὐτὸ παθητὸν τὸ σῶμα; ὅτι δὲ καθ’ αὐτὸ ἀκίνητον δῆλον· μὴ γὰρ ὄντος τοῦ κινούντος αὐτὸ οὐκ ἂν ποτε κινήθει. διὸ καὶ ἑτεροκίνητον ἀξιούσιν αὐτὸ λέγεσθαι, ὡς καθ’ αὐτὸ μὴ δυνάμενον κινεῖσθαι.); see also Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 55, 58.12–14: “(...) the cosmic elements were created that stand in the place of matter, as yet undistinguished and shapeless and formless and wholly soulless and unmoved, altogether lacking in divine similarity (...)” (τὰ κοσμικὰ στοιχεῖα ὕλης λόγον ἐπέχοντα, ἀδιάκριτα τέως καὶ ἄμορφα καὶ ἀνείδεα καὶ ὅλως ἄψυχα καὶ ἀκίνητα, τῆς θείας ὁμοιότητος). In chapter 26, however, Nicholas verbally distinguishes between the “other-moved” and the “unmoved” within the created order, which is difficult to reconcile with what says elsewhere (26, 36.7–11): “the One itself is that which produces all things—the self-moved, the other-moved, and the unmoved, and [...] it creatively causes subsistence and, once it has caused subsistence, preserves [its creatures] in existence and moves [them] when it wishes—the one itself, the single principle and cause of all things, the Trinity revered by us: Trinity so that the one would not remain sterile or unmoved like entirely soulless things (...)” (εἶναι δὲ τὸ πάντα παράγον, τὰ αὐτοκίνητα, τὰ ἑτεροκίνητα, τὰ ἀκίνητα, καὶ δημιουργικῶς ὑφίσταν καὶ ὑποστάντα τηροῦν ἐστώτα καὶ κινεῖν, ὅτε βούλεται, τὸ ἓν αὐτό, τὴν μίαν πάντων ἀρχὴν καὶ αἰτίαν, τὴν παρ’ ἡμῶν σεβομένην τριάδα (τριάδα μὲν ὡς μὴ ἄγονον μένη τὸ ἓν μηδ’ ἀκίνητον ὡς τὰ παντάπασιν ἄψυχα...))

19 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 14, 21.12–18: ἡμεῖς δὲ τὸ ἓν καὶ τὸ δν καὶ τὰ γαθὸν ταυτὸν εἶναι καὶ λέγοντες καὶ πιστεύοντες, τουτέστι τὸ ὑπὲρ πάν ἓν καὶ ὑπεράγαθόν τε καὶ ὑπερούσιον, αὐθύπαρκτόν τε κυρίως καὶ αὐτοκίνητον εἶναι ὁμολογοῦμεν καὶ τὰλλα πάντα κινεῖν καὶ ποιοῦν καὶ τὰ μὲν ὄντα τηροῦν, τὰ δὲ μετασκευάζον ὡς βούλεται, καὶ τοῖς μὲν μετὰ τοῦ ἑτεροκινήτοις εἶναι καὶ τὸ αὐτοκίνητον χαρίζομεν, τὰ δὲ μόνον ὀρίζον εἶναι ἑτεροκίνητα (...).

20 See, however, the exception noted in note 18, above.



Thus, in chapter 4 of the *Divine Names*, he quotes the following passage from the *Hymns of Yearning* by Hierotheos:

Come then, and gathering these [two powers] together again into one, let us say that there is a single power that, in order to produce a unifying mixture, of itself moves from the good all the way to the last among beings, and returns from there again through all things in sequence to the good, cycling from itself and through itself and by itself, revolving always identically toward itself.<sup>21</sup>

A little earlier, having posed the question, “What do the theologians mean, calling him at one time yearning and love, and at another time yearned-for and beloved?”, he answers, “He is a simple, *self-moved*, self-active desiring motion, pre-existing in the good and flowing out to beings from the good and returning again to the good.”<sup>22</sup> In Letter 9, Dionysius says that by uncovering the more extraordinary scriptural symbols so as to “see these naked and pure in themselves”, “in this way we would revere the ‘source of life’ flowing into itself, also seeing [it] stable in itself and a certain single power, simple, *self-moved*, self-active, not abandoning itself, but being knowledge of all knowledges, and always contemplating itself through itself.”<sup>23</sup> So, as these citations show, one can find precedents in Dionysius for speaking of God as self-motion.<sup>24</sup> Nowhere, however, does Dionysius seem to suggest that divine self-movement is inherently Trinitarian, an association of ideas that is clearly present in Gregory’s *Oration 29*.

21 (Ps.-)Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus*, 4.17 (162.1–5; 713D): “Ἀγε δὴ καὶ ταύτας πάλιν εἰς ἓν συναγαγόντες εἰπώμεν, ὅτι μία τις ἔστιν ἀπλήθῃ δύναμις ἡ αὐτοκίνητικὴ πρὸς ἐνωτικὴν τινα κράσιν ἐκ τάγαθου μέχρι τοῦ τῶν ὄντων ἐσχάτου καὶ ἀπ’ ἐκείνου πάλιν ἐξῆς διὰ πάντων εἰς τάγαθὸν ἐξ ἑαυτῆς καὶ δι’ ἑαυτῆς καὶ ἐφ’ ἑαυτῆς ἑαυτὴν ἀνακυκλοῦσα καὶ εἰς ἑαυτὴν αἰεὶ ταυτῶς ἀνελιττομένη.”

22 (Ps.-)Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus*, 4.14 (160.1–11; 712C–712D): “Τί δὲ ὅλως οἱ θεολόγοι βουλόμενοι ποτὲ μὲν ἔρωτα καὶ ‘ἀγάπην’ αὐτόν φασι, ποτὲ δὲ ἔραστον καὶ ἀγαπητόν; (...) ἐρωτικὴν κίνησιν ἀπλήν, αὐτοκίνητον, αὐτενέργητον, προοῦσαν ἐν τάγαθῷ καὶ ἐκ τάγαθου τοῖς οὖσιν ἐκβλυσζομένην καὶ αἰθερὶς εἰς τάγαθὸν ἐπιστρεφομένην.”

23 (Ps.-)Dionysius, *Epistula* 9.1 (193.12–194.4; 1104B–1104C): “Δεῖ δὲ καὶ ἀποδύντας αὐτὰ ἐφ’ ἑαυτῶν γυμνὰ καὶ καθαρὰ γενόμενα ἰδεῖν. Οὕτω γὰρ ἂν θεώμενοι σεφθείημεν ‘πηγὴν ζωῆς’ εἰς ἑαυτὴν χρομένην καὶ ἐφ’ ἑαυτῆς ἐστῶσαν ὁρῶντες καὶ μίαν τινὰ δύναμιν, ἀπλήν, αὐτοκίνητον, αὐτενέργητον, ἑαυτὴν οὐκ ἀπολείπουσαν, ἀλλὰ γινώσιν πασῶν γινώσεων ὑπάρχουσαν καὶ αἰεὶ δι’ ἑαυτῆς ἑαυτὴν θεωμένην.”

24 The formation αυτο-X in Dionysius (e.g. αὐτοφῶς, αὐτοαγαθότης, αὐτοζωή) often means X-in-itself, or self-X. While some translations render αὐτοκίνητον as “motion itself”, it seems to me more likely that it has the usual sense of “self-moved”.

Nicholas' interest in the notion of divine fecundity, however, clearly does derive from Dionysius, who is the first Christian author to associate the term fecundity (γονιμότης) with the Trinity.<sup>25</sup> In *Divine Names* 1.4 Dionysius writes, with allusion to Eph. 3:15, that God is hymned "as triad because of the trihypostatic manifestation of the super-substantial fecundity, from which 'all fatherhood in heaven and on earth' is and 'is named'".<sup>26</sup> This text is surely one of

25 There is a text in the TLG ascribed to "Pseudo-Cyril" that uses the term in a trinitarian context, but it has been shown to be a later compilation dependent on John of Damascus. See G. Conticello, "Pseudo-Cyril's *De Sancta Trinitate*: A Compilation of Joseph the Philosopher", in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 61(1995), pp. 117–129. An interesting question, though I cannot pursue it here, is the extent to which Dionysius' interest in divine fecundity as a metaphysical principle is itself partly inspired by Proclus. Proclus does not seem to use the word γονιμότης, but there are many occurrences of γόνιμος and related terms in his writings. See, for example, *Elements of Theology*, props. 7, 27, 78, 98, 152 and 155. As for Gregory, we can find in his writings a rejection of what he sees as the poverty of the Jewish conception of God, which is related to Nicholas' emphasis on divine fecundity. See *Oration* 38.8 (SC 358:118.14–19): Θεοῦ δὲ ὅταν εἴπω, λέγω Πατὴρ, καὶ Υἱοῦ, καὶ ἁγίου Πνεύματος· οὐτε ὑπὲρ ταῦτα τῆς θεότητος χρομένης, ἵνα μὴ δῆμον θεῶν εἰσαγάγωμεν· οὐτε ἐντὸς τούτων ὀρίζομένης, ἵνα μὴ πενίαν θεότητος κατακριθῶμεν, ἢ διὰ τὴν μοναρχίαν Ἰουδαίζοντες, ἢ διὰ τὴν ἀφθονίαν Ἑλληνίζοντες. ("When I say 'God', I mean Father and Son and Holy Spirit. The divinity is not diffused beyond these, lest we introduce a crowd of gods, nor is it limited to fewer than these, lest we be condemned to a poverty of divinity, either Judaizing because of the monarchy or hellenizing because of the abundance."); see also *Oration* 45.4 (= PG 36, 628C) for the same text.

26 (Ps-)Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* 1.4 (112.10–113.2; 589D–592A): "Ὅθεν ἐν πάσῃ σχεδὸν τῇ θεολογικῇ πραγματείᾳ τὴν θεαρχίαν ὁρώμεν ἱερῶς ὑμνουμένην ὡς μονάδα μὲν καὶ ἐνάδα διὰ τὴν ἀπλότητα καὶ ἐνότητα τῆς ὑπερφυοῦς ἀμερείας, ἐξ ἧς ὡς ἐνοποιοῦ δύναμews ἐνιζόμεθα καὶ τῶν μεριστῶν ἡμῶν ἐτεροτήτων ὑπερκοσμίως συμπτυσσομένων εἰς θεοειδῆ μονάδα συναγόμεθα καὶ θεομίμητον ἔνωσιν, ὡς τριάδα δὲ διὰ τὴν τρισυπόστατον τῆς ὑπερουσίου γονιμότητος ἐκφάνσιν, ἐξ ἧς «πάσα πατριὰ ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς» ἔστι καὶ «ὀνομάζεται». Of the three other uses of the term γονιμότης in Dionysius, only one is trinitarian: *De divinis nominibus* 13.3 (229.6; 980D–981A): Διὸ καὶ μονὰς ὑμνουμένη καὶ τριάς ἡ ὑπὲρ πάντα θεότης οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲ μονάς, οὐδὲ τριάς ἡ πρὸς ἡμῶν ἢ ἄλλου τινὸς τῶν ὄντων διεγνωσμένη, ἀλλὰ ἵνα καὶ τὸ ὑπερηνωμένον αὐτῆς καὶ τὸ θεογόνον ἀληθῶς ὑμνήσωμεν, τῇ τριαδικῇ καὶ ἐνιαίᾳ θεωνυμίᾳ τὴν ὑπεράνωμον ὀνομάζομεν, τοῖς οὕσι τὴν ὑπερουσίαν. Οὐδεμία δὲ μονάς ἡ τριάς, οὐδὲ ἀριθμὸς οὐδὲ ἐνότης ἡ γονιμότης οὐδὲ ἄλλο τι τῶν ὄντων ἢ τινι τῶν ὄντων συνεγνωσμένων ἐξάγει τὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα καὶ λόγον καὶ νοῦν κρυφίότητα τῆς ὑπὲρ πάντα ὑπερουσίως ὑπερουσίης ὑπερθεότητος, οὐδὲ ὄνομα αὐτῆς ἔστιν οὐδὲ λόγος, ἀλλ' ἐν ἀβάτοις ἐξήρηται. ("For this reason, the divinity beyond all that is hymned as both monad and triad is neither a monad nor a triad such as is understood from us or from some other among beings, but so that we may truly hymn its superunified [character] and its **theogony**, we name what is beyond names with the triadic and henadic divine-naming, [we name] by beings what is beyond being. And no monad or triad, no number or unity or **fecundity** or anything else among beings or known by any among beings, sets forth the hiddenness beyond every logos and mind of the superdivinity that super-exists superessentially beyond all, nor does it have a name or a logos,

Nicholas' chief inspirations: like Dionysius in this passage, he not only thinks of the Trinity in terms of fecundity, but also repeatedly speaks of divine fecundity as the source of creaturely fecundity.<sup>27</sup>

Maximos the Confessor seems to be the first patristic writer to have explicitly related Gregory's statement in *Oration* 29 to the Dionysian theme of divine fecundity (γονιμότης). We will come to this in a moment. In his scholia on Dionysius, however, John of Scythopolis had already alluded to this passage in relation to Dionysius' discussion of the Trinity. Commenting on Dionysius' discussion of "unions and distinctions within the unutterable Union and sustaining Source",<sup>28</sup> John writes,

He now theologizes concerning the procession of the unspeakable Triad to three hypostases, that the God and Father, moving timelessly, beneficently and lovingly proceeded to a distinction of hypostases, remaining super-unified and super-simplified in his own wholeness, without parts and without diminishment, his own radiance proceeding into existence as a living Image, with also the all-Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father everflowingly and in a manner worthy of worship, as the Lord mystically teaches. And by goodness the cause and fount of all things is multiplied to a tri-hypostatic thearchy. And these things Gregory the Theologian says in his discourses against Eunomius [i.e., *Oration* 29].<sup>29</sup>

While the term γονιμότης does not appear in this passage, the idea is clearly present when John speaks of the "cause and fount of all things" being "multiplied by goodness".<sup>30</sup>

but is transcendent in unapproachable regions"). Elsewhere Dionysius, explaining why angels are called "rivers of fire", speaks of their "live-giving fecundity" (ζωοποιού γονιμότητος) (*De coelestia hierarchia*, ed. G. Heil, A.M. Ritter (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991), 15.9 [58.10–11; 337C]), and in another passage he speaks of the "peaceful fecundity" (εἰρηνικῆς γονιμότητος) of divine peace, which spreads peace throughout the cosmos (*De divinis nominibus* 11.2 [219.23; 952A]).

27 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 151, quoted below in note 33.

28 (Ps-)Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus*, 2.5 (128.14–15; 641D).

29 John of Scythopolis, *Scholia on The Divine Names* 2.5 (128.14–15): Τὰ περὶ τῆς ἀφράστου τριάδος μέχρι τριῶν ὑποστάσεων προόδου νῦν θεολογεῖ, ὅτι περὶ ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ κινηθεὶς ἀχρόνως καὶ ἀγαθοπρεπῶς καὶ ἀγαπητικῶς προήλθεν εἰς διάκρισιν ὑποστάσεων, ἀμερῶς τε καὶ ἀμειώτως μέινας ἐν τῇ οἰκειᾷ ὁλότητι ὑπερηνωμένους καὶ ὑπερηπλωμένους, τοῦ οἰκείου ἀπαυγάσματος εἰς ὑπαρξίν προελθόντος ὡς εἰκόνας ζώσης, καὶ τοῦ παναγίου πνεύματος προσκυνητῶς καὶ ὑπεραενάως ἐκπορευομένου ἐκ τοῦ πατρός, ὡς μυσταγωγεῖ ὁ κύριος. ἀγαθότητι δὲ ἐπληθύνθη ἐπὶ τρισυπόστατον θεαρχίαν ἢ αἰτία πάντων καὶ πηγὴ. ταῦτα καὶ ὁ θεολόγος Γρηγόριος ἐν τοῖς κατὰ Εὐνομίου φησίν.

30 Cf. other instances of γονιμότης in John of Scythopolis, *Scholia on The Divine Names* 1.4

Maximos, however, in his *Ambigua to John*, is the first to offer an interpretation of Gregory's statement that explicitly relates it to divine fecundity. Unlike Nicholas, however, who in his *Refutation* of Proclus assigns a central role to divine self-motion, Maximos seems chiefly concerned to explain away Gregory's apparent claim that God moves; Maximos understands the movement subjectively, as taking place in our progressive understanding of God's triune character:

(...) *the Monad from the beginning moved toward dyad and at Triad came to a halt.* For it is moved in the intellect receptive to it, whether angelic or human, that through it and in it makes investigations concerning it. And, to speak more clearly, he teaches the intellect indivisibly in the first approach the principle concerning monad, lest division be introduced into the first cause, but spurs it to receive also its divine and unspeakable fecundity (γονιμότητα), saying to it in a hidden and mysterious manner that it should not think that this Good is ever ungenerative (ἄγονον) of Word and Wisdom or of sanctifying Power, which are consubstantial and hypostatic, lest the divine be conceived as composed of these as of accidents and not be believed to exist eternally as these.<sup>31</sup>

(112.14 sq.): καὶ ὅτι γονιμότητά φησι τὴν πατρικὴν πρόοδον εἰς ἔκφανσιν τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος. (And [note] that he calls "fecundity" the paternal procession into manifestation of the Son and of the Holy Spirit); also 13.3 (229.8): Τὸ θεογόνον φησι δηλοῦσθαι ἐκ τῆς ὀνομασίας τῆς τριάδος. ἵνα γὰρ παραστή τῶν ἀνεκκαλήτων ὑποστάσεων ἢ προσκυνητῇ ἔκφανσις, ὁ ἀριθμὸς ἐπενοήθη, καθὰ φησι καὶ Βασίλειος καὶ Γρηγόριοι οἱ θεῖοι. γόνιμον δὲ τὸν πατέρα καταχρηστικῶς ὠνόμασεν, ἅτε καὶ προσκυνητοῦ υἱοῦ πατέρα καὶ τοῦ συμπροσκυνητοῦ αὐτοῖς παναγίου πνεύματος πηγὴν. γονιμότης οὖν ἢ ἕτερόν τι ὄνομα τῶν συνεγνωσμένων ἢ ἀνθρώποις ἢ καὶ αὐταῖς ταῖς νοηταῖς δυνάμεσιν οὐκ ἂν παραστήσειε τρανῶς τὰ ὧς εἰσὶν ἐκ πάντων ἀποκεκρυμμένα τοῦ θεοῦ. πῶς γὰρ δυνατόν ὀνομάσαι ἀπὸ τίνος τῶν ὄντων τὸν θεὸν μηδὲν τῶν πάντων ὄντα καὶ ὑπὲρ τὰ πάντα ὄντα; (He says that the name of 'Trinity' shows a 'divine-begetting' (θεογόνον). For number was invented in order that the venerable manifestation of the ineffable hypostases might be represented, as the divine Basil and Gregory say. And he named the father 'fertile' (γόνιμον) loosely (καταχρηστικῶς), inasmuch as he is Father of the venerable Son and fount of the co-venerable Holy Spirit. So 'fertility' or any other name among the things known either to men or to the very noetic powers would not clearly represent the things of God as they are, hidden from all. For how is it possible to name God from something among beings, since he is nothing among beings and is beyond all beings?)

31 Maximos the Confessor, *Ambigua*, 23.4: Κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον καὶ ὁ θεόφρων Γρηγόριος φησι: "Μονὰς ἀπ' ἀρχῆς εἰς δυάδα κινηθεῖσα μέχρι Τριάδος ἔστη." Κινεῖται γὰρ ἐν τῷ ταύτης δεκτικῷ νῷ, εἴτε ἀγγελικῷ εἴτε ἀνθρωπίνῳ, δι' αὐτῆς καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ τὰς περὶ αὐτῆς ἐξετάσεις ποιούμενῳ, καὶ σαφέστερον εἰπεῖν, διδάσκει αὐτὸν ἀμερίστως ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ προσβολῇ τὸν περὶ μονάδος λόγον, ἵνα μὴ διαίρεσις τῷ πρώτῳ αἰτίῳ ἐπεισασθῇ, προβιβάξει δὲ αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν θείαν καὶ ἀπόρρητον τούτου γονιμότητα δέξασθαι, λέγουσα μυστικῶς τε καὶ κρυφίως αὐτῷ μὴ δεῖν ἄγονον εἶναι

To summarize, then, it seems that Dionysius was the first Christian writer to have associated the Trinity with the term “fecundity” (γονιμότης), John of Scythopolis then brought Gregory’s text into a Dionysian context, and Maximos made an explicit connection between Trinity and fecundity in his explanation of the same text from Gregory. Nicholas’ actual formulations, however, strongly suggest that he also has John of Damascus in mind, as I will show shortly.

Not only in Nicholas’ prologue, but throughout his *Refutation*, the theme of divine fecundity is central. In nearly half of his twenty-two uses of the term “fecundity”, he qualifies it with the adjective “natural”. His purpose in specifying a “natural fecundity” (φυσική γονιμότης) is to emphasize what he regards as a crucial distinction between three different kinds of “procession” (πρόοδος), to use Proclus’ term. Proclus himself uses the term “fertile” or “fecund” (γονιμός), to characterize the productive capacity of principles at various levels within his system, but whereas Proclus’ emanative doctrine suggests a seamless continuity in the productive procession of the One into Being, into Life, into Intellect, into Soul, etc., Nicholas strictly distinguishes between three different processions. The fundamental and framing distinction is constituted by the “creative procession”, God’s free and unmediated production of all things from not being. This creative procession is never described in terms of “natural fecundity”, and in fact the word “fecundity” (γονιμότης) is not even usually applied to the creative procession. Only once, in Chapter 7, Nicholas explicitly distinguishes “demiurgic and creative” (δημιουργική καὶ ποιητική) fecundity from “natural fecundity”,<sup>32</sup> and later, in Chapter 151, Nicholas speaks of God’s creative capacity as a “knowing fecundity”, (ἐπιστημονική γονιμότης) and a “productive fecundity” (παρακτική γονιμότης). “Natural fecundity”, however, is strictly distinguished from this creative capacity, and designates, in the first place, the Father’s role as begetter of the Son and “projector” of the Spirit, and in the second place, reflections of this begetting and procession within the created

---

πώποτε φρονεῖν τοῦτο τὸ ἀγαθὸν Λόγου καὶ Σοφίας ἢ ἀγιαστικῆς δυνάμεως, ὁμοουσίῳ τε καὶ ἑνυποστάτῳ, ἵνα μὴ σύνθετον ἐκ τούτων ὑποληφθῇ τὸ θεῖον ὡς συμβεβηκότων, καὶ οὐχὶ ταῦτα ὑπάρχον ἀεὶ πιστευθῇ.

- 32 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 7, 11.1–6: “(...) this wise man in his demonstration simply uses “fecundity” for “production”; yet production and fecundity are not the same; rather, the natural fecundity according to which the Son and Spirit derive from the Father, being of the same nature with him, is one thing, and the demiurgic and creative [fecundity] by which all things derive from the Father and the Son and the Spirit is something else”. ((...) παραλαμβάνει ὁ σοφὸς οὗτος τὴν γονιμότητα ἀντὶ τῆς παραγωγῆς· οὐκ ἔστι δὲ ταῦτόν παραγωγή καὶ γονιμότης, ἀλλὰ ἄλλη μὲν ἡ φυσικὴ γονιμότης, καθ’ ἣν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ὁ υἱὸς καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα, τῆς αὐτῆς ἐκείνῳ φύσεως ὄντα, ἄλλη δὲ ἡ δημιουργικὴ καὶ ποιητικὴ, καθ’ ἣν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος τὰ ὄντα πάντα.)

order. Whereas the products of the creative procession are different in species from their cause, the characteristic feature of natural fecundity is that it brings about “offspring” that are of the same species and nature.<sup>33</sup>

Nicholas’ specification of “natural fecundity” (φυσική γονιμότης) suggests the influence of John of Damascus, for in the *De Fide Orthodoxa* John writes, “It is impossible to say that God is lacking in the *natural fecundity* (φυσική γονιμότης); and fecundity is to beget from oneself or from one’s own substance offspring

33 See Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 151, 136.24–137.30. The chapter is worth citing in its entirety: “The paternal cause is good and most good, and God is such, or rather he is this; for God is the Good and the Good is God. And since God is also all-powerful, it is clear that he pre-contains all fecundity; and for this reason, as it is written, *from him derives all fatherhood in heaven and on earth*. And it is absolutely necessary that the divine fecundity and paternity be incomparably superior to the [fecundity and paternity that exists] among us; but now, according to the hypotheses of this wise one, it risks to be inferior by much, if the One alone is God and is not, as according to our account, that which is both one and three, and if on the one hand it begets, but begets something inferior to and worse than itself, while on the other hand it transmits to those after it a power of begetting such that nothing begets something equal and precisely similar to itself in nature, but all beget [offspring that are] secondary and inferior to themselves, even though the fathers with us on earth beget offspring that are equal to themselves and similar in nature; for man begets man, and horse begets horse, and the offspring have differed from the begetters in no way except in time, the ones earlier, the others later (but this is nothing in addition to nature); but indeed earlier and later in time have no place among the eternal things. And no one doubts that the power of the one who begets something equal with himself is superior to the power of the one who begets something inferior, unless he would say that the abortions contrary to nature are superior to the offspring according to nature. But if every power and *every good* comes down to us *from above*, where it pre-exists in a superior way, then it is absolutely necessary that the divine fecundity and paternity be superior to [the fecundity and paternity] among us. Therefore, the One is fecund by nature and super-naturally and inefably begets the Son from its own substance and nature, not simply similar to itself and equal in nature, and brings forth likewise the Spirit, according to the twofold mode of the natural fecundity beheld also among us, and in this way the super-principle *monad*, super-principally *moving*, *came to a halt in triad*; and the same is both monad and triad. And on the one hand [there is] the natural paternity and fecundity in this [the One], but on the other hand God produces all beings, not from his super-substantial and hidden substance, but creatively, by scientific fecundity of super-wise wisdom, and in this way he both is and is said to be Father of all beings as well. And having put also rank in the beings that obtain the precedence according to this [fecundity?] and that first receive his illuminations and transmit [them] to others, on this basis he also grants to these the paternal privilege. But according to this wise man, the very first One bears only the productive fecundity and has been deprived of the natural [fecundity], which implies either that he begrudges to others the status of being indistinguishable from him in nature, and thus is not good, or that he is not able to bring forth from himself something consubstantial with himself, and thus is not all-powerful.”

similar in nature to oneself.”<sup>34</sup> In another text John further specifies this notion as applying to the generation of both the Son and the Spirit:

(...) Christ the truth says: “The sower went out to sow”. And who is the sower? God and father and creator and farmer; God according to nature; father according to the natural fecundity by which he is Father of a Son and projector of a Spirit; creator, for by will he framed this universe from not being; farmer, for from his super-substantial existence he cultivates each of the things that come into being, distributing the substantial grace and power that are analogous and appropriate to the nature of each, as well as the persistence and stability of their natural state.<sup>35</sup>

In this latter text from John, we see not only the specification of “natural” fecundity that is typical in Nicholas, but also the explicit identification of this fecundity with both the begetting of the Son and the projecting of the Holy Spirit, what Nicholas will designate as the “two-fold mode of natural fecundity” (τὸν διττὸν τρόπον τῆς φυσικῆς γονιμότητος). Thus, in responding to Proclus’ Proposition 64, Nicholas writes,

34 John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei*, ed. P.B. Kotter (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1973), 8.49: Ἀδύνατον γὰρ τὸν θεὸν εἰπεῖν ἔρημον τῆς φυσικῆς γονιμότητος· ἡ δὲ γονιμότης τὸ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἦγουν ἐκ τῆς ἰδίας οὐσίας ὅμοιον κατὰ φύσιν γεννᾶν. Maximus also speaks of natural fecundity in *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* (55, l. 174), but in connection to human, not divine fecundity. See also Michael Syncellus, *Encomium in Sanctum Isacium et Dalmatum*, ed. P. Hatlie, “The Encomium of ss. Isakos and Dalmatos by Michael the Monk (BHG 956d): Text, Translation and Notes”, in V. Ruggieri, L. Pieralli (eds), *EUKOSMIA. Studi miscellanei per il 75 di Vincenzo Poggi S.J.* Soveria Mannelli (Catanzaro): Rubbettino, 2003, pp. 277–293, 7.11: “there is not yet a father deprived of natural fecundity (...)” ((...) οὔτε πατὴρ τῆς φυσικῆς πῶ ἐστέρηται γονιμότητος); and Nicholas Mouzalon, *De processione Spiritus Sancti* (RAP 3656) edited in Th. Zeses, “Ο πατριάρχης Νικόλαος Δ' Μουζάλων (Παράρτημα: Μουζάλωνος, Περὶ τῆς ἐκπορεύσεως τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος)”, in Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς 23 (1978), pp. 307–329, here 36.16: Αὐτοῦ δὲ τοῦ Πνεύματος οὐ ταῦτα μόνον τὰ εἰρημένα θεοπρεποῦς ἀξίας ἀνάξια πάσχοντος, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ μόνον αὐτὸ τῆς κοινῆς Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ καὶ ταυτῆς δὴ φυσικῆς γονιμότητος μένειν ἄμοιρον (...).

35 John of Damascus, *Laudatio sanctae martyris Anastasiae*, ed. B. Kotter (Berlin / New York: De Gruyter, 1988), 4.1–8: Ὡδε πῇ φησι Χριστός, ἡ ἀλήθεια: “Ἐξῆλθεν ὁ σπείρων τοῦ σπείραι.” Καὶ τίς ὁ σπείρων; Ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ καὶ δημιουργὸς καὶ γεωργός· “Θεός” κατὰ φύσιν· “πατὴρ” <κατὰ> τὴν φυσικὴν γονιμότητα, καθ’ ἣν ἐστὶ πατὴρ μὲν υἱοῦ, προβολεὺς δὲ πνεύματος· “δημιουργός”, ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων γὰρ βουλῆσει τότε τὸ πᾶν συνεστήσατο· “γεωργός”, φυτοκομεῖ γὰρ ἐκάστῳ τῶν γενομένων μεταδίδους ἐξ ὑπερουσίου ὑπάρξεως τὴν οὐσιώδη καὶ τῇ φύσει ἐκάστου ἀνάλογον καὶ κατάλληλον χάριν καὶ δύναμιν καὶ τῶν φυσικῶν ἔξεων μονὴν τε καὶ ἴδρυσιν.

It is not the case that many self-perfect henads or monads proceeded from the one and only and all-perfect Father, but only two, according to the twofold mode of natural fecundity: the one and only Son by begetting, and the one and only Holy Spirit by proceeding (...).<sup>36</sup>

Later, when commenting upon Proposition 151, Nicholas uses the same phrase, but with an addition:

(...) the One is fecund by nature, and begets the Son, not simply similar to itself and equal in nature, but super-naturally and ineffably from its own substance and nature, and brings forth likewise the Spirit, according to the *twofold mode of natural fecundity beheld also among us*, and thus the super-principle *Monad*, super-principially *moving*, *came to a halt in Trinity*; and the same is both monad and triad.<sup>37</sup>

Nicholas' phrase, "the twofold mode of natural fecundity beheld also among us" is puzzling at first sight, for it is not obvious what mode of fecundity might be intended besides begetting. The meaning becomes clear, however, in Chapter 18 of the *Refutation*, where Nicholas suggests the fountain and the sun as images of the "projection" of the Spirit:

although the Father is *hypostatic* cause (ὑποστατικὸν αἰτίον) of both the Son and the Spirit, he is not the productive or creative cause, but rather, he is the begetting cause of the former, and the bringer-forth or projecting (προακτικὸν εἶτουν προβλητικὸν) cause of the latter, as Father and projector. And everything that thus begets and brings forth according to its own nature begets and brings forth something similar to itself. And so

36 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 64, 67.12–15: Αὐτοτελεῖς ἐνάδες εἶτουν μονάδες ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐνὸς καὶ μόνου καὶ παντελείου πατρὸς οὐ πολλαί τινες προήλθον ἀλλ' ἢ δύο μόναι κατὰ τὸν διττὸν τρόπον τῆς φυσικῆς γονιμότητος, ὁ εἷς καὶ μόνος υἱὸς γεννητῶς καὶ τὸ ἐν καὶ μόνον ἅγιον πνεῦμα ἐκπορευτῶς (...). Note that for Nicholas causation "by mere being" (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι) is also only applicable to the generation of the Son and the Spirit, whereas it applies at multiple levels of Proclus' system. For discussion of causation "by mere being" see also Jonathan Greig's chapter in this volume, "Nicholas of Methone on Divine Ideas: Between Proclus and the Early Byzantines".

37 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 151, 137.13–19: γόνιμον ἄρα φύσει τὸ ἐν καὶ γεννᾷ οὐχ ἀπλῶς ὁμοιον ἑαυτῷ καὶ ἴσον κατὰ φύσιν, ἀλλ' ὑπερφυῶς καὶ ἀρρήτως ἐκ τῆς αὐτοῦ οὐσίας καὶ φύσεως τὸν υἱόν, προάγει τε ὡσαύτως τὸ πνεῦμα κατὰ τὸν διττὸν τρόπον τῆς καὶ παρ' ἡμῖν θεωρουμένης φυσικῆς γονιμότητος, καὶ οὕτως ἡ ὑπέραρχος μονὰς ὑπεραρχικῶς κινηθεῖσα μέχρι τριάδος ἔσται· καὶ ἔστιν ἡ αὕτη καὶ μονὰς καὶ τριάς.



a man begets a man, and a horse begets a horse, and a fountain gushes forth water and the sun gives forth light with its ray, and these begotten and projected things are similar to what begot or brought them forth.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, for Nicholas the divine fecundity that is distinctly expressed in both the begetting of the Son and the projecting of the Spirit is also reflected in a two-fold manner within the created order.

Let us return now to the theme of divine self-motion. Just as God's natural fecundity is reflected in the natural fecundity of creatures, so also, according to Nicholas, divine self-motion (αὐτοκίνησις) is reflected in the motion of creatures, and preeminently in the self-motion of angelic minds and rational souls. Of course, the association of self-motion with soul is an old one going back to Plato. Precisely this association is what we see in the hierarchy that Proclus outlines in Proposition 14. Nicholas, however, extends the application of self-motion beyond the level of Soul, on the one hand, so as to include both angelic intellects<sup>39</sup> and God, and on the other hand restricts the meaning of self-movement so that only *rational* souls, not all souls, are considered to be self-moved.<sup>40</sup> This restriction is made clear by his consistent association of

38 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 18, 24.27–25.2: εἰ γὰρ καὶ ὑποστατικὸν αἰτίον ἐστὶν ὁ πατὴρ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ καὶ παρακτικὸν εἶναι ποιητικόν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ μὲν γεννητικόν, τοῦ δὲ προακτικόν εἶναι προβλητικόν ὡς πατὴρ τε καὶ προβολεὺς. πᾶν δὲ τὸ οὕτω γεννῶν καὶ προάγον κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φύσιν ὅμοιον ἑαυτῷ γεννᾷ καὶ προάγει. ἄνθρωπος οὖν ἄνθρωπον γεννᾷ καὶ ἵππος ἵππον καὶ πηγὴ ὕδωρ προΐησι καὶ τὸ φῶς μετὰ τῆς ἀκτίνος ὁ ἥλιος καὶ εἰσι τὰ τε γεννῶμενα καὶ τὰ προβαλλόμενα τοῖς γεννώσι καὶ τοῖς προάγουσι ὅμοια.

39 Following Gregory of Nazianzus, who in *Oration* 38.9 speaks of the angels as not “immovable” but “difficult to move” (δυσκινήτους): “I am persuaded to consider and say that they are not immovable but only difficult to move on account of the one who was called Lucifer because of his radiance but both became and is called darkness because of his pride” (trans. Harrison, p. 67).

40 See Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 20: “If every body is moved by another, but the moving agent, according to him, is soul, then someone might inquire whether the elements too, since they are bodies and are moved, are moved by soul and are ensouled. And if every soul is self-moved, and consequently is ever-moving and immortal, and if all animals and plants and elements are ensouled, then how are their souls not immortal as well, and thus separable from bodies? Alternatively, it is not the case that every body is moved by soul, but there are some that are moved by nature alone. And it is not the case that every soul is immortal, since only the rational and intellectual soul, and not every soul, is perfect; the nature of the irrational animals and, even more, the nature of the plants, is imperfect and is not worthy to be called ‘soul’ in the proper sense; rather, it is ‘psychic in form/soul-like’, as someone might say, since it is ranked on the borderland of soul and nature”. The expression ‘soul-like’ (ψυχοειδής) is very rare, appearing only three other times in the TLG (twice in Philo, once in Iamblichus). One instance in Philo is relevant to Nicholas’ usage: “And it was on this account that of all living creatures God created fishes first, inasmuch

self-movement with self-determination (αὐτεξουσίωτος).<sup>41</sup> For example, in his commentary on Proposition 14, which we have already considered, he states that “the bodiless substances [i.e. angels and rational souls] are participants in the self-motion that we call self-determination, receiving this from the first self-moved and self-subsistent substance”.<sup>42</sup> In other texts Nicholas assigns self-determination to “the rational soul and the super-cosmic intellects” (*Refutation* 19), or to “rational and intellectual [beings]” that are governed “by both nature and choice” (*Refutation* 43), and he makes it clear that self-determination is the power of choosing freely between moral alternatives. In chapter 185, he again identifies self-movement and self-determination, stating that “the soul is agreed to be self-determined, or at any rate the soul that is called rational, according to which especially it is also self-moved”.<sup>43</sup> In other words, it is designated as self-moved with respect to its rationality in particular. In chapter 186, he speaks of the animal that “is *rational* and because of this *free and self-determined* to do what it wishes, not being governed *by nature alone*, as the irrational animals are”.<sup>44</sup>

There is nothing novel in this meaning of self-determination (αὐτεξουσίωτος), which could be illustrated from many patristic sources. Both in prior authors and in Nicholas, however, αὐτεξουσίωτος typically applies only to angels

---

as they partake of corporeal substance in a greater degree than they partake of soul, being in a manner animals and not animals, moving soulless things, having a sort of semblance of soul diffused through them for no object beyond that of keeping their bodies live (πρὸς αὐτὸ μόνον τὴν τῶν σωμάτων διαμονὴν παρασπαρέντος αὐτοῖς τοῦ ψυχοειδοῦς) (just as they say that salt preserves meat), in order that they may not easily be destroyed. And after the fishes, he created winged and terrestrial animals: for these are endowed with a higher degree of sensation, and from their formation show that the properties of their animating principle are of a higher order. But after all the rest, then, as has been said before, he created man, to whom he gave that admirable endowment of mind—the soul, if I may so call it, of the soul, as being like the pupil to the eye; for those who most accurately investigate the natures of things affirm, that it is the pupil which is the eye of the eye” (from *On the Creation*, trans. Yonge).

41 See Gregory of Nazianzus and John of Scythopolis for earlier collocation of these terms.

42 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 14, 20.14–17: (...) αὐτοκίνητοι δὲ αἱ ἀσώματοι οὐσίαι, τῆς αὐτοκινήσεως, ἣν ἡμεῖς φάμεν αὐτεξουσίωτητα, μετέχουσαι ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης αὐτοκινήτου καὶ αὐθυπάρκτου οὐσίας (...).

43 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 185, 162.6–9: εἰ δὲ ταῦτα ἄτοπα, καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτεξουσίωτος εἶναι ἀνωμολόγηται, ἢ γε λογικὴ, καθ’ ὃ μάλιστα καὶ αὐτοκίνητος, εἴρηται, οὔτε ἄρα φύσει τίς θεία καὶ καθ’ αὐτὴν θεὸς οὔτε φύσει μεταβλητὴ τίς, ἀλλ’ αὐτοπροαίρετος πάσα.

44 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 186, 164.29–32: ὅτι λογικὸν τοῦτο τὸ ζῷον ἐστι καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο ἐλεύθερόν τε καὶ αὐτεξουσίωτον τοῦ πράττειν ὅπερ ἂν βούληται, καὶ οὐ φύσει μόνη, καθάπερ τὰ ἄλογα, διοικούμενον (...). Cf. also Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, chapters 106, 107 and 171.

and men rather than to God, though on one occasion, in one of his anti-Latin treatises, Nicholas does speak of the Holy Spirit as αὐτεξούσιος. Thus, αὐτοκίνητος and αὐτεξούσιος are not strictly interchangeable for Nicholas, since he more readily speaks of God as self-moved than as self-determined. Even so, the two terms are closely associated for Nicholas; this is unusual, and, as I have already noted, Nicholas' understanding of self-moved in terms of self-determination is a restriction of the traditional sense of self-motion as a characteristic of soul in a broader sense.<sup>45</sup> When we investigate the sources for precedents for Nicholas' usage, a familiar pattern emerges. In two passages of Gregory of Nazianzus, we find the terms αὐτοκίνητος and αὐτεξούσιος in close proximity in lists of attributes of the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>46</sup> And John of Scythopolis, in two scholia on Dionysius' *On the Divine Names*, glosses "self-moved" as meaning "self-determined", explicitly excluding the more generic sense of motion:

We should understand that by 'self-moving' he means those endowed with self-determination and those who rule themselves. He does not

45 Though it should be noted that one also finds in later Platonic authors this restriction of self-motion to rational souls. See Hermias, *In Phaedrum*, ed. C.M. Lucarini, C. Moreschini (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 119–120: "And especially from soul's perfecting itself you would understand its self-motion, and you would separate the rational soul from the irrational and its nature; for it belongs to the rational soul to perfect itself and to rouse itself and to return to itself, which exists for none of the others, and according to this interpretation it is fitting to say the same concerning the divine and human soul, i.e. of every rational [soul] and not concerning irrational [soul] and nature. But for others, as many as are moved, this is a fount and source of motion; and a source is ungenerated, etc". (Μάλιστα δὲ ἐκ τοῦ τελειοῦν ἑαυτὴν τὴν ψυχὴν λάβοις ἂν αὐτῆς τὸ αὐτοκίνητον καὶ ἀποχωρίσεως τὴν λογικὴν ψυχὴν καὶ τῆς ἀλόγου καὶ τῆς φύσεως ταύτη· τῆς γὰρ λογικῆς ἐστὶ ψυχῆς τὸ ἑαυτὴν τελειοῦν καὶ ἀνεγείρειν καὶ ἐπιστρέφειν εἰς ἑαυτήν, ὃ οὐδεμιᾶ τῶν ἄλλων ὑπάρχει, καὶ κατὰ ταύτην τὴν ἐκδοχὴν ἀρμόζει [λέγειν] τὸ περὶ θείας τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνης λέγειν αὐτὸν ψυχῆς, τουτέστι πάσης λογικῆς καὶ οὐχὶ περὶ τῆς ἀλόγου καὶ τῆς φύσεως. Ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὅσα κινεῖται τοῦτο πηγὴ καὶ ἀρχὴ κινήσεως· ἀρχὴ δὲ ἀγένητον, καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς). See also Damascius, *De principiis* I, 33–34. I am grateful to Carlos Steel for these references.

46 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 34.10 (SC 318:10.8–10): [We cannot say that the Son or the Holy Spirit is] mutable or subject to change; or that either in time, or place, or power, or energy he could be measured; or that he was not naturally good, **or not self-moved, or not self-determined** (...) ((...)) τρεπτόν ἢ ἀλλοιωτόν, ἢ χρόνῳ, ἢ τόπῳ, ἢ δυνάμει, ἢ ἐνεργείᾳ μετρούμενον, ἢ οὐ φυσικῶς ἀγαθόν, ἢ οὐκ αὐτοκίνητον, ἢ οὐκ αὐτεξούσιον (...); Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 41.9 (SC 358:9.9–12): The Holy Ghost [...] is] ever the same with himself, and with those with whom he is ranged; invisible, eternal, incomprehensible, unchangeable, without quality, without quantity, without form, impalpable, **self-moving, eternally moving, self-determined**, self-powerful, all-powerful (...) (αὐτὸ ἑαυτῷ ταυτὸν αἰεὶ, καὶ οἷς συντέτακται· ἀόρατον, ἀχρόνον, ἀχώρητον, ἀναλλοίωτον, ἄποιον, ἄποσον, ἀνέιδεον, ἀναφές, αὐτοκίνητον, ἀεικίνητον, αὐτεξούσιον, αὐτοδύναμον, παντοδύναμον (...)).

mean things that move themselves, e.g., animate beings, in opposition to immobile things, e.g., houses and mountains, rocks and wood.<sup>47</sup>

Gregory and Dionysius are Nicholas' two most important authorities in the *Refutation*, and we have seen already how Nicholas also seems to be influenced by John of Scythopolis' scholia on Dionysius. It therefore seems quite likely that his conception of self-motion in terms of rational self-determination owes something to the influence of these earlier passages in Gregory and John.

What seems to be entirely unprecedented in Nicholas' *Refutation*, however, is that he not only ascribes self-movement to God, but he specifically associates self-movement with God as Trinity, and interprets Gregory's famous line, "the monad moved to dyad and at triad came to a halt", in these terms. Unlike Maximus the Confessor, who in his interpretation of this passage takes pains to deny that God moves, Nicholas emphatically affirms that God is self-moved, or self-moving. Given that Nicholas all but identifies self-movement (αὐτοκινήσις) with self-determination (αὐτεξουσίτης), by affirming divine self-motion he thereby maintains the divine freedom and, by extension, the freedom of rational souls made in God's image. The logic is as follows: God as Trinity is paradigmatic self-motion, which is paradigmatic self-determination, or freedom. All creatures are fundamentally "other-moved" and therefore not free, yet some creatures, namely men and angels, are given a measure of self-motion, and thus have a relative self-determination or freedom. For man this is part of what it means to be made in the image of God, and thus it follows that human freedom is an image of the divine freedom that is the Trinity.<sup>48</sup>

Nicholas' conception of the Trinity as self-moved and therefore free is doubtless linked to his concern to oppose Proclus' emanationist conception whereby all lower levels of reality are produced "by the mere being" of the first cause. If, as Proclus maintains, the first cause is unmoved, then it seems it must produce "by mere being". If, however, one maintains that God creates freely, then he must create by will, not by being; he is thus not unmoved, but self-moved. Consider Proclus' Prop. 76 and Nicholas' response:

Prop. 76: Everything that comes to be from an unmoved cause has an unchangeable existence; everything that comes to be from a moving cause has a changeable existence.

47 John Scythopolis, *Scholia on The Divine Names*, 4.33 (178.11–12): ὅπερ δέ φησιν αὐτοκινήτων, ἀντὶ τοῦ αὐτεξουσίαν καὶ αὐτοκρατόρων εἰρῆσθαι νοητέον, οὐ γὰρ τῶν ἑαυτοῦς κινούντων, οἷον ἐμψύχων, πρὸς ἀντιδιαστολὴν τῶν ἀκινήτων, ὡς οἰκῶν, ἢ ἑτεροκινήτων, ὡς λίθων καὶ ξύλων.

48 This is not stated explicitly by Nicholas but is implicit in the following associations: Trinity—self-motion—self-determination.

For if the maker is entirely unmoved, then it produces what is second after it not through motion but by mere being; and if this is so, then it has what derives from it concurrent with its own being; and if this is so, then so long as it exists, it produces. But it always exists, and so it always causes what is after it to subsist. This implies that the latter is always coming into being from it and always exists, attaching its own “always” according to procession to the maker’s “always” according to activity (...).<sup>49</sup>

*Refutation 76:* That whose being is incomprehensible, of this the power and activity are also incomprehensible, so that both the creation and its manner are incomprehensible; foolish is he who investigates “the how” and who tries to subject this to demonstration. But that the divine is incomprehensible is agreed upon by all.

What comes to be is not unchangeable, for assuredly it comes to be, formerly not existing, but being changed from not being into being, and developing, according to its nature, to be changed from being into not being, unless the goodness of the creator holds it together and preserves it in being. We should therefore attribute the manner of the creation, and the persistence or change of things that have come into being or have been created, to the purpose of the Creator, who defines according to his will the manner of the creation, the measures of its persistence, and the order and change into one another of the things made, [...] But Proclus, rejecting the divine will, and determining by the mere existence of the Creator the production of what comes into being, seems to introduce the creation as involuntary for the Creator; for this reason, furthermore, he does not call it creation, but production. [...] And God produces nothing among beings by mere being, i.e., without willing, so as to have his product concurrent with his own being, but all things are posterior to his unoriginate existence; only his begetting of the Son and “projecting” of the Spirit is by mere being, and for this reason these are co-unoriginate and co-eternal and con-substantial with the Begetter and Projector. “Involuntary” has no place there, but [God produces beings] by one will that is common to the

49 Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 76: Πάν μὲν τὸ ἀπὸ ἀκινήτου γινόμενον αἰτίας ἀμετάβλητον ἔχει τὴν ὑπαρξιν· πᾶν δὲ τὸ ἀπὸ κινουμένης, μεταβλητὴν. εἰ γὰρ ἀκίνητόν ἐστι πάντη τὸ ποιοῦν, οὐ διὰ κινήσεως, ἀλλ’ αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι παράγει τὸ δεύτερον ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, σύμδρομον ἔχει τῷ ἑαυτοῦ εἶναι τὸ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, ἕως ἂν ᾗ, παράγει. αἰεὶ δὲ ἔστιν· αἰεὶ ἄρα ὑφίστησι τὸ μετ’ αὐτό· ὥστε καὶ τοῦτο αἰεὶ γίνεται ἐκείθεν καὶ αἰεὶ ἔστι, τῷ ἐκείνου αἰεὶ κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν συνάψαν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ κατὰ τὴν πρόοδον αἰεὶ ...

three Persons, insofar as the goodness of the Begetter and Projecter, of the Begotten, and of the Projected, is one and common.<sup>50</sup>

While Nicholas does not explicitly claim here, as elsewhere, that God is self-moved, he clearly must reject the premise of the unmoved mover, for only thereby can he reject the production “by mere being” that in his view denies the freedom of the first cause. Quite possibly this concern is the philosophical motivation for his earlier rejection of the more traditional teaching that God is unmoved. He does not seem to have considered that one might, with John Philoponus, reject the inference rather than the premise.<sup>51</sup>

I turn now to another issue that merits investigation, and this is the question of the original meaning and context of the famous line in Gregory of Nazianzus that Nicholas repeatedly quotes: “the monad from the beginning moved toward a dyad and at the trinity came to a halt”. This text appears near the beginning of Gregory’s *Oration* 29.

The highest beliefs about God are three: anarchy, polyarchy, and monarchy. The first two were played with by children among the Greeks, and

50 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 76: Οὐ τὸ εἶναι ἀκατάληπτον, τούτου καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ ἐνέργεια ἀκατάληπτος, ὥστε καὶ ἡ ποιήσις καὶ ὁ κατ’ αὐτὴν τρόπος· καὶ μάταιος ὁ τὸν τοιοῦτον τρόπον περιεργαζόμενος καὶ ἀποδείξει ὑπάγειν πειρώμενος. ὅτι δὲ ἀκατάληπτον τὸ θεῖον πᾶσιν ἀνωμολόγηται. Τὸ γινόμενον οὐκ ἀμετάβλητον· γίνεται γὰρ πάντως μὴ πρότερον ὢν ἄλλ’ ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι μεταβάλλον καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φύσιν πεφυκός ἐκ τοῦ ὄντος μεταβληθῆναι εἰς τὸ μὴ ὄν, εἰ μὴ ἡ τοῦ ποιήσαντος ἀγαθότης συνέχει αὐτὸ καὶ διατηρεῖ ἐν τῷ εἶναι. ἄμεινον οὖν τῷ βουλήματι τοῦ ποιοῦντος ἀνατιθέναι τὸν τε τρόπον τῆς ποιήσεως καὶ τὴν διαμονὴν εἴτε μεταβολὴν τῶν γεγενημένων εἴτουν πεποιημένων ὀρίζοντος κατὰ τὸ ἑαυτοῦ θέλημα καὶ τὸν τρόπον τῆς ποιήσεως καὶ τὰ μέτρα τῆς διαμονῆς καὶ τὴν τάξιν καὶ τὴν εἰς ἄλληλα μεταχώρησιν τῶν πεποιημένων [...]. οὗτος δὲ τὸ θεῖον θέλημα παραιτούμενος καὶ τὴν παραγωγὴν τοῦ γινομένου τῷ εἶναι μόνῳ τοῦ ποιοῦντος ἀφοριζόμενος ἀκούσιον ἔοικε τῷ ποιοῦντι τὴν ποιήσιν εἰσάγων· διὸ οὐδὲ ποιήσιν ἀλλὰ παραγωγὴν αὐτὴν ὀνομάζει. [...] αὐτῷ δὲ τῷ εἶναι, μὴ θέλων, δηλαδὴ παράγει τῶν ὄντων οὐδέν, ὥς καὶ σύνδρομον ἔχειν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ εἶναι τὸ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ παραγόμενον, ἀλλὰ πάντα τῆς αὐτοῦ ἀνάρχου ὑπάρξεως ὕστερα, μόνον δὲ αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι γεννᾷ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ μόνον προβάλλει τὸ πνεῦμα, ὅθεν καὶ συνάναρχα ταῦτα καὶ συναῖδια καὶ ὁμοούσια τῷ γεννῶντι καὶ προβάλλοντι, οὐδ’ ἐκεῖ τοῦ ἀκούσιου χώραν λαμβάνοντος, ἀλλ’ ἐνὶ θελήματι καὶ κοινῷ τῶν τριῶν, καθὼ καὶ ἡ ἀγαθότης μία καὶ κοινὴ τοῦ μὲν γεννῶντός τε καὶ προβάλλοντος, τοῦ δὲ γεννωμένου, τοῦ δὲ προβαλλομένου.

51 In the fourth argument of his *Against Proclus* (75.26–77.5), Philoponus argues that one need not suppose that creation *de novo* involves a change in the creator, for while the realization of Aristotelian “first actuality” does imply change in the cause from a prior state of potentiality, the production of “second actuality”, being instantaneous, does not. If, then, God is always actually creator in the first sense, he ‘becomes’ actually creator in the second sense (actually creates) without undergoing any change. For discussion of this argument, see Greig, “Proclus’ Reception in Maximus the Confessor”, pp. 139–146.

let them play. For anarchy is without order; and polyarchy is factious, and in this way anarchic, and in this way without order. So both lead to the same result, namely disorder, and this leads to destruction; for disorder is a preparation for destruction. But monarchy is what is honored by us—not the monarchy that one person circumscribes, for even one person, if at odds with himself, can become many, but the monarchy that is established by equal honor of nature, by agreement of opinion, by identity of motion, and by the tendency toward the one of those that derive from it (which indeed is impossible for the created nature) so that, even if they differ in number, they cannot be divided in substance. **Because of this (διὰ τοῦτο)** the monad, moved from the beginning to dyad, came to a halt at triad. **And this is for us (καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν ἡμῖν)** the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; the first, begetter and projector, impassibly of course, and without time or body; and the others, the begotten one and the projection, or I do not know how someone might call these, abstracting in every way from visible things. For we do not dare to say “overpouring of goodness”, which one of those who philosophized among the Greeks dared to say, like some cup overflowing, clearly saying this, in the chapters where he [i.e., Plotinus] philosophizes concerning first and second cause, lest we ever introduce the begetting as unwilling, like some natural and unres trainable secretion, most unfitting for our conceptions regarding divinity. Because of this, establishing our own definitions, we introduce the unbegotten, and the begotten, and the one who proceeds from the Father, as somewhere God the Word himself says.<sup>52</sup>

52 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 29.2 (SC 250:178.24–180.27): Τρεῖς αἱ ἀνωτάτω δόξαι περὶ θεοῦ, ἀναρχία, καὶ πολυαρχία, καὶ μοναρχία. αἱ μὲν οὖν δύο παισὶν Ἑλλήνων ἐπαίχθησαν, καὶ παιζέσθωσαν. τό τε γὰρ ἀναρχον ἄτακτον· τό τε πολυαρχον στασιώδες, καὶ οὕτως ἀναρχον, καὶ οὕτως ἄτακτον. εἰς ταῦτόν γάρ ἀμφοτέρα φέρει, τὴν ἀταξίαν, ἣ δὲ εἰς λύσιν· ἀταξία γὰρ μελέτη λύσεως. ἡμῖν δὲ μοναρχία τὸ τιμώμενον· μοναρχία δέ, οὐχ ἦν ἐν περιγράφει πρόσωπον· ἔστι γὰρ καὶ τὸ ἐν στασιάζον πρὸς ἑαυτὸ πολλὰ καθίστασθαι· ἀλλ’ ἦν φύσεως ὁμοτιμία συνίστησι, καὶ γνώμης σύμπνοια, καὶ ταυτότης κινήσεως, καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἐν τῶν ἐξ αὐτοῦ σύννευσις, ὅπερ ἀμήχανον ἐπὶ τῆς γεννητῆς φύσεως, ὥστε καὶ ἀριθμῶ διαφέρει, τῇ γε οὐσίᾳ μὴ τέμνεσθαι. διὰ τοῦτο μονὰς ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς εἰς δυάδα κινήθεισα, μέχρι τριάδος ἔστη. καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν ἡμῖν ὁ πατήρ, καὶ ὁ υἱός, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα· ὁ μὲν γεννήτωρ καὶ προβολεύς, λέγω δὲ ἀπαθῶς, καὶ ἀχρόνως, καὶ ἀσωμάτως· τῶν δέ, τὸ μὲν γέννημα, τὸ δὲ πρόβλημα, ἢ οὐκ οἶδ’ ὅπως ἂν τις ταῦτα καλέσειεν, ἀφελὼν πάντη τῶν ὀρωμένων. οὐ γὰρ δὴ ὑπέρχουσιν ἀγαθότητος εἰπεῖν θαυράσσομεν, ὃ τῶν παρ’ Ἑλλήσι φιλοσοφησάντων εἰπεῖν τις ἐτόλμησεν, οἷον κρατήρ τις ὑπερερρῦη, σαφῶς οὕτως λέγων, ἐν οἷς περὶ πρώτου αἰτίου καὶ δευτέρου φιλοσοφεῖ· μή ποτε ἀκούσιον τὴν γέννησιν εἰσαγάγωμεν, καὶ οἷον περιίττωμα τι φυσικὸν καὶ δυσκαθεκτον, ἥκιστα ταῖς περὶ θεότητος ὑπονοίαις πρέπον. διὰ τοῦτο ἐπὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων ὄρων ἰστάμενοι τὸ ἀγέννητον εἰσάγομεν, καὶ τὸ γεννητόν, καὶ τὸ ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον, ὥς πού φησιν αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ λόγος.

One might easily assume that the words Nicholas loves to quote were simply Gregory's own words. Nicholas himself presumably thought so and cited them on Gregory's authority. On closer examination, however, Gregory appears to be quoting or alluding to someone else's text. The clue lies in the word ἡμῖν ('for us'). διὰ τοῦτο ('because of this') signals the logical connection between the first part and the statement about the motion of the monad. But after this statement, the "for us" signals that the previous line is not Gregory's own words. Rather, he is quoting or paraphrasing another source (unidentified) to make a Trinitarian point.<sup>53</sup>

There is not space here to consider at length the various neo-Pythagorean parallels to this language, and so I limit myself to citing the most impressive parallel that I have so far been able to identify. It is found in a fragment from a historical work by Eunapius, who is best known for his *Lives of the Philosophers*:

Receiving this one as an ally, he kept him by his side; and then another was added, and there was a multitude; and **just as, according to the Pythagoreans, a monad, when it is moved to dyad, is no longer deprived of the nature of the numbers**, but is dispersed and flows into many, in this way, when Charietto took up Cercio, their achievements increased, and the number of their allies grew in proportion to their achievements.<sup>54</sup>

Eunapius' use of the numerological analogy here seems rather strained, since he is speaking about the arrival of reinforcements in a military campaign. But the fragment shows very clearly the Pythagorean (or neo-Pythagorean) character of the idea that the monad moves into the number series.

While neither Maximus nor Nicholas seems to have realized it, Gregory was not directly asserting that God is moved, but instead was using a Pythagorean motif to make a Trinitarian point. Maximus, on the one hand, by interpreting the passage in purely subjective terms, obscures Gregory's objective point about the Trinity. Nicholas, on the other hand, by interpreting this motion of monad to triad as a Trinitarian self-motion, and thus an affirmation of divine self-determination, probably reads far more into the passage than Gregory intended. Further investigation is needed to understand the Neopythagorean and Plotinian background of Gregory's thought, and its implications for understanding him. Probably the unmoving 'motion' of numbers seemed a fitting way of gesturing toward the paradoxes of intra-Trinitarian causality.

53 I am grateful to Fr. Andrew Louth for pointing out the implication of this 'for us' (ἡμῖν).

54 Eunapius, *Fragmenta*, ed. L.A. Dindorf (Leipzig: Teubner, 1870), p. 218.



## Conclusion

Proclus' *Elements of Theology* famously employs the highly systematic and formally rigorous geometric method, constructing an elaborate system on the basis of only a few obvious assumptions. In form, Nicholas' response has no structure of its own, for it simply mirrors that of Proclus' text. In substance, however, we can discern certain governing ideas with systematic implications. Above all, as the end of Nicholas' prologue makes clear, these are the ideas of divine self-motion and divine fecundity, both of which, according to Nicholas, characterize a distinctively Christian, hence Trinitarian, alternative to Proclus' system, with its monadic and unmoved first principle. In order to be free, and freely create, God must be self-moved rather than unmoved. In order to be Trinity, God must possess an archetypal fecundity. According to Nicholas' account these two divine features—divine self-movement and fecundity—are the transcendent cause and source of both natural, created fecundity and of the creaturely self-movement that is rational self-determination. The created order thus reflects the divine order. But even more, for Nicholas God's internal self-movement and fecundity overflow in a kind of freely-willed emanation-creation. While Nicholas denies the Proclean emanative conception of production "by mere being", his own expositions of God's creative production are filled with emanative metaphors, so that we might say that creation is, for Nicholas, a freely deployed over-flowing and out-flowing of the dynamism and generosity of the divine life itself.

## Bibliography

### *Primary Sources*

- Damascius, *De principiis*, ed. L.G. Westerink, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1986–1991.
- Eunapius, *Fragmenta*, in *Historici Graeci minores*, ed. L.A. Dindorf, Leipzig, Teubner, 1870.
- Gregory of Nazianzus, *Discours 27–31*, ed. P. Gallay, Paris, Les Editions du Cerf, 2008.
- Gregory of Nazianzus, *Discours 32–37*, ed. C. Moreschini, Paris, Les Editions du Cerf, 1985.
- Gregory of Nazianzus, *Discours 38–41*, ed. C. Moreschini, Paris, Les Editions du Cerf, 1990.
- Gregory of Nazianzus, *Festal Orations*, tr. N.V. Harrison, Crestwood, NY, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008.
- Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations*, *Patrologia Graeca* 36.
- Hermias, *In Platonis Phaedrum scholia*, ed. C.M. Lucarini, C. Moreschini, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2012.

- John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei*, ed. P.B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 2, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1973, pp. 3–239.
- John of Damascus, *Laudatio sanctae martyris Anastasiae*, ed. B. Kotter, in *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Vol. 5, Berlin / New York: De Gruyter, 1988, pp. 289–303.
- John of Scythopolis, *Prologus et scholia in Dionysii Areopagitae librum De Divinis Nominibus cum additamentis interpretum aliorum*, ed. B.R. Suchla, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2011.
- John Philoponus, *Against Proclus on the Eternity of the World 1–5*, tr. M. Share, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2005.
- John Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum*, ed. H. Rabe, Leipzig, Teubner, 1899.
- Maximos the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers. The Ambigua*, edition and translation N. Constatas, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2014.
- Michael Syncellus, *Encomium in Sanctum Isacium et Dalmatum*, ed. P. Hatlie, “The Encomium of ss. Isakos and Dalmatos by Michael the Monk (BHG 956d): Text, Translation and Notes”, in V. Ruggieri, L. Pieralli (eds), *EUKOSMIA. Studi miscellanei per il 75 di Vincenzo Poggi s.j.*, Soveria Mannelli (Catanzaro), Rubbettino, 2003, pp. 277–293.
- Nicholas Mouzalon, *De processione Spiritus Sancti* (RAP 3656), edited in Th. Zeses, “Ο πατριάρχης Νικόλαος Δ' Μουζάλων (Παράρτημα: Μουζάλωνος, Περί της ἐκπορεύσεως τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος)”, in *Ἐπιστημονική Ἐπετηρίς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς* 23(1978), pp. 307–329.
- Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*, ed. A.D. Angelou, Leiden, Brill, 1984 (for translation, see Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation*, below).
- Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *De coelesti hierarchia, De ecclesiastica Hierarchia De mystica theologia, Epistulae*, ed. G. Heil, A.M. Ritter, *Corpus Dionysiacum* 11, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1991.
- Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, ed. B.R. Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum* 1, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1990.
- Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. and tr. E.R. Dodds, New York, Oxford University Press, 1963.

### Secondary Sources

- Benvenuto, C., “Reconsidering Nicholas of Methone's Corpus on the Procession of the Holy Spirit”, in this volume, pp. 347–373.
- Bucossi, A., “12th-century Philosophers and the Filioque: The Case of Nicholas of Methone's Corpus on the Procession of the Holy Spirit”, in this volume, pp. 290–346.
- Conticello, V., “Pseudo-Cyril's 'De Sancta Trinitate': A Compilation of Joseph the Philosopher”, in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 61(1995), pp. 117–129.

- Gersh, S. (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus: from Antiquity to Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Greig, J., "Proclus' Reception in Maximus the Confessor, mediated through John Philoponus and Dionysius the Ps.-Areopagite: A Case Study of *Ambiguum* 7", in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes, Volume 3: On Causes and the Noetic Triad*, Leiden, Brill, 2022, pp. 117–167.
- Greig, J., "Nicholas of Methone on Divine Ideas: Between Proclus and the Early Byzantines", in this volume, pp. 201–232.
- Oosthout, A., "A Relativistic Approach to Proclus: Nicholas of Methone's Critique of *Elements of Theology* § 67–74 (on Parts and Wholes)", in this volume, pp. 167–200.
- Opsomer, J., "Standards of Argument in Nicholas of Methone and Proclus: Comparing the *Elementatio theologica* with Nicholas' Attempts to Disarm It", in this volume, pp. 139–166.
- Robinson, J.M., *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th-century Byzantium*, A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Graduate Program in Medieval Studies, Notre Dame (Indiana).
- Robinson, J.M., "Dionysius Against Proclus: the Apophatic Critique in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation of the Elements of Theology*", in D.D. Butorac and D.A. Layne (eds), *Proclus and his Legacy*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2017, pp. 249–269.
- Robinson, J.M., "Proclus as Heresiarch: Theological Polemic and Philosophical Commentary in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation (Anaptyxis)* of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in S. Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2017, pp. 103–135.
- Robinson, J.M., "'A Mixing Cup of Piety and Learnedness': Michael Psellos and Nicholas of Methone as Readers of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes, Volume 2. Translations and Acculturations*, Leiden, Brill, 2021, pp. 56–93.

# Ontological Foundations and Methodological Applications of Analogy in Nicholas of Methone: An Example of Realism

*Christos Terezis*

University of Patras

*Lydia Petridou*

Hellenic Open University, Patras

## 1 Introduction

In Christian teaching, analogy as a method primarily connects ontology with epistemology, where the former precedes the latter, according to the application of consistent realism, which the exponents of the analogical method adopt. The fact that analogy is related both to descriptions and interpretations of sensible beings and to the reduction of their content to metaphysical realities also emphasizes its close relevance to natural theology. Furthermore, since natural theology considers the eternal immanence of the divine in nature through various ways that can be captured by human perception and cognitive elaboration to some extent, analogy is also about how causality will be analyzed, which constitutes one of its most crucial foundations.

In this paper, we will attempt to study the principle of analogy in Nicholas of Methone (c. 1110–c. 1165), one of the most emblematic anti-Neoplatonist thinkers of Byzantium. We will focus on Nicholas' *Refutation of the Elements of Theology* by Proclus (412–485). We need to mention in the first place that Nicholas, like other Christian thinkers, argues for the principle of causality as the foundation of the determinations which the metaphysical world emits to the natural level, both ontologically and epistemologically (while at the same time we should not ignore questions that pertain to the fields of ethics and aesthetics). And the principle of analogy is based exactly on this holistic presence of causality in every particular case, which is used quite extensively, but without being absolutized as to the possibility of its linguistic depictions and semantic extensions, since any accuracy of them is contended that it is defined by the range of human capacity. The first question that we will deal with is whether analogy is transferred by Nicholas into the metaphysical world, as is the case,

for example, of Proclus' hierarchically structured metaphysical world, which is formed by direct and mediating dependencies of the lower gods upon the higher. By extension, is analogy for Nicholas a term, or method, to understand the metaphysical world? In a broader sense, what is its exact function as also a strictly methodological mode, in order for valid epistemological products to be formed?

We should first clarify that both Christianity and Neoplatonism adopt ontological monism—that is, the idea that all things depend on one cause grounding the plurality of beings. The difference between them is that the former embraces monotheism, while the latter defends polytheism. This theoretical detail is crucial, for it defines the degree of analogy between the metaphysical and natural world as to their essence, structure and functions. In a monotheistic model, analogy is not as complicated as it is in a polytheistic model that functions with intermediaries, since there are many causes that are hierarchically structured. Having in mind intertextuality, one should also note that Proclus refers to analogy in all of his treatises, such as the *Theologia Platonica*, which was likely written after the *Institutio theologica*, which Nicholas criticizes.<sup>1</sup> Our examination of the two thinkers is limited to the texts that Nicholas focuses on. This also affects the range of the theories.

1 Cf. Proclus, *Theologia Platonica* [*Théologie Platonicienne II*, intr., ed., transl., comm. H.D. Saffrey—L.G. Westerink (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1974)], 43.15–51.19, where occasioned by the sixth book of Plato's *Respublica*, Proclus mentions the following: Τίνα τὰ ἐν Πολιτεία (507c–509d) ῥηθέντα διὰ τῆς πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον ἀναλογίας περὶ τῆς πρώτης ἀρχῆς· ἐν οἷς λέγεται πῶς τὰγαθὸν ἀνυμνεῖται, πῶς φανότατον τοῦ ὄντος, πῶς ὁ ἥλιος ἔκγονος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, καὶ ὅτι καθ' ἑκάστην τάξιν τῶν θείων ὑπέστη μονὰς ἀνάλογος ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἀρχῇ, καὶ πῶς πάντων ἐστὶν αἰτία τῶν ὄντων πρὸ δυνάμεως οὐσα καὶ ἐνεργείας (2.5–11). [Proclus, *The Theology of Plato*, transl. Th. Taylor (The Prometheus Trust, 1995), p. xvi: “What assertions are in the *Republic* concerning the first principle, through its analogy to the sun; where also it is shown, how it is celebrated as the good, and as the most splendid of being. How the sun is the offspring of the good; and that according to each order of divine natures, there is a monad analogous to the first principle. And how the first principle is the cause of all beings and is itself prior to power and energy.”] As in many others, this is a chapter in which Proclus points out his monistic and polytheistic ontological system. The term “μονάς” represents every individual cause and a particular way of unity. On this analogy in Proclus, cf. S. Gersh, *Κίνησις Ἀκίνητος: A Study of Spiritual Motion in the Philosophy of Proclus* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), pp. 83–90, where he makes a general study of this topic in relation to the question of activity: “Any further investigations into the nature of activity must take account of Proclus' interpretation of the famous simile of light in Plato's *Republic*. This simile exercised a profound influence overall the Neoplatonists because of its application to the Good or supreme principle, and Proclus takes considerable pains to explore its meaning in every detail. In one important respect, his treatment deviates from the original text, for when he says that Plato is employing an ἀναλογία, he understands this term in a special tech-

## 2 Analogy as a Method to Refute Proclus' Metaphysical Positions

For Proclus, as we have already mentioned in our introduction, metaphysical hierarchy within a manifold of causes or gods is presupposed. A typical example is prop. 72 of the *Institutio theologica*, where Proclus contends that “all those characters which in the participants have the relative position of a basis proceed from more complete and more universal causes.”<sup>2</sup> According to Nicholas, this proposition leads Proclus to accept that matter—which, Proclus demonstrates in the next prop. 73,<sup>3</sup> comes from the One—is superior to the “forms”, which come from Being.<sup>4</sup> But this hierarchical structure, as Nicholas

---

nical sense peculiar to later Neoplatonism, and this determines the general form which his interpretation of the simile takes” (83–84). Cf. L.J. Rosan, *The Philosophy of Proclus. The Final Phase of Ancient Thought* (New York: Cosmos, 1949), pp. 125–126.

- 2 Cf. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. E.R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), prop. 72, 68.17–18: πάντα τὰ ἐν τοῖς μετέχουσι ὑποκειμένων ἔχοντα λόγον ἐκ τελειοτέρων πρόεισι καὶ ὀλιγωτέρων αἰτίων. Dodds in his critical study on the text considers that this proposition explains the previous prop. 71, and he contends that (pp. 238–239): “The generic characters of an individual or a class are involved in, but do not involve, its specific characters (hence their earlier emergence and longer persistence): Pr. expresses this by calling them the ‘basis’ or ‘matrix’ (ὑποκείμενον, ὑποδοχή) of the latter. The presence of such generic characters is a prerequisite before the individual can be fit (ἐπιτήδειος) to receive the specific form. Pr. is thus enabled to explain away the seeming dualism of the famous passage in the *Timaeus* [30a] where the visible world is represented as having had a ‘faulty and disordered motion’ of its own before the demiurge took it in hand. This motion came not from any evil principle resident in Matter, but from the direct influence of the higher Forms, which are metaphysically prior to the demiurge. [...] The doctrine of these props. appears in Syrianus, in *Metaph.* 29. 4 ff. It has an interesting parallel in Origen’s theory that souls derive their existence from God the Father, their rational nature from God the Son, and their holiness from the Holy Ghost (*De princip.* 1. iii. 8).” We need to pay attention that the general properties are not involved in individual beings, in the sense that they would gain their hypostasis simply from those properties, but they rather provide the foundation for them. This position strengthens metaphysical realism, which is accepted by both Nicholas and Proclus. Obviously, these references are also interesting from a historical-philosophical point of view. From a practical, as well as epistemological, point of view, prop. 72 holds a key role to understanding the structure of Proclus’ ontological system. Ann. Ch. Saget mentions the following (*L’architecture du divin: Mathématique et philosophie chez Plotin et Proclus* [Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982], p. 31): “Chez Proclus, si ὑποκείμενον est l’effluve de la cause la plus lointaine, il peut parfaitement être saisi et pensé de face, comme la structure la plus pauvre qui soutient les autres, lesquelles en sont des particularisations et des différences (p. 72). Professer alors que la matière est l’ultime expression de l’Un, c’est signifier que l’Un n’est pas seulement puissance de distinction et de cohésion de chaque être, donc de séparation de cet être et des autres, mais aussi puissance de résorption des différences, et de cette différence inintégrable qui, chez Plotin, se nommait matière ou mal.”

3 Cf. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 68.19–29.

4 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλο-

describes it, implies that matter participates in an exclusive way in the One, body in Being and the ensouled body in Soul.<sup>5</sup> According to the principle of analogy, if the One is superior to Being and if Being is superior to Soul, then matter is superior to body, and what is shapeless and formless is superior to that which is shaped and formed.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it follows that the soulless body is superior to the ensouled. In other words, any relationship between the causes will also be applied by extension to its effects. But according to Nicholas this syllogism cannot be true either for the Christian or generally for the philosophical tradition,<sup>7</sup> for the ensouled is closer and more akin to the divine and the formal is superior to the formless, since, according to the argument presented, the opposite of “form” is privation. Furthermore, if we accept this hierarchy, we will also have to apply it to the higher levels. Or else, through reversal back toward the lower level of being, if the ensouled is superior to the soulless and if body is superior to matter, then Soul must precede Being and Being must precede the One. But this is a hierarchy that is contradicted by both Christian and Neoplatonist frameworks.<sup>8</sup> In this case of production, analogy as a methodological mode can only function according to both these directions, but not in an inflexible way, since in Proclus causal interventions are explicit.

---

σόφου / *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas' life and works by A.D. Angelou (Athens / Leiden: The Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984), 74.3–5: Διὰ δὲ τοῦ πορίσματος καὶ ἄκων ὁ σοφὸς συνελαύνεται κρείττω λέγειν τὴν ὕλην τῶν εἰδῶν, εἶπερ ἢ μὲν ἐκ τοῦ ἐνὸς ὑπέστη, τὰ δὲ ἐκ τοῦ ὄντος. The term, ἄκων, unless it expresses an ironic attitude on behalf of Nicholas, suggests that Proclus did not make the appropriate analogies, not deliberately but due to a methodological or syllogistic lack.

- 5 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 74.9–12: ὅρα γὰρ μετέχοντά φησι τὴν ὕλην, τὸ σῶμα, τὸ ἔμψυχον σῶμα, ὡς ἐκ τοῦ πορίσματος διαδείκνυται, ταῦτα δὲ καὶ προϊόντα καὶ ὑφεστώτα, τὴν μὲν ὕλην ἐκ τοῦ ἐνὸς, ἐκ δὲ τοῦ ὄντος τὸ σῶμα, ἐκ δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ ἔμψυχον σῶμα. In this case as well, the whole rationale leads to a methodological-syllogistic lack or fallacy for Proclus.
- 6 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 74.12–19: τριῶν τοίνυν τῶν ὑφιστάντων καὶ τριῶν τῶν ἐξ αὐτῶν ὑφισταμένων ἀνάλογον ἔχειν ἀνάγκη πρὸς ἄλληλα· ὡς τὸ ὑφιστάν πρὸς τὸ ὑφιστάν, οὕτω τὸ ὑφιστάμενον πρὸς τὸ ὑφιστάμενον. Εἰ τοίνυν κρείττον καὶ θεϊότερον τοῦ ὄντος τὸ ἐν, κρείττον καὶ θεϊότερα καὶ ἡ ὕλη τοῦ σώματος, ἡ ἄμορφος καὶ ἀνείδεος τοῦ μεμορφωμένου ποσῶς καὶ εἰδοπεποιημένου· καὶ εἰ τὸ ὄν ὡς ὀλικώτερον καὶ ἐγγύτερον τῷ ἐνὶ τῆς ψυχῆς κρείττον, καὶ τὸ σῶμα θεϊότερον τοῦ ἔμψυχωμένου σώματος, τὸ ἄψυχον τοῦ ἔμψυχου.
- 7 Cf. for instance Plato's *Parmenides*, *Timaeus* and *Philebus* alongside Aristotle's *Physics* II and *Metaphysics* Λ. For a systematic analysis of these works, cf. P. Aubenque, *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote* (Paris: PUF, 1962), pp. 365–411.
- 8 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 74.28–32: “ἐμπαλιν δὲ εἰ τὸ μὲν ἔμψυχον τοῦ ἀψύχου κρείττον, τὸ δὲ σῶμα τῆς ὕλης, τάχ' ἂν καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ ὄντος καὶ τὸ ὄν τοῦ ἐνὸς προτετάξονται, ἅπερ οὐδὲ τοῦτ' ὁκοεῖ. Τὰ γὰρ ὅπως οὖν ἀνάλογον ἔχοντα καὶ ἐμπαλιν καὶ ἐναλλάξ ἔχειν ἀνάγκη δείκνυσσι γεωμετρική”. Geometry receives here a methodological stability, which can confirm analogy.

However, this analogy, from both sides, cannot be accepted by Nicholas, since the *One* would then become equivalent to nothing:<sup>9</sup> in other words, it would lead to an indirect but inevitable identification of God with nothingness. In this rationale, it is assumed that matter has no “form” and that is why it is deprived of existence. It is therefore ontologically eliminated and, by extension, any possible cause of it also becomes non-existent. However, this conclusion is absurd, since even Proclus could not eliminate the existence of matter, much less the existence of the *One*.<sup>10</sup> By extension, we could contend that the whole position is completely absurd. And this judgment is not just a theological conclusion but also an existential one for any Christian or Neoplatonist thinker, since the philosophical framework for both, regardless of their differences, is based on the presence of the supreme Principle, on which all other things depend, not only for their being but also for their well-being. Or, in other words, since the systems of both are under metaphysical foundations realistic, analogy here proves that under such associations realism could be completely disproved. According to their principles, logic confirms theology and ontology—both the metaphysical and natural—and describes the two in various ways, with precise articulation of causality being the main goal. One sees this in Eastern Christian authors, such as Leontius of Byzantium, John of Damascus and Arethas of Caesarea, who are some of the most emblematic exponents of Aristotelian logic, especially as transmitted through Porphyry.

Nicholas argues that Proclus’ analogies are mistaken—at least methodologically or syllogistically—when taking into account what is mentioned in *Genesis* as well as Basil the Great’s interpretation of *Genesis*:<sup>11</sup> for both, God creates the material universe as a particular formed being, namely with the ontological categories of quantity and quality, which also include all the other categories.<sup>12</sup> In particular, God creates corporeal substance, which includes the

9 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 75.5–6: ἵνα καὶ τὸ ταύτην ὑφιστάτων ἐν εἰς τὸ μηδὲν ὡσαύτως εἶναι διὰ τῆς ἀναλογίας ἐλαύνηται.

10 Proclus systematically discusses the *One* as a foundational issue for ontology not only in the first propositions of *Institutio theologica* but also in *Theologia Platonica* 11, esp. in the apodeictic chapters. On the *Institutio theologica*, apart from E.R. Dodds’ comments, cf. also S. Breton, “La théorème de l’Un dans les *Éléments de Théologie* de Proclus”, in *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 58/4(1974), pp. 561–583.

11 Cf. Basil the Great, *Homilies in Hexaemeron* 1 and 2, ed. J.-P. Migne, (Paris: Migne = 29b, 1857), 4A–52B.

12 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 75.10–15: ἐν ἀρχῇ γάρ, φησὶν, ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς οὐχ ὕλην τοιαύτην οἷαν τὸ μηδὲν κατὰ στέρησιν παντὸς εἶδους, ταύτὸν δὲ εἰπεῖν παντὸς ὄντος, ἀλλὰ τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν, τὰ ἄνω δηλαδὴ καὶ τὰ κάτω σώματα πάντως πεποσωμένα τε καὶ πεποιωμένα καὶ ὡς ἄκρα μέσοις συνδούμενα σώματα τοῖς ἄλλοις στοιχείοις, ἅπερ εἰ θέλοι τις ὕλην καλεῖν, καλεῖτω. The reference to quantities and qualities, or quantitative and qualitative modes of



extremes, such as heaven and earth and those kinds of beings between them, that is to say, the natural elements as syntheses.<sup>13</sup> And this corporeal substance is obviously created, that is to say, clearly inferior to the Creator and is also a composition of matter and form. This composition results in formed hypostases with their properties, functions and inclusion in the broader realm of being. From a general historical-philosophical point of view, certain of these properties are primary (namely, necessary for being), such as life, and others secondary (that is, accidents not decisive for being), such as the color of the skin. Every created being participates in the divine according to these properties in various ways, such that the quality and the intensity of participation defines only the hierarchy between created beings and God, and not due to the ontological capacities and interventions-determinations of created beings by themselves.

As we attempt to evaluate Nicholas' critical analysis of Proclus' prop. 72, we could say more specifically the following: Nicholas makes a formally declarative reading of this proposition, without taking into account Proclus' general positions on how causality works. For Proclus, the fact that the One is the cause of matter does not mean that it is not the cause of the other realities, including metaphysical and natural ones. In his view, the supreme Principle creates first and foremost, through mediation, the substrate which is necessary for the formation of all the natural bodies or conditions: i.e. matter. But this does not mean that matter is superior to what is later produced: rather, matter is a requirement for the development of formed and ensouled bodies, which are the superior aspects of a composite hypostasis which is a unified organism. In this sense, the One is also the cause of things whose substrate is matter, which

---

appearances of matter, is of great importance, since it reveals the actualized divine plan. In fact, Gregory of Nyssa had raised this beforehand, e.g. in his cosmological work *Explicatio Apologetica ad Petrum fratrem in Hexaemeron*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris: Migne, 1857). In this treatise Gregory attempts to compare the pagan Greek and Christian traditions, in which we read: ὁμοῦ τὰ πάντα δι' ὧν ἡ ὕλη συνίσταται τῷ σοφῷ τε καὶ δυνατῷ θελήματι κατεβάρητο πρὸς τὴν ἀπεργασίαν τῶν ὄντων, τὸ κοῦφον, τὸ βαρὺ, τὸ ναστὸν, τὸ ἀραιὸν, τὸ μαλακόν, τὸ ἀντίτυπον, τὸ ὑγρὸν, τὸ ξηρὸν, τὸ ψυχρὸν, τὸ θερμὸν, τὸ χρώμα, τὸ σχῆμα, τὴν περιγραφὴν, τὸ διάστημα· ἃ πάντα μὲν καθ' ἑαυτὰ ἔννοιαί ἐσσι καὶ ψιλὰ νοήματα. Οὐ γάρ τι τούτων ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ ὕλη ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ συνδραμόντα πρὸς ἄλληλα, ὕλη γίνεται (69 C).

- 13 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 102.30–32: ἅμα γὰρ τὴν σωματικὴν οὐσίαν ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός, οὐρανὸν καὶ γῆν καὶ τὰ μέσα τούτων στοιχεῖα, καὶ χρόνος εὐθὺς σύνδρομος τούτοις συνεπέστη. It should be mentioned, from this context, that God did not create in time, but rather he created time together with the created world, otherwise he would fall under the necessities of time and be deprived of his ontological freedom. See e.g. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 7.20–22: Υπὸ χρόνον πᾶν τὸ γινόμενον, ἡ δὲ (sc. ἀγίας τριάς) οὐ μόνον ὑπέρχρονος ἀλλὰ καὶ υπεραίωνιος, ὡς καὶ χρόνων καὶ αἰώνων αἰτία ποιητική.

at the same time have received greater degrees of specification from metaphysical principles posterior to the One. For instance, the fact that the forms come from Being does not mean that they do not also come from the One, which is the cause of Being: in other words, the forms, as coming proximately from Being, also come ultimately from the One. This multi-causal relationship can be confirmed in the entire ontological system of Proclus.

Nicholas attempts to apply the principle of analogy without considering these aspects from Proclus. The result is that he presents Proclus as being opposed to the previous metaphysical tradition, including that of the classical period of Ancient Greek philosophy. In all his treatises, Proclus elucidates in detail a series of metaphysical causes, each of which has the power to intervene in matter depending on its position in the metaphysical hierarchy. However, we should specify further: according to Proclus' commentaries on Plato's *Parmenides* and *Timaeus*,<sup>14</sup> matter is the product of the combinations which take place between metaphysical realities and thus, from the moment it is created, it is also the container of what we may call natural reasons (*logoi*). These reasons are the natural results of the metaphysical combinations and are found in a constant active state, while at the same time, since they have eternal life, do not suffer any changes.

In another section, Nicholas focuses on how participation works and criticizes how a property is transferred from a superior to an inferior being within Proclus' hierarchical system. While he criticizes prop. 111, Nicholas also takes into account the claims of prop. 110. In these propositions Proclus contends that the modes of communication between superior and inferior beings are developed according to the method of analogy.<sup>15</sup> Here he specifically focuses on the ranks of the Intellects, Souls and Natures, with the last referring to the direct source of natural formations. According to both propositions, every ontological rank participates in its superior not as a whole but partially: in other words, the most perfect part of every inferior rank is able to be connected with the most imperfect of its superior.<sup>16</sup> Following this rationale, the superior property is not

14 Cf. for instance *In Platonis Timaeum* 111, 1.1–18.19, where the combination of the historical and the systematic aspect in which Proclus approaches this topic by exposing details on the content of each natural element—each of which is a particular body of the natural reasons (*logoi*)—is quite fascinating. Also interesting is that Proclus raises the question of the characterization of natural reasons, which are *per se* sensibly conceived not as bodies but as corporeal traits.

15 Cf. e.g. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 110, 98.1–5, esp.: τὰ μὲν πρῶτα καὶ τῇ ἑαυτῶν μονάδι συνημμένα μετέχειν δύνανται τῶν ἐν τῇ ὑπερκειμένη σειρᾷ προσεχῶς ἰδρυμένων διὰ τῆς ἀναλογίας [...].

16 Cf. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 111, 98.18–23, esp.: ἐκάστης γὰρ σειρᾶς οὐχ ὅλον

transferred *per se* to the manifold of the parts of the following rank. It should also be mentioned that such a transmission would lead only to a horizontal growth in entities, i.e. within the same horizontal series, and not a descending multiplication of vertical series. According to Proclus and Nicholas' commentary there are three levels in every rank: namely the unparticipated, participated, and the participant.

The first two communicate with the former with an intensity that is defined by the analogy between them with respect to the ontological possessions, while the third one is not able to take part in a participation like this. At this point Nicholas uses by analogy everything that Proclus mentioned about the Intellect, Soul and Nature and applies them to the henads. He thus stresses that the henads should also be distinguished into three levels.

---

τὸ γένος εἰς τὸ πρὸ αὐτοῦ ἀνηρτησθαι πέφυκεν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐν αὐτῇ τελειότερον καὶ συμφύεσθαι τοῖς ὑπερκειμένοις ἰκανόν (cf. 98.24–26). At this point, we find a position that can be generally applied, since it describes the procedures which take place within a divine being as well as between them. Saget's following comment shows in a synthetic precision the general context (cf. Saget, *L'architecture du divin*, pp. 291–292): “En conjuguant la structure d'ordre de chaque ordre, et la structure d'ordre de l'ensemble des ordres, on parvient à un système constitué comme un réseau, où apparaissent de nouvelles structures ainsi les chaînes verticales constituées d'éléments de niveaux différents, mais de place analogue—ὁμοταγεῖς—à l'intérieur de la série. Proclus met ainsi en place un système où tous les termes peuvent être reliés par voie de ressemblance, un système où l'analogie dépasse son strict sens de proportion pour signifier qu'aucun élément n'est isolé ou isolable, que tout est vivant, car ‘la véritable analogie est la vie même’ (Proclus, *In Timaeum* II 24, 16).” She then stresses the following on the dialectics between unparticipated and participated within the same being (p. 292): “Sans doute Proclus accorde aux hénades et monades un statut particulier: elles sont imparticipables. Mais ce caractère, qui devient une simple différence, ne les arrache pas au système des êtres: l'imparticipable est aussi participant (les hénades, de l'Un, les monades, de leurs causes). Ces quasi-êtres sont liés au système, dès lors qu'ils sont pensés selon quelque lien, fût-il de différence.” One should also note that, whenever speaking of the henads' participation in the *One*, one does so by expressive economy. J. Trouillard's following comment (Proclus, *Eléments de Théologie* [Paris: Aubier, Montaigne, 1965], pp. 52–53) reflects the ontological mission of the henads, which could be considered as the peak of Plato's unwritten doctrines on the pair “one-indefinite dyad”: “Les henads dont nées d'un problème capital du néoplatonisme. Si chaque principe agit par son être, comment de l'absolue simplicité l'extrême complexité du réel peut-elle procéder? Sans doute par la médiation d'une *dyade*, c'est-à-dire d'une unite qui se donne à elle-même un surcroît, un excès, germe de différence illimitée. L'hénade est justement ambivalente. ‘Le dyade est à la fois hénade et multiplicité: hénade en tant qu'elle participe à l'un, multiplicité en tant qu'elle est cause du multiple ... Et sa multiplicité est une manière d'unité et son unité est créatrice de dualité’. Comment le complexe peut-il se fonder en l'Un et, au sens le plus strict, en partir? Il faut que lui-même soit radicalement un sans contaminer le Principe.”

Their third level is not able to participate in a superior deity, in this case the One.<sup>17</sup> But he then considers this judgment impossible, and so he contends, in a reversed analogy, that everything included in a rank of beings, from Proclus' system, participates as a whole in the properties of the former rank.<sup>18</sup> And this follows the principles that define the ontological relationships. Consequently, Nicholas clarifies that in every rank described by Proclus the first level is unparticipated, the second is participated and the third is that which participates—in other words, by itself it possesses no property belonging to the unparticipated and participated.

We need to mention, however, that according to the Neoplatonist philosopher the third level constitutes the possibility of transition from a higher to a lower metaphysical being and, in this sense, has from a point onwards an active responsibility for providing gifts and being immanently present to what follows. It must then communicate with what precedes, by which it receives the foundations for its own manifestations.

In commenting on Proclus' proposition, Nicholas does not consider that the henads, for Proclus, are not hierarchically distinguished and that they are the participated projections of the One.<sup>19</sup> They function neither in the same way nor in an analogous way—only perhaps by expressive economy—with the other metaphysical beings, which hold an unparticipated and a participated part. The unparticipated part is transcendent while the participated is productive-immanent. The former corresponds to “remaining” and the latter

17 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 107.32–108.2: *μόνους οὖν φησι θεῖους εἶναι νόας τοὺς πρώτους, τοὺς δὲ δευτέρους καὶ τρίτους οὐ θεῖους ἀλλὰ νόας μόνον· οὐκοῦν καὶ θεοὶ μόναι ἂν εἶεν αἱ πρώται ἐνάδες, αἱ δ' ἄλλαι οὐ θεοί· τοῦτο γὰρ ἀπαιτεῖ ἡ ἀναλογία.*

18 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 108.5–7: *θεῖοι ἄρα καὶ οἱ δεῦτεροι νόες καὶ οἱ τρίτοι κατὰ τὸ τῆς ἀναλογίας ἀκόλουθον, οὕτω δὲ καὶ πάσαι ψυχαὶ νοεραὶ καὶ πάσαι φύσεις ἔμψυχοι.*

19 The subject which refers to the ontological nature of the henads and the hierarchy between them is one of the most difficult in terms of their analysis. There are two basic details that must be taken into account: a) they belong together with the One in the area of Henology, from which they derive without any mediation and b) one is not produced from the other, with the consequence that no dependencies and determinations develop between them. Proclus, however, is not explicitly declarative in his relevant remarks. Nevertheless, on considering Proclus' *Theologia Platonica* III, ch's. 1–7 (6.7–30.13), one can see that any hierarchy between the henads results solely from the nature of their products. As a whole, the henads are defined as uniform, unutterable, hyper-essential and completely similar to the One. They constitute the hyper-essential multitude which emanates from the One, which successively assigns to each its particular emanating mission, so as to produce a category of gods. From this point onwards, the hierarchies between these gods begin. Besides, among the realities included in the branch of Henology, the state of otherness is explicitly absent. The henads are exclusively emanations of the One.

to “procession”.<sup>20</sup> We then meet these two different ways of presence in all the metaphysical beings. Nicholas, therefore, does not accurately understand analogy in Proclus. For the latter, analogy is applied to all metaphysical beings, but not to the henads. Within every metaphysical reality there is hierarchy, which is not identified in the henads. The henads give hypostasis to these realities, in order through their hierarchical structure to form the requirements for the production of the sensible world, but without violating metaphysical unity, which they have formed a priori. They are also found, after specific transformations, in the natural world.<sup>21</sup>

In props. 109, 110 and 111 Proclus attempts to elaborate his metaphysical hierarchical system in individual branches.<sup>22</sup> The main position that he intends to

20 For a systematic discussion of the relationship of the pair “unparticipated-participated” with the ternary emanating scheme for the formation of the metaphysical world “remaining-procession-reversion”, cf. *Theologia Platonica*, IV, 6.6–17.14, where Proclus elaborates the top metaphysical triad—after the One and the henads—of the principles of “Being-Life-Intellect”. The characteristic is that the above two schemes are repeated multiple times, since each metaphysical monad multiplies within itself, which means that it determines the next one in a uniform and multiplicative sense. This happens with “Being” in relation to “Life” as well as with “Life” in relation to “Intellect” under hierarchical terms. A similar discussion we find in *Theologia Platonica*, III, 6.14–11.15.

21 Cf. for instance, Proclus’ *Theologia Platonica* VI. The same topic is also discussed in Proclus’ commentary on Plato’s *Timaeus*, where one finds fascinating analyses. We could say that the third book of this commentary is possibly the most emblematic in the history of philosophy regarding metaphysics of immanence. It is a complete treatise for the geographic and arithmetic structure of the natural world and the method of analogy is used exhaustively.

22 E.R. Dodds presents a diagram of these propositions in order to represent the series of reality which come from their own monad. According to his analysis, Proclus describes a double “reversion” which indicates a double causality. Especially for props. 110 and 111, Dodds says that they refer to a principle which “is required to make it consistent with prop. 62 cor. If the lower order is always more numerous than the higher, a one-to-one correspondence between the two series, such as Pr. postulates, obviously cannot extend to the whole of the lower series: at its further extremity there will be terms which have no analogue in the superior order and are therefore not directly attached to that order. This is clearly true of the relation of φύσις and ψυχή. The application of the principle on the next higher level involves the conclusion that there are some ψυχῆς which have no νοῦς οὐκείος. Pr. places the human soul in this category (prop. 204: cf. *In Tim.* I. 245, 18 ff.) on the ground that it enjoys νόησις only intermittently (prop. 184). Finally, authority for the assumption of a similar relation between νόεσις and θεοί was discovered in Plato’s use of the expression θεῖος νοῦς (*Phil.* 22 C, *Legg.* 897 B)” (cf. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, pp. 255–257). All these emphasize the gradual domination, in some sense, of the manifold over unity. As far as the ontological system develops in a descending way, the manifold limits the analogies between the first field and the following. The primary unity then continually weakens while the same happens with the intensity of the presence of the former to the latter. But,

point out is that within every divine reality there is a hierarchy of its parts, that is, there are higher and lower particular ontological fields. However, the fact that a lower field is not capable of participating in its own terms and directly in the higher reality with respect to its own does not mean that it is excluded from participation. And this participation takes place through intermediates, a detail which ontologically and epistemologically dominates in Proclus' system. Specifically, the fact that the lower part of a reality participates in its higher—and provided that they both hold the same properties, but in a different intensity—contributes to the fact that the lower participates, after the intervention of the higher, in the former reality. Otherwise, the course of the development of the sensible world would end. This kind of procedure is not confirmed in the ontological field of the henads, which for Proclus, especially according to his later works like the *Platonic Theology*, are not hierarchized according to their particularity or even somehow the divisibility of their uniform ontological state but only with respect to their emanating range. Analogy is thus found in all the metaphysical realities, without this state of theirs affecting how the henads exist. By extension, there is no analogy between these realities and the henads. According to all these, Nicholas is right when he mentions that there are three ranks in every reality, an unparticipated, a participated and a participating but one cannot contend that there is an analogous distinction in the henads, which only represent existing modes of the One, its inner self-founding predicates.<sup>23</sup>

In the same theoretical context, Nicholas criticizes the way in which Proclus discusses the concept of analogy in prop. 113 of the *Elements of Theology*. This is the proposition in which Proclus begins to discuss his theory on the divine henads systematically, which he elaborates in his following works, in which through further arguments he concludes that the henads are the participated part of the One or those emanating powers in which he forms metaphysical world or the world of gods. In this proposition Proclus mentions that the cause

---

unity never disappears, and in this way analogy shows the variety of the intensity regarding the relationship between the cause and the effect.

- 23 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 106.20–23. According to J. Robinson: “It does seem that Nicholas has identified a contradiction. The answer is that, for Proclus, even though the monad is the first of each series, some particulars are “firsts” in a broader sense” [J. Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th-century Byzantium*, A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Graduate Program in Medieval Studies, Notre Dame (Indiana), 2014, p. 349]. Obviously, this meaning refers to the particular first fields of the multiplications that take place in each case.

of the divine number (namely, the number of the henads) is the One, while the cause of the intellectual number is the Intelligence and of the psychical number is Soul. The context in which he describes these causal relations is the principle of analogy within a particular ontological field, according to which every manifold which appears through emanation is analogous to its cause. The number of the divine henads is then characterized as united, since its cause is the One. That is, in the field of the henads the One's unity becomes a property possessed by them, each in a particular way, for their independent existence, as it were, from the original absolute unity to be realized. In this rationale he also characterizes the other, lower relationships: i.e. the manifold of intellects is intellectual and the manifold of the souls is psychical.<sup>24</sup> In any case, however, the cause, as a particular natural monad, can have the property of the particular one, which produces its own manifold. This manifold is similar and akin to its cause and multiplies its property. This is actually the function which begins to develop in the first place in the metaphysical universe and in this way it receives archetypal content in relation to those which by analogy will take place in the natural world. Proclus then does not build an analogy between the pair One-henads and the pair Intellect-intellects and the rest of the metaphysical pairs with respect to their strict ontological content but as regards the relationships they develop during their causal manifestation, which can be described

24 Cf. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 100.5: εἰ γὰρ ὁ θεῖος ἀριθμὸς αἰτίαν ἔχει προηγουμένην τὸ ἓν, ὡς ὁ νοερὸς τὸν νοῦν καὶ ὁ ψυχικὸς τὴν ψυχὴν, καὶ ἔστιν ἀνάλογον τὸ πλῆθος πανταχοῦ πρὸς τὴν αἰτίαν, δῆλον δὴ ὅτι καὶ ὁ θεῖος ἀριθμὸς ἐνιαίος ἐστίν, εἴπερ τὸ ἓν θεός (cf. 100.6–9). According to E.R. Dodds (cf. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, p. 260): “The divine series is ἐνιαίος both in the sense that perfect internal unity is the fundamental character (κυριώτατον τῶν συμπληρούντων) of every god (*in Parm.* 1069.8); and in the sense that the gods are bound together by a closer collective unity than any subsequent order of existence.” We need to mention also that there is one more difference: the henads are the source of the One-Being, while all the emanating divine beings are parts of the Being-One—i.e. the One's domain apart from Being. In this sense we should utilize Ann. Ch. Saget's comment: “Hors ce qui est gouverné par l'Un, il n'y a rien. De plus, la limitation des ordres intérieurs à cet enveloppement est affirmée d'emblée avec la constitution de la première totalité: celle des hénades. Que les hénades aient un nombre limité (*El. Théol.* p. 113) signifie qu'il a pour les êtres un nombre fini dans les manières d'être-un. De l'intelligible au corporel, quelle que soit la quantité précise des intermédiaires, se développe un nombre d'ordres correspondant strictement à cette matrice première” (cf. Saget, *L'architecture du divin*, p. 286). Hence, no matter how much the manifold will grow, it is stressed here too that it would not exclude the permanent presence of unity, regardless of the intensity. In this context, we could easily recall the Platonic pair “one-indefinite dyad” or correspondingly “limit-unlimited”. We believe that any discussion on the “unwritten doctrines” of Plato and any relevant ontological question should consider L. Robin's great work, *La théorie platonicienne des idées et des nombres d'après Aristote* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1908).

after the compound term “one-manifold”, which works analogously depending on the particular ontological field in which it appears. At the highest level, however, distinction between the one and the manifold is not as distinct as in the following particular gods, where the manifold appears more intensively.

Nicholas criticizes Proclus’ syllogism following specific aspects of the principle of analogy. The first thing that he says is that the Neoplatonist philosopher co-ranks the One with all the principal causes, basing his critique on the claim that this supreme Principle is transcendent and, by extension, cannot be placed with what comes after it.<sup>25</sup> From a Christian point of view, this comment is justified and clearly examines the multi-causality which Proclus suggests. The second point of Nicholas’ criticism, however, does not follow what we said before on Proclus’ positions, since it stresses that the One is analogous to all the principal causes.<sup>26</sup> As we have already confirmed, there is no such relationship and Proclus’ analogy refers only to forms of being and causality. In conclusion, Nicholas attempts here to criticize Proclus based on a Christian position—thus his argument is still a refutation—in a way that does not rely on the contradictions which would potentially (or otherwise) be found in Proclus’ text. It should also be noted that, while intellects participate in their cause, i.e. Intellect, in a hierarchical way, one cannot find something analogous to the field of the henads, which are essentially the direct emanations of the One and form a second One. Only in an analogous way could one contend that they participate in the One without actually doing so. That is to say, they are two particular ways in which the One exists.<sup>27</sup>

In another section and focusing on the question of whether and how the unparticipated becomes participated, Nicholas criticizes Proclus’ position that the first One (and, more generally, whatever cause is related to all beings) is not participated by any being: τὸ πάντων ὃν οὐχ ὑπὸ πάντων μετέχεται.<sup>28</sup> According to his rationale, if we accepted that it is completely unparticipated, prop. 1 of

25 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 110.18–20: τὸ πᾶσι τοῖς ἀρχικοῖς αἰτίοις συντάττειν τὸ ἓν, ὃ δεῖ πάντων προεξηρησθαι, τὸ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τούτου πρὸς τὰ συγγενῇ κάτωθεν καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ὑστέρων λαμβάνειν. Here he obviously does not mean an ontological kinship between the One and the produced beings: only the produced beings are akin since they come from a common source. This kinship places them under a universal cosmic unity.

26 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 157.14–15.

27 Proclus was very concerned with this topic in his other treatises. H.D. Saffrey and L.G. Westerink in their introduction to Proclus’ *Theologia Platonica* III (Paris 1978, xi–xvii) discussed in a thorough way the phases in which the philosopher passed to deal with this question.

28 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 32.29–30.



the *Elements of Theology* (πάν πλῆθος μετέχει πη τοῦ ἐνός,<sup>29</sup> “Every manifold in some way participates unity”) and prop. 5 (πάντη ἄρα μετέχει τοῦ ἐνός,<sup>30</sup> “it participates the One in every way”) would be proved wrong and thus refuted. On the other hand, if the One is participated by all and belongs to all, its unparticipated nature and transcendence vanish. However, we should mention that Proclus’ proposition is not just about the transcendent One but also the One in its immanence, which in other propositions is presented as performed by the henads, which express the One-Being. His position is that the transcendent

29 Cf. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 1.1. According to E.R. Dodds (Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, pp. 188–189): “This prop. is placed at the head of Pr.’s system in order to exclude the assumption of a world of pure quantitative plurality devoid of that qualitative shaping which Neoplatonism attributed to the operation of a transcendent unity and which we call individuality. Proclus found his authority for this exclusion in Plato *Parmenides* 157 C ff., where it is shown that every manifold τοῦ ἐνός μετέχει πη, both as a whole and in each of its parts. The thesis that anything possessing being has unity in some degree is a central tenet for Plotinus, e.g. *Enneads* VI. ix. 1, v. vi. 3. But the formal argument by which it is here established does not occur in Plato, nor, I think, in Plotinus. It is directed against the concept of infinite actual (as distinct from potential) divisibility, and turns on the impossibility of conceiving a sum of numerical infinities, which must itself be numerically greater than infinity. The proof given in the text is elaborated at length in *Th. PI. II. i*, where two other proofs are added.” We should also mention that “division” in Proclus is clearly ontological as an expression of the successive hypostatic distinctions in unity, and on a second level it also becomes methodological. From *Theologia Platonica* III–VI this distinction is constantly affirmed. Either way, Proclus never disconnects methodology, but he approaches it under the prism of its clear ontological determination. Hence, “division” is considered as the inner dialectical way of organizing “being”, which the human intellect is asked to repeat explicitly in its epistemological attempts and to express it.

30 Cf. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 6.2–3. According to E.R. Dodds (Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, p. 191): “This proposition demonstrates that the Absolute Unity whose existence was established in prop. 4 is at once completely transcendent, in the sense of being uninfected by plurality, and completely immanent, in the sense that all plurality ‘participates’ it or is determined by it.” For an extremely systematic reading which also takes into account the general context and presents a number of diagrams, cf. Saget, *L’architecture du divin*, pp. 235–243, where we read the following on the prop. 5—in combination with props. 19 and 2—of the *Institutio Theologica* with references to the horizontal and vertical ontological procedures, which show the main characteristics of Proclus’ hierarchical world and with insistence on how hypostatic particularities are formed (pp. 239–240): “Première indication sur la structure de chaque ordre. Cette structure se présente comme l’application dans la dimension horizontale du schéma vertical de P5: toute pluralité dépend de l’Un. Ainsi, tout ordre (τάξις ou σειρά ou είρμός), constitué en P19 comme une classe naturelle par la possession originale d’un caractère commun, doit être issue, puisque cette communauté.” The descending course of the second One can obviously be characterized as dialectical, in the sense of the gradual production of the divine beings or the ontological categories as “modes” of the One-Being. Cf. P. Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1968), pp. 303–307.

One is separated from the many and that we can attribute to this the predicate “one”. Regarding its participation the One is found in the many as a second One, once again, and this status is named after the predicate ἐν ἅμα καὶ οὐχ ἓν (“is one yet not-one”), with the second part referring to privation but not transcendence. Finally, the participating is οὐχ ἓν ἅμα καὶ ἓν (“is not-one yet one”) in the sense that it does not originally have the property of unity but receives it from the second *One* which it participates.

This proposition is generally accepted by the Christians, based on the distinction—which however never introduces separations—between the divine essence and the divine energies (ἐνέργειαι).<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, from a Christian point of view, the problem is constantly that Proclus describes a hierarchy of metaphysical realities, according to which every entity, analogously to their productive range, participates in some sense in the One (which regarding its emanating-productive functions is also named “Good”). This sort of hierarchy by analogy is not accepted by Christianity. Nicholas’ critique has to do with Proclus’ position that it is the same thing by quantitative analogy when the One is participated by one being and by every one of them.<sup>32</sup> Considering the teaching that he adopts, his critique is correct—albeit from a Christian perspective—since it is based on the Christians’ refusal to accept the metaphysical hierarchical model of Neoplatonism. In a general sense, the structure

31 In the Eastern Christian tradition, the most systematic treatise that has been written regarding the distinction between the divine essence and energies is Gregory Palamas’ *Περὶ θεϊκῶν ἐνεργειῶν καὶ τῆς κατὰ αὐτὰς μεθέξεως* (cf. *Συγγράμματα*, vol. II, ed. by P. Christou, Thessaloniki, 1966, pp. 96–136), who bases the distinction on who utilizes everything relevant that has been written, beginning with Athanasius the Great and with references to the Cappadocian Fathers, the Dionysian tradition, Cyril of Alexandria and John of Damascus, while there are also references to the New Testament.

32 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 32.33–33.4: τὸ γὰρ ὅτι τὸ πάντων ὄν καὶ ὑπὸ πάντων μετέχεται, σὺ πάντως δώσεις ὁ τό τινος ὄν καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ τινος ἐκείνου, οὗ ἐστὶ, μετέχεσθαι λέγων, ὡς ταῦτόν ὄν τό τέ τινος εἶναι καὶ τὸ ὑπὸ τοῦ τινος ἐκείνου μετέχεσθαι καὶ ἐξ ἀναλόγου τὸ πάντων εἶναι καὶ τὸ ὑπὸ πάντων μετέχεσθαι. Note that in the entire Neoplatonic and Byzantine tradition, analogy is closely related with participation, which can be traced back to Plato’s *Parmenides*. Cf. 127d–134d, where the discussion includes both ontological and epistemological analyses. Scholars have dealt with this thoroughly. Despite the concise references, one can see the notions of participation and analogy in the introduction of the dialogue composed by Aug. Diès (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1965). For instance, cf. the crucial comment of P. Ricoeur, *La métaphore vive* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), pp. 347–348, who discusses the topic with reference to Thomas Aquinas (p. 347): “La source principale de toutes les difficultés tient à la nécessité de soutenir la prédication analogique par une ontologie de la participation. L’analogie, en effet, se meut au niveau des noms et des prédicats; elle est d’ordre conceptuel. Mais sa condition de possibilité est ailleurs, dans la communication même de l’être. La participation est le nom générique donné à l’ensemble des solutions

of this passage is explained by the fact that the reality which is unparticipated in itself also becomes participated through the participating projections which it manifests. This view is acceptable by both the Neoplatonic and Christian tradition. Nicholas as well considers God as both unparticipated and participated, relying on the Dionysian tradition, where we explicitly find the term ἀμεθέκτως μετεχόμενον,<sup>33</sup> which means “unparticipatedly participated”. Proclus contends that every level of being, in the context of the hierarchy by which all beings are structured, participates in the One according to its metaphysical position: i.e. according to the hierarchical principles below the One. In Christianity there is no participation like this. The ontological categories characterize the divine energies of the One, which are distinct from the principle’s essence while at the same time the energies are the principle’s volitional manifestations. Hence, the only participation accepted by the Christians is that all natural beings participate in one and the same divine principle through the divine energies, each and every one analogously to the degree of the properties which they hold. For instance, the way in which man participates in these energy projections is different than that of a horse, since man also possesses the property of intellect.

### 3      **Analogy as a Way of Understanding the Existence and Function of the Created**

With participation revealing the degree of ontological similarity between the uncreated and created, as well as the possession of divine properties by natural beings, Nicholas uses analogy to describe the way in which the created works within the regulatory frame which has been defined by God. In other words, to speak ontologically, every property which is possessed in a complete degree by the absolutely transcendent divine being is transferred to the created beings according to the possibilities that each one of them possesses. Analogy is then applied between those beings which participate in a divine property.

---

apportées à ce problème. Participer c’est, d’une manière approximative, avoir partiellement ce qu’un autre possède ou est pleinement. Dès lors la lutte pour un concept adéquat d’analogie est sous-tendue par la lutte pour un concept adéquat de participation.” We may also observe that Aquinas points out ambiguity and polysemy as epistemological aspects of analogy.

33 Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae Graecae Cursus Completus* 3 (Paris: Migne, 1857), 644 A, where we read: ἐκ τῶν μετοχῶν καὶ τῶν μετεχόντων ὑμνεῖται τὰ ἀμεθέκτως μετεχόμενα. Cf. R. Roques, *L’univers dionysien, Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys* (Paris: Cerf, 1954), pp. 71–81. On this comment, cf. Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone’s Refutation of Proclus*, p. 223.

This means that every being participates in that property in its own way. Thus, the same concept is used to describe states between different beings, provided that every being possesses this state according to its capacity. Polysemy then obtains between beings: that is to say, an ontological property is known in a number of ways. One can also see from Plato's *Parmenides* (131a–133a) onward that the property's metaphysical presence in things, by way of participation, does not imply a division of that property, but rather a universal presence over each being, although each receives it in its own way.

In the refutation of prop. 25, Nicholas is clear: if we compare the uncreated with the created, the uncreated is perfect while the created is constantly imperfect. Perfection however is not removed from the created world, at least as a future possibility. If we focus on the created, every being can be considered perfect, since it is able to accomplish its own perfection in the domain of its own nature which is produced by the supreme Principle.<sup>34</sup> In this case, analogy classifies created beings according to two perspectives: a) in relation to their Creator, stressing the ontological otherness of the two naturally different levels, and b) in relation to the created world, insofar as it places them in a hierarchy formed by the range of participation that their natural hypostasis has in the divine gifts. And the particular nature of every being in this case means closeness to the Divine and possession to a greater or lesser degree of a divine property, which can be given either as a primary bestowment or in sequence.<sup>35</sup> For instance, man is considered to be more perfect than an irrational being

34 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 33.28–33: πρὸς μὲν οὖν τὴν μίαν πάντων ἀρχὴν οὕτως ἀτελὴ πάντα τὰ ἐξ αὐτῆς παραγόμενα, αὐτὸ δὲ καθ' αὐτὸ τούτων ἕκαστον λέγοιτ' ἂν τέλειον, φθάνον εἰς τὴν οἰκείαν καὶ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ φύσει ἀνάλογον τελειότητα, ἣν ἔλαχε κληρωσάμενος ἀπὸ τῆς μίας ἀρχῆς τῆς παντελοῦς καὶ προτελείου καὶ υπερτελοῦς καὶ τελειοδώρου. In this passage we find a reference to the grammatical prepositions *προ-* and *ὑπέρ-* in a popular topic for both the Neoplatonists and Christians. For Proclus, cf. for instance, J. Trouillard, *La mystagogie de Proclus* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982), pp. 101–108.

35 Cf. Nicholas' commentary on prop. 71 (*Refutation*, 73.9–14) of *The Elements of Theology*: εἰ γὰρ τῷ ἐνὶ ἐστοίχεις αἰτίῳ, πάντα μὲν ἂν ὑφίστης ἐξ ἐκείνου καὶ οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἐτέρου ὑποκείμενον ὑπετίθεις καὶ ὑποδέχεται δὲ πάντα σὺν ἡμῖν ὡμολόγεις τὰς ἀπ' ἐκείνου ἐλλάμψεις, καθόσον ἕκαστον ἐρχομεῖ, τὰ μὲν εὐθύς μετ' ἐκεῖνο πρωτοδότως, τὰ δ' ἐφεξῆς, ἀναλόγως ταῖς οἰκείαις τάξεσιν εἴτε φύσει διὰ μέσων τῶν πρὸ αὐτῶν μεταδιδομένας. The term *ἐλλάμψεις* describes in a metaphorical way the manifestation of the divine energies. On how the question is approached in Ps.-Dionysius' texts, cf. for instance, Vl. Lossky, "La notion des 'analogies' chez Denys le Pseudo-Aréopagite", in *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale Et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 5 (1930), pp. 279–309. On how it appears in the history of the Platonic and Aristotelian tradition, with considerable references to Neoplatonic and Medieval approaches, cf. J.F. Courtine, *Les catégories de l'être: Études de philosophe ancienne et médiévale* (Paris: PUF, 2003), pp. 192–211, where the question is also investigated in an ontological and epistemological way, considering formal logic as well.

and, due to this perfection, has a natural capacity to reach universal perfection through becoming assimilated to the image of God, by which the likeness of God may be actualized.<sup>36</sup> In this regard Nicholas is dealing with the sensible world, and engages, in a manner of speaking, in an empirical way. One should also note that Nicholas explicitly refutes polytheism and multi-causality in the proposition's commentary, and hence he also refutes Proclus' ontological analogies which support polytheism and multi-causality.

However, since Nicholas also accepts that there is a non-sensible—or intelligible—created world, analogy is used for the level of the angels as well. Nicholas thus mentions that these self-perfect intellects were also produced by the supreme Principle which gave them their perfective properties, according to which they maintain their intellectual nature and incline toward the divine cause according to each intellect's respective position in their hierarchical ranking.<sup>37</sup> We can identify the schema of “procession” and “reversion” here: namely, the supreme Principle works creatively and produces the angels, giving them not only being but also additional properties, where intellect is the main property; by this inherent property, they are capable of “reverting” on their primary cause. But, if we attempted to determine what precedes, i.e. the being of the intellects or their intellectual properties, we could not give an answer. The only thing that Nicholas makes clear is that the powers of the angelic ranks, as modes of being given to them by God, are analogous to the divine “processions”. The powers reflect in a concrete way the gifts that are given by the divine “processions” during the process of production, which the Holy Trinity possesses in a supreme way, as the sole cause of the gifts.<sup>38</sup> These gifts are transferred by the superior angelic ranks to the inferior ones, so this is the only

36 For a multidimensional analysis of this question, cf. V. Lossky, *À l'image et à la ressemblance de Dieu* (Paris: Aubier, 1967). Cf. also, É. Gilson, *L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale* (Paris: Aubier, 1989), pp. 175–213, who references the ancient Greek aspects of the topic, insisting on Plato's and Aristotle's positions.

37 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 67.1–5: ἐκ δὲ τοῦ ἐνὸς τούτου, τουτέστι τρισυποστάτου θεοῦ δημιουργικῶς παρήχθησαν οἱ τε αὐτοτελεῖς νόες καὶ αἱ τούτων τελειωτικαὶ ιδιότητες, καθ' ἃς αὐτοὶ τε τὴν οἰκείαν νοερὰν τάξιν ἕκαστοι σφίζουσι καὶ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον, ὡς ἐφικτόν, κατὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον ἀνατείνονται. Cf. R. Roques, *L'Univers dionysien: structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys*, pp. 135–167, who makes a fascinating use of the primary sources, both the biblical and the patristic, to form a holistic theory.

38 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 136.17–20: πάντων δὲ τούτων καὶ ἡ κατὰ παραγωγὴν πρόοδος ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, οὐ μὴν ἀπ' ἀλλήλων· κάκειθεν ἀναλόγους ταῖς προόδοις τὰς δυνάμεις τὰς ἐφικτὰς ὑποδέχονται διαπορθευόμενες, οὐ παραγομέναι, διὰ τῶν πρὸ αὐτῶν, ὧν καὶ κατὰ λόγον ἡλάττωνται. The first significantly systematic Christian treatise on the angels is Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite's *De coelesti hierarchia*, which is the source for both Eastern and Western Christian theories of the angels.

sense in which the principle of intervention functions, which is not ontological: in other words, the gifts transmitted between angelic ranks originate not from their respective level but rather from God alone. In the refutation of the prop. 92 of *Institutio theologica*, Nicholas names them “powers”, while in the refutation of the prop. 177 he calls them “divine illuminations”, and in the refutation of the prop. 146 he refers to them as “divine effulgences”.

More specifically, in the refutation of prop. 92, Nicholas is clear regarding Christian causality: God is all-powerful insofar as he possesses power in a complete degree and in a way that only originates in him, and through this he intervenes in created beings by giving plenitude to their existence. The power given to created beings by God is then assimilated by them and becomes a capacity for their inherent properties which they bring about through their own initiation. Furthermore, God’s power is infinite in the sense that God endlessly produces gifts. However in the case of transmission, namely in the process in which it is indivisibly divided, power becomes finite in the beings which receive it, and in this sense analogous to the substances to which it is given.<sup>39</sup> Here analogy shows the way in which complete power is transmitted as such but becomes finite within created beings, since each can only receive that power up to a point. This difference is due to the ontological otherness between God and creatures, and the absolute priority of the former over the latter, although divine providence remains unaffected.<sup>40</sup>

In the second refutation of prop. 177, Nicholas mentions that some divine illuminations are more uniform and more universal while others are more multi-form and more specific, once again depending on the beings which receive the illuminations. The powers of the different angelic ranks then correspond to the way in which each receives the same illuminations given by God

39 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 91.27–92.2: εἰ δὲ μὴδὲν ἐκεῖ περιττόν, οὐδεμία ἄρα παρὰ τὴν μίαν ἐκείνην ἄλλη δύναμις δυναμοῖ τὰ ὄντα, ἀλλ’ ἐκείνη διὰ πάντων διήκουσα αὐτά τε τὰ ὄντα παράγει καὶ τὰς ἐν αὐτοῖς δυνάμεις ἀφ’ ἐαυτῆς συνυφίστησι μόνῃ ἄπειρος οὖσα πεπερασμένως, ἀναλόγως δηλαδὴ ταῖς οὐσίαις ἀμερίστως μεριζομένη καὶ οὕτως αὐτὰς μὲν περαίνουσα, αὐτὴ δὲ ἄπειρος μένουσα. The participle περαίνουσα reveals the appropriate teleological eschatology for each ontic case.

40 On this, cf. S. Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), pp. 204–217, who analyzes the topic of potency in relation to activity, stressing that the status which is appropriate for God is activity. This holds true for both Neoplatonic and Christian thinkers, with the obvious difference that the former hold to a plurality of gods in their metaphysical system, unlike the latter. In addition, the impassivity attributed to the divine does not mean passivity but transcendence even of passivity (p. 215). The state of “potentiality” is not found in the divine, only in the sense of what will be formed after its manifestation.

according to their analogous position in God's providential [or teleological] plan.<sup>41</sup> That is to say, some angelic ranks are closer to the supreme Principle and some others are farther from it. The same structure is maintained also in the case of souls and ensouled beings.<sup>42</sup> Here as well, the properties given to a rank of beings define the rank in which a being belongs according to the divine plan.

In the third refutation of prop. 146, the illuminative "procession" is characterized as perpetual and is revealed through the divine economy and the endless bestowment of properties in correspondence, here as well, with the degree of the acceptability of every being. The divine effulgences "proceed" by analogy from the higher to the lower ranks of the world, in order that every created being can "revert" from its respective foundation appropriate to it by analogy, following an ascending way to the supreme Principle.<sup>43</sup> This movement is con-

41 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 155.20–26: Οἱ θεῖοι νόες ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐνὸς καὶ ὑπερόντος παρηγγέμενοι νοὸς τοῦ πάντα προέχοντος ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὰ εἶδη καὶ ὑπερέχοντος καὶ εἰς τὸ εἶναι παράγοντος αὐτὰ τε καὶ τὰς ὕλας αὐτῶν, ἐκείθεν καὶ θεῶν ἐλλάμψεων πληροῦνται, οἱ μὲν ἐνοειδестέρων καὶ δλικωτέρων, οἱ δὲ πολυειδестέρων καὶ μερικωτέρων κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν ἧς ἐλαχον ἕκαστοι τάξεως καὶ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἐγγύτητος· οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὰς δυνάμεις ἀναλόγους ἔχουσι ταῖς ἐλλάμψεσιν. Although in themselves they do not have a specific reference, we would say that the terms εἶδη and ὕλας αὐτῶν refer to cosmological hylomorphism, which has been discussed since the Presocratics. On the same topic, cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 150.14–18: οἱ δὲ θεῖοι νόες, οὓς ἡμεῖς ἀγίους ἀγγέλους φαμέν, ἀναλόγως τῇ πρὸς ἐκεῖνον αὐτῶν ἐγγύτητι τὰς ἐκείθεν ἐλλάμψεις ὑποδεχόμενοι κατὰ ταύτας καὶ τὰς οἰκείας νοήσεις ἔχουσι καὶ ποιοῦσιν οὐδὲν δημιουργικῶς καὶ παρ' ἑαυτῶν ἄλλ' ἢ λειτουργικῶς τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ. In this passage it is once again said that the angels receive illuminations by God analogously to their proximity to him: the angels' thoughts and, by extension, their gifts to human beings are analogous to these illuminations. They work as intermediates, albeit as conveying already-produced properties, and not as producing, or creating, new properties in beings. Thus, regarding the act of creation there is no analogy.

42 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 67.5–6: αἱ τε αὐτοτελεῖς ψυχὰι καὶ αἱ τούτων ὡσαύτως τελειωτικαὶ ιδιότητες, καθ' ἃς αὐταὶ τέ εἰσιν ἑαυτῶν καὶ τὰ ψυχούμενα ψυχούσιν. One should note that αὐτοτελεῖς is not related to the concept of self-constitution (αὐθυπόστατον) for Proclus. Αὐτοτέλεια in Nicholas is related to self-determining power and is mostly a moral and epistemological concept, as freedom of action, which in a positive sense works according to rationality. Cf. for instance, Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 51.19–26; 103.2–9. On the other hand, in Proclus self-constitution primarily has an ontological meaning and shows how a divine being contributes to its production by utilizing what it has received from its superiors. Cf. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, props. 40–51, 42.8–50.6. These propositions are closely related with those which refer to the triad of "remaining-procession-reversion". Cf. Ch. Terezis, "La critique de Nic. de Méthone à la théorie de Proclus concernant la schéma: immanence—procession—conversion", in *Byzantion* 65(1995), pp. 455–466.

43 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 134.7–13: Ἡ δὲ κατ' ἐλλάμψιν αἰθῖος ἐκείθεν προβαίνει καὶ ἀτελεῦτητος τοῖς μὲν πρωτοδότως, τοῖς δὲ δευτεροδότως καὶ καθ' ἐξῆς, τῶν θεῶν ἀπαυγασμάτων

stant and adds a dynamic orientation to the divine teleological-eschatological plan. Focusing on those beings subject to generation and corruption—in other words, beings which fall under the domain of time—Nicholas mentions in the same paragraph that their “procession” has been completed since the sixth day of creation, according to their respective archetype or universal, while what remains is their perfection after the seventh day, namely on the eighth day.<sup>44</sup> It is at this point that the creative plan is supposed to be accomplished, namely with the actions performed by created beings in their analogous position. The position here is explicit: the realization of God’s providence or teleology cannot be completed without each creature’s respective, appropriate initiative.

In the refutation of prop. 130 of the *Elements of Theology* we find one more detail of the difference between Neoplatonic polytheism and Christian monotheism, which also defines the epistemological models adopted. Here Proclus presents his multi-causal system and the structural way of the hierarchy in it in relation to all the forms of being,<sup>45</sup> a position which is refused by Nicholas. According to Nicholas, all properties—chiefly those of “being”, “life” and “intellect”—are completely possessed by God as *logoi* and are transmitted in a lesser degree, not as gifts but as receptions, to produced beings analogously to their position in the metaphysical hierarchy.<sup>46</sup> One can see, in connection

---

προχομένων κατὰ μετάδοσιν ἀναλόγως ταῖς ἐκάστων τάξεσιν εἶτουν στάσει μέχρι καὶ τῶν ἐν ἐκείνοις ἐσχάτων. Οὕτω δὲ καὶ πάντα πρὸς τὴν μίαν ἀρχὴν ἀνατακτικῶς ἐπιστρέφει καὶ ὁ αἰδιος τοῖς τοιοῦτοις καὶ ἀτελεύτητος ἐν τε ταῖς προόδοις καὶ ταῖς ἐπιστροφαῖς κύκλος σώζεται. Just like in other sections, here as well we see how straight motion meets cyclical motion: specifically, both “procession” and “reversion” follow a straight course, which however becomes cyclical for the beginning and the end or, else, the starting point and the target coincide.

44 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 134. 13–18: ἡ δὲ τῶν ὑπὸ γένεσιν καὶ φθορὰν καὶ χρόνον κατὰ μὲν τὸ καθόλου καὶ ἤδη τετέλεστα· ἐν ἑξ γὰρ ἡμέραις σύμπαξ ὁ αἰσθητὸς συμπληρῶται κόσμος, ἐν δὲ τῇ ἐβδόμῃ κατέπαυσεν ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐκέτι πρόδος ἄλλου τοῦ κόσμου, καὶ ἔτι προσδοκᾶται πάμπαν συντελεσθῆναι κατὰ τὴν τοῦ παρόντος αἰῶνος συντέλειαν. “Universal” refers to the original complete formation of the divine plan, which expects its completion after the activation of the entire world and the particular choices that created beings in the world will make.

45 Ann. Ch. Saget, who relies on prop. 130 of the Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, discusses how ontological hierarchy is defined in Proclus’ system, which, by extension, defines how analogy works (Saget, *L’architecture du divin*, p. 288): “Cette proposition [...] met bien en lumière la fausse proximité des êtres inférieurs: ceux-ci sont moins distants de leurs causes prochaines en ce que la transcendance s’atténue avec l’éloignement du Principe. Mais ils sont davantage impuissants et à se rassembler eux-mêmes et à s’unir à leurs causes. Si bien que, moins séparés de leurs causes (que l’intelligible de son principe, par exemple), ils en sont pourtant, par leur faiblesse, plus distancés.”

46 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 123.22–24: [...] πάντα δὲ δυναμοὶ καὶ τάττει, καθ’ οὓς



with this, that the discussion of the *logoi* of beings brings out the doctrine of creation from nothing. Everything which exists in the created world as a composition of properties has been created only due to the divine activation, which classifies the created natures into categories analogously to the *logoi* of their productive power: the *logoi* are then what brings about each, which God knows in an absolute degree. The natures of the created beings are, then, nothing but hypostasized divine *logoi*, or archetypes which are not autonomous or self-constituted realities, since no ontological existence is attributed to them inasmuch as they are divine wills existing within God's unity. Accordingly, the *logoi* express the divine providence and project the divine will in the created universe.

It should also be mentioned that the *logoi* also define the particular way in which created beings exist and function. Specifically, created beings' position κατὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον, "by analogy" or "in accordance" with their nature, defines the way of their "reversion" to the first and only source. On the higher ontic level, i.e. the mode of being for the angels and human beings, "reversion" defines the way in which they may accomplish likeness with the divine creative projections.<sup>47</sup> Focusing on the question of "reversion", the refutation of prop. 138 of the *Institutio theologica* is quite interesting. In this proposition Proclus discusses once again the multi-causal hierarchical structure of his system, according to the degree of participation in the *One*. Nicholas however does not discuss this topic, at least directly, but he elaborates how the created beings "revert" to their source. In every case, "reversion" takes place in an analogous way to the divine simplicity, which is the opposite of composition, which characterizes produced beings.<sup>48</sup> Beings' "reversion" must then mirror the simplicity of the First to reach the kind of unity appropriate for each one.

---

οἶδεν αὐτὴ λόγους τῆς προσηκούσης ἐκάστης δυνάμεώς τε καὶ τάξεως, αἷς ἀναλόγως καὶ πάντα ταύτης ἐξέχονται. Nicholas here uses the verb οἶδα, which has a broader meaning than that of ἐπίσταμαι, since it also shows the intention which goes together with knowledge.

47 Cf. once again Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 67.1–5.

48 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 128.22–25: θεοῦνται δὲ πάντως κατὰ μετοχὴν ἐκείνου οἱ καὶ τὸ εἶναι ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἔχοντες καὶ τὸ νοεῖν καὶ τὸ ζῆν καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς πολυσχιδοῦς οὐσίας ἡ ζωῆς ἡ νοήσεως πρὸς αὐτὸν δι' ἀναλόγου τῆς ἀπλότητος ἐπιστρέφοντες εἴτουν ἐνιζόμενοι. Ps.-Dionysius discusses the triad "being-life-intellect" in *De divinis nominibus* v–vii and, contrary to the Neoplatonists and especially Proclus, suggests that each term indicates a particular divine energy, but not a divine being. Describing the henism of divine causality in this way, he presents the "reversion" of being to the One-Good as being accomplished directly. On the other hand, Proclus contends that this ascending course will be accomplished through Intellect, Life and Being, allowing for ascending ultimately to the One. For a systematic analysis, cf. E. Corsini, *Il trattato "De divinis nominibus" dello Pseudo-Dionigi e i commenti neoplatonici al Parmenide* (Torino: Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, 1962),

By extension, deification by grace can then only be accomplished according to the kind of simplicity reflected in the superior property which a created being possesses. In particular, if a being's superior property is intellect, its deification becomes possible through the simplicity of this property, which analogously affects the rest of that being (e.g. its body or matter), in comparison with the other properties it possesses (such as, again, the body or matter). This principle correspondingly applies for all other kinds of beings analogous to the highest property they possess. In every case, hypostatic composition then gains its unity (ένίζεται) through "reversion". Every being which functions in a composite way becomes simple in accordance with its highest property, and in this realizes its course towards deification. Or, to put it another way, each being is transformed in an analogous way to the integrity of the divine simplicity, which produces every created property.

Furthermore, although all created beings "proceed" from the supreme principle, that is, they are created out of nothing, and then "revert" to it, according to the Christian teaching upheld by Nicholas, the kind of motion of the "procession-reversion" process is unique for every created being. As Nicholas explains in the refutation of prop. 33 of the *Institutio theologica*, the kind of motion for created beings is cyclical, although rather in a straight line.<sup>49</sup> Nicholas specifically utilizes analogy to show the descending creative movement and, then, the ascending movement which completes and restores beings to their original status. The angelic ranks, for instance, are subject to a lesser straight descending course and follow a lesser straight ascending course. But the course of those which are farther from God is greater, and so on. Man makes an even greater ascending course to God in comparison to the angels.<sup>50</sup>

---

pp. 122–165. In this section, Corsini attempts a broader analysis of the similarities and differences between Ps.-Dionysius and Proclus, using especially the terms "participated" and "unparticipated" as well as the schema "remaining-procession-reversion".

49 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 42.31–43.29: Καί ἄλλως δὲ οὐ πᾶν τὸ προῖόν ἀπὸ τινος καὶ ἐπιστρέφον κυκλικὴν ἔχει τὴν ἐνέργειαν, ἀλλ' εἴπερ ἄρα εὐθυτερῇ καὶ τὴν πρόοδον καὶ τὴν ἐπιστροφὴν ἢ ἀπόδειξις ἀναγκάζει νοεῖν.

50 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 42.18–30: Καὶ οἱ μείζους τῶν ἐπιστροφῶν κύκλοι καὶ οἱ ἐλάττους τοῖς παραχθείσιν ἀρμόζουσιν ἀναλόγως· ὅθεν αἱ μὲν πρῶται τῶν ἀγγέλων τάξεις δι' ἐλαττώσεων ἐπιστρέφουσιν, αἱ δευτέραι δὲ διὰ μειζόνων, καὶ ἔτι μάλλον αἱ τρίται, ἡμεῖς δ' ἔτι μάλιστα. Cf. R. Roques, *L'univers dionysien, Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys*, pp. 136–147. In general, according to Nicholas, the angelic ranks form their ascending and descending course, in which there is also the factor of intention, which excludes any strict ontological modes of being. According to the context, it becomes clear that the intentional movement of every angelic rank is also defined by its position. The intention of an angelic rank is then analogous with its ontological quality. But, intention makes this quality special and unique. Cf. for instance, *Refutation*, 149.18–21, where we

Combining all those mentioned on the divine illuminations and “reversion”, we could argue that there is a mode of analogous similarity in distinction between the divine illuminations as descending gifts and the created beings as ascending. In other words, the first and only divine source “proceeds” and through the same course the created beings “revert” to the divine source’s respective metaphysical level. This is where an already-mentioned conclusion arises once again: exactly because the productive manifestation is performed by the source and the “reversion” of the produced moves towards that source, the whole process could be considered to be cyclical. That is to say, while the course towards likeness to God develops in a straight line, the communication with the end brings back the beginning. End and beginning are identical, but between them there is the initiative of the created, which in every case is in straight line.<sup>51</sup> As an extension, according to Nicholas “reversion” is not a spiral motion. But, according to Proclus, it is due to the interventions of other, higher causes which take place and which are present to the completion of the ascending process.

#### 4 Conclusions

Since, for Christian thought, a produced being is not defined in its essence autonomously, but in terms of what it receives from above, and since, according to the framework adopted, all produced beings are projections of theophany, we can see in Nicholas’ system a correspondence between the metaphysics of

---

read: οἱ δὲ ἄγγελοι καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἄναντες κινεῖσθαι πρὸς τὸ θεϊότερον ἀνατεινόμενοι καὶ πρὸς τὸ κάταντες τῇ θεῇ προνοίᾳ διακονούμενοι καὶ ὅλως εἰ καὶ μὴ κατὰ φύσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ προαίρεσιν κινήτοί εἰσιν.

- 51 We should keep in mind that the difference between cause and effect raises explicit limits in analogy, which excludes a precise likeness. L. de Raeymaeker (“L’analogie de l’être dans la perspective d’une philosophie thomiste”, in *L’analogie. Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 87(1969/1), pp. 89–106) points out that, according to Thomas Aquinas, a particular being possesses its *esse*, in its own way, through participation, such that it participates in the perfection of the perfections, i.e. God, and becomes thus a created being according to the “image of God”. For de Raeymaeker, these constitute the authentic basis for affirming the existence of particular beings not as phenomena or imaginary reflections but as true, self-subsistent beings. They participate in a superior being and, at the same time, the conditions which bring them into being, which are closely related with the world of becoming, depend on its gifts. At this point a detail arises regarding what a produced being is according to the Christian teaching. It is only a created being with no autonomous metaphysical presence or function. On the other hand, in Proclus we find the distinction between metaphysical and natural produced beings, so that there are two categories of “reversion” with clear differences, which also affect how analogy works.

immanence as Ontology and natural theology<sup>52</sup> as Epistemology. What connects these two fields is causality, which functions as both an ontological and epistemological category. In fact, since causality is defined within a monotheistic framework, the natural universe is considered as ontologically dependent on the divine energies (which, it should be stressed, are volitional and not subject to analogies)—and the providential plan implied in the energies. This kind of approach to metaphysics and natural ontology clearly affects the epistemological procedures as well, which are analogously reduced from the effects to the causes and obviously, more or less, differentiate one another regarding the way of ascending. For instance, man's reduction from becoming to being requires going beyond the sensory-representational level and an introduction of the process of intuition.

Regarding the metaphysical names, we have to note that under the terms of Nicholas' monotheism they refer to the projections of the divine energies, in which there is no hierarchy nor are they determined or dependent on anything else. That is, they arise from a particular energy, or manifestation, arising from the divine essence and contextualize the ontology of the divine immanence. In this sense, analogy is not found on the metaphysical level between the divine energies, amongst themselves, or between the divine energies and the divine essence, but only between that which appears as a new reality with a particular sensible form and its cause (i.e. the divine energy), which is manifested in endless ways. We can also observe that the divine energies through their combinations form natural cores, which lead to an immense number of substances found in the natural world.

In addition, we find an extensive and quite fascinating discussion on natural *logoi* in Proclus' commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*, almost with the same rationale: i.e. as products of the divine plan. Names, which arise from the dialectics of thinking with becoming and being, appear to be dependent on Ontology, with realism being explicit in any case. And exactly in this sense the predicates are attributed to God, as active causality, according to the representations emitted by the entire created world as defined according not only to the general projection of theophanies but also to the identification, as far as possible, of their special modes. At the same time, God cannot be completely known in himself, not even with respect to his energies or manifestations: as transcendent, God is not subject to the conceptual schemata of the human intellect, which can be applied as predicates only in the world of the natural phenomena. In this sense, one can refer to Nicholas' Christian framework as a

---

52 I.e. the manifestation of divine activity in nature: cf. the Introduction, above.

kind of Byzantine Kantianism, and less so a Byzantine Neoplatonism. One can recognize the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's *De mystica theologia* as establishing a tradition in this light, insofar as it has placed the method of analogy in a pragmatological context.

The ontological status of causality goes with the status of "participation". But since participation cannot be measured and cannot be cognitively understood fully, the principle of analogy—the precise function of which needs to be ontologically based on the acceptance of the divine immanence or epistemologically on equivocation or even allegorical interpretation—fills cognitive gaps up to a point. This takes place in a way that facilitates the limited cognitive and theoretical capacity of man. Since man is unable to grasp the immanent causality of God, nor is he able to understand how it is manifested or assimilated by created beings, he follows an ascending course towards the divine through the investigation of created beings. This is obviously not a nominalist approach, since realism in the Christian context is unquestionable, and defines both the knowledge of the self as created by the divine and the knowledge of beings, all of which are theophanies. The question is, then, how the principle of causality makes possible the analogies between cause and effect. And since the relation between these two terms appears in multiple ways, analogy must also appear in multiple ways, without obviously affecting monotheism, or also monism, where, as noted earlier, the one divine cause appears in a dynamic, multidimensional way with respect to its presences. One should also note that participation, in both Christianity and Neoplatonism, appears in many ways (namely, it is epistemological, moral, aesthetic and, more summarily, existential), which means that there is no one, straightforward way to realize it. This affects the application of analogy as well.<sup>53</sup>

Therefore, the principle of analogy, according to what Nicholas has said, cannot be accepted in a simplistic way as referring only to one sense, such as to the phenomenal or material world: an acceptance like this would mean the domination, at least implicitly, of a broader material empiricism and the subordination of metaphysical Ontology to the phenomenon or at least to its epi-

53 But in almost all Christian and Neoplatonic approaches the relation of analogy to participation is obvious and its particular content depends on the emphasis given to this relation. Cf. for instance É. Gilson's following comment (*L'Esprit de la philosophie médiévale*, p. 100): "Les notions de participation et d'analogie se déploient avec une luxuriance excessive dans les cosmogonies primitives ou même médiévales; elles s'y étalent dans leur crudité, sans critique, sans méthode, sans justification rationnelle; mais il ne résulte pas de là qu'elles ne correspondent pas à un aspect authentique du réel et ne soient, par conséquent, indispensables pour l'expliquer ou même simple ment le décrire, d'autant moins que la naïveté de l'idée d'analogie est beaucoup moindre qu'on ne l'imagine communément."

stemological reflections. Or, else, the sensible world would be considered that it completely reveals being and that it somehow decodes it. Rather, in Christian thought the natural world gains value but the supernatural level preserves its complete autonomy regardless of any providential relationship. In this sense, the function of analogy is as follows: it keeps intact the divine transcendence at the same time that it explains how the two levels, the transcendent and the natural one, communicate through the projections of the divine energies in the realm of creation and how this creation assimilates them. In this way, Nicholas avoids agnosticism without affecting the divine mystery and affirms natural theology.<sup>54</sup> However, this does not mean that he was successful in his critique of Proclus' framework, unless one investigates his view under a Christian framework. But there is another detail which constitutes an unsurpassable difficulty: the difference between polytheism and monotheism, which is such that a comparison of these two frameworks is not easy. In general, not just in relation to analogy, it is necessary to specify the possibilities of comparisons, so that to draw a conclusion through the reduction in a third term. The realistic model adopted is common in the two worldviews, but not able to lead always to parallel examinations.

Regardless, however, of the similarities and differences between the two worldviews of Christianity and Neoplatonism, analogy serves as an optimistic methodological model for three main reasons: a) it re-evaluates the natural universe as a theophany in an ontological and axiological scale; b) it demonstrates the human intellect's ability to ascend, as far as possible, to the projections of the divine causality; and c) it offers ways for Philosophy to engage with Theology beyond mere methodology. This proves a fruitful encounter for the development of the theory of spirit, since philosophy has traditionally been characterized as being based on dualism in contrast to Christianity as being

---

54 The topic of analogy is dominant in medieval philosophy, and has proven notoriously difficult to understand for the modern scholar: cf. É. Gilson's points (*L'Esprit de la philosophie médiévale*, pp. 97–99): "La notion d'analogie est une de celles qui offrent le plus de difficultés au lecteur moderne d'un traité médiéval; il s'en faut d'ailleurs de beaucoup que les penseurs du moyen âge se soient accordés sur sa définition et saint Thomas ne semble pas avoir cherché à l'élucider complètement pour elle-même. Ce que l'on peut dire, c'est qu'elle exerce deux fonctions, l'une qui est unitrice, l'autre qui est séparatrice. L'analogie est toujours à la fois relié à son principe du fait qu'il en est un analogue, et séparé du fait qu'il n'en est qu'un analogue [...]. Sans la doctrine de l'analogie, l'identification de Dieu et de l'être donne naissance au panthéisme. Le cas s'est produit plusieurs fois dès le Moyen Âge [...] on pourrait montrer que si l'idée d'image divine est au centre de tant de mystiques médiévales, celle de saint Bernard, par exemple, c'est justement parce qu'elle permet une déification mystique sans confusion de substance, l'homme n'étant plus alors, sous l'action assimilatrice de la grâce, que le sujet informé par la ressemblance de Dieu."

based on monism. Nevertheless, this deference did not lead to an unbridgeable theoretical gap, for in both cases goodness maintains a central role as the cause (both the creative and final) of creation.<sup>55</sup> In this, goodness expresses the intentional function of causality. Importantly, intention does not lead to an absolute analogy, thereby ensuring an Ontology with clear norms.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

- Basil the Great, *Homilies in Hexaemeron*, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris, Migne (= PG29b), 1857.
- Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae Graecae Cursus Completus* 3, Paris, 1857.
- Gregory of Nyssa, *Explicatio Apologetica ad Petrum fratrem in Hexaemeron*, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris, Migne (= PG44), 1857.
- Nicholas of Methone, Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου / *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas' life and works by A.D. Angelou, Athens / Leiden, The Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984.
- Plato, *Parmenides*, ed. A. Diès, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1965.
- Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria III*, ed. E. Diehl, Leipzig, Teubner, 1903–1906.
- Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, edition, translation and introduction E.R. Dodds, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1933; *Éléments de Théologie*, trans. J. Trouillard, Paris, Aubier, Montaigne, 1965.
- Proclus, *Théologie Platonicienne II*, ed. H.D. Saffrey, L.G. Westerink, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1974; *The Theology of Plato*, transl. T. Taylor, Somerset: The Prometheus Trust, 1816 [repr. 1995].

55 This is a topic with a long historical course, regarding both the primary sources and the secondary literature. Once again, we follow É. Gilson's thought, who provides us here the basis for a more comprehensible framework (*L'Esprit de la philosophie médiévale*, p. 94): "Déjà, dans le *Timée*, c'est la libéralité, l'absence d'envie du Démonstrateur divin, qui est invoquée pour rendre raison de son activité ordonnatrice. Mais si le bien est la raison dernière de la création, quelle est la raison de ce bien lui-même? Poser une telle question à Platon serait s'exposer à demeurer sans réponse, puisqu'il considère le Bien comme la réalité suprême. Poser la question à Denys l'Aréopagite serait se mettre dans le même cas. Profondément pénétré de platonisme, ce chrétien ne parvient pas à surmonter le primat du Bien pour s'élever au primat de l'Être. On voit clairement qu'il en est ainsi dans le texte capital des Noms divins (v, 1), où Denys développe sa conception de l'existence divine. Pour lui, lorsque Dieu nous enseigne qu'il est l'Être, on doit entendre que de toutes les participations à la bonté, qui est son essence, l'être est la première. Commentant à son tour le commentaire de Denys, saint Thomas se déclare d'accord avec lui, mais on a justement remarqué qu'il ne l'est pas, car au lieu de voir dans l'être une participation du bien, ce que le texte de Denys suppose, il voit dans le bien un aspect de l'être."

### Secondary Sources

- Aubenque, P., *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote*, Paris, PUF, 1962.
- Breton, S., "La théorème de l'Un dans les *Éléments de Théologie* de Proclus", in *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 58/4(1974), pp. 561–583.
- Corsini, E., *Il trattato De divinis nominibus dello Pseudo-Dionigi e i commenti neoplatonici al Parmenide*, Torino, Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, 1962.
- Courtine, J.-F., *Les catégories de l'être. Études de philosophie ancienne et médiévale*, Paris, PUF, 2003.
- De Raeymaecker, L., "L'analogie de l'être dans la perspective d'une philosophie thomiste", in *L'analogie. Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 87(1969/1), pp. 89–106.
- Gersh, S., *Κίνησις Ἀκίνητος: A Study of Spiritual Motion in the Philosophy of Proclus*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1973.
- Gersh, S., *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1978.
- Gilson, É., *L'Esprit de la philosophie médiévale*, Paris, J. Vrin, 1989.
- Hadot, P., *Porphyre et Victorinus*, Paris, Études Augustiniennes, 1968.
- Lossky, Vl., "La notion des 'analogies' chez Denys le Pseudo-Aréopagite", in *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 5(1930), pp. 279–309.
- Lossky, Vl., *À l'image et à la ressemblance de Dieu*, Paris, Aubier, 1967.
- Riquœur, P., *La métaphore vive*, Paris, Seuil, 1975.
- Robin, L., *La théorie Platonicienne des Idées et des Nombres d'après Aristote*, Paris, Félix Alcan, 1908.
- Robinson, J., *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th-century Byzantium*, A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Graduate Program in Medieval Studies, Notre Dame (Indiana), 2014.
- Roques, R., *L'univers dionysien, Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys*, Paris, Cerf, 1954.
- Rosan, L.J., *The philosophy of Proclus. The Final phase of Ancient Thought*, New York, Cosmos, 1949.
- Saget, A. Ch., *L'architecture du divin: mathématique et philosophie chez Plotin et Proclus*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1982.
- Terezis, Ch., "La critique de Nic. de Méthone à la théorie de Proclus concernant la schéma: immanence—procession—conversion", in *Byzantion* 65(1995), pp. 455–466.
- Trouillard, J., *La mystagogie de Proclus*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1982.



# 12th-Century Philosophers and the Filioque: The Case of Nicholas of Methone's Corpus on the Procession of the Holy Spirit

Alessandra Bucossi

Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The history of the controversy between the Greek and the Latin churches has never been written on the basis of the theological treatises composed by the authors involved in the discussions, both real and invented. Most probably one of the reasons why this has not yet been done is that the lives of many of these authors, especially those who lived during the 12th century, are obscure—too obscure for those of us who wish to understand the relationships among the intellectuals and their reciprocal influences.

Of Nicholas of Methone's life only scant pieces of information have survived. We do not know when he died, or whether he participated in some important church synods or encounters with Latin envoys,<sup>2</sup> but in his case the picture is even more obscure due to the accusation of plagiarism both in relation to his *Refutatio Institutionis theologiae Procli*<sup>3</sup> and his theological writings on

1 My heartfelt gratitude goes to Jonathan Greig and Joshua Robinson who not only carefully read this contribution but generously corrected my English and suggested relevant improvements for my interpretation of Nicholas' thought.

2 For an attempted reconstruction of the biography, see Νικολάου Μεθώνης, *Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου*, ed. A.D. Angelou (Athens / Leiden: Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984), pp. IX–XXIII. From now on abbreviated Nicholas of Methone, *Refutatio Procli*.

3 The original Greek title is Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου τοῦ Λυκίου πλατωνικοῦ φιλοσόφου πρὸς τὸ μὴ συναρπάζεσθαι τοὺς ἀναγινώσκοντας ὑπὸ τῆς ὑποφαινομένης αὐτῇ πειθανάγκης καὶ σκανδαλίζεσθαι κατὰ τῆς ἀληθοῦς πίστεως. A thorough study, rich bibliography and an English translation are available in J.M. Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th-century Byzantium*, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Notre Dame 2014. Other important analyses by the same scholar are J.M. Robinson, "Dionysius Against Proclus: the Apophatic Critique in Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of the *Elements of Theology*", in D. Layne, D.D. Butorac (eds), *Proclus and his Legacy* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 249–270; J.M. Robinson, "Proclus as Heresiarch: Theological Polemic

the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup> This charge, in light of most recent studies on this important churchman and philosopher, should be reconsidered, especially on the basis of those internal pieces of evidence that show his corpus to have a coherent plan, designed to defend Byzantine orthodoxy against the threat represented by both the Latin addition of the Filioque sentence to the Creed and the “Hellenic tales” (οἱ τῶν Ἑλλήνων μῦθοι).<sup>5</sup>

Since most scholars are generally more interested in the “philosophical” writings of Byzantine intellectuals than in their theological writings, the aim of this paper is to offer the reader the most meaningful and original argumentative knots of Nicholas of Methone’s writings on the Filioque and to highlight the passages and arguments that would be interesting for a further analysis of the reception of classical, late antique, and medieval philosophy. Indeed, some scholars have already discussed the relevance of the theological writings of Nicholas to better understand the *Refutatio Procli*: the most famous and quoted is certainly the review of Angelou’s edition by Kazhdan, in which the relevance of the twelfth-century historical context, and the relationship between the churches for the composition of the philosophical refutation of Proclus, are left open for further research;<sup>6</sup> others have claimed that Nicholas’ philosophical production has no relationship with the theological literature and discussions of the time; and, furthermore, others defending Nicholas’ paternity of the *Refutatio Procli* have used the anti-Latin stance of the text in order to prove its date of composition during the 12th century.<sup>7</sup>

---

and Philosophical Commentary in Nicholas of Methone’s *Refutation (Anaptyxis)* of Proclus’ *Elements of Theology*, in S. Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 103–136.

4 See for example A. Michel, *Humbert und Kerullarios: Quellen und Studien zum Schisma des XI. Jahrhunderts* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1930), vol. 2, p. 364: “Fast die ganze Schrift des Stethatos, größere Teile davon sogar doppelt, wurde von Nikolaos von Methone († vor 1166) übernommen, der lange Zeit zu Unrecht als der bedeutendste Theologe des 12. Jahrhunderts galt, heute aber als Kopiator großen Stils bekannt ist.”

5 Nicholas of Methone, “Τοῦ αὐτοῦ Νικολάου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης κεφαλαιώδεις ἔλεγχοι τοῦ παρὰ Λατίνοις καινοφανοῦς δόγματος, τοῦ ὅτι τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐκπορεύεται”, in A.K. Demetrakopoulos (ed.), *Ἑκκλησιαστικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη* (Leipzig, 1866, repr. 1965), vol. 1, pp. 359–380, at § 11, p. 365, l. 5.

6 A.P. Kazhdan, “Review of Angelou’s edition”, in *Speculum* 64(1989), pp. 196–199.

7 J. Stiglmayr, “Die ‘Streitschrift des Prokopios von Gaza’ gegen den Neuplatoniker Proklos”, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 8(1899), pp. 263–301; E. Amato, A. Corcella, G. Ventrella, P. Maréchaux (eds), *Procope de Gaza. Discours et fragments* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2014), pp. XI–LXXXV, “Introduction générale”; M. Trizio, “Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium”, in S. Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus: From Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 182–226; A. Gioffreda, M. Trizio, “Nicholas of Methone, Procopius of Gaza and Proclus of Lycia”, in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2021), vol. 2, pp. 94–135.

The aim of this paper is neither to enter into the discussion of the paternity of the texts attributed to the Bishop of Methone, nor to interpret the theological side of the *Refutatio Procli*: Joshua Robinson<sup>8</sup> and Nicolò Carmelo Benvenuto<sup>9</sup> have already devoted their doctoral dissertations and articles to these controversial and complex topics; the goal of this chapter is instead to present Nicholas of Methone's theological writings on the Holy Spirit in order to add some relevant cases to the ongoing debate on the relationship between the theological and the philosophical realms in Nicholas' production, especially because those scholars who have also mentioned the anti-Latin writings generally refer to one or two of these texts, but do not take into account the entire corpus.



Four works attributed to Nicholas of Methone are preserved, but only one of them (no. 3) has recently received a critical edition.<sup>10</sup> These works include:

1. A reply to a question on the Holy Spirit, *Ad magnum domesticum* (Angelou, n. 7; *RAP* G19828)<sup>11</sup>

8 Robinson, "Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation of Proclus*". See above n. 3, p. 290.

9 C.N. Benvenuto, "Prime indagini su quattro scritti teologici di Nicola di Metone", Dottorato di Ricerca in "Storia, cultura e saperi dell'Europa Mediterranea dall'Antichità all'Età Contemporanea", Università degli Studi della Basilicata 2022. When this contribution was submitted in May 2022, several important works by Carmelo Nicolò Benvenuto had not yet been published. At the current stage of revision for publication, it is unfortunately no longer possible to take Benvenuto's research into account. I would therefore like to apologise to both the reader and to Benvenuto himself if any of our respective findings now appear to overlap. The following are his recent publications: N.C. Benvenuto (ed.), *Nicola di Metone: Refutationes theologicae doctrinae Latinorum*. Akribos anaginoskein 3. Potenza, Basilicata University Press, 2024; N.C. Benvenuto, "Nicola di Metone e il *De Spiritus Sancti processione* di Nicola IV Muzalone. Note per una nuova proposta attributiva", in *Medioevo Greco* 23(2023), pp. 13–39; N.C. Benvenuto, "Un 'quaderno' di *excerpta* d'autore: le *Memoriae contra Latinos de Spiritu Sancto* tra Niceta Stetato, Nicola di Metone e Niceta Coniata" in *Medioevo Greco* 24(2024), pp. 63–84.

10 The *RAP* numbers refer to the *Repertorium Auctorum Polemicorum de pace et discordia inter Ecclesiam Graecam et Latinam*, a research project, coordinated by Alessandra Bucossi and Marie-Hélène Blanchet, that is creating the first complete online inventory of the Byzantine literature dedicated to the relationship between Greek and Latin Christianity, accessible at the address, [www.unive.it/rap](http://www.unive.it/rap).

11 Nicholas of Methone, "Νικολάου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης, πρὸς τὸν μέγαν Δομέστικον, ἐρωτήσαντα περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος πῶς λέγεται οὐσιωδῶς ἐπιδημῆσαι καὶ ἐνουκῆσαι τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις; καὶ εἰ οὕτως ἦν καὶ ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, πῶς οὐχὶ καὶ αὐτοὶ χριστοὶ λέγονται; ἢ εἰ μὴ οὕτως, τίς ἡ διαφορά;," in A.K. Demetrakopoulos (ed.), *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη* (Leipzig, 1865, repr. 1965), vol. 1, pp. 199–218. From now on abbreviated: Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*.

2. A treatise on the procession of the Holy Spirit, *Adversus Latinos de Spiritu Sancto* (Angelou, n. 1, *RAP* G368)<sup>12</sup>
3. A collection of principal refutations of the new Latin dogma, *Refutationes theologicae doctrinae Latinorum*, also known as *Syllogismi*<sup>13</sup> or *Oratio* 7<sup>14</sup> (Angelou, n. 3, *RAP* G19831)<sup>15</sup>
4. Memoirs from various writings written against the Latin blasphemy on the Holy Spirit, *Memoriae contra Latinos* (Angelou, n. 4, *RAP* G19835).<sup>16</sup>

It is impossible to establish a definite evidence-based dating for these writings, however, according to the contents, it seems plausible to propose a hypothetical order of composition from one to four: number one is a general text on the Holy Spirit, which is not explicitly addressed against the Latins, but was composed in reply to a question posed by a *megas domestikos*, perhaps John Axouch (died 1150 ca.),<sup>17</sup> while the last one is a sort of “*Reader’s Digest*” of all the writings that Nicholas dedicated to the procession of the Holy Spirit.<sup>18</sup>

In this paper I discuss these four texts, which are clearly attributed to Nicholas, bishop of Methone by the manuscript tradition; however, as hinted in

- 
- 12 Nicholas of Methone, “Νικολάου τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης, λόγος πρὸς τοὺς Λατίνοους περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς οὐ μὴν καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐκπορεύεται” in K. Simonides (ed.), *Ὁρθοδόξων Ἑλλήνων θεολογικαὶ γραφαὶ τέσσαρες* (London: Gilbert and Rivington, 1858), pp. 1–39. From now on abbreviated: Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*.
  - 13 This is the title that will be employed in this publication to avoid confusion with the *Refutatio Procli*.
  - 14 The text is published by Demetrakopoulos under its original title, however, on the basis of the title used by the *TLG*, many publications refer to it as *Oratio* 7, which of course is not an appropriate title.
  - 15 Nicholas of Methone, “Τοῦ αὐτοῦ Νικολάου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης κεφαλαιώδεις ἔλεγχοι τοῦ παρὰ Λατίνοις καινοφανοῦς δόγματος, τοῦ ὅτι τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐκπορεύεται”, in A.K. Demetrakopoulos (ed.), *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη* (Leipzig, 1866, repr. 1965), vol. 1, pp. 359–380. From now on abbreviated: Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae* in the bibliographic references in the footnotes, but as *Syllogismi* in the main text. The reader should be aware that, although this text has since been published by Carmelo Nicolò Benvenuto (in his *Refutationes*, see above n. 9, p. 292) the references in this contribution have not been updated to reflect the new edition, and still refer to the printed version by Demetrakopoulos.
  - 16 Nicholas of Methone, “Ἀπομνημονεύματα ἐκ τῶν διαφόροις λόγοις γεγραμμένων κατὰ Λατίνων περὶ τῆς εἰς τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα βλασφημίας”, in *Два неизданных произведения Николая, епископа Мефонского, писателя XII века* (Novgorod, 1897), Arsenij Ivačenko (ed.), pp. 5–49. From now on abbreviated: Nicholas of Methone, *Memoriae contra Latinos*.
  - 17 A.P. Kazhdan (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), vol. 1, p. 239, s.v. Axouch.
  - 18 More references on the correspondence in this paper at Section 5. *Memoriae*, at p. 339, and in the critical apparatus of the *Contra Latinos et de processione Spiritus sancti* attributed to Niketas Stethatos (*RAP* G19631) edited in A. Michel (ed.), *Humbert und Kerullarios: Quellen und Studien zum Schisma des XI Jahrhunderts* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1930), vol. 2, pp. 371–409. From now on abbreviated Niketas Stethatos, *Contra Latinos*.

this volume by Carmelo Nicolò Benvenuto<sup>19</sup> and widely discussed in his doctoral dissertation,<sup>20</sup> there are various problems of attributions for at least the *Memoriae* (attributed also to Niketas Stethatos)<sup>21</sup> and some parts of the *Syllogismi* (attributed also to the Patriarch Nicholas IV Mouzalon),<sup>22</sup> which I will mention only briefly in the dedicated sections.

A thorough study of Nicholas of Methone's theological doctrine on the procession of the Holy Spirit would deserve a monograph. Nevertheless, in this publication I will first concisely describe the *Ad magnum domesticum*, and then I will dedicate more space and attention to the main work on the procession of the Holy Spirit, the *Adversus Latinos de Spiritu Sancto*, trying also to highlight if and when we can find passages that should be analysed in the light of Nicholas' *Refutatio Procli*. I will then finally pinpoint the passages from the *Syllogismi* and the correspondences of *Memoriae* that complete this succinct overview.

## 2 *Ad magnum domesticum*

The title of the *Ad magnum domesticum* preserves the questions asked to Nicholas by a *megas domestikos*, by imperial order:<sup>23</sup> why is the Holy Spirit said to have descended on and dwelt in the Apostles οὐσιωδῶς, “in essence” (based on a passage from Gregory of Nazianzus' *Oration 41*, on Pentecost)? Is there any difference between the way in which the Spirit substantially inhabits the Apostles and the substantial relationship between the Spirit and Christ? Indeed, if there is no difference, then should the Apostles be called “christs”? But, if the relationship is different, what is the difference?<sup>24</sup>

19 C.N. Benvenuto, “Reconsidering Nicholas of Methone's Corpus on the Procession of the Holy Spirit”, in this volume, p. 347–373.

20 Benvenuto, “Prime indagini su quattro scritti teologici di Nicola di Metone”, quoted above n. 9, p. 292.

21 See above n. 18.

22 Nicholas IV Mouzalon, *De processione Spiritus Sancti* (RAP G3656) edited in Th. Zeses, “Ο πατριάρχης Νικόλαος Δ' Μουζάλων (Παράρτημα: Μουζάλωνος, Περὶ τῆς ἐκπορεύσεως τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος)”, in *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἑπετηρὶς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς* 23(1978), pp. 307–329.

23 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 199, l. 26–p. 200, l. 1: μάλιστα καὶ βασιλικοῦ προηγησαμένου κελεύσματος, τὴν λύσιν μοι τοῦ παρὰ σοῦ προτεθέντος ζητήματος ἐπιτρέποντος.

24 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, titulus, p. 199: Νικολάου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης πρὸς τὸν μέγαν Δομέστικον, ἐρωτήσαντα περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος πῶς λέγεται οὐσιωδῶς ἐπιδημῆσαι καὶ ἐνοικῆσαι τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις; καὶ εἰ οὕτως ἦν καὶ ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, πῶς οὐχὶ καὶ αὐτοὶ χριστοὶ λέγονται; ἢ εἰ μὴ οὕτως, τίς ἡ διαφορά;

The passage by Gregory of Nazianzus that triggers the entire discussion is the following:

Ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἀμυδρῶς· τὸ δὲ δεύτερον ἐκτυπώτερον· τὸ δὲ νῦν τελεώτερον, οὐκέτι ἐνεργείᾳ παρὸν ὡς πρότερον, οὐσιωδῶς δέ, ὡς ἂν εἴποι τις, συγγινόμενόν τε καὶ συμπολιτευόμενον.

But while the first manifestation was obscure, the second <was> more manifest and the present one is more perfect: because the Spirit is no longer present by his action, as before, but it is **substantially**, as one could say, that He is present to the Apostles and resides with them.<sup>25</sup>

This set of questions is not explicitly linked to anti-Latin polemics, but Nicholas' explanations form the basis of his theology of the Holy Spirit, his "pneumatology". The text opens with a series of references to the Spirit in the Old and New Testament (e. g. the chrism in Is. 61: 1; joy and exultation in Gal. 5: 22) and his role in the life of Christ: the Spirit and the Virgin, the Spirit and Christ's baptism, the Spirit as the finger of God that drives away the demons, and so on. The turning points in Nicholas' and Gregory's exegeses are after Christ's death and resurrection, when Christ himself breaths forth the Spirit (Io. 20: 21–23), on appearing to the Disciples, and later, after the Ascension, when he sends the Spirit at Pentecost (Mc. 16: 19; Lc. 24: 50–53; Act. 1: 6–11).

In order to explain how and why the Spirit exists differently in the Son and in the Apostles, Nicholas clarifies that the Spirit is "substantially" in the Son because the two are the unique substance of the Divinity, while the same condition is not applicable to the Apostles, who are creatures, and the divine substance cannot be confined within creation. The Bishop of Methone uses a passage from Gregory of Nazianzus' *Oratio* 31, on the Holy Spirit, to reinforce his first point:

[...] πάντα τῇ οὐσίᾳ πληροῦν, πάντα συνέχον· πληρωτικὸν κόσμου κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν, ἀχώρητον κόσμῳ κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν [...].

[...] [the Spirit is] filling all with his essence, containing all: *filling the world*<sup>26</sup> in his essence, **not limited** by the world in his power [...].<sup>27</sup>

25 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 41, § 11, p. 340, l. 20–23.

26 Cf. Sap. 1: 7.

27 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 31, § 29, p. 334, l. 18–20; Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 204, l. 10–14.

Then he goes on to explain that since God is infinite, while the world is limited, and since the unlimited cannot be contained in the limited,<sup>28</sup> therefore, when the Spirit comes upon and dwells in the Apostles, he is not contained in his entirety in each one of them, as he is in Christ,<sup>29</sup> but in the Apostles the Spirit is divided and in parts.<sup>30</sup> It is important to highlight the two different expressions employed in these passages: the Spirit is ἀχώρητον, “cannot be confined”, but can be χωριστόν, “separable”. Nicholas’ point could be summarised in a simple concept: the Divinity is infinite but at the same time can be divided into parts, as the Spirit is in residing in each creature. The conclusion to one of the questions posed by the *megas domestikos*, therefore, is: if the Spirit does not exist in the same manner in the Apostles and in Christ, then the Apostles cannot be called “christs”; rather they can be called “Christians”, a simple conclusion to quite a tedious question. One wonders if this was a serious matter for discussion in Constantinople, as Nicholas seems to present it in the proem, or if it was a personal curiosity of the *megas domestikos*.<sup>31</sup>

Nicholas goes back to Gregory of Nazianzus’ passage from *Oratio 41* and draws attention to the three fundamental stages in the life of Christ—(1) before he was glorified by his suffering, (2) after the Resurrection, and (3) after the Ascension<sup>32</sup>—in order to clarify (always on the basis of Gregory) how the manifestation of the Spirit was possible only after the Resurrection. He explains at length the meaning of Gregory’s text and then concludes, clarifying that the Theologian did not use the expression “substantially” in a complete, absolute way<sup>33</sup> but “tempered”<sup>34</sup> it (ἐκόλασε)<sup>35</sup> by the addition of the words “as one could

28 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 205, l. 2–3: ἄπειρον γὰρ τὸ θεῖον, ὁ δὲ κόσμος πεπερασμένος, καὶ οὐ δήπου τῷ πεπερασμένῳ χωρεῖται τὸ ἄπειρον.

29 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 205, l. 6–10: Ὡστε καὶ οὐσιωδῶς φῶμεν ἐπιδημήσαι τὸ Πνεῦμα καὶ ἐνοικῆσαι τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις, ἀλλ’ οὐχὶ καὶ ὅλον αὐτὸ καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἐν ἐκάστῳ τούτων χωρηθῆναι δοίμεν, οὐδ’ οὕτως ἐνωθῆναι καὶ συνουσιωθῆναι ὡς τῷ Χριστῷ.

30 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 205, l. 22–25: Διαιρετῶς οὖν καὶ μεριστῶς ἐν τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις τὸ Πνεῦμα, ἀλλ’ οὐχ ὅλον ἐν ἐκάστῳ καὶ ἀδιαίρετον καὶ ἀμερίστον, οὐ μὴν οὐδ’ ἀχώριστον, ἀλλ’ ἔστιν ὅπου καὶ χωριστόν.

31 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 206, l. 6–13: Οὐκοῦν οὐδὲ χριστοὶ κυρίως λεχθεῖεν ἂν οἱ μῆτε ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, ὃ λέγεται, πρώτης μῆτε μὴν ἔπειτα συνουσιωθέντες ἀχωρίστως ὅλῳ τῷ χρίσματι, ἀλλ’ εἰς μὲν οὗτος, εἰς Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (συμφησαιμεν ἂν καὶ ἡμεῖς τῷ Παύλῳ)· οἱ δὲ ὡς μεριστοὶ τοῦ χρίσματός τε καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ μέτοχοι χριστιανοὶ μᾶλλον ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ παρωνύμως κληθῆσονται [...].

32 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 207, l. 6–8, cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio 41*, § 11, p. 338, l. 9–15.

33 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 206, l. 16–19: Καίτοι ἔστιν εἰπεῖν, ὡς οὐδ’ ὁ Θεολόγος ἀπόλυτον τὴν οὐσιωδῶς λέξιν παρέλαβεν, ἀλλ’ ἐκόλασε τῇ προσθήκῃ τοῦ “ὡς ἂν εἴποι τις”.

34 Or “mitigated/chastened”.

say" (ὡς ἂν εἴποι τις). Therefore, the "substantial" (οὐσιωδῶς) presence of the Spirit in the Apostles is different from his presence in Christ, because in Christ the Spirit was present, quoting again Gregory, "not operating, but accompanying a person of equal dignity" (ἐὼ γὰρ Χριστὸν εἰπεῖν, ᾧ παρῆν, οὐχ ὡς ἐνεργούν, ἀλλ' ὡς ὁμοτίμῳ συμπαρομαρτοῦν),<sup>36</sup> "id est"—adds Nicholas—"as cooperating in the one and undivided operation, as supremely united and belonging essentially in a supra-essential manner according to the equality of honour of the nature" (τούτέστι συνεργούν κατὰ μίαν ἀμέριστον ἐνέργειαν, ὡς καὶ ὑπερηνωμένον καὶ συνουσιωμένον ὑπερουσίως κατὰ τὴν ὁμοτιμίαν τῆς φύσεως).<sup>37</sup>

In this way Nicholas concludes his reply,<sup>38</sup> but not the treatise; in fact he feels the need to explain fully why Gregory said that the Spirit was "substantially" present in the Apostles not in a "simple and open way" (καὶ οὐδὲ τοῦτο ἀπλῶς) but in a such a "tempered"<sup>39</sup> way (ἀλλ' οὕτω κεκολασμένως).<sup>40</sup> To resolve the case, Nicholas mentions the hint left by Gregory himself (ὡς ἂν εἴποι τις) and interprets "substantially" (οὐσιωδῶς) as referring to Aristotle's πρῶτην οὐσίαν.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, for Nicholas the Spirit was present in substance because the Divinity and the name, "God", are common, and therefore the οὐσία is common, while each person of the Trinity is what the philosophers call ἄτομον, individual, but both what is common and what is personal are substance.<sup>42</sup> A reasoning that could sound quite eccentric in the panorama of the twelfth-century polemical writings, which are primarily concerned with clearly and rigidly distinguishing between the common substance (οὐσία) and the personal hypostases (ὑποστάσεις) and carefully identifying and specifying the personal characteristics, not common, and the collective substantial characteristic shared by the Divinity.<sup>43</sup>

36 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 41, § 11, p. 338, l. 10–11.

37 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 207, l. 19–22.

35 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 207, l. 15–16: Ὅποτε τοίνυν καὶ τὸ οὐσιωδῶς συγγίνεσθαι τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις ὁ Θεολόγος ἐκόλασε.

38 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 207.

39 Or "mitigated/chastened".

40 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 207, l. 28–p. 208, l. 2: Εἰ γὰρ δὴ τὸ Πνεῦμα πάντα τῇ οὐσίᾳ πληροῦν ἐστίν, ὥσπερ εἴρηται, οὐ νῦν μόνον μετὰ τὴν οἰκονομίαν ἀλλὰ καὶ πρότερον, πῶς νῦν ὡς καινὸν γινόμενον ὁ Θεολόγος εἰσάγει τὸ οὐσιωδῶς τοῦτο τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις συγγίνεσθαι, καὶ οὐδὲ τοῦτο ἀπλῶς, ἀλλ' οὕτω κεκολασμένως;

41 Aristotle, *Categoriae*, 5; see e.g. 2b, l. 8–20.

42 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 208, l. 8–25: κοινὸν γὰρ ἡ θεότης καὶ τὸ Θεὸς ὄνομα, ἰδικὸν δὲ καὶ οἷον ἄτομον τῶν τῆς Τριάδος προσώπων ἕκαστον καὶ λέγεται γε καὶ ἔστιν οὐσία ἑκάτερον· οὐσία γὰρ καὶ τὸ καθέκαστον, εἰ καὶ μὴ τοῦτο μόνον, δ καὶ ὑπόστασις καὶ πρόσωπον κρατεῖ λέγεσθαι.

43 Cf. for example Niketas of Thessalonike, *Dialogi* (RAP 610079), in *Nicetae Thessalonicensis Dialogi sex de processione Spiritus Sancti*, ed. A. Bucossi, L. D'Amelia (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), § 19, pp. 9–11.



So, according to Nicholas, the Spirit had always been present in substance, following his Aristotelian interpretation of the adverb οὐσιωδῶς, together with the Father and the Son, but he was not present σωματικῶς, αἰσθητῶς<sup>44</sup> (“physically” and “sensibly”)—here quoting again *Oratio* 41 by Gregory<sup>45</sup>—because he could manifest himself through his operation (διὰ μόνης τῆς ἐνεργείας)<sup>46</sup> only after the Resurrection, in the “tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them” (Act. 2: 3): this indeed was the time of his presence, of his personal and substantial manifestation, which human beings had not experienced before.<sup>47</sup> Finally, Nicholas clarifies that in this way it is also possible to understand the meaning of the passage of Io. 7: 39: “Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”

[...] οὕτως πρότερον ἐνεργείᾳ παρόν, ὕστερον οὐσιωδῶς ὡς ἂν εἴποι τις (ὁ περιττός τὴν ἕξω σοφίαν, κατὰ τὸ σημαινόμενον δηλαδὴ τῆς κατ’αὐτὸν πρώτης οὐσίας, ὃν ὁ λόγος φθάσας ἐδήλωσε) τοῖς μαθηταῖς ἐπεδήμησε συγγινόμενόν τε καὶ συμπολιτευόμενον [...].<sup>48</sup>

[...] so, the Spirit, being present **before through operation**, then descended upon the Apostles **substantially as one could say** (i.e., the remarkable one in pagan wisdom, according to the meaning of the primary substance as he defined it, which this writing has already elucidated) being **associated with the disciples and living with them** [...].

A third part follows, which in fact is as an addition to the main reply to the *megas domestikos*. Nicholas summarizes the previous conclusions, and then resolves three other issues against (1) those who think that the Spirit is the “inbreathing/infusion” (ἐμφύσημα) of Christ; (2) those who think that the Spirit is only a “simple activity” (ψιλὴ ἐνέργεια); and (3) those “who call him finger of the Son-hand”.<sup>49</sup> This set of errors brings with it the heresy of the Latins: in particular, calling the Spirit “inbreathing/infusion” (ἐμφύσημα) is proper to their heresy, which teaches that the Spirit proceeds from the Son.<sup>50</sup> Nicholas goes on

44 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, pp. 209–210.

45 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 41, § 11, p. 340, l. 23–25: “Ἐπρεπε γάρ, Υἱοῦ σωματικῶς ἡμῖν ὁμιλήσαντος, καὶ αὐτὸ (i.e., the Spirit) φανῆναι σωματικῶς· καὶ Χριστοῦ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐπανελθόντος, ἐκεῖνο πρὸς ἡμᾶς κατελθεῖν.

46 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, pp. 209–210.

47 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 209.

48 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 210, l. 13–18.

49 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 211, l. 19–22: καὶ οἱ μὲν ἐμφύσημα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, οἱ δὲ ψιλὴν ἐνέργειαν, οἱ δὲ δάκτυλον καὶ ἑλαττον εἶναι τοῦ Υἱοῦ, ὡς αὐτοῦ χειρὸς ἐπέχοντος λόγον, τὸ Πνεῦμα νομίζοντες.

50 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 211, l. 31–212, l. 7: “Ὅτι μὲν οὖν

to list all the passages of the Scriptures where the Father and the Son are also called “spirit”, or where the name, “spirit”, is used in many different contexts, e.g. when Paul writes about the “spirit of slavery” and the “spirit of adoption” (Rom. 8: 15), etc.<sup>51</sup>

Most interesting is the following passage, where Nicholas explains why the Spirit cannot be a simple operation (ψιλή ἐνέργεια). Again, he starts from Gregory of Nazianzus:

Εἰ ἐνέργεια, φησὶν, ἐστὶ, ἐνεργηθήσεται οὐκ ἐνεργήσει, καὶ ὁμοῦ τῷ ἐνεργηθῆναι παύσεται· τοιοῦτον γὰρ ἡ ἐνέργεια. Πῶς οὖν ἐνεργεῖ καὶ τάδε λέγει καὶ ἀφορίζει καὶ λυπεῖται καὶ παροξύνεται, καὶ ὅσα κινουμένου σαφῶς ἐστίν, οὐ κινήσεως;

“And if [the Spirit] is activity”, as Gregory says, “he will be acted on, he will not be acting [i.e. as the agent], and when he will not be acted upon anymore he will cease to be: for such is activity. How then does he act, speak words, set apart, grieve, get angry, and do anything that clearly belongs to a moving [agent], and not to a movement?”<sup>52</sup>

After having quoted Gregory, he tries to offer an explanation that could also take into account Cyril of Alexandria, who calls the Spirit “natural, and essential, and enhypostatic operation” (ἐνέργεια φυσική τε καὶ οὐσιώδης καὶ ἐνυπόστατος).<sup>53</sup> Indeed, because the holy Fathers cannot contradict each other, we must therefore understand that one is the Spirit blown to the Apostles, through the Lord’s insufflation (διὰ τοῦ κυριακοῦ ἐμφυσήματος), and another one is the Spirit sent from the Father through the Son, in the form of tongues of fires, because this second one is not an insufflation, or an operation (ἐμφύσημα and ἐνέργεια), but the ἐνέργεια φυσική καὶ οὐσιώδης καὶ ἐνυπόστατος, i.e. the natural, essential and enhypostatic operation.<sup>54</sup>

ἐνεφύσησεν ὅπτανθεις τοῖς μαθηταῖς μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν ὁ Σωτὴρ καὶ εἶπε, λάβετε Πνεῦμα ἅγιον, ὡς τὸ θεῖον φησιν Εὐαγγέλιον, καὶ ἡμεῖς συνομολογοῦμεν· τὸ δὲ τὴν ἐμφύσησιν ταύτην ἐκπορεύσιν εἶναι τοῦ τῆς ὑπερουσίου Τριάδος ἐνὸς ἁγίου Πνεύματος, ὡς διὰ τοῦτο καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα λέγειν εἶναι ἐμφύσημα καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐκπορεύεσθαι, τῆς τῶν Λατίνων ἐστὶ παρανοίας, οὐχ ἡμέτερον λέγειν.

51 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 213, l. 1–2.

52 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 213, l. 16–20. Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 31, § 6, p. 286, l. 9–13.

53 Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali Trinitate* (= PG 75), col. 580A, l. 3–9: “Ὅτε τοίνυν ἄπερ ὑπέσχετο δρᾶν ὁ Θεὸς μετ’ ἐξουσίας τὸ Πνεῦμα πληροῖ, καὶ ποιμένας ἐγείρει κατὰ τὴν ἐν προφήταις ἐπαγγελίαν, οὐκ ἄλλότριον ἄρα τῆς θείας οὐσίας ἐστίν, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐνέργεια φυσική τε καὶ οὐσιώδης καὶ ἐνυπόστατος, ἐξ αὐτῆς προοίονσα καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ μένουσα πάντα ἐργάζεται τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ.

54 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 215, l. 14–25: “Ἄλλο τοίνυν καὶ κατὰ τοὺς

Nicholas' writings, although not being addressed to the Latins, thus contain two crucial issues relating to the presence and coming of the Spirit, which will be reemployed by the theologian in his openly anti-Latin writings: the first issue, which is in fact the question posed by the *megas domestikos*, is how the Spirit can be present in each man, and if he is present substantially; the second issue, an additional explanation by Nicholas, is about the differences between the insufflation (ἐμφύσημα) from Jesus and the "physical", "sensible", and "substantial" descent at Pentecost. Among Nicholas' works, the reply to the *megas domestikos* is certainly the one most extensively devoted to the exegesis of patristic passages, and is clearly the one that is least motivated by the Filioque polemic; however, it seems that this text somehow lays the foundation for the pneumatology that Nicholas will develop in the other treatises.

### 3 *Adversus Latinos de Spiritu Sancto*<sup>55</sup>

The *Adversus Latinos de Spiritu Sancto* can certainly be considered the main treatise composed by Nicholas of Methone against the addition of the Filioque to the Creed. The text opens with a traditional invocation for assistance to the Holy Spirit and to the Son, the only source and teacher of the revealed knowledge. However, starting from the first lines Nicholas embroiders his treatise with references to the *De divinis nominibus*, using a sequence of adjectives, composed of the preposition ὑπέρ, typical of the *usus scribendi* of Dionysius the Areopagite:

Βασιλεῦ οὐράνιε, παράκλητε, ἀγαθέ, προσκυνητέ, θεὸ τὸ Πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, τὸ ἅγιον, τὸ ὑπερούσιον, τὸ ὑπέρφωτον, τὸ ὑπέρζων, τὸ ὑπέρσοφον [...].<sup>56</sup>

ἀγίους Πατέρας καὶ κατὰ τοὺς θείους Προφῆτας τὸ διὰ τοῦ κυριακοῦ ἐμφυσήματος αὐτίκα τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις ἐμπνευσθὲν Πνεῦμα ἅγιον, καὶ ἄλλο τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦτοῖς ἀποσταλέν, ἐν εἵδει πυρίνων γλωσσῶν διαμερισθέν· οὐδ' ἄρα τοῦτο τοῦ Κυρίου ἐστὶν ἐμφύσημα, οὐδὲ ἐνέργεια νῦν παρ' αὐτῷ καὶ νῦν ἀποτελούμενον, ἀλλ' εἴπερ ἄρα, καθὰ καὶ τῷ θείῳ Κυρίλλῳ δοκεῖ, ἐνέργεια φυσικὴ καὶ οὐσιώδης καὶ ἐνυπόστατος, οἷα καὶ ὁ Υἱὸς δύναμις, ἐκ τῆς θείας οὐσίας τοῦτέστι τῆς πατρικῆς προΐουσα καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ μένουσα καὶ πάντα ἐργαζομένη τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ.

55 The Greek title is: Νικολάου τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης πρὸς τοὺς Λατίνους περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς οὐ μὴν καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐκπορεύεται.

56 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 1, l. 1–3. Cf. e.g. Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *De divinis nominibus*, § 11, 3, p. 125, l. 15, ed. B.R. Suchla (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990).

The close dependence upon the Areopagite, of which many examples can be found later in this same text and in the *Memoriae*,<sup>57</sup> makes this treatise a fundamental work for understanding the context in which the *Refutatio Procli* was also conceived; it also closely links the two texts and provides a much more striking and meaningful analysis than the *Syllogismi*, which is the text that has almost exclusively been used when discussing the relationship between the theological and the philosophical productions of the Bishop of Methone.<sup>58</sup>

As for all the writings by Nicholas discussed in this publication, one must bear in mind that the printed editions of the texts are not fully reliable; however, in this case it is possible to get a general idea of the contents and the concepts that the Bishop of Methone developed in his theological production. After the opening prayer (εὐχή), the version printed by Simonides incorporates a sentence, attested by the manuscript tradition,<sup>59</sup> similar to the following:

Ἐκθεσις ἐν συνόψει τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς ὀρθοῦ δόγματος μετὰ τινος συμμέτρου κατασκευής.<sup>60</sup>

Exposition in a brief but comprehensive statement of our right dogma with the aid of some suitable (συμμέτρου) constructive reasoning (κατασκευής).

It is clear that a meticulous study is needed to clarify if these words are the title given by Nicholas himself, or if some marginalia were added by a scribe. However, this sentence perfectly sums up Nicholas' plan for his text: a brief but comprehensive exposition, which includes a full canonical arsenal, from the Sacred Scriptures to the ecumenical councils, with additional space<sup>61</sup> for suitable arguments based on constructive, logical reasoning.

Nicholas' exposition opens with the traditional profession of Faith: "We believe in one God, in three persons or hypostases, contemplated in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit [...]" (Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἓνα Θεὸν ἐν τρισὶ προσώποις εἶτουν ὑποστάσεσι θεωρούμενον Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ καὶ ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι [...]).<sup>62</sup> But what

57 See below Section 5. *Memoriae*, at p. 334.

58 E.g., see Trizio, "Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium", p. 206.

59 Details about the manuscript tradition are available in the PhD thesis, Benvenuto, "Prime indagini".

60 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 3, l. 21–22.

61 This hint could also, possibly, give us a sense of the cautiousness that a twelfth-century theologian should display while navigating between philosophy and theology.

62 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 3, l. 23–24.

is noteworthy for our research, which aims at presenting the writings of Nicholas of Methone in the context of his *Refutatio Procli*, is the fact that this text, from the very first pages, hides a numerous hints, allusions, and references that can be read as addressed to Proclus' and Dionysius' readers, i.e. to those who could certainly recognise them at first glance.

After the basic presentation of the pillars of orthodoxy, Nicholas argues that the Sabellian confusion of the hypostases revives Judaism, and the Arian division of the divine substance inclines toward Hellenic polytheism, while the pious way is a secure middle way "that has the safe rope of the Lord's tradition" (ὥσπερ τινος ἀσφαλοῦς ἐχομένη πείσματος τῆς κυριακῆς παραδόσεως).<sup>63</sup> This metaphor of the secure rope is not a generic image, but in fact comes from Plato's *Laws*<sup>64</sup> and is quoted many times in Proclus, in particular in a passage from the *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*:

Ταῦτα δὲ εἰδὼς ἡγοῦμαι δεῖν ὥσπερ ἀσφαλοῦς πείσματος ἔχεσθαι τῆς τοῦ καθηγεμόνος ἡμῶν παραδόσεως· διὰ γὰρ ταύτης τὰ μὲν πλημμελῆ τῶν δοξασμάτων φευζόμεθα, ταῖς δὲ καθαρωτάταις ἐννοίαις Ἰαμβλίχου συνεψόμεθα.<sup>65</sup>

Being mindful of this, I think that one should cling as if to a stout mooring-rope to the doctrine of our own teacher. For it is through this that we shall avoid discordant theories and follow the purest conceptions of Iamblichus.<sup>66</sup>

In Nicholas the ἀσφαλοῦς πείσματος (safe rope) is that of the παραδόσεως (tradition) of the Lord (κυριακῆς), while in Proclus it is of τοῦ καθηγεμόνος ἡμῶν (probably Syrianus).

However, there is a second peculiarity in Nicholas' passage: the fact that, instead of insisting only on Arius, Sabellius, the Pneumatomachoi and the other heresiarchs, he adds the "heresies" of the Jews and the Hellenes.<sup>67</sup> The usage of the Hellenes-Jews couplet seems to be inherited from his beloved

63 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 5, l. 16.

64 Plato, *Laws*, x 893B: ἐχόμενοι δὲ ὡς τινος ἀσφαλοῦς πείσματος ἐπεισβαίνωμεν εἰς τὸν νῦν λόγον.

65 Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum*, v, p. 174, l. 15, ed. E. Diehl, *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Timaeum commentaria* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1906), vol. 3.

66 Eng. tr. from Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, transl. H. Tarrant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 53, l. 14–16.

67 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 5, l. 9–13: ἡ μὲν γὰρ τῶν ὑποστάσεων σύγχυσις, ἐκ τῆς σαβελλιανῆς αἰρέσεως εἰσαχθεῖσα, τὸν ἥδη κατηργημένον Ἰουδαϊσμόν ἀνεκαίνιζεν· ἡ δὲ τῆς οὐσίας κατατομὴ καὶ διαιρέσις, ἐκ τῆς ἀρειανικῆς προβιβαζομένη μανίας, εἰς πολυθεῖαν ἐλληνικὴν ἐξωλίσθαιεν.

Gregory of Nazianzus<sup>68</sup> or from the acts of the councils,<sup>69</sup> but it is quite unusual—I would say unattested—in the other twelfth-century polemicists, who rarely refer to the Jews and the Hellenes in the anti-Latin texts devoted to the discussion of the Filioque, while of course they abundantly refer to the Jews in the texts dedicated to the Azymes.<sup>70</sup>

A third point of interest in the opening of the *Adversus Latinos*, which—indeed—seems to be planned with the aim of clarifying all the important references that must be grasped to understand the text, is the following:

Τούτων οὕτως ἡμῖν ὡμολογημένων, φέρε τὸν σκοπὸν τῶν προκειμένων ὀνομάτων κοινῇ συνδιασχεψόμεθα· καὶ τῇ ἀναπτύξει τῶν ὀνομάτων, τὰς ὑπ' αὐτῶν σηματομενάς προσωπικὰς ιδιότητας θεωρήσωμεν.<sup>71</sup>

Having agreed on these <principles>, let us investigate by common consent the meaning of the proposed names, and through the explanation of the names let us perceive the personal characteristics communicated by them.

Here, it is clear at first sight that Nicholas, while proposing to investigate the meaning of the names of the Trinity through the **explanation** (ἀναπτύξει) of them, is invoking the authority of the Areopagite,<sup>72</sup> exactly as he does in the title of his *Refutatio Procli*: Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου.<sup>73</sup>

The following passage remains in the same context and is the most meaningful for our understanding of the relationship between Nicholas, Proclus and, of course, Dionysius the Areopagite. However, it is also an unusual approach to

68 cf. e.g., Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 38, § 8, p. 118, l. 17–19; 6 (= Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 45 (= PG 36), col. 628, l. 41–43): ἵνα μὴ πενίαν θεότητος κατακριθῶμεν, ἢ διὰ τὴν μοναρχίαν Ἰουδαῖζοντες, ἢ διὰ τὴν ἀφθονίαν Ἑλληνίζοντες; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 25, § 16, p. 194, l. 1–3: Μῆτε ἀρχὰς τρεῖς, ἵνα μὴ Ἑλληνικόν, ἢ τὸ πολύθεον· μῆτε μίαν μὲν, Ἰουδαϊκὴν δὲ στενὴν τινα, καὶ φθονεράν, καὶ ἀδύνατον [...].

69 cf. e.g., ACO: *Concilium universale Ephesenum anno 431*, 1.1, 7, p. 105, l. 24.

70 On the different usage of leavened and unleavened bread is dedicated Nicholas of Methone's *Adversus Latinos de azymis* (RAP G364) in Два неизданных произведения Николая, епископа Мефонского, писателя XII века, ed. Arsenij Ivačenko (Novgorod, Parovaia tipografia I.I. Ignatovskago 1897), pp. 51–115.

71 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 5, l. 18–21.

72 Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *De divinis nominibus*, § 1, 1, p. 107, l. 3–4: Νῦν δέ, ὦ μακάριε, μετὰ τὰς Θεολογικὰς ὑποτυπώσεις ἐπὶ τὴν τῶν θείων ὀνομάτων ἀνάπτυξιν, ὡς ἐφικτόν, μετελεύσομαι.

73 As it has been recently, and rightly, pointed out in Robinson, “Dionysius Against Proclus”, p. 249.

the Filioque question, where the author hints at his philosophical background and interests through his use of easily identifiable and peculiar “jargon”. The quotation is long, but Nicholas’ words deserve to be read in full:

What, then, does the name of the Father mean? And what does that of the Son mean? And what does that of the Spirit mean? Is it not because the Father is fertile principle (γόνιμός ἐστιν ἀρχή) and cause of Divinity (καὶ αἰτία θεότητος) and, to say it according to the great Dionysius, “primal source of Divinity” (πηγαία θεότης)?<sup>74</sup> <The primal source of Divinity is> in itself ungenerated, but by itself brings forward (προάγουσα) entities which are similar according to the substance (κατ’ οὐσίαν ὅμοι’ ἄττα), and both generates (γεννῶσα) the Son and emanates (προβαλλομένη) the Spirit, according to the double **emanation**<sup>75</sup> of the **fertile power** (κατὰ τὴν διττὴν τῆς γονίμου δυνάμεως πρόοδον): in fact it is neither necessary that the Father is brought forth from another (οὔτε γὰρ ἄλλοθεν τὸν Πατέρα προῆχθαι πᾶσα ἀνάγκη)—that (ἐκεῖνο referred to ἄλλοθεν) in fact would be the Father, the principle that brings forth, not this—, nor <it is possible> that he, being himself *Father from whom every paternity in heaven and on earth is and takes its name*,<sup>76</sup> and having in himself the “auto-fertility” (τὴν αὐτογονιμότητα), halfway (ἐξ ἡμισείας) would have brought forth the fertile power (τὴν γόνιμον δύναμιν), so that perhaps he would have either generated only or emanated only. And further, because at any rate the generative capacity (γονιμότητος) is seen down here in some way with the senses, and shows the double way of **emanation** (τὸν διττὸν τῆς πρόοδου τρόπον); not only, in fact, the man generates (γεννᾷ) a man and horse generates horse according to the generative **emanation of fertility** (τὴν γεννητικὴν τῆς γονιμότητος πρόοδον), but also the root emanates (προβάλλει) the plant and the water proceeds from the source (ἐκπορεύεται) and the sun pours out (προχέει) the light through its ray according to the emanating power of him who is fruitful (κατὰ τὴν προβλητικὴν τοῦ γονίμου δύναμιν).

The “primal source of Divinity” (ἡ πηγαία θεότης) in itself, therefore, having preceded the entire generative power (τὴν γονιμότητα) and emanating it whole and perfect (ὅλην αὐτὴν καὶ τελείαν), both supernaturally

74 Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *De divinis nominibus*, §11, 7, p. 132, l. 1 and Proclus, *In Platonis Cratylum*, §142, p. 80, l. 19–20 and 23, ed. G. Pasquali (Leipzig: Teubner, 1908).

75 In a Trinitarian context ἡ πρόοδος should be translated as “emanation” and not “procession” (the latter being a standard translation for πρόοδος in Proclus and other Neoplatonists) as the Greek technical term for “procession” of the Holy Spirit is only ἡ ἐκπόρευσις.

76 Eph. 3: 15.

generates (γεννᾷ μὲν ὑπερφυῶς) the Son and in a supra-essential manner brings forth (ὑπερουσίως προάγει) the Spirit, and not one before and the other later, but both simultaneously, and each secretly and ineffably, since neither the generation nor the procession (ἢ τῆς γεννήσεως ἢ τῆς ἐκπορεύσεως) can be circumscribed by time or age, but eternally and above all beginnings, above all reason and every notion: since the offspring, if in this way must be said, and that who proceeds are envisaged together (συνθεωρουμένων) as perfect, or rather supremely perfect by the originator and unoriginated hypostasis of the Divinity (τῇ ἀρχηγόνῳ καὶ ἀγενήτῳ τῆς θεότητος ὑποστάσει). And in this way, indeed, the theogonic hypostasis of the Divinity (ἢ μὲν θεογόνος ὑπόστασις τῆς θεότητος) also is and is called Father. <Of> the other <persons of the Divinity>, like sprouts sown by the divine (βλαστοὶ θεόφυτοι),<sup>77</sup> the one <is and is called> Son since certainly he is brought forth by generation (γεννητῶς προήκται), the other <is and is called> the Spirit since <he is brought forth> by procession.<sup>78</sup>

This passage is markedly saturated with a lexicon that a reader of the *Refutatio Procli* will find extremely familiar. It is certainly not an aim of this publication to discuss this quotation from a genuinely philosophical point of view, but only

77 Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *De divinis nominibus*, § 11, 7, p. 132, l. 2.

78 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 5, l. 18–p. 6, l. 25: Τί τοίνυν βούλεται σημαίνειν τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Πατρὸς; Καὶ τί τὸ τοῦ Υἱοῦ; Καὶ τί τοῦ Πνεύματος; Ἀρ' οὐχ ὅτι γόνιμός ἐστιν ἀρχὴ καὶ αἰτία θεότητος ὁ Πατήρ, καὶ κατὰ τὸν μέγαν εἰπεῖν Διονύσιον, πηγαία θεότης; Αὐτὴ μὲν ἀγεννητος, ἐαυτῇ δὲ κατ' οὐσίαν ὅμοι' ἅττα προάγουσα, καὶ γεννώσα μὲν τὸν Υἱόν, προβαλλομένη δὲ τὸ Πνεῦμα, κατὰ τὴν διττὴν τῆς γονίμου δυνάμεως πρόοδον· οὕτε γὰρ ἄλλοθεν τὸν Πατέρα προήχθαι πᾶσα ἀνάγκη—ἐκεῖνο γὰρ ἦν ὁ πατήρ, τὸ προάγον, οὐχ οὗτος—, οὕτε Πατὴρ ὢν αὐτὸς ἐξ οὗ πᾶσα πατριά, ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς ἔστι τε καὶ ὀνομάζεται, καὶ τὴν αὐτογονιμότητα (In the printed edition αὐτογονιμότητος) προσέχων ἐν ἐαυτῷ ἐξ ἡμισείας (In the printed edition ἐξημισείας) προάγειν ἔμελλε τὴν γόνιμον δύναμιν, ὥστε τυχὸν ἢ γεννᾶν μόνον, ἢ προβάλλεσθαι μόνον· καίτοι γε τῆς κάτω που θεωρουμένης περὶ τὴν αἰσθησιν γονιμότητος, τὸν διττὸν τῆς πρόοδου τρόπον ἐμφανιζούσης· οὐ γὰρ μόνον ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἄνθρωπον γεννᾷ, καὶ ἵππος ἵππον κατὰ τὴν γεννητικὴν τῆς γονιμότητος πρόοδον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ φυτὸν, ἢ ρίζα προβάλλει· καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ ἀπὸ τῆς πηγῆς ἐκπορεύεται· καὶ τὸ φῶς προχέει μετὰ τῆς ἀκτίνος ὁ ἥλιος κατὰ τὴν προβλητικὴν τοῦ γονίμου δύναμιν. Ὅλην οὖν ἡ πηγαία θεότης ἐν ἐαυτῇ προειληφύα τὴν γονιμότητα, καὶ ὅλην αὐτὴν καὶ τελείαν προβαλλομένη, γεννᾷ μὲν ὑπερφυῶς τὸν Υἱόν, προάγει δὲ ὑπερουσίως τὸ Πνεῦμα· οὐ τὸν μὲν πρότερον τὸ δὲ ὕστερον· ἀλλ' ἅμφω ἅμα· καὶ κρυφίως καὶ ἀπορρήτως ἑκάτερον· οὐ χρόνῳ οὐκ αἰῶνι τινὶ περιγραφομένης ἢ τῆς γεννήσεως ἢ τῆς ἐκπορεύσεως· ἀλλὰ προαιωνίως καὶ ὑπεραρχίως ὑπὲρ πάντα λόγον καὶ πᾶσαν ἔννοιαν· τῇ ἀρχηγόνῳ καὶ ἀγενήτῳ τῆς θεότητος ὑποστάσει, τελείων μᾶλλον δὲ ὑπερτελῶν· συνθεωρουμένων τοῦ τε γεννηματος, εἰ οὕτω χρὴ φάναι, καὶ τοῦ ἐκπορεύματος. Ταύτῃ τοι καὶ ἡ μὲν θεογόνος ὑπόστασις τῆς θεότητος, Πατήρ ἔστι τε καὶ ὀνομάζεται· οἱ δὲ ταύτης οἶον βλαστοὶ θεόφυτοι, ὁ μὲν Υἱός· ὅτι διὰ καὶ γεννητῶς προήκται· τὸ δὲ Πνεῦμα, ὅτι περ ἐκπορευτῶς ὀνομάζεται.



to highlight those elements in Nicholas' approach to the Filioque question that are particularly distinctive and innovative in the contest of the polemical literature against the Latins. The analysis will be conducted mainly on the basis of the language used.

A first peculiarity is the choice of the adjective γόνιμος, -η, -ον (productive, fertile, fruitful), which Nicholas employs seventeen times in his entire literary production, but exclusively in the *Refutatio Procli* (7 times) and in the *Adversus Latinos* (10 times). This is an adjective that must have been particularly useful to express his point of view, if he even creates a neologism from this lemma, αὐτογονιμότης, *Fruchtbarkeit an sich* (fertility in itself), which according to our present knowledge of Medieval Greek seems to be a *hapax*.<sup>79</sup> Certainly the use of this adjective is a *hapax* in the context of the polemical literature against the Latins. In fact, a search conducted on the (published) texts composed from the ninth to the twelfth century, and dedicated to the Filioque, has produced no results: nobody before Nicholas had ever talked about the Father by using the adjective, "productive, fertile" (γόνιμος). There is no doubt that Nicholas was influenced by Proclus in this choice: in fact, the adjective γόνιμος, -η, -ον is one of the philosopher's favourites insofar as he uses it consistently, especially in the *Theologia Platonica* (92 times) and in the *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria* (55 times).<sup>80</sup> In general, according to the statistics that can be derived from the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, Proclus is the author who uses it the most (235 times; the second being Plutarch, with only 63 times, and the third being Aristotle, with 57), while Dionysius the Areopagite, whom Nicholas quotes openly in this passage, does not use it very often (four times in its entire corpus: two in *De divinis nominibus* and two in *De coelesti hierarchia*). On the other hand, if we analyse the term γονιμότης, Proclus does not use it at all, while the Areopagite employs it again only four times (three times in *De divinis nominibus* and once in *De coelesti hierarchia*).<sup>81</sup>

79 Cf. E. Trapp (ed.), *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität besonders des 9.–12. Jahrhunderts* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1994), s.v. αὐτογονιμότης.

80 As Robinson has already argued, it seems that Nicholas was acquainted with Proclus' *Commentary in Timaeus*, see Robinson, "Dionysius Against Proclus", pp. 108–109.

81 The exact references can easily be found using *TLG*, but for brevity's sake it is not considered necessary to list them here.

In this context it can be added another possible influential source of Nicholas' usage of the terms discussed above (θεόγονος, γόνιμος, γονιμότης): John of Scythopolis, "Scholasticus", in his *scholia* of the *De divinis nominibus*, ed. B.R. Suchla (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), *scholion* DN 229, 8, p. 453, l. 1–11. I am grateful to Joshua Robinson for this reference.

It can be noted, therefore, that Nicholas employs a passage from the Areopagite to support his orthodoxy but at the same time seems to interweave the patristic source with a markedly Proclean lexicon. The full passage from Dionysius, which backs Nicholas' opening, is the following:

Πάλιν, ὅτι μὲν ἐστὶ πηγαία θεότης ὁ πατήρ, ὁ δὲ υἱὸς καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς θεογένου θεότητος, εἰ οὕτω χρή φάναι, βλαστοὶ θεόφυτοι καὶ οἶον ἄνθη καὶ ὑπερούσια φῶτα, πρὸς τῶν ἱερῶν λογίων παρειλήφραμεν.<sup>82</sup>

Again, we have received from the Scriptures that the Father is primal source of Divinity (πηγαία θεότης), while the Son and the Spirit are, if one must say so, sprouts sown by the divine of the theogonic Divinity, and like flowers and supra-essential lights.

A second striking usage is the insistence (in very few lines) on the word πρόοδος (κατὰ τὴν διττὴν τῆς γονίμου δυνάμεως πρόοδον [...]; τὸν διττὸν τῆς προόδου τρόπον ἐμφανιζούσης ...; κατὰ τὴν γεννητικὴν τῆς γονιμότητος πρόοδον [...]). This is again a term widely used by Proclus, Damascius and also Dionysius in *De divinis nominibus* and, unsurprisingly, extensively employed by Nicholas in the *Refutatio Procli*.<sup>83</sup> However, and this time surprisingly, it is also used in the texts against the Latins, where Nicholas, instead of using a more "traditional" expression such as "modes of the existences" (οἱ τρόποι τῶν ὑπάρξεων), insists on using the "double emanation" or "double way of the emanation" to refer to the existences of the Son and the Spirit.

It is fundamental to insist on the words employed by Nicholas because, just as the Fathers of the Church built a precise set of expressions that could be used in the Christological discussions, the Greek theologians between the 9th and 12th century concentrate their effort (and Nicholas is one of the most accurate) on defining the exact theological lexicon for the procession of the Holy Spirit.

It could be interesting for scholars of philosophy, who try to understand Nicholas' *Refutatio Procli* and the reasons why it was composed, to highlight the fact that for a twelfth-century Byzantine theologian the term πρόοδος (eman-

82 Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *De divinis nominibus*, § 11, 7, p. 132, l. 1–3.

83 The exact references are, also in this case, redundant because they can easily be found through the *TLG*. However, it could be interesting to report here the numbers for ἡ πρόοδος (as from the *TLG*'s statistics feature): for Proclus, 864 (mainly in *Theologia Platonica*, 303; and in *Platonis Timaeum*, 259); Damascius, 351, Nicholas of Methone, 87, and Dionysius, 30 (only in *De divinis nominibus*).

ation), when interpreted—as in Nicholas—as a synonymic form for οἱ τρόποι τῶν ὑπάρξεων (way/modes of the existences), becomes a technical term that refers to the eternal origins of the Son and Spirit from the Father, and, therefore, cannot be interpreted according to the philosophical framework of Proclus' *Institutio theologica*. Moreover, it must be emphasized that although πρόοδος is employed for “emanation, originating, coming from”, and—as it has been shown above—is also acceptable to describe both the Son's generation and the Spirit's procession, it should never be confused, especially by modern translators, with “procession”, which is a term that applies only to the existence of the Holy Spirit, for which the dogmatically correct term in Greek is only ἡ ἐκπόρευσις.

Even if Byzantine theologians use the “Hellenic” philosophy for discussing the procession of the Holy Spirit, and they indeed do it (e.g., the use of Aristotle in the *Ad Magnum domesticum* analysed before, but also, for example, the dialogues by Niketas of Thessalonica),<sup>84</sup> Nicholas feels the need to refute Proclus because his “theology” is not applicable to Christian orthodoxy, and it is not applicable especially in the struggle against the Latins, which at this point in history is not only a major concern but is also an utterly philosophical debate; it is sufficient here to quote the importance of Nicholas' contemporary Hugo Eteriano, who knew and refuted his positions.<sup>85</sup>

Here it could be interesting to recall Kazhdan's point of view:

Theology is a very delicate discipline in which nuances acquire the magnitude of dogma. One might emphasize the human nature of Christ to indicate the possibility of human deification; one might even emphasize the hierarchical structure of the Trinity [...]. Nicholas emphasized the monarchical principle. The unity of the Trinity was for Nicholas not an antiquarian question to be considered in connection with philosophical errors of the fifth century. [...] Nicholas lived and worked when the “Latin question” was the major problem that Byzantium faced. Nicholas, as is well known, took a clear-cut anti-Latin stand [...].<sup>86</sup>

Nicholas insists on the monarchy that is the paternal principle inside the Trinity and perceives Proclus' hierarchical emanations as a possible risk, because he feels that they could open the way to the procession of the Spirit from the

84 Niketas of Thessalonike, *Dialogi*, quoted above n. 43—p. 297.

85 Hugo Eterianus, *De sancto et immortalī Deo*, ed. P. Podolak, A. Zago (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020).

86 Kazhdan, “Review of Angelou's edition”, pp. 198–199.

Father “and” the Son. However, it must be clarified here that there is only one instance in the *Refutatio Procli* in which the Bishop of Methone explicitly mentions the Latins: this is the passage he inserts when discussing chapter 22 (κβ’), “All that exists primally and originally in each rank is one, and not two or more than two, but all are μονογενές.” He writes:

“Ἡ τάχα κατ’ οὐδέτερον τῶν εἰρημένων τρόπων ὁ φιλόσοφος οὗτος ἐνταῦθα ἐξελάβετο τὸ μονογενές, ἀλλ’ εἴπερ ἄρα ὡς αὐτὸ τὸ πρῶτως καὶ ἀρχικῶς ὄν γένος ὄν καὶ ἀρχὴν τῶν ἐξ αὐτοῦ οὕτω τοῦτό φησιν. Οὕτω δ’ ἂν καὶ χρήσαιτό τις τῷ θεωρήματι τούτῳ κατὰ Λατίνων τῶν δύο τὰ ἀρχικὰ αἰτία τοῦ Πνεύματος λεγόντων, Πατέρα καὶ Υἱόν· πλὴν ἀλλὰ πρῶτον μεταφραστέον ἐπὶ τὸ εὐσεβές τὸ πρόβλημα καὶ οὕτως αὐτῷ χρηστέον.”<sup>87</sup>

Or perhaps this philosopher does not understand μονογενές here according to either of the ways just mentioned, but rather he means it thus: as “that which exists primitively and originally”, being genus and principle of the things from it. And thus someone might even use this proposition against the Latins, who say that the Spirit has **two principal causes**, Father and Son; but indeed first one must paraphrase the proposition in a pious sense, and thus one must use it.<sup>88</sup>

Still, when analysing the relationship between the anti-Latin production and the *Refutatio Procli*, it is remarkable to note how in the *Refutatio* Nicholas puts a great effort into clarifying how both the noun πρόοδος, the verb παράγω, and its noun, παραγωγή, are misused by the philosopher. A very noteworthy chapter to consider in this context is number 29 (κθ’), which—according to Robinson’s thorough analysis of the *Refutatio Procli*—is also the first time that Nicholas uses πρόοδος in connection with the intra-trinitarian relationship.<sup>89</sup>

‘Ἄλλ’ ὁ σοφὸς οὗτος μηδὲν τούτων διαστέλλων καὶ τὴν ὁμοιότητα προτίθησι τῆς ταυτότητος ὡς ταύτης αἰτίαν καὶ τῇ κατὰ γέννησιν προόδῳ ὕφεσιν δίδωσι καὶ τὴν πρόοδον ἀδιαφόρως ἀντὶ τῆς παραγωγῆς καὶ τὸ γεννηθὲν ἀντὶ τοῦ παραχθέντος λαμβάνει.”<sup>90</sup>

87 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutatio Procli*, § 22, p. 30, l. 10–17.

88 English translation from Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone’s Refutation of Proclus*, p. 217.

89 Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone’s Refutation of Proclus*, p. 233, note 611.

90 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutatio Procli*, § 29, p. 39, l. 19–23.

But this wise man, failing to distinguish these, places “similarity” (ὁμοιότητα) before “sameness” (ταυτότητος) as cause of the this [emanation], and gives “decline” for the “emanation” (προόδω) by begetting, and takes “emanation” (πρόοδον) indifferently for “production” (παραγωγής), and “begotten” (γεννηθέν) in the place of “produced” (παράχθεντος).<sup>91</sup>

At section 30 (λ') Nicholas, again, takes great care in distinguishing the terms:

Καὶ τὸ τριακοστὸν τοῦτο κεφάλαιον ὡσαύτως σφάλλει τῷ πρὸ αὐτοῦ, ὡς ταυτόν τι πρόοδον ἤτοι προαγωγὴν καὶ τὴν παραγωγὴν λαμβάνον. Ἀντὶ γὰρ τοῦ εἰπεῖν τὸ ἀπὸ τινος προαγόμενον, τὸ ἀπὸ τινός φησι παραγόμενον καὶ ἀντὶ τοῦ ἐν τῷ προάγοντι, ἐν τῷ παράγοντι.

Ἄλλο τὸ ταυτόν καὶ ἄλλο τὸ ὅμοιον· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶν οὐσίας, τὸ δὲ ποιοῦ. Ἐπὶ τῆς οὐσιώδους καὶ φυσικῆς προόδου οὐχ ἀρμόζει τὴν ὁμοιότητα παραλαμβάνειν ἀλλ' ἢ τὴν ταυτότητα καὶ τὴν ἐτερότητα· οὐσία γὰρ οὐσίας, καθὼ οὐσίαι, οὔτε ὅμοια οὔτε ἀνόμοια λέγονται· ποιότητος γὰρ τὸ ὅμοιον καὶ τὸ ἀνόμοιον. Ὁ μὲν Υἱὸς καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα προῖασιν ἀπὸ τοῦ Πατρὸς φυσικῶς καὶ ἀμέσως, οὐ μὴν καὶ παράγονται· συναῖδια γὰρ αὐτῷ καὶ συνάναρχα καὶ ὁμοούσια.<sup>92</sup>

And this 30th chapter causes bafflement (σφάλλει) in like manner as the previous one, since it takes “emanation” (πρόοδον), that is, “**bringing forth**” (προαγωγὴν), to be the same thing as “**production**” (παραγωγὴν). For instead of saying “that which has been brought forth from something”, he says “**that which has been produced from something**”, and instead of “**in the bringer forth**” he says, “in the producer”.

But “same” and “similar” are distinct, for the one is of substance, and the other is of quality. It is not fitting to understand “similarity” of the substantial and natural “emanation”, but rather “sameness” and “otherness”: for one substance is not said to be either “similar” or “dissimilar” to another, insofar as they are substances, for “similarity” and “dissimilarity” pertain to quality. The Son and the Spirit “advance/go forward/spring” (προῖασιν) from the Father “naturally” (φυσικῶς) and “directly” (ἀμέσως), and they are **not** “produced” (παράγονται), for they are co-eternal and co-unoriginate and consubstantial with Him.<sup>93</sup>

91 I have slightly changed Robinson's translation (Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus*, p. 233) and used “emanation” instead of “procession” to give a sense of Nicholas' understanding of the passage.

92 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutatio Procli*, § 30, p. 30, l. 27–p. 40, l. 6.

93 Again I have slightly changed Robinson's English translation in order to avoid “procession” and “to proceed”, Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus*, p. 234.

Another example is from chapter 35 (λε'):

[...] ὁ δὲ σοφὸς οὗτος ἀδιορίστως τὴν πρόοδον ἐκλαμβάνων ὡς κοινὸν ὄνομα κατὰ τε τῆς παραγωγῆς καὶ τῆς ὑπερφυοῦς καὶ τῆς φυσικῆς εἰκότως ἑαυτὸν τε καὶ τοὺς αὐτῷ προσανέχοντας ἐκ τῆς ὁμωνυμίας κατασοφίζεται.<sup>94</sup>

[...] but this wise man, understanding the “**emanation**” without distinction as a common name concerning the “**production**” (παραγωγῆς), both the super-natural (ὑπερφυοῦς) one and the natural one (φυσικῆς), misleads both himself and those relying on him, as might be expected from this ambiguity.<sup>95</sup>

The *Refutatio Procli* is filled with these kinds of passages where the Bishop of Methone clarifies the meaning and proper acceptations of those terms when they are used to describe the Trinity. The noun, παραγωγή, and the verb, παράγω,<sup>96</sup> for example, cannot be employed to talk about the eternal generation and the eternal procession, because they imply the idea of making, or producing, something from non-being<sup>97</sup> and, therefore, the idea of creation. Creation—clearly in his perspective—cannot be applied either to the Son or to the Spirit, because “the Son and the Spirit are not produced”,<sup>98</sup> and this is the reason why Nicholas never uses this verb in his theological writings on the Holy Spirit.<sup>99</sup>

While a clear definition of the acceptations in which a term can be used and interpreted is certainly one of the major concerns of Nicholas, the focal point of the introduction of the *Adversus Latinos* is the alarming confusion of the personal characteristics of the three persons of the Trinity that can be introduced by the Latin innovation: the Bishop of Methone wants to safeguard the πατρικὸν ἰδίωμα, the “characteristic property of the Father”, which is being the only θεόγονος ἀρχή, the “theogonic principle”.

94 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutatio Procli*, § 35, p. 45, l. 22–25.

95 Here I have interpreted the passage differently. Here Robinson's translation (*Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus*, p. 243): “But this wise man, understanding ‘procession’ loosely as a common name applicable to the [procession] according to production and to the super-natural [procession] and to the natural [procession], misleads both himself and those relying on him, as might be expected from this equivocation.”

96 Cf. Robinson, “Proclus as Heresiarch”, p. 113, nota 44.

97 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutatio Procli*, § 41, p. 50, l. 6: παράγειν ἐστὶ κυρίως τὸ ἐκ μὴ ὄντων εἶναί τι ποιεῖν.

98 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutatio Procli*, § 30, p. 40, l. 4–5: Ὁ μὲν Υἱὸς καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα προΐασιν ἀπὸ τοῦ Πατρὸς φυσικῶς καὶ ἀμέσως, οὐ μὴν καὶ παράγονται.

99 Cf. Robinson, “Proclus as Heresiarch”, p. 120, and note 61.

This introductory part is split into two parts by a question (ἐρώτησις). Here the reader must be warned, again, that this analysis is based on the version of the treatise printed by Simonides and that, therefore, it will be possible to propose a reliable examination of the sections of the text (ἐρώτησις, ἀντιθέσεις, λύσεις, etc.) only after a proper critical edition will be published. However, according to Simonides' version, we have only one question in the entire text, followed by a series of six antitheses/oppositions. The question is,

Πότερον οὖν τὸ πατρικὸν τοῦτο ἰδίωμα, ὅπερ ἦν τὸ προάγειν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ θεογόνως τὸν Υἱὸν καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα, δώσομεν καὶ τῷ τῶν ἐξ αὐτοῦ, ἢ ὥσπερ τούτων ἑκάτερον πρὸς τε θάτερον καὶ πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα ἀκοινώτητος<sup>100</sup> ἢ ἰδιότης ἐστίν, οὕτω καὶ τῷ Πατρὶ ἀκοινώνητον πρὸς τὰ ἐξ αὐτοῦ διατηρήσομεν τὸ ἰδίωμα, ἵνα καὶ ὄντως ἰδίωμα ᾖ.<sup>101</sup>

Will we then give this **characteristic property** of the Father, which is the bringing forth from himself of the Son and the Spirit through divine begetting (θεογόνως), also to one of those from him, or, since for each of the two—both with the other and with the Father—the **specific character** is not sharable, will we also so maintain the **characteristic property** of the Father as unsharable with those who are from him, so that it is also an essentially **characteristic property**?<sup>102</sup>

Nicholas' conclusion is the very heart of Orthodox pneumatology: the personal characteristics of each person of the Trinity must remain unmovable and unsharable, and there should be no inferiority among the three hypostases. For example, it is not possible to allow the Son also to have the property of emanating the Spirit, otherwise he would have two properties, being generated and emanating the Spirit, and the Spirit would have only one property, that of proceeding, so that he would then be inferior to the Son. Indeed, Nicholas here recalls the main fearsome heresiarchs: Sabellius, Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, and their followers, because among them some negate the Trinity, falling into Judaism, while others lower the Divinity to the rank of the creation, falling into paganism (πρὸς Ἑλληνισμόν).<sup>103</sup>

100 ἀκοινότητος in the printed text.

101 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 6, l. 27–p. 7, l. 2.

102 The same kind of reasoning, for example in Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, § 4-5-7-8, pp. 361–364.

103 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 7, l. 31.

After the main introductory part, dedicated to the fundamental pillars of faith (which, it is important to highlight, is a traditional opening for a text against the Filioque, although—as has been shown—it is constructed by Nicholas in a very idiosyncratic way), the Bishop of Methone organises his text in a series of questions and answers indicated, in Simonides' edition, by the words ἀντίθεσις (objection, opposing argument) and λύσις (solution): six objections and six solutions.

The first argument is based on two passages (Io. 10: 30, "I and the Father are one", and 16: 15, "All that belongs to the Father is mine") that represent the Latin objections, as presented by Greek authors, and should demonstrate that since the Son is equal in power to the Father (ἰσοδύναμον εἶναι τῷ Πατρὶ),<sup>104</sup> therefore they share the procession of the Holy Spirit. To these Scriptural passages Nicholas replies with a standard answer: the persons of the Trinity are one, but their personal characteristics are different and distinct in order to avoid confusion among the hypostases; he quotes various passages from the Areopagite that insist on the fact that there is only one source of the Divinity: the Father.<sup>105</sup> After this traditional explanation, Nicholas moves into a more philosophical approach, explaining why the "dyad" is unacceptable: because the risk is the introduction of a double cause in the Trinity, and, therefore, the Latin innovation.

In this respect, it is significant to present also a passage from Proclus' *In Platonis Parmenidem*, and a passage from Dionysius' *De divinis nominibus* to better understand Nicholas' background. Proclus writes:

[...] πανταχοῦ γὰρ ἡ δυάς ἀρχὴ καὶ μήτηρ ἐστὶ τοῦ πλήθους, ἐν θεοῖς, ἐν νοῖς, ἐν ψυχαῖς, ἐν φύσεσιν· ἡ δὲ αἰτία τοῦ πλήθους ἐστὶ πως καὶ αὐτὴ κατ' αἰτίαν {τὸ} πλήθος, ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ ἐν τὸ αἴτιον τῆς ἐνώσεως κατ' αἰτίαν ἐστὶν ἐν· ὅλως δὲ ἡ δυάς ἐστὶ μὲν ὅπερ λέγεται δυάς, ἔρημος δὲ τοῦ ἐνός οὐκ ἔστι· πᾶν γὰρ τὸ μετὰ τὸ ἐν μέτεχόν ἐστι τοῦ ἐνός, ὥστε ἡ δυάς αὐτὴ καὶ ἐν πῶς ἐστὶ, καὶ ἐνὰς ἄρα ἡ δυάς ἐστὶ καὶ πλήθος, ἀλλ' ἐνὰς μὲν, ὡς μετέχουσα τοῦ ἐνός, πλήθος δέ, ὡς αἰτία τοῦ πλήθους. ἐκεῖνοι μὲν οὖν οὔτε πλήθος αὐτὴν οὔτε ἐν εἰρήκασιν· ἡμεῖς δὲ καὶ ἐν καὶ πλήθος, καὶ τὸ τε πλήθος αὐτῆς ἐνοειδές καὶ τὸ ἐν δυοποιόν.<sup>106</sup>

[...] for the dyad everywhere—among the gods, among the intellects, in souls, in natures—is the principle and mother of plurality; and the cause

104 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 8, l. 1–2.

105 Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *De divinis nominibus*, § II, 5, p. 128, l. 12; § II, 8, p. 132, l. 3; § XIII, 3, p. 228, l. 8.

106 Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, ed. C. Steel, t. I, § I, p. 110, l. 29–p. 111, l. 9.



of plurality is itself, in a way, causally plurality, just as the one, the cause of unity, is causally one. In general, the dyad is exactly what it is called, a dyad; but it does not exist when deprived of unity, for everything that comes after the One participates in the One, so that the dyad itself is also in a sense one, and therefore both unity and plurality. But it is a unity as participating in the One, and plural as the cause of plurality. These critics, then, assert that it is neither plurality nor unity, but we say it is both unity and plurality; its plurality is one in form, and its unity is productive of duality.<sup>107</sup>

The dyad, therefore, is a multiplier but in the intra-trinitarian relationship cannot be contemplated as a principle, because, as the Areopagite states, “Each dyad is not a principle; unity will be the principle of each dyad” (Πᾶσα γὰρ δυὰς οὐκ ἀρχή, μονὰς δὲ ἔσται πάσης δυάδος ἀρχή).<sup>108</sup>

The theme is widely discussed in the *Refutatio Procli* and it could be extremely interesting for scholars of philosophy to compare the *Refutatio* with the reply that Nicholas offers to the first Latin objection in the *Adversus Latinos*. An important detail must be added: in this treatise against the Filioque, Nicholas decides not to quote *verbatim* the famous passage from Gregory of Nazianzus, “For this reason the monad moved towards a dyad since the beginning and at the Trinity came to a halt” (Διὰ τοῦτο μονὰς ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς εἰς δυάδα κινήθεισα μέχρι τριάδος ἔσται),<sup>109</sup> although he quotes it both in the *Syllogisms*<sup>110</sup> and in the *Memoriae*.<sup>111</sup>

The reply is long and articulated,<sup>112</sup> but some passages are worth quoting. After citing a patchwork of passages from the Areopagite,<sup>113</sup> Nicholas starts a long commentary with a rhetorical question, which clearly places the discussion in the realm of theology in contradistinction to “Hellenic wisdom”: “Do you see how in all theology the One shines? (Ὅρᾷς ὅπως ἐν πάσῃ τῇ θεολογίᾳ προλάμπει τὸ ἓν;)<sup>114</sup> [...] For this reason one is God the Father, and only Father, so that

107 Engl. tr. from Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, transl. R.M. Glenn, J.M. Dillon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 85.

108 Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *De divinis nominibus*, § IV, 21, p. 168, l. 22.

109 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 29, § 2, p. 180, l. 13–14.

110 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, § 40, p. 374, l. 17–19.

111 Nicholas of Methone, *Memoriae contra Latinos*, p. 11, l. 4–7 = Niketas Stethatos, *Contra Latinos*, p. 375, l. 15–16.

112 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 8, l. 5–p. 13, l. 15.

113 Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *De divinis nominibus*, § II, 5, p. 128, l. 8–10; p. 128, l. 11; § II, 8, p. 132, l. 2–4; § XIII, 3, p. 228, l. 7–11.

114 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 10, l. 18–19.

a dyad cannot be associated with the One (Διὰ τοῦτο εἰς Θεὸς ὁ Πατήρ, καὶ μόνον Πατήρ, ἵνα μὴ δυὰς παραζευχθῇ τῷ ἐνί).<sup>115</sup> Nicholas goes on to say that the same principle applies to the Son, who must be one and from one source, and to the Spirit, who again must be one and from one source. This is once more necessary so that “the One anticipates the dyad” (ἵνα τὸ ἐν πανταχοῦ τὴν δυάδα προφθῇ),<sup>116</sup> and then again the Father cannot share his own personal characteristics with the Son and the Spirit and,

[...] ἵνα μὴ πάλιν δυὰς παραζευχθῇ τῷ ἐνί πρόσυλος οὐσα· καὶ κάτω κειμένη καὶ περὶ τὴν αἴσθησιν εἰλουμένη· καὶ τῷ, τε πληθυσμῷ τῷ, τε μερισμῷ, τὴν ἀοριστίαν τε καὶ τὴν ἀπειρίαν συμπαρεισάγουσα· καὶ τό γε καθ’ ἑαυτήν, εἰς ἀχανές τι καὶ ἀφανές ἀνυπαρξίας πέλαγος<sup>117</sup> τὰ ὑπ’ αὐτῆς καταλαμβανόμενα παραπέμπουσα, εἰ μὴ προφθάνον τὸ ἐν συνεῖχε τὰ πάντα τῇ ἑαυτοῦ μετοχῇ καὶ πρὸς τὴν οἰκείαν φύσιν ἀνέσωζεν.<sup>118</sup>

[...] so that the dyad again does not unite with the One, being connected with matter, and lying below [i.e. at the level of the creation], and being confined within the senses, and through both multiplication and division introducing infinitude and infinity, and wherefore guiding according to its very nature all the things possessed by her towards a kind of infinite and dark sea of nonexistence; if the One, anticipating <the dyad>, had not united all things by participation in himself and had not brought them safely to his own nature;

(and then again, he comes back to Dionysius the Areopagite)

οὐδὲν γὰρ τῶν ὄντων ἀμέτοχον τοῦ ἐνός· ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν πολλὰ τοῖς μέρεσιν, ἐν τῷ ὅλῳ· τὰ δὲ πολλὰ τοῖς συμβεβηκόσιν, ἐν τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ· καὶ τὰ πολλὰ τῷ ἀριθμῷ, ἢ ταῖς δυνάμεσιν ἐν τῷ εἶδει.<sup>119</sup> καὶ τὰ πολλὰ τοῖς εἶδεσιν, ἐν τῷ γένει· καὶ τὰ πολλὰ ταῖς προσόδοις,<sup>120</sup> ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ.<sup>121</sup> [...] Καὶ οὐκ ἂν εὕρης τί τῶν ὄντων, ὃ

115 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 10, l. 20–21.

116 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 10, l. 28–29.

117 Basil of Caesarea, *Adversus Eunomium*, ed. B. Sesboué, G.-M. de Durand, L. Doutreleau (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1982), § I, 16, p. 228, l. 4–10; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 38, § 7, p. 114, l. 5–8; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 45, § 3 in PG 36, col. 625, l. 37.

118 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 11, l. 12–19.

119 In Nicholas’ printed text ἐν ταῖς δυνάμεσιν ἢ τῷ εἶδει.

120 In Nicholas’ printed text προσόδοις, but not attested in the manuscript tradition of Dionysius.

121 Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *De divinis nominibus*, § XIII, 2, p. 227, l. 13–16.

μὴ τῷ ἐνὶ καθὸ πᾶσα ἡ θεότης ὑπερουσίως ὀνομάζεται, καὶ ἔστι τοῦθ', ὅπερ ἐστὶ, καὶ τελειοῦται καὶ διασώζεται.<sup>122</sup>

in fact, nothing among existing beings is not a partaker of the one, but what is many according to the parts is one as a whole, and the things that are many according to the accidents are one in the subject, and those things that are many according to the number or powers are one in the species, and those that are many according to the species are one in the genus, and the things which are manifold in their emanations are one in the principle. [...] And you could not find any being that is without unity—wherefore the whole Divinity is called [such] suprasubstantially—which is what it is and reaches its perfection and is preserved.

And he finally concludes:

[...] ὥσπερ οὖν καὶ τὰς ἄλλας θεωνυμίας ὅσαι τὴν ὅλην θεαρχίαν χαρακτηρίζουσιν, ἐπίσης ἐκάστη τῶν θεαρχικῶν ὑποστάσεων, ἡ θεολογία προσάπτει, ἐξορίζουσα πᾶσαν ἐκείθεν θεωνυμίας ἐτερότητά τε καὶ ἀνισότητά καὶ ἀνομοιότητα καὶ τὸ μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον, ἃ τῆς ὕλης καὶ τῶν συνθέτων εἰσὶν, οὕτω καὶ τὸ ἐν ἐπίσης ἐκάστῳ τῶν θεαρχικῶν προσώπων ἔστι καὶ ὀνομάζεται· εἰς Πατὴρ, εἰς Υἱός, ἐν ἁγίον Πνεῦμα.

Ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸ ἐν· εἰς γὰρ τὰ τρία Θεός· καὶ τὸ ἐν ἐκάστῳ ἓν, κατ' οὐδὲν ἕτερον τοῦ ἐν τῷ παντί· ἀπεληλαμένης ἐκείθεν, καὶ τῆς καθόλου τε καὶ ἐπὶ μέρος διαφορᾶς· οὐ γὰρ τρεῖς μερικᾶς οὐσίας τὴν θεότητα εἶναι πιστευόμεν· ἀλλὰ μίαν ἀμέριστον τοῖς φυσικοῖς πᾶσι πλεονεκτήμασιν εἰ καὶ τοῖς προσωπικοῖς μερίζεται ἰδιώμασιν [...].<sup>123</sup>

[...] therefore, as theology equally attributes all the other divine appellations that characterize the entire Godhead to each of the divine hypostases, driving away from there any diversity, inequality and dissimilarity of the divine appellation, **and the more and the less**, which are rather proper to matter and to composite entities, so also the One equally is and is called in each divine person: one the Father, one the Son, one the Holy Ghost.

Since they are also one, the three in fact are one God, and what is in each one is one, in no way different from the one who is altogether, and

122 Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *De divinis nominibus*, § XIII, 3, p. 228, l. 15–16.

123 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 10, l. 18–p. 12, l. 13.

the distinction between what is universal and what is in part is eliminated here: we do not believe, in fact, that they are three partial substances of the Deity, but that it is one and undivided, in all its essential virtues, although it is divided in the personal characteristics [...].

A detail must be added here: the *Adversus Latinos* presents an atypical usage of the term θεολογία; Nicholas employs it fourteen times, while the other authors before him (e.g., Photios or Niketas Byzantios) use it very rarely (up to four times). This again is a sign of how difficult it was for the Bishop of Methone to deal with the “Hellenic theology” of Proclus, on the one hand, and the new “Latin theology”,<sup>124</sup> on the other—a battle that he needs to fight in order to safeguard the orthodox doctrine as it is taught by “our first and only teacher and master who, being himself both God and interpreter of the theology, will announce these things.”<sup>125</sup> It is easy to understand Nicholas’ concerns from these few words: even the term θεολογία must be handled with great care. It is God who is the teacher, the exegete, and the master: the “theology” proposed by Proclus does not fit into the orthodox, God-inspired “science of things divine”.

The following four refutations/solutions (λύσεις) are each also exegetical replies that clarify the Greek interpretations of some passages from the Gospel. The second objection is based on three widely used passages: “When the Paraclete comes, whom I will send to you from the Father” (Io. 15: 26); “He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you” (Io. 16: 13); and, “It is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you” (Io. 16: 15). According to Nicholas the Latins use these passages to demonstrate that whatever thing is sent, this very thing proceeds from the sender. The reply insists on a feature that is peculiar to Nicholas’ writings: the painstaking attention to the meaning of words—in this case, the difference between ἡ ἀποστολή (“sending forth”) and ἡ ἐκπόρευσις (“procession”),<sup>126</sup> the same clear distinction that can be found also in the *Syllogismi* where he distinguishes between ἐκπόρευσις, ἀποστολή, μετάδοσις, ἐμφύσησις,<sup>127</sup> while in order to explain Io. 16: 15 he goes back to a widely quoted passage from Photios’ *Mystagogia*, in which the Patriarch explains that there is a difference between saying “it is from me that

124 See for a compelling overview of the Latin side, G. d’Onofrio, “Quando la metafisica tornò in Occidente. Ugo Eteriano e la nascita della theologia”, in *Aquinas*, 55.1–2 (2012), pp. 67–106.

125 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 29, l. 29–30: ὁ πρῶτος ἡμῖν καὶ μόνος καθηγητὴς καὶ διδάσκαλος, ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ Θεὸς καὶ τῆς θεολογίας ἐξηγητὴς, ἀναγγελεῖ ταῦτα.

126 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 16.

127 See below section 4. *Refutationes theologicae-Syllogismi*, at pp. 320–334.

he will receive” and “it is from mine that he will receive”, because in saying “from mine” Christ intends “from my Father and not from me.”<sup>128</sup>

The third reply is to the objections based on the passage of Io. 20: 22: “And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” Nicholas recalls some of the themes he used in the *Ad magnum Domesticum* in relation to the fact that the term, “spirit”, can be used in different ways: to talk about God and the Holy Spirit, but also to talk about angelic spirits, or about the spirit “of slavery” and the spirit “of adoption” (Rom. 8: 15),<sup>129</sup> etc.

It is also worthy of attention to note here how deeply Nicholas is engaged in tracing the limits of the usage of a word or, as in this case, in recognising the polysemantic value of a noun like “spirit”:

πῶς ἂν αὐτὸς συστείλῃς τὸ ὄνομα εἰς ἓν σημαίνόμενον; Εἰ δ' ἀνάγκη πολυσήμαντον ὁμολογεῖν τοῦτο καθὰ καὶ δέδεικται, προσήκοι ἂν τῷ νουνεχεῖ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐξεταστῇ, μὴ ἀπλῶς οὕτω καὶ ἀδιακρίτως ἐκδέχεσθαι τὴν φωνήν, ὡς ἐν τούτῳ σημαίνουσιν πανταχοῦ τὸ συμπληρωτικὸν τῆς τριάδος Πνεύμα· ἀλλὰ διαστέλλειν, οὐ μὲν τοῦτο, οὐ δὲ ἐκεῖνο σημαίνεται· ἵνα μὴ τῷ ἀλλήνῳ<sup>130</sup> τῆς ἐκδοχῆς· εἰς ἀτοπίας ἀποκρημνίζεται βάραθρον.<sup>131</sup>

How could you reduce the name <of the Spirit> to mean one thing? If it is necessary to recognize this <name> as having many meanings as it has been demonstrated, it would be convenient for the intelligent inquirer of truth not to accept the expression so simply and indiscriminately as if <this expression> in this way meant everywhere one, [i.e.] the Spirit who is an essential part of the Triad, but to distinguish where this means this and where that, so that he is not plunged into abysses of senselessness by confusing the interpretation.

A fourth solution answers to a hypothetical question, which is typical of the anti-Latin writings, on what can be considered ἄτοπον—which can be translated both with a theological sense, as “wicked/outrageous”, and with a more philosophical meaning, as “paradoxical/absurd”—in stating that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.<sup>132</sup> Nicholas lists seven reasons why the

128 cf. Photios, *De Spiritus Sancti mystagogia*, § 22–23 in *PG* 102, col. 301–303; Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, § 41, pp. 374–375.

129 Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*, p. 213, l. 1–2.

130 τῷ ἄλλῳ ἄλλῳ in the printed text.

131 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 19, l. 22–p. 20, l. 2.

132 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 24, l. 30.

Filioque is ἄτοπον, and almost all of them refer to the fact that it does not respect the tradition and the teaching of the Scriptures and the Fathers and introduces “a new addition” (ἡ νέα προσθήκη) to the Creed.

The fifth question-and-answer cluster is dedicated to the passages in which the Spirit is called the “Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8: 9); “the breath of his mouth” (2 Thess. 2: 8); and “Spirit of truth” (Io. 15: 26). Nicholas uses a traditional reply: “procession” is not connected to “possession”, otherwise God, who is called the “God of Abraham [and] of Isaac”,<sup>133</sup> should come from the Patriarchs.

Ἐγὼ δὲ διαφορὰν οἶδα τοῦ εἶναί τι τοῦδε, καὶ τοῦ ἐκ τοῦδε· τὸ μὲν γὰρ οἰκείωσίν τινα βούλεσθαι δηλοῖ, τὸ δὲ ἀναφορὰν πρὸς τὸ αἷτιον.<sup>134</sup>

I know, instead, that there is a difference between being “of something” and “from something”: the first case shows a certain appropriation, the second case a reference to the cause.

In this reply we also find a clear explanation of what Nicholas intends for πρόοδοι, and why in his *Refutatio Procli* he tries so insistently to refute the Philosopher’s position:

[...] εἴ γε φυσικὴν ὁμολογητέον ἡμῖν εἶναι τοῦ Πνεύματος τὴν ἐκπόρευσιν· τουτέστιν ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς ὑπερφυσικῆς φύσεως τοῦ ἐξ οὗ ὅποιαν καὶ τὴν γέννησιν τοῦ Υἱοῦ, ἵνα καὶ τῷ τρόπῳ μόνῳ διαφέρωσιν ἀλλήλων αἱ πρόοδοι.<sup>135</sup>

[...] if we must acknowledge the natural procession of the Spirit, that is to say from the very supernatural nature of the one from whom is also the generation of the Son, so that the “emanations” differ from each other only in the manner.

The sixth and last exegetical passage is dedicated to Io. 10: 30: “I and the Father are one.” Again, here we find the attempt to offer a very literal interpretation of the Gospel passage: Christ did not say, “I and the Father ‘am’ one”, but “I and the Father ‘are’ one” because he wanted to signify the distinction between the persons:

133 E.g., Gen. 28: 13.

134 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 27, l. 5–7.

135 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 28, l. 3–7.

[...] οὐκ εἶπεν Ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ Πατὴρ ἐν εἰμί, ἵνα κατὰ πάντα τηρήσῃς τὸ ἐν· ἀλλ' ἐν μὲν εἰπὼν, ἔδειξε τὴν μίαν οὐσίαν· ἐσμέν δὲ πάλιν εἰπὼν, ἔδωκε καὶ τὴν τῶν προσώπων διαίρεσιν.<sup>136</sup>

Having concluded the exegesis of the traditional quotations from the Gospel, attributed by the Greek polemical literature on the Filioque to the Latins, Nicholas, starting with Paul, retraces the teachings about the Spirit and his procession from the Father that can be found in the New Testament, and concludes with an outline of the decisions of the first four ecumenical councils (Nicaea in 325, Constantinople in 381, Ephesus in 431, and Chalcedon in 451).<sup>137</sup>

#### 4 *Refutationes theologicae—Syllogismi*<sup>138</sup>

The *Refutationes theologicae*, *Κεφαλαιώδεις ἔλεγχοι*, which will be called *Syllogismi* to avoid any confusion with the *Refutatio Procli*, contain a collection of short refutations of the new Latin dogma of the Filioque, in the form of “syllogisms”<sup>139</sup> and summarize the main faults of Latin pneumatology, already presented in the other writings. The text was published for the first time by Demetrakopoulos<sup>140</sup> and divided into 47 sections. In this case as well, we cannot completely rely on the printed text, unfortunately, and need a proper critical edition in order to draw well-grounded conclusions, however, it is possible to obtain a general understanding of Nicholas’ way of refuting the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son. This section presents only selected passages from those which could enrich the analysis of Nicholas’ philosophical background.

<sup>136</sup> Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, p. 28, l. 24–26.

<sup>137</sup> Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos*, pp. 31–36.

<sup>138</sup> The Greek title is: Τοῦ αὐτοῦ Νικολάου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης κεφαλαιώδεις ἔλεγχοι τοῦ παρὰ Λατίνοις καινοφανοῦς δόγματος, τοῦ ὅτι τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐκπορεύεται.

<sup>139</sup> Other contemporary authors use this kind of collections of syllogisms, see e.g. Andronikos Kamateros, *Sacrum Armamentarium* (RAP GI349), p. 219, titulus, ed. A. Bucossi (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).

<sup>140</sup> The text is published by Demetrakopoulos under its original title, however, on the basis of the title used by the *TLG*, many publications refer to it as *Oratio* 7, which of course is not an appropriate title; the title from the manuscript tradition is Τοῦ αὐτοῦ Νικολάου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης κεφαλαιώδεις ἔλεγχοι τοῦ παρὰ Λατίνοις καινοφανοῦς δόγματος, τοῦ ὅτι τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐκπορεύεται. Now in the edition prepared by N.C. Benvenuto; see above, note 9, p. 292.

In this writing, as in the others presented above, one of the major concerns of Nicholas is how to explain the relationship between God as monad and God as Trinity. This is a “hot topic”, very well documented throughout the *Refutatio Procli*, starting from its very proem,<sup>141</sup> but we also see the issue here in the beginning of the *Syllogismi* where in a very short preface the Bishop of Methone summarizes his point of view. This is a rather conventional opening for a text dedicated to the Filioque: indeed, the theologians feel the urge to start from a common foundation that can be shared by Greeks and Latins; however, they do not usually refer to the difference between μονάς and τριάς but rather to that between οὐσία and ὑπόστασις, while Nicholas insists on the fact that the Godhead is monad and triad:

Ὁμολόγηται, ὅτι καὶ ἡ ὅλη θεότης μονάς ἐστι καὶ τριάς κατὰ τὸ κοινὸν τῆς οὐσίας, καὶ τριάς ἡ αὐτὴ κατὰ τὰς ὑποστάσεις, καὶ ἐκάστη τῶν ὑποστάσεων μονάς ἐστι καὶ ἓν κατὰ τὸ οἰκεῖον ἰδίωμα, ὃ τῶν λοιπῶν ὑποστάσεων διακρίνεται.

It is confessed both that the entire Divinity is monad and that is triad according to what is common to the substance, and is triad according to the hypostases, and each one of the hypostases is monad and one according to its proper distinctive feature, which distinguishes it from the other hypostases.<sup>142</sup>

In *Refutatio Procli* Nicholas expresses the same point in various passages, e.g.,

Τριάς οὖν ἡμῖν ἡ θεότης ὁμολογεῖται καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ μονάς καὶ τὸ ἓν καὶ οὔτε τὸ τριάς εἶναι ἀρνεῖται τὸ εἶναι τὸ ἓν οὔτε τὸ εἶναι τὸ ἓν ἀρνεῖται τὸ εἶναι τριάς, ἀλλ’ ἐξ ἑκατέρου μᾶλλον ἐκότερον οὐσα βεβαιοῦται.<sup>143</sup>

We confess therefore that the Divinity is a triad and that the same is a monad and the One; its being three does not deny its being the One, nor does its being the One deny its being three, but rather from both it is confirmed to be both.<sup>144</sup>

141 E. g. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutatio Procli*, p. 4, l. 19–5, l. 15, proem.

142 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, p. 359, l. 1–p. 360, l. 3.

143 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutatio Procli*, p. 4, l. 28–5, l. 3, proem.

144 Engl. tr. from Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus*, p. 85.



Even more notable is the first passage §1 in which Nicholas states that to say the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son would imply that one comes from two, that the Spirit would have two principles, as the Father and the Son are two and not one,

Εἰ τὸ Πνεῦμα ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐκπορεύεται, εἶη ἂν τὸ ἐν ἐκ τῶν δύο καὶ δύο ἀρχαὶ τοῦ ἐνός· ἐν γὰρ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ὥσπερ καὶ ὁ Πατὴρ εἷς καὶ ὁ Υἱὸς εἷς. Πατὴρ δὲ καὶ Υἱὸς οὐχ εἷς, ἀλλὰ δύο, εἰ καὶ τῇ φύσει ἓν· ἄλλος γὰρ καὶ ἄλλος, εἰ καὶ μὴ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο.<sup>145</sup>

If the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, he would be the one [coming] from two and there would be two principles of the one; for indeed the Holy Spirit is one, as also the Father is one and the Son is one. Father and Son are not one, but two, although they are one according to nature; two persons indeed but not two things.

Then he adds,

Καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ὄντων πάντων οἱ λόγοι πρόεισιν ἐν τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ κεῖθεν εἰς τὰ ὄντα διανέμονται· εἶη ἂν καὶ πᾶσα ἡ ἐν τοῖς οὖσι θεωρουμένη μονὰς ἐκ δυάδος, καὶ ἡ δυὰς ἀρχὴ τῆς μονάδος, ὅπερ ἄτοπον καὶ τῇ κοινῇ ἐναντίον ἐννοίᾳ, καθ' ἣν τὸ ἐν πάντες καὶ τὴν μονάδα δυάδος τε καὶ παντὸς προτάττουσιν ἀριθμοῦ, ὡς ἄρα τῆς μονάδος ἀρχῆς οὕσης δυάδος τε καὶ παντὸς ἀριθμοῦ.<sup>146</sup>

And because the reasons of all beings pre-exist in God, and from there are distributed to the beings, the entire monad would be contemplated in beings from a dyad, and the dyad would be the origin of the monad, a thing that is absurd and contrary to common understanding, according to which everybody places the one and the monad before the dyad and before every number, because the monad is principle of the dyad and of every number.

In §2 and §3 he insists on the fact that the double procession would imply double causes, that one of the two principles would be imperfect and that nothing perfect can have an imperfect cause and at the same time that the dyarchy would banish the monarchy from the one Divinity.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>145</sup> Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, §1, p. 360, l. 8–13.

<sup>146</sup> Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, §1, p. 360, l. 13–19.

<sup>147</sup> Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, §2, p. 360, l. 29–31: Πῶς γὰρ τὸ ἐξ ἀτελών; οὐδὲν γὰρ τέλειον ἐξ ἀτελών· καὶ ἅμα ἡ δυαρχία τὴν μοναρχίαν ἀπὸ τῆς μίας ἐξορίζει θεότητος.

The third section is more specifically devoted to the idea of God's perfection: if the procession from the Father is and must be perfect, then the addition of a procession from the Son is superfluous.

Εἰ τελεία ἡ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπόρευσις τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος (τελεία δέ, ὅτι Θεὸς τέλειος ἐκ Θεοῦ τελείου τοῦ Πατρὸς τὸ Πνεῦμα), τί δήποτε συντελεῖ πρὸς ταύτην ἡ ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ; Εἰ μὲν γὰρ καὶ αὕτη συνεισφέρει τι, οὐ τελεία ἐκείνη [...].<sup>148</sup>

If the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father is perfect—perfect indeed because the Spirit is perfect God who comes from a perfect God who is the Father—what then does the <procession> “from the Son” contribute to this? If, in fact, also this [i.e. the procession from the Son] furnishes something, then that one [i.e. the procession from the Father] is not perfect [...].

The following sections (§§ 4-5-6-7) present some well-known refutations: if there is only one procession from the Father and the Son, it means that they share the same common characteristic, but this is impossible because in the Trinity a feature is either common to the three persons or is proper to one hypothesis: what is proper is not common, and what is common is not proper. If the Father and the Son share one property it means that either the Spirit is inferior to them, or he must share a property with the Father, that of generating the Son, which is of course an absurd consequence.

Section § 8 is dedicated to one of the crucial issues that potentially link the Latin heresy and the philosophical threat: the proliferation of persons in the Trinity, i.e., a new form of polytheism. Following the previous reasoning that leads Nicholas to say that the Spirit should also be cause of the Son, here he argues that even if we allow that the Son cannot be from the Spirit, however, in order to safeguard the equality in honour and power, the Latins must tolerate the Spirit's emanating something else, which must be equal in nature and power to the Spirit who emanates it and to those from whom the Spirit is brought forth (προάγω—not by chance the verb we have already discussed in the *Adversus Latinos*),<sup>149</sup> but these reasonings would lead to a proliferation of persons in the Trinity and even overtake Hellenic polytheism.<sup>150</sup>

148 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, § 3, p. 361, l. 1–6.

149 See above p. 310.

150 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, § 8, pp. 363–364: “Ἡ εἰ μὴ τὸν Υἱόν, ἀλλ’ ἕτερόν τι δοτέον ἐκ τοῦ Πνεύματος ἢ γεννᾶσθαι ἢ ἐκπορεύεσθαι, ὡς ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκείνων ἐκάτερον, ἵνα καὶ ἰσότημα τάχα καὶ ἰσοδύναμα φυλαχθῇ, ὁμοφυεῖς ἂν εἴη καὶ ἰσοδύναμον καὶ τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Πνεύμα-

Although sections §9 and §10 discuss the famous passage of Io. 14: 28, “The Father is greater than I”—which in 1166 triggered a fierce debate that opposed Latin and Greek interpretations of the verse of the Gospel of John—it is not possible to ascertain whether Nicholas is somehow referring to contemporary events and debates, since the passage is widely discussed in almost all anti-Latin texts.<sup>151</sup>

Section §11 again deals with the statement that nothing personal can be shared in the Trinity. In this case, if the Father were to share the procession of the Spirit with the other two persons, the Spirit would proceed from himself, being both cause of himself and caused—a thing, says Nicholas, that not even the tales of the Hellenes imagined.<sup>152</sup>

Sections §§12–25 allow Nicholas to go back to his main concern (the monad, the dyad, the triad) and try to entangle the Latin heresy by making ample use of Aristotle. Section §12 in particular includes a passage that, in slightly changed form, appears also in the *Memoriae*, and that is worth mentioning again as a bridge between philosophy and theology:

Εἰ μὴ μόνον ὁ Πατήρ Πατήρ, καὶ μόνον ὁ Υἱὸς Υἱός, καὶ ἐξ ἐνὸς μόνου τοῦ Πατρὸς ὁ τε Υἱὸς καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ἀλλὰ δύο Πατήρ καὶ Υἱὸς τὰ τοῦ ἐνὸς Πνεύματος αἴτια, ἡ δυὰς ἄρα καὶ τῆς μονάδος προτέτακται καὶ ὑπεράνω τῆς μοναδικῆς τριάδος βέβηκε, καίτοι κάτω που παρὰ τῶν ἔξω σοφῶν ἡ δυαδικὴ σύνθεσις τῇ ὕλῃ προσέριπται· ἡ γάρ τοι καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἄνω παρὰ τῆς ἐναρχικῆς μονάδος ἐν τῇ τριάδι συνεκφωνηθεῖσα δυὰς, ἕως οὕτω τῆς πηγαίας μονάδος κεχώρισται,

τοὺς προαγόμενον τῷ τε προάγοντι καὶ τοῖς ἐξ ὧν τοῦτο προήχεται· οὐκ ἔτι ἄρα τριάς, ἀλλὰ τετράς ἔσται τὸ πρεσβευόμενον, μᾶλλον δὲ εἰς ἄπειρον αἱ ὑποστάσεις οὕτω γε προχωρήσουσιν, αἰετὶ τῆς προαγομένης τῇ προαγωγῇ τῆς αὐτῆς οὐσῆς φύσεως καὶ δυνάμεως, ἵνα καὶ τὴν ἐλληνικὴν πολυθεϊαν οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα δοξάζοντες παρελίσσωσιν.

151 For general introductions, see: P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); M. Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081–1261* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). For most recent studies, see: P. Podolak, A. Zago, “Ugo Eteriano e la controversia cristologica del 1166: edizione dell’opuscolo *De minoritate*. Appendice: edizione della lettera ad Alessio”, in *Revue des études byzantines* 74/1(2016), pp. 77–170; P. Podolak, “Il dossier latino sul concilio del 1166: *Pater maior me est*”, in S. Cosentino, M.E. Pomero, G. Vespignani (eds), *Dialoghi con Bisanzio: spazi di discussione, percorsi di ricerca. Atti dell’VIII Congresso Nazionale dell’Associazione Italiana di Studi Bizantini* (Ravenna, 22–25 settembre 2015) (Spoleto: CISAM, 2019), pp. 789–804.

152 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, §11, p. 364, l. 31–p. 365, l. 5: Ἡ τοίνυν τοῦ Πνεύματος προβολὴ εἰ μὲν κοινῇ τῶν τριῶν εἶναι δοθείη, εἴη ἂν καὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ Πνεύματος, καὶ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἄρα ἐκπορευθήσεται τὸ Πνεῦμα καὶ ἀρχὴ καὶ αἴτιον ἔσται αὐτὸ ἑαυτοῦ, καὶ αἴτιον ἅμα καὶ αἰτιατόν, ὅπερ οὐδ’ οἱ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἀνεπλάσαντο μῦθοι.

οὐδέπω δυάς, ἀλλ' ἢ μονάς κυρίως κρατεῖ, δι' ὃ καὶ τριάς καὶ εἶναι καὶ νοεῖσθαι καὶ λέγεσθαι.<sup>153</sup>

If [it is] not [the case that] only the Father is Father, and only the Son is Son, and only from one Father are both the Son and the Holy Spirit, but rather [that] two—Father and Son—are the causes of one Spirit, then the dyad would stand before the monad and mount above the monadic Triad, and indeed down here (= in creation) somehow the dyadic composition is assigned to matter by the “Hellenic philosopher”; indeed—let me tell you—according to us up there (= the divine realm) the dyad which is pronounced together in the Triad by the monad which is principle of unity, so long as it is not yet separated from the primal-source monad, it <is> never yet at any time dyad, but a monad legitimately rules and, because of this, also Triad both is, is perceived, and is called such.

Section §13 insists on the fact that two principles in the Trinity are inconceivable. Sections §14 and §15 implicitly discuss a reference to the Scriptural passage, “the Father is greater than I” (Io. 14: 28).<sup>154</sup> Nicholas concludes from this that the Son clearly cannot be a cause of the Spirit for the following reasons: the Father is cause of those hypostases who are from him, and therefore is greater than them by reason of hypostasis (τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ὑποστάσεως) and not by reason of nature (τῷ λόγῳ τῆς φύσεως); since the nature is shared by the three persons, and since the Son is not the same hypostasis as the Father and cannot cause anything by reason of nature, otherwise he would be greater than the Spirit (as the Pneumatomachoi say), it clear that the Son cannot be cause of the Spirit.<sup>155</sup> Moreover, at §15 he adds that even if the Son were to be a cause of the Spirit by reason of hypostasis, he would be part of the hypostasis of the Father, and therefore he would complete him, since the Father would in that case be in need of fulfilment, which is clearly an absurd consequence.

Section §16 goes back again to discuss monad, dyad and triad, adding convoluted explanations of the relationship between the three concepts.

153 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, §12, p. 365. Compare the bolded section with *Memoriae* in Niketas Stethatos, *Contra Latinos*, p. 376, l. 21–p. 377, l. 4: **κάτω προσρίπτον τὴν θυαδικὴν σύνθεσιν τῇ ὕλῃ. ἢ γὰρ ἄνω παρὰ τῆς ἀρχικῆς μονάδος ἐν τῇ τριάδι συνεκφανθεῖσα δυάς, ἕως οὕτω τῆς μονάδος κεχώρισται, οὐδέπω δυάς· ἀλλ' ἢ μονάς τε κυρίως καὶ τριάς κρατεῖ καὶ εἶναι καὶ νοεῖσθαι καὶ λέγεσθαι· τὸ μὲν τῇ φύσει, τὸ δὲ τῷ ἀριθμῷ.**

154 See above sections §9–10, n. 151—p. 324.

155 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, §14, p. 366.

[...] οὐδαμοῦ δυὰς τῇ μιᾷ θεότητι παραζεύγνυται· οὐδεὶς ἐν τῇ τριάδι συνδυασμός· οὐ μετὰ τὴν μονάδα δυὰς, εἴτε καὶ τριάς, ἵνα καὶ δυάδα πρὸ τῆς μονάδος ἢ καὶ τριάδος νοήσω, ἀλλὰ μονὰς μὲν ἢ πηγαία τῶν ἐξ αὐτῆς δύο μονάδων αἰτία· φθάνει δὲ ταύτας ἑαυτῇ ἐνοῦσα· καὶ πρὸ δυάδος νοουμένη τριάς, καὶ ἅμα ἐνὶ μὲν φωτὶ περιστράπτουσα καὶ τρισί [...].<sup>156</sup>

[...] in no case does the dyad join the one Divinity: there is no combination in the Triad, and it is not the case that after the monad there is a dyad and afterward there is a triad, so that I must know a dyad before the monad or the triad, but the monad is the fontal cause of the two monads that come from it; and she anticipates them, uniting them in herself and the Triad is thus known before the dyad and brightly shines, together, with one and three lights [...].

But the most intriguing passage is the following:

[...] οὐκέτι μονὰς μονάδων αἰτία πρὶν δυασθῆναι τρισσομένη, καὶ τριάς τὴν δυάδα προφθάνουσα, ἵνα καὶ τούτῳ τὸ ὑπερφυὲς αὐτῆς παραδείξῃ· ἀλλὰ μονὰς μὲν δυάδος, αὐθὺς δὲ δυὰς μονάδος αἰτία, καὶ δυὰς πρὸ τριάδος νοουμένη, καὶ ἀριθμὸς ἄλλος αὐτομάτως ἀναφαινόμενος ὑπερβαίνων τὴν τριάδα καὶ εἰς ἄπειρον προβαίνων, καὶ τὰ ἄτοπα ἄπειρα.<sup>157</sup>

[if the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, then] ... **monad is no longer cause of monads, being tripled before being doubled**, with triad anticipating the dyad, so that in this too it would demonstrate its supernatural [character], but monad is cause of dyad, and again dyad is cause of monad, and dyad is conceived before triad, and spontaneously another number appears that surpasses the triad and advances towards infinity and infinite absurdities.

The tortuous expression, οὐκέτι μονὰς μονάδων αἰτία πρὶν δυασθῆναι τρισσομένη, although remaining somewhat obscure, seems to have received the attention of at least one admirer, Joseph Bryennios (born ca. 1350, died before 1438, probably 1430/1), who created his treatises by assembling passages from numerous twelfth-century authors,<sup>158</sup> and quoted this passage twice *verbatim*.<sup>159</sup>

<sup>156</sup> Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, § 16, p. 367, l. 2–8.

<sup>157</sup> Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, § 16, p. 367, l. 25–p. 368, l. 2.

<sup>158</sup> See Niketas of Thessalonica, *Dialogi*, ed. Bucossi, D'Amelia, p. 273–274.

<sup>159</sup> Joseph Bryennios, *Oratio* 1, l. 250; *Oratio* 21, l. 38, ed. E. Boulgares, Ἰωσήφ μοναχοῦ τοῦ Βρυεννίου τὰ εὐρεθέντα (Leipzig, 1768; repr. 1991), vol. 1.

Sections §§17–24 implicitly discuss the famous passage from Io. 16: 15, “All that belongs to the Father is mine”, and its exegesis is based again on the fact that the Son cannot have the same personal properties of the Father.<sup>160</sup> Nicholas uses a very common set of refutations: the Spirit would send forth a fourth person from himself, such that “the Spirit, as being from two causes, would not be simple: the Father, uncaused cause, and the Son both caused and cause”;<sup>161</sup> the Spirit would be son of the Son and nephew of the Father; the Spirit would have an intermediary in his procession from the Father (οὐδ’ ἂν ἀμέσως);<sup>162</sup> the procession and the generation must occur simultaneously (ἅμα).<sup>163</sup>

Although Nicholas employs Aristotle and refers to his logic quite often in order to construct his confutation of the Latin Filioque, and although many other theologians refer (even if they do not mention him by name) to Aristotelian logic,<sup>164</sup> sections §§24–28 are quite original in the panorama of anti-Latin polemicists. To be more accurate, one should say that Nicholas in these passages seems to be using more Porphyry, or other Aristotelian commentators (e.g. David the Conqueror, Pseudo-Elias/Pseudo-David),<sup>165</sup> than Aristotle himself, when he discusses the fact that a characteristic proper to the Father cannot be shared by the Son, by using a parallel with the property of the “ability to laugh” that belongs to human beings:<sup>166</sup>

§ 24 Πᾶν ἴδιόν τινος ἀπ’ ἐκείνου μεταλαμβανόμενον, οὗ περ ἂν ἴδιον ᾖ, καὶ καθ’ ἑτέρων τινῶν δύο λεγόμενον, εἰ μὲν κατ’ ἀμφοῖν ἐπίσης ἀληθεύεται, ὁμοφυῆ· εἰ δὲ κατὰ τοῦ ενός, τοῦ ἑτέρου δὲ μὴ, ἑτεροφυῆ τὰ δύο ταῦτα δείκνυσιν ὄντα· οἷον φέρε εἰπεῖν. Τὸ γελαστικὸν ἴδιον ὃν τοῦ κατὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον εἶδους, ἀπὸ τούτου

160 Cf. Io 15: 13–15: ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ἐκεῖνος, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὁδηγήσει ὑμᾶς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πάση· οὐ γὰρ λαλήσει ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ, ἀλλ’ ὅσα ἀκούσει λαλήσει, καὶ τὰ ἐρχόμενα ἀναγγελεῖ ὑμῖν. ἐκεῖνος ἐμὲ δοξάσει, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ λήμψεται καὶ ἀναγγελεῖ ὑμῖν. πάντα ὅσα ἔχει ὁ πατήρ ἐμὰ ἐστίν· διὰ τοῦτο εἶπον ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ λαμβάνει καὶ ἀναγγελεῖ ὑμῖν.

161 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, § 20, p. 368: κ’. Πῶς δὲ καὶ ἀπλοῦν τὸ μὴ ἐξ ενός, ἀλλ’ ἐκ δύο, τοῦ μὲν ἀναιτίου αἰτίου, τοῦ δὲ αἰτιατοῦ καὶ αἰτίου;

162 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, § 22, p. 369. Interesting to note that, most probably during the first half of the twelfth century, Niketas of Thessalonica writes six dialogues to explain the role of the Son as intermediary in the procession of the Holy Spirit, see especially Niketas of Thessalonica, *Dialogus II*, ed. Bucossi, D’Amelia.

163 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, § 23, p. 369.

164 See again especially Niketas of Thessalonica, *Dialogus II*, ed. Bucossi, D’Amelia.

165 Cf. for a recently updated general introduction R. Sorabji (ed.), *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence* (London / New York: Bloomsbury, 2016<sup>2</sup>).

166 Aristotle, *De partibus animalium*, 673a, l. 8, καὶ τὸ μόνον γελᾶν τῶν ζώων ἄνθρωπον. On the Aristotelian origin of the example, see J. Barnes (ed.), *Porphyry’s Introduction* (Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 208–209 and footnotes.

δὴ μεταλαμβανόμενον λεγέσθω πρῶτον κατὰ τινων δύο καὶ ἀληθεύετω, οἷον Σωκράτους καὶ Πλάτωνος· γελαστικὸν γὰρ ἑκάτερον τούτων· οὐκοῦν καὶ ὁμοφυεῖς Σωκράτης καὶ Πλάτων. Λεγέσθω πάλιν καὶ καθ' ἑτέρων δύο, καὶ κατὰ μὲν τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀληθεύετω, κατὰ δὲ τοῦ ἑτέρου μηκέτι· οἷον κατὰ τοῦ Σωκράτους καὶ κατὰ τῆς γεγραμμένης εἰκόνης αὐτοῦ· ὁ μὲν γὰρ Σωκράτης ὄντως γελαστικόν, ἡ δὲ εἰκὼν αὐτοῦ οὐκέτι· ἑτεροφυῇ ἄρα τὰ δύο ταῦτα Σωκράτης καὶ εἰκὼν αὐτοῦ.

Κατὰ δὴ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον ἐπειδὴ τὸ προάγειν τὸ Πνεῦμα ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ ἴδιον ἐστὶ τοῦ Πατρὸς, τοῦτο δ' ἀπὸ τοῦ Πατρὸς μεταλαμβανόμενον καὶ κατὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ λεγόμενον καὶ τοῦ Πνεύματος, κατὰ μὲν τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἀληθεύει, ὡς τὸ καινὸν<sup>167</sup> δόγμα φησί, κατὰ δὲ τοῦ Πνεύματος οὐκέτι· οὐδὲ γὰρ αὐτὸ ἑαυτὸ προβάλλει· ἑτεροφυῇ ἄρα τὰ δύο ταῦτα, ὁ Υἱὸς καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα. Εἰ δὲ ταῦτα ὁμοφυῇ, ἢ κατ' ἀμφοῖν ἀληθεύετω τὸ προβάλλειν τὸ Πνεῦμα ἐξ αὐτῶν, ἢ εἰ μὴ κατὰ τοῦ ἐνός, οὐδὲ κατὰ τοῦ λοιποῦ ἀληθεύει.

When whatever characteristic property of some given thing is conveyed far from that thing, of which it should be a characteristic property, and is said in relation to other two, if in equal terms it is truly predicated in relation to both, <they are> of the same nature; if instead it <is said> in relation to the one, and not to the other, these entities prove to be of a distinct nature; let us say an example. The ability to laugh, being a characteristic property of the species of human beings, conveyed far from this, must then be said primarily in relation to the other two [entities] and truly predicated, as for instance Socrates and Plato: each of them is, in fact, able to laugh; therefore Socrates and Plato are also of the same nature. And again, <the ability to laugh> must also be said in relation to other two, and now must be truly predicated in relation to one, and now not in relation to the other: as for instance in relation to Socrates and the depicted portrait of him: Socrates, verily, is able to laugh while his portrait is not; therefore, these two things—Socrates and his portrait—are of a distinct nature.

Then, according to this same reasoning, since it is a characteristic property of the Father to bring forward the Spirit by himself, if this is conveyed far from the Father and said in relation to the Son and the Spirit, in relation to the Son it is truly predicated, as the new dogma [i.e. the Latins' Filioque teaching] says, but in relation to the Spirit it is not: indeed he does not bring himself forward; therefore the two—the Son and the Spirit—are of distinct nature. But if these are of the same nature, either

167 κοινόν in the printed edition.

the bringing forward of the Spirit from them is truly predicated in relation to both, or if it is not true in relation to one, it is not true also in relation to the other.

Sections §§ 25–26 concentrate on the fact that what is common (κοινόν) cannot be a characteristic property (ἴδιον) and *vice versa*. Section § 27 goes back to the τὸ γελαστικόν, “to be able to laugh”, but in this case Nicolas also opens the section by quoting an uncommon passage from Photios’ *Mystagogy*.<sup>168</sup>

Οὐδὲν ἴδιόν τινος ὑποστάσεως ἐτέρᾳ ὑποστάσει ἐφαρμόζειν δύναται· ἀλλ’ ἐπειδὴν ἴδιόν τι ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτως ἐξιδιωσαμένου μεταλαμβάνόμενον κατὰ τινος ὑποστάσεως πραγματικῶς ἀληθεύει, ἐκεῖνο τὸ πρώτως αὐτὸ ἐξιδιωσάμενον εἰς λόγον ἀνάγεται φύσεως· οἷον τὸ γελαστικὸν πρώτος ἐξιδιοῦται ὁ καθόλου λεγόμενος ἄνθρωπος, ἀπὸ δὲ τούτου μεταλαμβάνόμενον ἀληθεύει πραγματικῶς κατὰ πάντων τῶν κατὰ μέρος ἀνθρώπων· ἀλλ’ ὁ καθόλου ἄνθρωπος, ὁ πρώτος τὸ γελαστικὸν ἐξιδιωσάμενος, οὐχ ὑποστάσεως ἀλλὰ φύσεώς ἐστιν ὄνομα. Εἰ τοίνυν καὶ τὸ προάγειν τὸ Πνεῦμα πρώτος μὲν ἐξιδιοῦται ὁ Πατήρ, ἐξ αὐτοῦ δὲ μεταλαμβάνει τοῦτο καὶ ὁ Υἱός, ὑπόστασις ὢν, ἀκόλουθον ἂν εἴη καὶ τὸν Πατέρα λέγειν μὴ εἶναι ὑπόστασιν, ἀλλὰ φύσιν· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, μὴδ’ εἶναι ὅλως Πατέρα.

No characteristic property of a hypostasis can apply to another hypostasis, but whenever what is a characteristic property—being conveyed far from “the one to which it is primarily peculiar”—is truly predicated in reality in relation to another hypostasis, that one “to which it is primarily peculiar” itself is brought up to a dimension of nature. The ability to laugh, for example, is primarily peculiar to what we call man in general and then, if it is conveyed far from this, is truly predicated successively in relation to all men. But man in general—the first to whom the “ability to laugh” is peculiar to—is the name of a nature and not of a hypostasis. If, therefore, on the one hand the Father first has as his peculiar property also to emanate the Spirit, but on the other hand from him also the Son

168 Cf. Photios, *De Spiritus Sancti mystagogy*, § 19 in PG 102, col. 297, (10') Καθόλου δὲ ἐπὶ πάντων τῶν κυρίως ἰδίων, ἐπειδ' ἂν τι τούτων κατὰ τινος πραγματικῶς ὑποστάσεως ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτως ἐξιδιωσαμένου μεταλαμβάνόμενον ἀληθεύει, εἰ καὶ μὴ τὸ ἀξίωμα τῆς ἀντιστροφῆς αὐτῷ συνεπάγοιτο, ἐκεῖνο δὴ τὸ παρέχον ἐτέρῳ μετέχειν τοῦ ιδιώματος εἰς λόγον ὁρῶμεν ἀναγόμενον φύσεως. Εἰ οὖν ὅπερ ἦν ἴδιον ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἐγνωσμένον τοῦ Πατρός, τοῦτο δίδωσιν ἢ τόλμα παρεῖναι καὶ τῷ Υἱῷ, συνονόρω καὶ ἄκουσα, πρὸς οἷον αὐτῆς τέλος καταστρέφει τὸ θεοστυγές· ἀκόλουθον δ' ἄρα, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἦν τοῖς ἐρασταῖς τοῦ ψεύδους, κατὰ τῶν ιδιωμάτων ἐφάπαξ ἐκμεμνήσιν, τοῦ Πατρός καὶ αὐτὴν γε παντελῶς τὴν ὑπόστασιν εἰς φύσιν ἀναλῦσαι καὶ τὸ αἷτιον ὅλως περιελεῖν τῶν θεαρχικῶν ὑποστάσεων.



partakes of this, being a hypostasis, it would be consequent to say also that the Father is not a hypostasis, but a nature, and if this is so, he would not be Father at all.

Section § 28 still remains in a strictly logical context:

Ἐτι τὸ Πνεῦμα ἢ ἴσον εἶναι ἀνάγκη ἢ μείζον ἢ ἔλαττον τοῦ Υἱοῦ· ἀλλ' ἴσον μὲν οὐκ ἂν εἴη τὸ ἐκ δύο, ὥς φασι, τὸ ἐξ ενός· ἦν γὰρ ἂν καὶ αὐτὸ ἐξ ενός ἢ κακείνος ἐκ δύο· λοιπὸν δὲ ἢ μείζον ἔσται, ὅπερ οὐδεὶς ποτε τῶν κατὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ λυττησάντων εἶπεῖν ἐτόλμησεν, ἢ ἔλαττον, καὶ πάλιν ἀναζῇ Μακεδόνιος.

The Spirit must be either equal to, greater than, or inferior to the Son, but what is from two, as they (the Latins) say, would not be equal to what is from one: indeed it would also be from one or that would also be from two, so it will be either greater, a thing that no one of those who raged against the Son has ever dared to say, or lesser, and again Macedonius revives.<sup>169</sup>

Sections §§ 29–30 are dedicated to the exegesis of Io. 15: 26 and Io. 20: 22, while from § 31 onward we have various sections dedicated to the proper lexicon that should be used to discuss the procession: § 31 (ἐκπόρευσις, ἀποστολή, μετάδοσις, ἐμφύσησις); §§ 32–33 (χορηγείσθαι τὸ Πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ἐκπορεύεσθαι); § 34 (πέμπεσθαι and ἐκπορεύεσθαι); § 35 ἀποστολή καὶ ἐκπόρευσις, and the ministering spirits (καὶ πάντα τὰ εἰς διακονίαν ἀποστελλόμενα λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα).

Sections §§ 36–38 recall the themes that Nicholas treated in the *Ad magnum domesticum*, which go back to the treatise's main question: is Pentecost the essential manifestation of the Holy Spirit? The Bishop of Methone concludes that there must be a difference between ἐμφύσησις καὶ ἐκπόρευσις, between ἐμφύσημα καὶ πνεῦμα: in one case we must understand a manifestation in time, an economic operation, while in the other case we must understand the eternal existence of the Spirit and his τρόπος τῆς ὑπαρξέως (mode of subsistence).

More interesting and original in the panorama of 9th–12th-century writings on the procession of the Holy Spirit is section § 39,<sup>170</sup> where Nicholas explains

169 Nicholas is referring to the Arian heresy (“those who raged against the Son”) and to the bishop Macedonius, believed to be the heresiarch of the heresy of the Pneumatomachoi, i.e. the heretics that denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit during the 4th century.

170 Later authors will use the κοινή εὐδοχία in this context; e.g. Joseph Bryennius, *Oratio* 18, l. 348–352, but also Gennadios Scholarios (referring to Gregory of Nazianzus) in his *Tractatus de Processu spiritus sancti* II, p. 327, l. 5–12 and in his *Responsio ad syllogismos*

the difference between τὴν ἐκπόρευσιν καὶ τὴν ἐκπομπήν (“sending forth”) and quotes Io. 15: 26:

[...] τῷ μὲν γάρ, Ὅταν ἔλθῃ, εἰπεῖν τὸ αὐτεξούσιον ἐδήλωσε τοῦ Πνεύματος καὶ τὸ αὐτοκίνητον· τῷ δὲ εἰπεῖν, Πέμψω ὑμῖν παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς, τὴν τε ταυτοβουλίαν τῆς ὅλης Τριάδος καὶ τὸ ἐν καὶ κοινὸν ἔδειξε θέλημα· κἀνταῦθα γὰρ τὴν εὐδοκίαν αὐτοῦ τε καὶ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἀποστολήν εἶναι νομιστέον, ὥς ἂν εἰ εἶπεν, ὅτι ἐλεύσεται κατὰ κοινήν εὐδοκίαν καὶ θέλησιν αὐτοῦ τε καὶ τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ ὁμοῦ καὶ ἅμα· ὅθεν καὶ ἡ πρόοδος αὐτοῦ παριστᾷ [...].<sup>171</sup>

[...] by saying “when he comes”, [Christ] made clear the Spirit’s free will and “free movement”, but by saying “I will send [him to] you from the Father”, he showed the identity of the will of the entire Triad and the one, shared desire: from there indeed it must be understood that his good will and that of the Father are the sending forth, as he said that <the Spirit> will come according to a **common good-will**, [according to] his and the Father’s intention, together and simultaneously, from which his emanation also occurs [...].

Again Nicholas insists on a clear differentiation of terms and here, quite originally, introduces in the “sending forth of the Spirit” the idea that there is a common action that shows “the identity of will and the one and common desire”,<sup>172</sup> an insistence on a link among the persons that is not usually highlighted and that could have opened a way to reconcile with the Latin opponents, if it had been pursued further.

Nicholas moves to section § 40, where he links § 39 with § 40 by reference to the idea of movement, or better, of the two movements (procession and generation) and quotes the famous passage from Gregory of Nazianzus’ *Oratio* 29, which Nicholas repeatedly uses both in his writings on the Filioque and in the *Refutatio Procli*: “the monad in the beginning is moved to a dyad until it rests in the Triad.”<sup>173</sup>

*Marci Ephesi de processu spiritus sancti* p. 515, l. 13–32, both edited in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2–3, ed. M. Jugie, L. Petit, X.A. Siderides (Paris: Maison de la bonne presse, 1929–1930).

<sup>171</sup> Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, § 39, p. 374, l. 4–11.

<sup>172</sup> This concept also shows up in Nicholas of Methone, *Refutatio Procli*, § 76, p. 79, l. 10–20, where Nicholas links God’s causality to one common will between the three Trinitarian persons in strict opposition to Proclus’ causation by being alone (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι). I am grateful to Jonathan Greig for pointing out this passage to me. See J. Greig, “Nicholas of Methone on Divine Ideas: Between Proclus and the Early Byzantines” in this same volume at pp. 201–232.

<sup>173</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 29, § 2, p. 180, l. 13–14.

Sections §§ 41–42 are dedicated to the Photian exegesis of Io. 16: 14: “He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.” But again, Nicholas finds his “original” way to discuss it, concentrating on the vocabulary of the intra-Trinitarian relationship and the difference between λήψις (“reception”) and ἐκπόρευσις (“procession”).

The sections from § 43 onward are dedicated to the exegesis of the passage from Gal. 4: 6: “Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’” Nicholas here discusses the difference between being “from” something and being “of” something, mixing Biblical examples and Aristotelian echoes (§ 44 and § 45)<sup>174</sup> that bring the reader directly to the end of the text at paragraph § 51 (at least in the version printed by Demetrakopoulos).<sup>175</sup> The foolish consequences of saying that the Spirit should proceed from the Son, since the Spirit is “of the Son”, are the following: the Father, being “Father of Christ” would proceed from Christ, and the Son, being of the Father would proceed (instead of being generated) from the Father, so they all would share in procession (τὸ ἴδιον τοῦ Πνεύματος).

At § 46, Nicholas is again inspired by his beloved Aristotelian logic, where the reasoning is supposed to be “universal” and not according to likeness (“Ὁ καθόλου μὲν οὕτως, οὐχὶ κατὰ λόγον δὲ τῆς ὁμοιότητος”).<sup>176</sup> In this case, since the Spirit is of the Father and proceeds from the Father, in the same way since the Spirit is of the Son, he should also proceed from the Son: therefore, following the same logic, since both the Father and the Spirit are of the Son, according to the same equivalence of signification (κατὰ τὴν αὐτὴν ἀδιαφορίαν), the Spirit being of the Son would be paternal cause of the Son (πατρικὸν αἵτιον τοῦ Υἱοῦ). At § 47 moreover, always following the same logic, we would conclude that since they are both from the Father, they should come from him in the same way: therefore either they should both be by procession or by generation. § 48

174 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, § 45, p. 377, l. 3–5: Καὶ ἔτι τὰ πρὸς τι ὅσα αὐτὰ, ἅπερ εἰσὶν ἐτέρων, εἶναι λέγεται ἀλλήλων, ὅτι καὶ ἀλλήλων, ὡς τὸ διπλάσιον καὶ τὸ ἥμισυ.

175 A part of the manuscript tradition contains three additional sections e.g., ms. Brescia, Biblioteca Civica Queriniana, A.IV.3, Dyktion 9826, f. 225<sup>ra</sup>; Città del Vaticano, BAV, Barb. gr. 291, Dyktion 64837, f. 90<sup>r</sup>; Firenze, BML, Plut. 9.12, Dyktion 16100, f. 158<sup>r</sup>, inc. Καὶ ἄλλως δ’ ἂν ἐξελεγχθεῖ τὸ ἄλογον τῆς σφῶν ὑποθέσεως, expl. διὰ τῆς τοιαύτης κατατομῆς καὶ συμφύρσεως. Cf. P. Podolak, A. Bucossi, “Per una futura edizione di Ugo Eteriano: censimento della tradizione manoscritta e problemi di cronologia. Con un’appendice sui codici che conservano i frammenti greci di Alessandra Bucossi”, in *Sacris Erudiri* 56(2017), pp. 273–346, pp. 321–328; A. Bucossi, C. Gazzini, A. Rigo, “Contro Roma e contro Gregorio Palamas. Il manoscritto Città del Vaticano, BAV, Barb. gr. 291 da Costantinopoli a Leone Allacci”, in *Revue d’Histoire des Textes* 16(2021), pp. 1–73, p. 32.

176 cf. Aristotle, *Analytica priora*, 47b, l. 17.

adds the last exegetical passage of the Biblical quotation that identifies the Son as light (Io. 1: 7–9; Hebr. 1: 3; Ps. 35: 10; Io. 8: 12). Here Nicholas insists again on the fact that although the Son is said to be the light of the world, he does not of course come “from” the world, but he comes “to” the world.<sup>177</sup> From § 49 to § 51 the Bishop of Methone focuses on the fact that, although the Father and Son are also called “spirit”, and although there are other spirits (angels, souls, etc.), the procession is proper only to the Holy Spirit (ἴδιον τὸ ἐκπορευτόν).<sup>178</sup>

Nicholas’ final conclusion lies in the middle of section § 51: the Latin innovation is neither proved through logic nor proved through doctrine (τὸ ἀναπόδεικτον καὶ ἀμάρτυρον):

Τῷ γὰρ αὐτῷ λόγῳ ἀνεξέλεγκτόν τε καὶ ἀναπόδεικτον πᾶν τὸ περὶ ἑνὸς καὶ μόνου προσώπου λεγόμενον καὶ μὴ ἀπὸ τινος καθόλου ὁρμώμενον· ἐκ γὰρ τῶν καθόλου καὶ ὡς ἐπὶ πάντων καθόλου αἱ ἀποδείξεις ἐξ ὧν καὶ οἱ ἔλεγχοι ἀμάρτυρον δέ, ὃ μήτε ὁ μάρτυς ἐδογματίσεν ὁ πιστός, μήτε τις τῶν θεοπνεύστων ῥητῶς ὑπηγόρευσεν.<sup>179</sup>

For the same reason, anything that cannot be proved or demonstrated about a single and only person, cannot even be said to derive from any universal principle: for demonstrations –from which refutations also arise– proceed from universals, and <are valid> insofar as they apply universally; while that which lacks testimony is what neither the faithful witness has taught nor any of the divinely inspired authors has explicitly declared.

The choice of Nicholas appears clear: the *Κεφαλαιώδεις ἔλεγχοι*, a text that is structured as a sequence of logical reasoning and questioning to Latin opponents, must rely on Aristotelian logic. How far Nicholas is inspired by Aristotle himself, or by his commentators, is a complex field of research that requires the competencies of both philologists and philosophers, and cannot be dealt with here. However, it is unquestionable that Nicholas feels the need to approach the Latins through a “syllogistic” method that has its ancestor in Aristotle, although most probably it is inherited primarily from Photios.

This clear case, together with the fact (for example) that the *Sacrum Armentarium*, written at the order of Emperor Manuel Komnenos by Andronikos

177 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, § 48, p. 378, l. 7–8: ὡς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου προερχόμενον, ἀλλὰ μὴ ὡς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενον.

178 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, § 51, p. 379, l. 2.

179 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae*, § 51, p. 379, l. 6–12.

Kamateros, includes a collection of “syllogisms” from Nicholas of Methone, Theophylact of Ohrid, Photios, Niketas Byzantios, and the previously condemned philosopher, Eustratios of Nicaea, all seem to prove that during the Komnenian era the “guardians of Orthodoxy”<sup>180</sup> did not altogether condemn applying Aristotelian logic to dogmatic discussions. Rather, as Michele Trizio has clearly argued in his book on Eustratios, they condemned the use of Aristotle in discussions on the two natures of Christ,<sup>181</sup> because those dogmatic discussions were perceived as concluded, “pacified”, clarified and sanctioned by the ecumenical councils, while the discussions with the Latins on the procession of the Holy Spirit were still “works in progress” that needed the help of the ancient philosophers and their logic, as was the case in the Patristic age.

## 5 *Memoriae*

It is necessary to say a couple things about this text, because at present it exists in two published forms and is attributed to two different authors: one was published in 1897 by Arsenij Ivačenko under the paternity of Nicholas of Methone and entitled *Memoriae contra Latinos*—Ἀπομνημονεύματα ἐκ τῶν ἐν διαφόροις λόγοις γεγραμμένων κατὰ Λατίνων περὶ τῆς εἰς τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα βλασφημίας (Angelou, n. 4; *RAP* G19835);<sup>182</sup> another was published in 1930 by Anton Michel and attributed to Niketas Stethatos (11th century), with the title *Synthesis contra Latinos et de processione Spiritus Sancti* (or *Contra Latinos et de processione spiritus sancti*)—Ἑτέρα σύνθεσις κατὰ Λατίνων, ἐν οἷς βλασφημοῦσι εἰς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον λέγοντες ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦτο ἐκπορεύεσθαι. Τοῦ Στῆθατος (*RAP* G19631).<sup>183</sup>

The second “version” of the text is probably the most famous, because it was included in the dossier dedicated to the so-called schism of 1054 by Michel. This ample work, which remains even today one of the most important contributions on the primary sources of the reciprocal excommunication between the papal envoy, Humbert of Silva Candida, and the Patriarch of Constantinople,

180 Definition from the title of chapter 5 of Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 1143–1180.

181 cf. e.g., M. Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo di Eustrazio di Nicea* (Bari: Edizioni di Pagina, 2016), p. 13. A seminal work on this discussion is certainly G. Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz: Der Streit um die theologische Methodik in der späthbyzantinischen Geistesgeschichte* (14./15. Jh.), *seine systematischen Grundlagen und seine historische Entwicklung* (München: C.H. Beck, 1977), pp. 107–124.

182 Nicholas of Methone, *Memoriae*, pp. 5–49.

183 Niketas Stethatos, *Contra Latinos*, pp. 371–409.

Michael Cerularius,<sup>184</sup> is unfortunately not reliable in many aspects. It is possible to mention, for example, the attribution to Michael I Cerularius of a *Panoplia*, which was exhaustively rejected by Jugie, Laurent, and Darrouzès, who together proved that the anthology had been assembled in the context of the Council of Lyons II in 1274.<sup>185</sup> Regrettably even Michel's studies on the paternity of the *Synthesis* seem to be built on a rather unsound analysis of the manuscript tradition. In this volume, Carmelo Nicolò Benvenuto hints at the problems,<sup>186</sup> and in his doctoral dissertation he thoroughly discusses the manuscript tradition and presents some convincing evidence. The reader should refer to the recent publications by Benvenuto for further details, but it can be said that it appears extremely uneconomical for Nicholas to have copied a treatise composed by Niketas Stethatos, and to have used it, dismembered into bits and pieces, in his other writings; rather, it would be more realistic (also on the basis of the titles and the dedicatory closing) to consider the *Memoriae* certainly as a compilation, but assembled by Nicholas of Methone from his own corpus of writings, and not from a text by Niketas Stethatos, as was stated by Michel.<sup>187</sup>

The title of the *Memoriae* is:

Νικολάου τοῦ φιλοσόφου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης συλλογὴ τῶν γραφέντων αὐτῷ ἐν διαφόροις λόγοις περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος κατὰ τὰς τῶν Λατίνων βλασφημίας.

By Nicholas of Methone, a gathering of things written by him in various treatises on the Holy Spirit against the Latins' blasphemies.

While the title of the text attributed to Niketas Stethatos is:

Ἑτέρα σύνθεσις κατὰ Λατίνων, ἐν οἷς βλασφημοῦσι εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον λέγοντες ἐκ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦτο ἐκπορεύεσθαι.

184 To mentioned only a very recent contribution on this event, see A. Kaldellis, "Keroularios in 1054: Nonconfrontational to the papal legates and loyal to the emperor", in N.G. Chris-sis, A. Kolia-Dermitzaki, A. Papageorgiou (eds), *Byzantium and the West: Perception and Reality (9th–15th c.)* (Abingdon / New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 9–24.

185 The reviews of the publication by V. Laurent in *Échos d'Orient* 31(1932), pp. 97–110 and M. Jugie in *Byzantion* 8(1933), pp. 321–326 are clear enough on this point. For a reliable analysis see, V. Laurent, J. Darrouzès, *Dossier grec de l'Union de Lyon (1273–1277)* (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1976), pp. 116–127.

186 C.N. Benvenuto, "Reconsidering Nicholas of Methone's Corpus", in this volume at pp. 347–372.

187 Benvenuto, "Prime indagini su quattro scritti teologici di Nicola di Metone"; and see also above n. 9 at p. 292.

Another synthesis against the Latins, who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, saying that he proceeds from the Son.

Even the mere analysis of the nouns chosen for the titles, where σύνθεσις (synthesis) and συλλογή (gathering) are used, would be enough to correctly identify this kind of composition: a patchwork of other writings,<sup>188</sup> but the conclusion of the text, printed by Arsenij, is even more decisive:

Ταυτά σοι ἐν τῷ παρόντι, πανσέβαστε καὶ πάντιμε κεφαλῇ, παρ' ἡμῶν ἐσχεδίασται ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἐν διαφόροις λόγοις γεγραμμένων ἡμῖν κατὰ τῆς τῶν Λατίνων εἰς τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα βλασφημίας, ὅτι μὴ τὸ τοὺς λόγους ἔχον βιβλίον προχείρως εἶχομεν δοῦναί σοι.

These memories of the things that we have written in various treatises against the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit of the Latins, for you in the present <composition/booklet>, *pansebastos* and excellent head, were put together on the spur of the moment by us because we did not have the book that contains these treatises readily accessible to give it to you.<sup>189</sup>

Where the words μὴ προχείρως εἶχομεν δοῦναί σοι (“not to have something ready to be given as a present”) explain also how Nicholas worked, how he extracted so many verbatim quotations from his other writings, the Bishop of Methone, in fact, does not say that he did not have the book with him; he says that he does not have a book “readily accessible” to be donated to the *Pansebastos*, words that could also mean that he did not have a spare copy ready to be given to his reader and, therefore, he needed to ἐσχεδιάσται, which certainly means “to improvise”, “to put together on the spur of the moment”—but, most probably, it could also include the idea of “summarising, giving an outline”.<sup>190</sup>

Having already presented, in some details, the other treatises, this section does not insist on the contents, but offers a table with the correspondences, that can help the reader to get a sense of the treatise's structure.

188 A seminal presentation of the term συλλογή and its culture can read in P. Odorico, “La cultura della συλλογή. 1) Il cosiddetto enciclopedismo bizantino. 2) Le tavole del sapere di Giovanni Damasceno”, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 83/1 (1990), pp. 1–21.

189 Nicholas of Methone, *Memoriae*, p. 49.

190 Cf. Luciano Canfora, “Introduzione: Thesaurus insignis, non liber”, in Fozio, *Biblioteca* (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2016), pp. XI–LXIV.

The *Memoriae*—whether attributed or not to Nicholas of Methone<sup>191</sup>—are a patchwork of passages that can also be found in Nicholas' writings on the Holy Spirit's procession. It is not thorny to identify these long, sometimes verbatim passages of "self-plagiarism"; as the reader has seen in the previous pages, Nicholas has some very idiosyncratic habits: the painstaking precision in distinguishing the meaning and the usage of a word; the philosophical background reflected in the choice of words that he uses; and the introduction of very few—and always the same—quotations from Church Fathers.

### 5.1 *Text and Correspondences*

This treatise can be divided into nine sections: the opening passage, closing section, and seven question-and-answer clusters, as the reader has seen in the *Adversus Latinos*, entitled ἀντιθέσεις (antitheses, contradictions, objections, opposing arguments) and λύσεις (solutions, refutations); the long seven solutions are triggered by seven Latin doubts expressed by a fictitious interlocutor, who here and there Nicholas calls "dear Latin". From 1 to 5, it is possible to follow a strict correspondence that comprehends the entire anti-Latin corpus by the Bishop of Methone. The last two sections, 6 and 7, are not attested in the other writings, and include the replies to the hypothetical accusation of having added "only" before "from the Father" to the article about the procession of the Holy Spirit of the Symbol of Faith, and therefore, this "antithesis" transposes the traditional Greek accusation against the Latins of having tampered with the Creed with a new addition (προσθήκη) into the mouth of the opponents:

Ἀλλὰ καὶ σύ, φησί, προστίθης τὸ "μόνου ἐκ πατρὸς", λέγων "μόνου", καίτοι μηδαμοῦ τοῦτο τῆς θείας γραφῆς παραλαμβανούσης. Εἰ τοίνυν σοὶ ἔξεστι προστιθέναι, οὐ πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἐμοί, τῷ πρώτῳ θρόνῳ, τῷ κορυφαίῳ, τῷ τὰς κλείς τῆς βασιλείας ἐκ διαδοχῆς Πέτρου τοῦ θείου παρὰ τοῦ σωτῆρος πεπιστευμένῳ;<sup>192</sup>

191 Among the authors who trust Niketas Stethatos' attribution there is certainly Dirk Krausmüller, who dedicated to this text various publications, cf. e.g. D. Krausmüller, "Establishing Authority in the Constantinopolitan Religious Discourse of the Eleventh Century: Inspiration and Learning in the Writings of the Monk Niketas Stethatos", in S. Steckel, N. Gaul, M. Grünbart (eds), *Networks of Learning. Perspectives on Scholars in Byzantine East and Latin West, c. 1000–1200* (Münster: LIT-Verlag 2014), pp. 107–124; D. Krausmüller, "The procession of the Holy Spirit from the divine substance: observations about the Trinitarian theology of Symeon the New Theologian and Nicetas Stethatos", in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 60 (2015), pp. 75–91. While Alexei Barmin already in 2001 was not convinced by Michel's attribution, see A.V. Barmin, "Кто написал 'Другой свод против латинян'?", in *Византийский временник*, 60.85 (2001), p. 121–125.

192 Nicholas of Methone, *Memoriae*, p. 46.



But you too, he says, add the phrase “from the Father only,” saying “only,” even though this is nowhere found in the divine Scripture. If it is permitted to you to make additions, how much more to me—who occupy the first throne, the highest, the one to whom the keys of the kingdom were entrusted by the Saviour through the succession from the divine Peter?

And:

Ἄλλ' οὐδὲ τὸ ἐμόν, φησί, προσθήκη συννοεῖται, γὰρ ὥσπερ ὅτε λέγεται “τοῦ πατρὸς” τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ “ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς”· οὕτως, ἐπειδὴ καὶ “τοῦ υἱοῦ”, λέγεται τὸ “ἐκ τοῦ υἱοῦ”.<sup>193</sup>

But my <doctrine/position>, he says, must not be understood as an addition, for just as when the Spirit is said to be “of the Father”, also “from the Father” [is said], in this way because he is also “of the Son”, he is said to be “from the Son”.

From the point of view of the contents, the rest of the text cannot be considered particularly interesting, because—as the author himself clearly states—this treatise is a gathering of memories, but from the philological point of view the *Memoriae* are an extremely interesting challenge of textual criticism: an edition of this treatise should include the traditional reconstruction of the text, the analysis of the quotations internal to Nicholas’ corpus of writings, the cross-references, the self-plagiarism, and also the collation with later testimonies (12th–13th century) of reworked versions of the text preserved in Niketas Choniates’ *Thesaurus of Orthodoxy* (or *Panoplia dogmatica*, *RAP* G13013)<sup>194</sup> and in the bilingual *Three Syntagmata* by Nicholas/Nektarios of Casole (*RAP* G12762).<sup>195</sup>

A table of the correspondences, based on the critical apparatus assembled by Michel, could be a useful starting point for future research.

193 Nicholas of Methone, *Memoriae*, p. 48.

194 Partially printed in *PG* 139, col. 1101–1449; *PG* 140, col. 9–281.

195 cf. Podolak, Bucossi, “Per una futura edizione di Ugo Eteriano”, pp. 324–328; J. Hoeck, R.J. Loenertz, *Nikolaos-Nektarios von Otranto, Abt von Casole: Beiträge zur Geschichte der ost-westlichen Beziehungen unter Innozenz III. und Friedrich II.* (Ettal: Buch-Kunstverlag, 1965). It is in its final stage the critical edition by Paraskevi Toma, foreseen for 2023, with the provisional title *Nikolaos of Otranto: The Three Syntagmata. Editio princeps and Commentary*.

| Nicholas of Methone, <i>Memoriae</i> | Niketas Stethatos, <i>Contra Latinos</i> | Nicholas of Methone, <i>Adversus Latinos/Ad Magnum domesticum/Syllogismi</i>                                     | Biblical/canonical references/topic/keyword                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Introduction, pp. 5–16               | pp. 371–379                              | <i>Adv. Lat.</i> , pp. 2–3, 7–8;<br><i>Ad M. dom.</i> , pp. 201–202;<br><i>Syll.</i> , n. 8, 10, 15, 18, 29, 40. |                                                                                                                                 |
| n. 1, pp. 16–19                      | pp. 379–381                              | <i>Adv. Lat.</i> , pp. 8–13;<br><i>Syll.</i> , n. 5, 9, 15.                                                      | <b>Io. 10: 30</b> (ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατήρ ἐν ἐσμέν)                                                                                    |
| n. 2, pp. 19–23                      | pp. 381–384                              | <i>Adv. Lat.</i> , pp. 13–18;<br><i>Syll.</i> , n. 39, 41.                                                       | <b>Io. 16: 14–15</b> et <b>20: 22; 15: 26</b> (ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ λήμψεται καὶ ἀναγγελεῖ)                                              |
| n. 3, pp. 23–30                      | pp. 384–390                              | <i>Adv. Lat.</i> , pp. 18–21;<br><i>Ad M. dom.</i> , pp. 212–215;<br><i>Syll.</i> , n. 37, 38, 50.               | <b>Io. 20: 22</b> (λάβετε Πνεῦμα ἅγιον)                                                                                         |
| n. 4, pp. 30–37                      | pp. 390–396                              | <i>Adv. Lat.</i> , pp. 24–26–28, 31–33, 12;<br><i>Syll.</i> , n. 44, 45, 15.                                     | <b>Gal. 4: 6</b> (πνεῦμα τοῦ Υἱοῦ); <b>Rom. 8: 9</b> (πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ)                                                           |
| n. 5, pp. 37–46                      | pp. 396–407                              | <i>Ad M. dom.</i> , pp. 204–210, 217.                                                                            | <b>Io. 1: 16</b> (πλήρωμα); <b>1 Cor. 10: 4</b> (πνευματικὸν πόμα); <b>1 Cor. 12: 13</b> ; Greg. Naz., <i>Or. 41</i> (οὐσιωδῶς) |
| <i>lacuna</i>                        | p. 403, l. 21–<br>p. 407, l. 24          | <i>Adv. Lat.</i> , pp. 34–38.                                                                                    | Concilia Oecumenica                                                                                                             |
| n. 6, pp. 46–47                      | p. 407                                   | -                                                                                                                | προσθήκη                                                                                                                        |
| n. 7, p. 48                          | pp. 408–409                              | -                                                                                                                | προσθήκη                                                                                                                        |
| Closing dedication, p. 49            | <i>Vacat</i>                             |                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                 |

## 6 Conclusion

This contribution has attempted to present the main lines of development behind the reasoning and the central doctrinal arguments that Nicholas of Methone employed in the four treatises that form his corpus dedicated to the Holy Spirit against the Latin Filioque. This exposition's aim was to offer, in a shortened English version, the contents of a collection of works that are otherwise almost completely ignored, and to highlight the unique aspects and

innovative ideas that a corpus on the procession of the Holy Spirit can offer to a reader. In this respect, the conclusion of these pages should highlight three major issues that arise while studying the literary production of twelfth-century intellectuals.

The first, fundamental issue is the fact that it is necessary to study the complete production of a learned Byzantine philosopher, not necessarily to understand his reasons completely, but rather at least to obtain a more reliable picture of the motivations behind his writing—as it is in this case—the refutation against a fifth-century pagan philosopher. A twelve-century bishop involved in the dispute on the Filioque—a difference with the Latin Church that had not been resolved by conciliar decision, and that did not have a ready, clear theological answer from the Fathers—needed to go back to Hellenic wisdom, as was the case in the Patristic age, to develop a full doctrine of the intra-Trinitarian relationships. But going back to the Hellenic wisdom, a Byzantine theologian needed also to write against a hierarchical emanation framework, such as the Proclean one, that could be dangerous in the development of the doctrine of the procession. Indeed, the twelfth century was a time of elaboration, creation, and exploration, prompted by the confrontation with the Latin intellectuals who were present in-person in Constantinople (e.g., Hugo Eterianus).

A second issue is linked to the main concern of Komnenian-era theologians (who in many cases should indeed be considered philosophers too): they needed to develop a proper theology of the procession of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, they strove to establish and clearly define a lexicon that could be used to express that “pneumatology”. Nicholas of Methone, in this respect, is one of the most remarkable examples, inasmuch as he gave painstaking attention in selecting the exact word and in commenting on wrong usages by the Latins (and also by Proclus).

A third and last point is the importance of the historical context; banal as it could sound, this is still a desideratum in many studies. Kazhdan’s review of Angelou’s edition of the *Refutatio Procli*, which all the publications on Nicholas of Methone quote, suggested some streams of research in 1989:

Theology is a very delicate discipline in which nuances acquire the magnitude of dogma. [...] One might even emphasize the hierarchical structure of the Trinity—Niketas of Maroneia [...]. Nicholas emphasized the monarchical principle. The unity of the Trinity was for Nicholas not an antiquarian question to be considered in connection with philosophical errors of the fifth century. [...] Nicholas lived and worked when the “Latin question” was the major problem that Byzantium faced. Nicholas, as is well known, took a clear-cut anti-Latin stand. [...] But what was the major

difference between the Latins and Byzantium as seen by the Greeks? Kinnamos, Nicholas's contemporary, wrote about the crusaders: "Their dignities are peculiar and resemble distinctions descending from the height of the empire, since it is something more noble and surpasses all others. A duke outranks a count; a king, a duke; and the emperor, a king. The inferior naturally yields to the superior, supports him in war, and obeys." Byzantine monarchy, on the one hand, and Western hierarchy, on the other—such was the social confrontation of two worlds, and in this context the *Refutation*, with its emphasis on the divine "monarchy" and with its rejection of hierarchical emanation, can be read as a genuine twelfth-century document.<sup>196</sup>

Unfortunately, it seems that thirty years of research have not fully exploited these hints yet. Kazhdan suggested two fields of research: the first one is related to the theological analysis of the issue. Greek theologians strenuously defended the monarchy within the Trinity because it was dreadful for them to conceive a second source of Divinity, and they suspected that the Latins, claiming a role for the Son in the procession of the Spirit, could assign to the Son a characteristic that, being proper to the Father, was not shareable: the property of being the only principal cause, origin. Moreover, to introduce a role for the Son could create a hierarchy within the Trinity that was not conceivable either: it is possible to have a monarchy (one cause) in the Trinity, but not to have an emanative hierarchy of three main causes, because this would create a sort of polytheism (which in fact brings Nicholas back to the Hellenic tales, and therefore also to Proclus). In this respect, Kazhdan's reference to Niketas of Maroneia is not completely convincing, but he did not know the whole text now published.<sup>197</sup> A second hint is left in the review of Angelou's edition, which could even sound "overly reductive", as Robinson wrote,<sup>198</sup> but cannot be overlooked. Kazhdan traces a parallel between the Byzantine monarchy and the Latin hierarchy, on the one hand, and the monarchical principle of the Trinity and the Proclean emanative hierarchy, on the other. It is certainly not the case that Nicholas of Methone defended the monarchical principle of the Trinity against Proclus in reaction to the Latin political structure—nor did he attack Proclus' philosophy merely because it resembled Western models. Yet, it is worth considering the possibility that he may have rejected both the Latin social order and Proclus'

196 Kazhdan, "Review of Angelou's edition", pp. 198–199.

197 Niketas of Thessalonica, *Dialogus II*, ed. Bucossi, D'Amelia.

198 Robinson, "Proclus as Heresiarch", p. 117, nota 54.

emanative hierarchy precisely because neither reflected the monarchical principle at the heart of Trinitarian theology and of the ideological framework of the Greek, medieval Roman Empire: one God, one City, one Emperor.

## Bibliography

### *Manuscripts*

Brescia, Biblioteca Civica Queriniana, A.IV.3, Dyktion 9826

Città del Vaticano, BAV, Barb. gr. 291, Dyktion 64837

Firenze, BML, Plut. 9.12, Dyktion 16100

### *Primary Sources*

*Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum*, ed. E. Schwartz, 1.1.7, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1929 (repr. 1962).

Andronikos Kamateros, *Sacrum armamentarium: Pars prima*, ed. A. Bucossi, Turnhout, Brepols (= CCSG 75), 2014.

Aristoteles, *Analytica priora*, ed. W.D. Ross, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964 (repr. 1968).

Aristoteles, *Categoriae*, ed. L. Minio-Paluello, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1949 (repr. 1966).

Aristoteles, *De partibus animalium*, ed. P. Louis, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1956.

Basil of Caesarea, *Adversus Eunomium*, ed. B. Sesboüé, G.-M. de Durand, L. Doutreleau, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1982.

Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali trinitate* Paris, Migne (= PG 75), cols. 1479–1484.

Gennadios Scholarios, *Responsio ad syllogismos Marci Ephesi de processu spiritus sancti*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 3, ed. M. Jugie, L. Petit, X.A. Siderides, Paris, Maison de la bonne presse, 1930.

Gennadios Scholarios, *Tractatus de Processu spiritus sancti II*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2, ed. M. Jugie, L. Petit, X.A. Siderides, Paris, Maison de la bonne presse, 1929.

Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 25. *In laudem Heronis philosophi*, in *Discours* 24–26, ed. J. Mossay, G. Lafontaine, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1981.

Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 29. *De Filio*, in *Discours* 27–31, ed. P. Gallay, M. Jourjon, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1978.

Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 41. *In Pentecosten*, in *Discours* 38–41, ed. C. Moreschini, P. Gallay, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1990.

Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 45, *In sanctum Pascha Iia*, Paris, Migne (= PG 36), cols. 624–664

Hugo Eterianus, *Epistolae, De sancto et immortali Deo, Compendiosa Expositio, Fragmenta Graeca quae extant*, ed. P. Podolak, A. Zago, Turnhout, Brepols (= CCCM 298), 2020.

- John of Scythopolis, *Prologus et scholia in Dionysii Areopagitae librum "De divinis nominibus" cum additamentis interpretum aliorum*, ed. B.R. Suchla, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2011.
- Joseph Bryennius, *Oratio* 1, 18 et 21, in Ἰωσήφ μοναχοῦ τοῦ Βρυεννίου τὰ εὐρεθέντα, ed. E. Boulgares, vol. 1, Leipzig, Breitkopf, 1768 (Thessaloniki, Εκδόσεις ΡΗΓΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, repr. 1991).
- Nicholas IV Mouzalon, *De processione Spiritus Sancti*, in Th. Zeses, "Ὁ πατριάρχης Νικόλαος Δ' Μουζάλων (Παράρτημα: Μουζάλωνος, Περὶ τῆς ἐκπορεύσεως τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος)", in *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς* 23(1978), pp. 307–329.
- Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum*—Νικολάου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης, πρὸς τὸν μέγαν Δομέστικον, ἐρωτήσαντα περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος πῶς λέγεται οὐσιωδῶς ἐπιδημήσαι καὶ ἐνοικήσαι τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις; καὶ εἰ οὕτως ἦν καὶ ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, πῶς οὐχὶ καὶ αὐτοὶ χριστοὶ λέγονται; ἢ εἰ μὴ οὕτως, τίς ἡ διαφορά; in ed. A.K. Demetrakopoulos, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη*, vol. 1, Leipzig, Otto Wigand, 1866 (Hildesheim, Georg Olms Verlag, repr. 1965), pp. 199–218.
- Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos de azymis*—Τοῦ αὐτοῦ λόγος πρὸς Λατίνους περὶ τῶν ἄζυμων in ed. Arsenij (Ivačenko), *Два неизданных произведения Николая, епископа Мефонского, писателя XII века*, Novgorod, Parovaia tipografia I.I. Ignatovskago, 1897, pp. 51–115.
- Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos de Spiritu sancto*—Νικολάου τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης, λόγος πρὸς τοὺς Λατίνους περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς οὐ μὴν καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐκπορεύεται in ed. K. Simonides, *Ὁρθόδοξων Ἑλλήνων θεολογικαὶ γραφαὶ τέσσαρες*, London, Gilbert and Rivington, 1859, pp. 1–39.
- Nicholas of Methone, *Memoriae contra Latinos*—Ἀπομνημονεύματα ἐκ τῶν διαφόροις λόγοις γεγραμμένων κατὰ Λατίνων περὶ τῆς εἰς τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα βλασφημίας, in ed. Arsenij (Ivačenko), *Два неизданных произведения Николая, епископа Мефонского, писателя XII века*, Novgorod, Parovaia tipografia I.I. Ignatovskago, 1897, pp. 5–49.
- Nicholas of Methone, *Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου / Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas' life and works by A.D. Angelou, Athens / Leiden, The Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984.
- Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae doctrinae Latinorum*—Τοῦ αὐτοῦ Νικολάου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης κεφαλαιώδεις ἔλεγχοι τοῦ παρὰ Λατίνοις καινοφανοῦς δόγματος, τοῦ ὅτι τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐκπορεύεται, in ed. A.K. Demetrakopoulos, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη*, vol. 1, Leipzig, Otto Wigand, 1866 (Hildesheim, Georg Olms Verlag, repr. 1965), pp. 359–380; now also in Nicola di Metone, *Refutationes theologicae doctrinae Latinorum*, ed. N.C. Benvenuto, Potenza, Basilicata University Press, 2024.
- Niketas Choniates, *Thesaurus of Orthodoxy* PG 139, cols. 1101–1449; PG 140, cols. 9–281.

- Niketas of Thessalonike, *Dialogi sex de processione Spiritus Sancti*, ed. A. Bucossi, L. D'Amelia, *CCSG* 92, Turnhout, Brepols, 2021.
- Niketas Stethatos (attributed to), *Contra Latinos et de processione Spiritus sancti* in ed. A. Michel, *Humbert und Kerullarios: Quellen und Studien zum Schisma des XI Jahrhunderts*, vol. 2, Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh, 1930, pp. 371–409.
- Photios, *De Spiritus Sancti mystagogia*, Paris, Migne (= PG 102), cols. 280–392.
- Plato, *Leges*, in ed. J. Burnet, *Platonis opera*, vol. 5, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1907 (repr. 1967).
- Proclus, *In Platonis Cratylum commentaria*, ed. G. Pasquali, Leipzig, Teubner, 1908.
- Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem commentaria*, ed. C. Steel, vol. 1, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem commentaria*, trans. R.M. Glenn, J.M. Dillon, *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1987.
- Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, ed. E. Diehl, vol. 3, Leipzig, Teubner, 1906.
- Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, trans. H. Tarrant, *Proclus: Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Procopius of Gaza, *Discours et fragments*, eds E. Amato, A. Corcella, G. Ventrella, P. Maréchaux, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2014.
- Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, ed. B.R. Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum* 1, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1990.

### Secondary Sources

- Angold, M., *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081–1261*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Barmin, A.V., “Кто написал ‘Другой свод против латинян’?”, in *Византийский временник*, 60.85(2001), pp. 121–125.
- Barnes, J., (ed.), *Porphyry's Introduction*, Oxford / New York, Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Benvenuto, C.N., “Reconsidering Nicholas of Methone's Corpus on the Procession of the Holy Spirit”, in this volume, pp. 347–372.
- Benvenuto, C.N., *Prime indagini su quattro scritti teologici di Nicola di Metone*, Dottorato di Ricerca in Storia, cultura e saperi dell'Europa Mediterranea dall'Antichità all'Età Contemporanea, Università degli Studi della Basilicata 2022.
- Benvenuto, C.N., “Nicola di Metone e il De Spiritus Sancti processione di Nicola IV Muzalone. Note per una nuova proposta attributiva”, in *Medioevo Greco* 23(2023), pp. 13–39.
- Benvenuto, C.N., “Un ‘quaderno’ di excerpta d'autore: le Memoriae contra Latinos de Spiritu Sancto tra Niceta Stetato, Nicola di Metone e Niceta Coniata”, in *Medioevo Greco* 24(2024), pp. 63–84.
- Bucossi, A., C. Gazzini, and A. Rigo, “Contro Roma e contro Gregorio Palamas. Il mano-

- scritto Città del Vaticano, BAV, Barb. gr. 291 da Costantinopoli a Leone Allacci", in *Revue d'Histoire des Textes* 16(2021), pp. 1–73.
- Canfora, L., "Introduzione: Thesaurus insignis, non liber", in Fozio, *Biblioteca*, (eds) N. Bianchi, C. Schiano, Pisa, Edizioni della Normale, 2016.
- d'Onofrio, G., "Quando la metafisica tornò in Occidente. Ugo Eteriano e la nascita della theologia", in *Aquinas*, 55.1–2(2012), pp. 67–106.
- Gioffreda, A., and M. Trizio, "Nicholas of Methone, Procopius of Gaza and Proclus of Lycia", in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes*, vol. 2, Leiden, Brill, 2021, pp. 94–135.
- Greig, J., "Nicholas of Methone on Divine Ideas: Between Proclus and the Early Byzantines", in this volume, pp. 201–232.
- Hoeck, J. and R.J. Loenertz, *Nikolaos-Nektarios von Otranto, Abt von Casole: Beiträge zur Geschichte der ost-westlichen Beziehungen unter Innozenz III. und Friedrich II.*, Ettal, Buch-Kunstverlag, 1965.
- Jugie, M., "Review of Michel, A., *Humbert und Kerullarios: Quellen und Studien zum Schisma des XI Jahrhunderts*, vol. 1–2, Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh, 1924–1930", in *Byzantion* 8(1933), pp. 321–326.
- Kaldellis, A., "Keroularios in 1054: Nonconfrontational to the papal legates and loyal to the emperor", in N.G. Chrissis, A. Kolia-Dermitzaki, A. Papageorgiou (eds), *Byzantium and the West: Perception and Reality (11th–15th c.)*, Abingdon, Oxon / New York, NY, Routledge, 2019, pp. 9–24.
- Kazhdan, A.P., "Review of Angelou's edition", in *Speculum* 64(1989), pp. 196–199.
- Kazhdan, A.P., (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, New York / Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991, vol. 1, p. 239, s.v. Axouch.
- Krausmüller, D., "Establishing Authority in the Constantinopolitan Religious Discourse of the Eleventh Century: Inspiration and Learning in the Writings of the Monk Niketas Stethatos", in S. Steckel, N. Gaul, M. Grünbart (eds), *Networks of Learning. Perspectives on Scholars in Byzantine East and Latin West, c. 1000–1200*, Münster, LIT-Verlag, 2014, pp. 107–124.
- Krausmüller, D., "The procession of the Holy Spirit from the divine substance: observations about the Trinitarian theology of Symeon the New Theologian and Nicetas Stethatos", in *The Greek orthodox theological review* 60(2015), pp. 75–91.
- Laurent, V., "Review of Michel, A., *Humbert und Kerullarios: Quellen und Studien zum Schisma des XI Jahrhunderts*, vol. 1–2, Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh, 1924–1930" in *Échos d'Orient* 31(1932), pp. 97–110.
- Laurent, V., and J. Darrouzès, *Dossier grec de l'Union de Lyon (1273–1277)*, Paris, Institut français d'études byzantines, 1976.
- Magdalino, P., *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Michel, A., *Humbert und Kerullarios: Quellen und Studien zum Schisma des XI Jahrhunderts*, vol. 2, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1930



- Odorico, P., "La cultura della συλλογή. 1) Il cosiddetto enciclopedismo bizantino. 2) Le tavole del sapere di Giovanni Damasceno", in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 83/1(1990), pp. 1–21.
- Podolak, P., "Il dossier latino sul concilio del 1166: Pater maior me est", in S. Cosentino, M.E. Pomero, G. Vespignani (eds), *Dialoghi con Bisanzio: spazi di discussione, percorsi di ricerca. Atti dell'VIII Congresso Nazionale dell'Associazione Italiana di Studi Bizantini* (Ravenna, 22–25 settembre 2015), Spoleto: CISAM, 2019, pp. 789–804.
- Podolak, P., and A. Bucossi, "Per una futura edizione di Ugo Eteriano: censimento della tradizione manoscritta e problemi di cronologia. Con un'appendice sui codici che conservano i frammenti greci di Alessandra Bucossi", in *Sacris Erudiri* 56(2017), pp. 273–346.
- Podolak, P., and A. Zago, "Ugo Eteriano e la controversia cristologica del 1166: edizione dell'opuscolo De minoritate. Appendice: edizione della lettera ad Alessio", in *Revue des études byzantines* 74/1(2016), pp. 77–170.
- Podskalsky, G., *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz: Der Streit um die theologische Methodik in der spätbyzantinischen Geistesgeschichte* (14./15. Jh.), seine systematischen Grundlagen und seine historische Entwicklung, München, C.H. Beck, 1977.
- Robinson, J.M., "Dionysius Against Proclus: The Apophatic Critique in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation of the Elements of Theology*", in D. Layne, D.D. Butorac (eds), *Proclus and his Legacy*, Berlin / Boston, De Gruyter, 2017, pp. 249–270.
- Robinson, J.M., "Proclus as Heresiarch: Theological Polemic and Philosophical Commentary in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation* (*Anaptyxis*) of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*", in S. Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism*, Berlin / Boston, De Gruyter, 2017, pp. 103–136.
- Robinson, J.M., *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th-century Byzantium*, A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Graduate Program in Medieval Studies, Notre Dame (Indiana), 2014.
- Sorabji, R., (ed.), *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence*, 2nd ed., London / New York, Bloomsbury, 2016.
- Stiglmayr, J., "Die 'Streitschrift des Prokopios von Gaza' gegen den Neuplatoniker Proklos", in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 8(1899), pp. 263–301.
- Trapp, E., (ed.), *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität besonders des 9.–12. Jahrhunderts*, Wien, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1994, s.v. ἀποτομὴ-νιμότης.
- Trizio, M., "Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium", in S. Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus: From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 182–226.
- Trizio, M., *Il neoplatonismo di Eustrazio di Nicea*, Bari, Edizioni di Pagina, 2016.

# Reconsidering Nicholas of Methone's Corpus on the Procession of the Holy Spirit

Carmelo Nicolò Benvenuto

Università degli Studi della Basilicata

## 1 A Forger's Fancy<sup>1</sup>

"In the hierarchy of evil things—as a famous Italian intellectual, Giorgio Manganelli, stated—a critical edition deserves, within the world of a philologist, the same dignity of a perfect crime."<sup>2</sup> Some of the writings of Nicholas of Methone's *corpus*, dedicated to the procession of the Holy Spirit and the debate on the *Filioque*, received in fact their *editio princeps* during the second half of the nineteenth century thanks to the work of a fascinating Greek forger, Costantinos Simonides. Known for producing fictitious texts, Simonides fabricated manuscripts and papyri, even readjusting ancient texts with false interpolations, which are often indiscernible from the original text.<sup>3</sup> Providing a new edition of Nicholas of Methone's surviving works on the *Filioque*,<sup>4</sup> my first concern was to explore the actual role played by Simonides in their modern transmis-

1 I would express my gratitude to Professors Aldo Corcella, Pasquale Massimo Pinto, and Alessandra Bucossi for their support and to the editors of the volume for their commitment in developing this project.

2 G. Manganelli, *Concupiscenza libraria* (Milano: Adelphi, 2020), p. 191.

3 On the forger Costantinos Simonides and his production cf. J.K. Elliott, *Codex Sinaiticus and the Simonides Affair: An Examination of the Nineteenth-Century Claim that Codex Sinaiticus was not an Ancient Manuscript* (Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies, 1982); A.E. Müller et al. (eds), *Die getäuschte Wissenschaft: Ein Genie betrügt Europa—Konstantinos Simonides* (Wien: Vienna University Press, 2017); L. Canfora, *Il papiro di Artemidoro* (Roma / Bari: Laterza, 2008); L. Canfora, L. Bossina, *Wie kann das ein Artemidor-Papyrus sein? Ma come fa a essere un papiro di Artemidoro?* (Bari: Edizioni di Pagina 2008); L. Canfora, *Il viaggio di Artemidoro* (Milano: Rizzoli, 2010); L. Canfora et al., *Costantino Simonidis. Opere greche, I. Eulyros di Cefalonia, Ἐβνύξά / Ἀνθρῶπινα. Liste di manoscritti greci (1848–1864)* (Bari: Edizioni di Pagina, 2014).

4 My PhD project at the Università degli Studi della Basilicata, under the supervision of Professor Aldo Corcella, aimed at providing a new survey of the whole manuscript tradition and a new provisional critical text of Nicholas of Methone's works on the *Filioque* and on the procession of the Holy Spirit.

sion and to understand to what extent his interventions possibly transformed their original textual *facies*. Who is not afraid of a forger? Immediately after his escape from Leipzig—where he was imprisoned for the scandal of his fake manuscript of *Uranus*, which even involved Wilhelm Dindorf<sup>5</sup>—Costantinos Simonides devoted himself to the study of Nicholas of Methone between 1857 and 1858, during his short stay in Munich and, later, after his arrival in England. Simonides published, on different occasions, the text of two works of Nicholas of Methone: in 1857, in the third and final volume of the scholarly magazine *Memnon* (Μέμνων σύγγραμμα ἀρχαιολογικόν) published by Simonides himself in Munich,<sup>6</sup> and in 1858, in the volume Ὁρθόδοξων Ἑλλήνων θεολογικαὶ γραφαὶ τέσσαρες.<sup>7</sup> Simonides mainly worked on Nicholas of Methone's text as an actual philologist. The only, most notable falsehood in the forger's work on the theologian is the fabricated biography of Nicholas, which Simonides first published in 1857. The biography was then reprinted in 1858, 1859 and 1865, together with a lithographed portrait of the bishop, within the preface of a collection of Byzantine theological writings, Ὁρθόδοξων Ἑλλήνων θεολογικαὶ γραφαὶ τέσσαρες, published by Simonides in London. Simonides' chronological reconstruction attempted to emend the one that had been erroneously proposed by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century scholars (for example Fabricius) and that had identified two different personalities with the same name who held the episcopal seat of Methone between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries based on the witness of a poem by Nicephorus Blemmydes (1197–1272), which mentioned a certain Νικόλαος νέος Μεθώνης. Simonides placed Nicholas' *floruit* in the full thirteenth century and did not endorse the hypothetical existence of a second, later Nicholas of Methone.<sup>8</sup> In his preface, he claimed that all the details about Nicholas' life were from the third book of a work on illustrious monks of Mount Athos written by a certain hieromonk, Stephen from Athens. This work was, indeed, Simonides' imagination, but it must be added that all modern scholars tend to

5 Cf. Elliott, *Codex Sinaiticus and the Simonides Affair*, pp. 123–131.

6 C. Simonides, Μέμνων σύγγραμμα ἀρχαιολογικόν ('Ἐν Μονάχῳ, 1857), pp. 78–84. On this publication cf. P.M. Pinto, "Costantinos Simonides in the Gennadius Library", in *The New Griffon* 12(2011).

7 C. Simonides, Νικολάου τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης πρὸς Λατίνους περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς οὐ μὴν καὶ ἐκ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἐκπορεύεται, ('Ἐν Λονδίνῳ: τύποις Γιλβέρτου καὶ Πριβίνγτωνος, 1858) = C. Simonides, Ὁρθόδοξων Ἑλλήνων θεολογικαὶ γραφαὶ τέσσαρες, ('Ἐν Λονδίνῳ: τύποις Γιλβέρτου καὶ Πριβίνγτωνος, 1859). On this publications cf. Pinto, "Costantinos Simonides in the Gennadius Library", p. 87. C.N. Benvenuto, *Il metodo Simonidis: filologia del falso –vero e nostalgia di Bisanzio* (Bari: Edipuglia, 2024).

8 Simonides, Νικολάου τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης, pp. ε'–ζ'. Cf. A.D. Angelou, *Introduction*, in Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology: A Critical Edition with an Introduction on Nicholas' Life and Works by A.D. Angelou* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), p. ix.

reject, as did Simonides, Fabricius' distinction between the two Nicholas.<sup>9</sup> Costantino Simonides had, without a doubt, a great role in the modern rediscovery of Nicholas of Methone and, in particular, Nicholas' *corpus* on the Holy Spirit, but if one tries to understand how the profile of Nicholas of Methone—as an author and theologian—has been progressively eroded and devalued during his modern reception, one should definitely conclude that a scholar's prejudice could be much stronger than a forger's fancy.

## 2 A Charge of Plagiarism

From the nineteenth century onwards, Nicholas of Methone has been generally considered a plagiarist by modern scholarship.<sup>10</sup> In 1831 Cardinal Angelo Mai published for the first time an unknown and otherwise unattested fragment of a presumed and lost *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*, written by the late antique rhetorician Procopius of Gaza. He derived this fragment solely from f. 61<sup>r</sup> of the manuscript Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, gr. 1096. However, it was soon realized that the long Procopian fragment actually coincided *verbatim* with Chapter 146 of the *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*—actually his *opus magnum*—which a wide manuscript tradition attributes univocally to Nicholas of Methone and whose text had been made available only a few years earlier, in 1825, thanks to Johann Theodor Voemel.<sup>11</sup> The *quaestio methoniana*, born during the nineteenth century, is still ongoing.<sup>12</sup>

9 Cf. E. Follieri, "Santi di Metone: Atanasio vescovo, Leone taumaturgo", in *Byzantion* 41(1971), pp. 408–410. On the false biography cf. also C.N. Benvenuto, "A Distorted Lemma: Στεφάνης Ἀθηναῖος ἱερομόναχος and a False Biography of Nicholas of Methone", in *Trends in Classics* 15.1(2023), pp. 165–177.

10 Cf. Ehrhard's judgment on Nicholas of Methone's works in K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur von Justinian bis zum Ende des Oströmischen Reiches (527–1453)* (München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1897), pp. 84–86.

11 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutatio institutionis theologicae Procli Platonici*, ed. J.T. Voemel, in F. Creuzer, *Initia Philosophiae ac Theologiae ex platoniciis fontibus ducta. Pars Quarta* (F. am Main: Broenner, 1825). Cf. also U.R. Jeck, "Theodor Voemels byzantinistische Impulse. Dokumente zu Entstehung und früher Wirkungsgeschichte der Editio princeps der Refutatio institutionis theologicae Procli Platonici des Nikolaos von Methone", in *Bochumer Philosphisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittelalter* 18.1(2015), pp. 164–194.

12 Cf. E. Amato, "Sul discusso plagio della *Refutatio Procli Institutionis theologicae* di Procopio di Gaza ad opera di Nicola di Metone: nuovi apporti dalla tradizione manoscritta", in *Medioevo Greco* 10(2010), pp. 5–12; A. Gioffreda, M. Trizio, "Nicholas of Methone, Procopius of Gaza and Proclus of Lycia", in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes. Vol. 2. Translations and Acculturations* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2020), pp. 94–135.

The debate involved two opposite readings of Nicholas' profile as a twelfth-century author: i.e. the idea of those who believed that Nicholas' Ἀνάπτυξις was to be considered entirely a case of "plagiarism" from a supposed, lost *Refutation* by Procopius of Gaza and, on the other hand, the hypothesis which believed that the Procopian attribution of the Vatican fragments was totally erroneous: a charge of plagiarism vs. a case of misattribution.

Indeed, the charge of plagiarism directed against Nicholas of Methone was not limited to his *Refutation* alone, but also involved a large part of his other writings, especially the polemical treatises. Although the profile of Nicholas of Methone as an author has long been debated, his remaining theological production has generally flowed very little into this debate. In many cases, however, even Nicholas' theological production shows traces of numerous textual repetitions that have led nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship to the idea of plagiarism.<sup>13</sup> The "plagiarism hypothesis" was certainly facilitated by the availability of these texts in a complex and intricate manuscript tradition, as well as in bad and dated critical editions. The *corpus* of his four writings on the *Filioque*, for example, is still particularly understudied and kept outside of a broader evaluation of Nicholas of Methone as an author, in relation to the theoretical horizon and the concrete practices of Byzantine authorship.

The forger Simonides, in fact, played very little role in the process through which Nicholas' figure was under-esteemed, and silently shifted to that of an insignificant compiler, or even a plagiarist. One might even wonder if Nicholas' polemical works have ever been regarded and studied as actual twelfth-century documents in themselves. The answer seems to be that, unfortunately, they have not. If Byzantine literature is generally understudied and undertheorized,<sup>14</sup> Byzantine theological works are usually even left out of any attempt to re-write a comprehensive literary history of Byzantium. This "liminal literature" still needs to be included within a wider discussion about literature in Byzantium.<sup>15</sup>

If Nicholas' role in the development of the *Filioque* debate has been under-esteemed by scholars from the nineteenth century onwards—insofar as he was considered a mere compiler or even a plagiarist (as Ehrhard *apud* Krumbacher,

13 Cf. A. Michel, *Humbert und Kerullarios: Quellen und Studien zum Schisma des XI. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 2 (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1930), p. 364.

14 Cf. A. Cameron, *Byzantine Matters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 111, with reference in particular to E.M. Jeffreys, "We Need to Talk about Byzantium: or, Byzantium, its Reception of the Classical World as Discussed in Current Scholarship, and Should Classicists Pay Attention?", in *Classical Receptions Journal* 6.1 (2014), pp. 158–174.

15 A. Cameron, *Arguing it out: Discussion in Twelfth-century Byzantium* (Budapest / New York: Central European University Press, 2016), p. 9.

Petit, Michel called him)<sup>16</sup>—one could wonder if “plagiarism” is indeed a conceptual category fitting with the fluid nature of twelfth-century theological and polemical literature and a proper one to describe works in which the writings of the Fathers and of contemporary anti-Latin authors often converge, being incorporated, quoted, modified, re-adapted, re-elaborated. As Alessandra Bucossi has recently showed, one of the main twelfth-century trends in Byzantine polemical literature was that of developing mainly logical arguments on the model of Photius’ *Mystagogia*, in addition to the traditional use of quotations from the Fathers of the Church. This is the reason why twelfth-century polemical authors increasingly quoted recent, or even almost contemporary, works in addition to traditional patristic *auctoritates*. For instance, Theophylact of Ohrid, Eustratios of Nicaea, Nicholas of Methone himself, to mention just a few of these authors, limited their use of patristic quotations as much as possible and rather preferred the usage of logical/philosophical demonstrations, often quoting and reusing each other without any indication of these “borrowings”.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the term “plagiarism” is probably not so useful to describe the complexity of a literature on the edge between past and present, between tradition and transformation. One could even wonder if traditional categories, like those of authorship, originality, and intertextuality, are effective and useful tools to understand and describe the fluid magma of this production.

### 3 *Adversus Latinos de Spiritu Sancto*

If one tries to evaluate Costantinos Simonides’ work on Nicholas’ textual tradition, it would be certainly surprising to discover that it was mainly the actual work of a philologist. During 1858, Simonides published the *editio princeps* of Nicholas’ main theological treatise on the procession of the Holy Spirit (*Adversus Latinos de Spiritu Sancto; inc.* Βασιλεὺ οὐράνιε, παράκλητε ἀγαθέ (...); RAP 368)<sup>18</sup> in his volume, Ὁρθοδόξων Ἑλλήνων θεολογικαὶ γραφαὶ τέσσαρες. His

16 Cf. Erhard’s judgment on Nicholas of Methone’s works in K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur*, pp. 84–86. Anton Michel was particularly consistent in his belief that Nicholas was merely a “Kopiator grossen Stils”; cf. Michel, *Humbert und Kerullarios*, p. 364.

17 Cf. A. Bucossi, “Dibattiti teologici alla corte di Manuele Comneno”, in A. Rigo, A. Babuin, M. Trizio (eds), *Vie per Bisanzio. VII Congresso nazionale dell’Associazione Italiana di Studi Bizantini. Venezia, 25–28 novembre 2009* (Bari: Edizioni di Pagina, 2013), pp. 311–321.

18 The work corresponds to the item n. 1 of Angelou’s list of Nicholas of Methone’s writings. Cf. Angelou, *Introduction*, in Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, pp. xxv–xxvii. Simonides’ edition is still the only modern edition of this text.

textual reconstruction was based—as the forger himself declares—on a Mount Athos manuscript, partially collated with some other manuscripts (Oxford, Bodleian Library; Barocci 215, diktyon 47503 and München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, gr. 28, diktyon 44471).<sup>19</sup> I have been able to identify the manuscript, which was the main *Vorlage* of Simonides' edition, in a fourteenth-century manuscript currently preserved in Athens, at the National Library of Greece, MS 477, diktyon 2773.<sup>20</sup> The forger owned the manuscript as attested by an autograph dedication to the National Library of Greece, dated 1858 and signed by Simonides himself.<sup>21</sup> Folia 1–12, containing Nicholas' text, show numerous modern annotations that can be found both in the margins and in the line spacing, in red and black. Simonides' autograph notes were written during his preliminary work on the edition of the text. An analytical examination of all these marginal and interlinear annotations highlighted that the notes in red systematically refer to variants found by Simonides in the Munich manuscript (i.e. gr. 28), while those in black generally refer to alternative lessons of the Oxford manuscript (i.e. Barocci 215), collated by Simonides, and to corresponding notes in his *apparatus*. In this case Simonides' reconstruction of the text has proved to be quite reliable, even though the textual tradition of this work is

19 Simonides declares to have compared the text of Nicholas' work available from his mysterious Athonite manuscript with the text provided by two other manuscripts, respectively in Oxford and Munich: Παρεχτός δὲ τοῦ χειρογράφου τούτου εἶδον καὶ ἕτερα τέσσαρα· δύο μὲν ἐν τῇ τῆς Ὁξονίας Βοδλειανῇ βιβλιοθήκῃ, ὧν τὸ μὲν ἐκ χάρτου νεωτάτης ἐποχῆς, τὸ δὲ ἐκ διφθερῶν τοῦ τεσσαρασκαδεκάτου αἰῶνος. Τρίτον δ' εἶδον ἐν τῇ Αὐτοκρατορικῇ τῶν Παρισίων βιβλιοθήκῃ γεγραμμένον τῷ ἀφιε'. "Ἔστι δὲ καὶ τοῦτο ἐπὶ χάρτου γεγραμμένον, καὶ φέρει ἀριθμὸν 2830. Τέταρτον δὲ ἐν τῇ ἐν Μονάχῳ Βαβαρικῇ βιβλιοθήκῃ φέρον ἀριθμὸν 28, ὃ ἐκ χάρτου ὃν ἐξέγραψεν ἐν Φλωρεντίᾳ Μιχαήλος Μαλέας ὁ Ἐπιδιούριος τῷ ἀφγ' σωτηρίῳ ἔτει. Ἐκ τούτων τοίνυν τῶν τεσσάρων χειρογράφων παρέβαλον πρὸς τὸ ἡμέτερον τὸ τῆς Βαβαρικῆς βιβλιοθήκης μόνον· παρέβαλον δὲ καὶ τὸ τῆς Βοδλειανῆς βιβλιοθήκης διφθέρινον χειρόγραφον, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ τὸ ὅλον. Πρὸς δὲ καὶ τὰς τοῦ Παρισιανοῦ χειρογράφου ἐν περισελιδίοις σημειώσεις πρὸς τὰς τοῦ ἡμετέρου, ὅτι οὐκ εἶχον καιρὸν ἵνα τὴν τοῦ ὅλου ποιήσω ἀντιβολήν. Cf. Simonides, *Νικολάου τοῦ ἀγνωτάτου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης*, pp. 1β'–1γ'.

20 Some details on this manuscript were already available in the catalogue I.A. Sakellion, *Κατάλογος χειρογράφων της Εθνικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης της Ελλάδος*, (Ἐν Ἀθήναις: ἐκ τοῦ ἐθνικοῦ τυπογραφείου καὶ λειτογραφείου, 1931), which, however, omitted any reference to the dedication by Costantinos Simonides: 477 [190]. Τεῦχος ἐκ χάρτου τουρικικοῦ μήκ. Ο.31, πλάτ. Ο.22, κατὰ τὴν 12' ἑκατοεπταετηρίδα γεγραμμένον ὑπὸ δύο διαφόρων χειρῶν, ὧν ἡ μία δὲ νεωτέρα, ἐκ φύλλων δὲ συγκείμενον 18. Περιέχει: α' Νικολάου τοῦ ἀγνωτάτου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης: Πρὸς τοὺς Λατίνους περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς οὐ μὴν καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἐκπορεύεται; Καὶ β' Τοῦ αὐτοῦ κυροῦ Γεωργίου Κορεσίου ἱατροῦ καὶ θεολόγου συντομία τῶν Ἰταλικῶν ἀμαρτημάτων τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ.

21 The text of Costantinos Simonides' autograph dedication of the manuscript (f. 1) reads: Τῇ τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Ἔθνους δημοσίᾳ βιβλιοθήκῃ ἀνατίθισιν / ὁ Κ. Σιμωνίδης. / Προσφέρεται δὲ διὰ τοῦ τοῦ αἰῶνος συντάκτου Κ. Τιμ. Ι. Φιλήμονος / Ἐν Λονδίῳ τῇ 3/15 Μαΐου αἰωνθ' /Κ.

indeed much wider than the few manuscripts he knew and used, and the text needs to be completely reconsidered. It is possible, in fact, to identify more than fifty manuscripts, ranging from the twelfth to eighteenth centuries, which contain the text. In many passages most surviving ancient manuscripts (especially those from the thirteenth century) could even allow one to reshape the text printed by Costantinos Simonides on the basis of his later and corrupted source.

While Fabricius had mentioned the possibility of ascribing this work to the presumed second, younger Nicholas of Methone on the basis of the poem by Blemmydes mentioned above, Simonides, although confusing Nicholas' chronology, attributed this work to the Nicholas, bishop of Methone, under discussion. According to Simonides, Fabricius misinterpreted Blemmydes' expression, Νικολάω λάμπαντι νέω Μεθώνης,<sup>22</sup> where Nicholas was called νέος compared to Nicholas of Myra.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, some nineteenth-century scholars (e.g. J. Dräseke), trying to refute Simonides' views, erroneously accepted Fabricius' distinction between two different Nicholases of Methone and consequently misinterpreted the authorship of this work.<sup>24</sup> But, indeed, strong stylistic and conceptual analogies can be found between this work and the other treatises written by Nicholas himself on the Holy Spirit: one could compare the distinction of the breath (ἐμφύσημα) of Christ with the actual procession (ἐκπόρευσις) of the Spirit, a core argument of Nicholas of Methone's other writings, as developed both in his *Adversus Latinos de Spiritu Sancto*<sup>25</sup> and in the syllogisms 30–38 Demetrakopoulos.<sup>26</sup> Nicholas of Methone's *Adversus Latinos de Spiritu Sancto* contains no textual hints nor other explicit elements useful to date the writing: it could just be presumed that the main *Adversus Latinos de Spiritu Sancto* was composed together with at least a part of the collec-

22 J.A. Fabricius, *Bibliotheca Graeca sive notitia scriptorum veterum Graecorum*, vol. x1 (Hamburg: sumtu Theodori Cristophori Felginer, 1722), p. 294.

23 Simonides, Νικολάου τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης, p. ζ': ὁ καὶ ἀποδίδωσιν ὁ σοφὸς Φαβρίκιος, κακῶς ποιῶν, νευτέρῳ τινὶ Νικολάῳ τὸν τοῦ Νικηφόρου παρανοήσας ἔμμετρον λόγον. Καὶ γὰρ ὁ ποιητὴς εἰπὼν Δεῦτε πρόσιτε τῷ σοφῷ διδασκάλῳ, Νικολάῳ λάμπαντι νέω Μεθώνης, οὐδαμῶς ἕτερον τοῦ Νικολάου τούτου ὑπαινίττεται, ἀλλ' αὐτὸν τοῦτο λέγει νέον παραβάλλων αὐτὸν πρὸς τὸν ἀγιώτατον ἐκεῖνον Νικόλαον τὸν Θαυματουργόν, τὸν καὶ Μύρων τῆς Λυκίας Ἀρχιεπίσκοπον. The same argument is employed in an important contribution by Follieri, "Santi di Metone", p. 410.

24 J. Dräseke, "Zu Nikolaos von Methone", in *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 41(1898), pp. 402–411.

25 Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos de Spiritu Sancto*, ed. C. Simonides (Ἐν Ἀσυνδίνῳ: τύποις Γιλβέρτου καὶ Πρίβινγτωνος, 1858), pp. 18–22.

26 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae doctrinae Latinorum*, ed. A. Demetrakopoulos (Ἐν Λειψίῳ: τύποις Βιγάνδου, 1866), p. 371, l. 22–373, l. 25.



tion of syllogisms, the so-called *Refutationes theologicae doctrinae Latinorum*.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, a twelfth-century manuscript (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. gr. 200, diktyon 55932, f. 114–116) and some thirteenth-century manuscripts of Niketas Choniates' *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei* (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. IX.24, diktyon 16112 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Roe 22, diktyon 48403) also reveal the existence of a *versio brevis* and collections of excerpts from this text. One single manuscript, today in Venice (Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, gr. IV 58, diktyon 70442, f. 210<sup>v</sup>–219), even erroneously ascribed Nicholas of Methone's *Adversus Latinos* to the authorship of the patriarch Nicholas IV Mouzalon.<sup>28</sup>

#### 4 Syllogisms (or *Refutationes theologicae doctrinae Latinorum*)

In 1857, in his rare journal *Memnon*, Costantinos Simonides published the *editio princeps* of Nicholas of Methone's Κεφαλαιώδεις ἔλεγχοι or *Refutationes theologicae doctrinae Latinorum* (inc. 'Ὁμολόγηται ὅτι καὶ ἡ ὅλη Θεότης μονάς (...); des. (...) διὰ τῆς τοιαύτης κατατομῆς καὶ συμφύρσεως; RAP 19831),<sup>29</sup> claiming to have based his edition on an unknown and mysterious Athos manuscript. However, a closer analysis of his edition shows indeed a mix of variants that the Greek forger must have found in some very late manuscripts, such as the Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 1261, diktyon 50870 (16th century) and in two other late manuscripts in München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, gr. 65, diktyon 44509 (16th century) and gr. 66, diktyon 44510 (16th century). The text is a collection of chapters containing short propositions on the topic of the double procession of the Holy Spirit. Themes, arguments and doctrines—recurring elsewhere in Nicholas' theological *corpus*—are presented in a synthetic way, also quoting (as it normally happens in this kind of literary genre) from previous authors such as Photius or Theophylact of Ohrid.<sup>30</sup> Such collections of

27 Cf. the following paragraph.

28 The rubric of the manuscript reads: Λόγος τοῦ Μουζάλωνος κυροῦ Νικολάου περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος.

29 Simonides, Μέμνων σύγγραμμα ἀρχαιολογικόν, pp. 78–84. The work corresponds to the item n. 3 of Angelou's list of Nicholas of Methone's writings. Cf. Angelou, *Introduction*, in Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, pp. xxviii–xix. The text was then provided once more by A. Demetrakopoulos, Ἑκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη. *Bibliotheca ecclesiastica continens Graecorum theologorum opera*, vol. 1 (Ἐν Λειψίᾳ: τύποις Βεργάνδου, 1866), pp. 359–380; see now Nicola di Metone, *Refutationes theologicae doctrinae Latinorum*, ed. C.N. Benvenuto (Potenza : Basilicata University Press 2024).

30 A core argument of Nicholas' doctrinal elaboration (i.e. the distinction from the breath of

sylogisms, built on quotations even from contemporary authors, are in fact typical of twelfth-century literature.<sup>31</sup> Today, the text of Nicholas' sylogisms still has its reference edition in the nineteenth-century publication by the Greek scholar Andronikos Demetrakopoulos, based, as he stated, on a second-hand transcription from a single sixteenth-century codex, the Mon. gr. 66. Therefore, although Demetrakopoulos' publication was supposed to replace and improve Simonides' *editio princeps*, unfortunately it failed to do so and was even defined by Athanasios Angelou as an "uncritical edition of a text which appears to have undergone various successive abridgements throughout its long history".<sup>32</sup> For example, at the end of the text, Demetrakopoulos omitted without any reason the three final sylogisms of the collection (i.e. the sylogisms νζ', νη' and νθ' of Simonides' edition),<sup>33</sup> although they are attested by the entire manuscript tradition (including the Mon. gr. 66, employed by Demetrakopoulos himself): he probably believed that they were an *addition* of a later compiler. The sylogisms themselves and their textual history still represent a labyrinth for modern readers, and reconsidering the manuscript tradition, it is possible to identify at least three different versions of the text, whose mutual relationships are still completely unexplored.

A long version (*versio longa*) of the sylogisms is attested in three fourteenth-century manuscripts from Venice and Moscow<sup>34</sup> and includes around sixty chapters (κεφάλαια), *inc.* Ὁμολόγηται ὅτι καὶ ἡ ὅλη θεότης μονάς (...); *des.* (...) διὰ τῆς τοιαύτης κατατομῆς καὶ συμφύρσεως. This version circulated both autonom-

Christ and the actual procession of the Holy Spirit) is expressed in Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae doctrinae Latinorum*, p. 373, l. 5–11, in a sylogism (λς') which corresponds *verbatim* to Theophylact of Ohrid, *Allocutio ad quemdam ex suis familiaribus de iis quos Latini incusantur*, ed. P. Gautier (Thessaloniki: Association de recherches byzantines, 1980), p. 259, l. 26–28: "Ετι εἰ αὐτὸς ὁ παράκλητος ἐδόθη τότε διὰ τῆς ἐμφυσίσεως, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ χάρισμα τῆς ἀφέσεως τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν, ὡς αὐτίκα δεδήλωκεν ἐπειπὼν ὁ Σωτὴρ, ἂν τινων ἀφῆτε τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἀφίενται—οἶδε γὰρ ὁ Λόγος καὶ τὰ χάρισματα καλεῖν πνεύματα—τίνος ἢ κατὰ τὴν Πεντεκοστὴν παρουσία; ἢ γὰρ τοῦ αὐτοῦ καὶ περιττὴ, ἢ ἐτέρου καὶ ποῖον τοῦτο;

31 Cf. the case of the sylogisms collected by Andronikos Kamateros (cf. A. Bucossi, "Dialogues and Anthologies of the Sacred Arsenal by Andronikos Kamateros: Sources, Arrangements, Purposes", in C. Macé, P. Van Deun (eds), *Encyclopaedic Trends in Byzantium—Proceedings of the International Conference held in Leuven, 6–8 May 2009* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), pp. 269–286).

32 Angelou, *Nicholas of Methone. Refutation*, p. xxviii.

33 Demetrakopoulos' edition of the sylogisms ends with the words τὴν καινοτομίαν στηρίζοντες, while Simonides' text of the sylogisms contains the three additional chapters and ends with the words διὰ τῆς τοιαύτης κατατομῆς καὶ συμφύρσεως.

34 Cf. the manuscripts Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, App. III.3 (*olim* Nanius gr. 227), diktyon 70372 (14th century) and Moscow, Государственный исторический музей (ГИМ), Synod. gr. 423 (= Vladimir 245), diktyon 44048 (14th century, in the part referring Nicholas of Methone's sylogisms).

ously and incorporated within the unpublished part of the first *Syntagma* by Nicholas-Nektarios, abbot of Casole (13th century).<sup>35</sup> Nicholas-Nektarios of Casole did not re-elaborate the text (for example, adding extra syllogisms) but simply incorporated the text of the longer version within his own work. We can be sure of the fact that the *versio longa* was well-known in the middle twelfth century because the Latin advisor of Manuel Komnenos, Hugo Eterianus, in his *De sancto et immortalī Deo*, recently edited by Pietro Podolak and Anna Zago, quotes some *excerpta* from Nicholas' text in the same sequence in which they appear in Demetrakopoulos' Greek edition.<sup>36</sup> If Eterianus, in 1176–1177, while writing his *De Sancto et immortalī Deo*, could quote the syllogisms 44, 45 and 51 of the “long” version, the surviving *versio longa* is not to be considered as a *versio aucta* by a later compiler.

A short version (*versio brevis*), about thirty chapters (κεφάλαια), *inc.* Ὁμολογῆμένου τοῦ ὅτι τὸ ἐκπορεύεσθαι ἰδίωμα (...), *des.* (...) ἡ ἄλλου πνεύματος καὶ ποῖον τοῦτο, is the one incorporated within Niketas Choniates' *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei*, and is transmitted by the three of the most important thirteenth-century

35 Cf. the text available in two autograph manuscripts by Nicholas-Nektarios himself (13th century): Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. gr. 232, diktyon 65964 and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Suppl. gr. 1232, diktyon 53896; cf. J.M. Hoeck, R.J. Loenertz, *Nikolaos-Nektarios von Otranto, Abt von Casole: Beiträge zur Geschichte der ost-westlichen Beziehungen unter Innozenz III und Friedrich II* (Ettal: Buch-Kunstverlag, 1965), p. 105; M. Muci, “Il terzo syntagma di Nicola Nettare di Otranto”, in *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 2(2008), pp. 453–454; P. Canart, *Les palimpsestes en écriture majuscule des fonds grecs de la Bibliothèque Vaticane*, in S. Lucà (ed.), *Libri palinsesti greci: conservazione, restauro digitale, studio. Atti del Convegno internazionale, Villa Mondragone—Monte Porzio Catone—Università di Roma “Tor Vergata”—Biblioteca del Monumento Nazionale di Grottaferrata, 21–24 apr. 2004* (Roma: Comitato per le celebrazioni del millenario della Fondazione dell'Abbazia di Grottaferrata, 2008), p. 82; P. Radiotti, “Manoscritti digrafici grecolatini e latinogreci nell'Alto Medioevo”, in *Römische Historische Mitteilungen* 40(1998), p. 115. Moreover, some later manuscripts of Nicholas-Nektarios' work erroneously report in the rubric the authorship of Nicholas of Methone for the whole text of the Συναγμάτα, in the sixteenth-century manuscript Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, *Plut.* IX.12, diktyon 16100, f. 145–170<sup>v</sup>, *tit.* Τοῦ σοφωτάτου Νικολάου Μεθονέως βιβλίων περὶ ἐκπορεύσεως τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, *inc.* Ἐπειδὴ νῦν περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος (...). It is possible to find a similar case of misattribution in the rubric of the manuscript *Mon. gr.* 65, f. 358: the origin of this mistake in the transmission of the text has been convincingly explained by Hoeck, Loenertz, *Nikolaos-Nektarios von Otranto, Abt von Casole*, pp. 37–38, 90–91, 97, 100.

36 On the quotations from Nicholas' syllogisms within Eterianus' *De sancto et immortalī Deo*; cf. P. Podolak, “Nicetas Archbishop of Nicomedia: a Forgotten Figure in Twelfth-Century Controversy surrounding the Filioque”, in *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici* 53(2016), pp. 160–161.

witnesses of Niketas Choniates' theological work.<sup>37</sup> The fact that Choniates inserts a shortened version of a text in his compilation should not surprise us: it was not infrequent that Niketas Choniates included some abridged versions of the works he selected for his *Panoplia*, as happens in the case of other texts by Nicholas<sup>38</sup> or in the case of an abridged version of the *De azymis et de processione Spiritus Sancti* by Theodore of Smyrna.<sup>39</sup> The short version of Nicholas' syllogisms also had an autonomous textual transmission. In fact, it is also preserved in some manuscripts that apparently are independent from Choniates' ones.<sup>40</sup> The date of composition of this version should be possibly dated before the middle fifties of the twelfth century, since Gerhoch of Reichersberg's *De investigatione Antichristi* quotes a series of passages from this text.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, only during the thirteenth century is it possible to find some

37 Cf. F. Cavallera, "Le Trésor de la foi orthodoxe de Nicétas Acominatos Choniate", in *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 5(1913), pp. 124–137; J.-L. van Dieten, *Zur Überlieferung der Panoplia Dogmatike des Niketas Choniates. Codex Parisinus Graecus 1234*, in F. Dölger, *Polychronion: Festschrift für Franz Dölger zum 75 Geburtstag* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1966), p. 174; J.-L. van Dieten, *Zur Überlieferung und Veröffentlichung der Panoplia Dogmatike des Niketas Choniates* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1970). Moreover, two of the thirteenth-century manuscripts of Niketas Choniates' *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei*, i.e. *Laur. Plut.* IX.24, f. 296<sup>v</sup>–299<sup>v</sup> and *Roe* 22, f. 352–356<sup>v</sup> even transmitted a shorter version of the *versio brevis* of the syllogisms, which is characterized by the further omission of a single syllogism of the collection, i.e. the syllogism  $\chi\delta'$  in Demetrakopoulos' edition, also omitted by some autonomous manuscripts of the *versio brevis* (such as the MS Jerusalem, Library of the Orthodox Patriarchate, *Panaghiou Taphou* 108).

38 Nicholas of Methone's *Adversus Latinos de Spiritu Sancto* is transmitted in an abridged version in some thirteenth-century manuscripts of Niketas Choniates' *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei*; such as *Laur. Plut.* IX.24, f. 262–266 and *Roe* 22, f. 300–305; *tit.* Τοῦ ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης κυροῦ Νικολάου ἐκ τοῦ κατὰ Λατίνων ὑπὲρ τοῦ πνεύματος λόγου, *inc.* Πότερον οὖν τὸ πατρικὸν ἰδίωμα (...), *des.* (...) νῦν καὶ εἰς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

39 The main manuscripts of Niketas Choniates' *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei* provide a shortened version of the polemical work of Theodorus of Smyrna *De azymis et de processione Spiritus Sancti* (RAP 3629) as well—cf. *Laur. Plut.* IX.24, f. 293<sup>v</sup>–296; *Par. gr.* 1234, f. 344–346; *Vat. gr.* 680, f. 433–438: *tit.* Ἐκ τοῦ περὶ τῶν ἀζύμων καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος λόγου τοῦ κυροπαλάτου Θεοδώρου τοῦ Συμωναίου, *inc.* Ἀλλὰ γὰρ ληπτέον δι' τινος (...), *des.* (...) εἴτε ἡμεῖς ἡμαρτήκαμεν; this shortened version also had an autonomous circulation; the original and wider version of this text is the one transmitted by manuscript *Vatopedi* 229, *diktyon* 18373, f. 187–201 *tit.* Θεοδώρου Παλάτου τοῦ Συμωναίου λόγος περὶ τῶν ἀζύμων καὶ περὶ τῆς ἐκπορεύσεως τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, *inc.* Πρὸς τοὺς ἐκ Ῥώμης ἢ ὑπὸ Ῥώμην ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος (...), *des.* (...) εἴτε ἡμεῖς ἡμαρτήκαμεν.

40 Cf. the manuscript Jerusalem, Library of the Orthodox Patriarchate, *Panaghiou Taphou* 108, *diktyon* 35345 (13th century), f. 180<sup>v</sup>–183—i.e. the most ancient one, which autonomously transmits the text of the *versio brevis* of Nicholas' syllogisms.

41 Cf. P. Chiesa, M. Rafaiiani, "Dal manoscritto Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 1490. Un nuovo testimone della 'Kurzfassung u' della Epistola Presbiteri Iohannis e del

traces of the existence of the *versio brevis* in the Greek indirect tradition of Nicholas of Methone's syllogisms, namely in the text of the *De unione Ecclesiarum* by the patriarch John Bekkos where it is quoted *verbatim*.<sup>42</sup> The text of Nicholas of Methone's syllogisms was so successful that a manuscript, the Athens, National Library of Greece, Μετόχιον Παναγίου Τάφου 494, f. 67–79, diktyon 6891, which contains theological writings by Meletius Pegas and Nathanael Chycas, even preserves a seventeenth-century demotic paraphrase of the syllogisms.<sup>43</sup>

In the modern reception of the syllogisms, it is possible as well to observe another significant case of misattribution, which once again involved Nicholas of Methone in a charge of plagiarism. Modern scholarship has believed that the syllogisms were partly plagiarized by Nicholas of Methone from a previous work by the patriarch Nicholas IV Mouzalon,<sup>44</sup> the so-called *De processione Spiritus Sancti*, inc. Δέσποτά μου ἄγιε (...), des. (...) ἡ ἄλλου πνεύματος καὶ ποῖον τοῦτο (RAP 3656), in particular, because the short version of Nicholas of Methone's syllogisms seems to correspond *verbatim* to the final part of Nicholas IV Mouzalon's work on the Holy Spirit (i.e. Chapters 33–66 of Zeses' edition of the *De processione Spiritus Sancti* by Nicholas IV Mouzalon). Indeed, the misattribution originated from the fact that Mouzalon's modern editor, Zeses, thought that the two texts had a close connection, trusting only one very late and corrupted manuscript, the Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Române, gr. 318 (= Litzica 560), diktyon 10390 (15th–16th century), 339–370, which accidentally omitted the attribution to Nicholas of Methone and therefore, erroneously merged the two texts.<sup>45</sup>

---

*pitacium* contro il *Filioque* attestato da Gerhoch di Reichersberg", in *Filologia mediolatina* 27(2020), pp. 427–435.

42 In the thirteenth century John Bekkos quotes the *incipit* of the syllogisms in a form which is distinctive of the shorter version; cf. John Bekkos, *De unione Ecclesiarum*, ed. H. Lämmer (Friburgi Brisgoviae: Sumtibus Herder, 1864), p. 137, 41–54.

43 The title of the demotic paraphrase is Νικόλαου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης. Κεφαλαιόδεις ἔλεγχοι τοῦ παρὰ Λατίνοις καινοφανοῦς δόγματος τοῦ ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ ἐκ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἐκπορεύεται, συνοψιστένταις ἐκ τῶν διὰ πλάτους ἐν διαφόροις λόγοις γεγραμμένων αὐτῶν. Εἰς κοινὴν γλῶτταν, inc. Ὁμολογούμενον εἶναι ὅτι πως ὅλη ἡ θεότης εἶναι μόνάς ...

44 Th. Zeses, "Ὁ πατριάρχης Νικόλαος Δ' Μουζάλων (Παράρτημα: Μουζάλωνος, Περὶ τῆς ἐκπορεύσεως τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος)", in *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἑπετηρὶς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς* 23(1978), pp. 307–329.

45 A detailed analysis of the authorship of this text in C.N. Benvenuto, "Nicola di Metone e il testo del *De Spiritu Sancto processione* di Nicola IV Muzalone: note per una nuova proposta attributiva", in *Medioevo greco* 23 (2023). pp. 13–40.

5 *Ad magnum domesticum, Memoriae contra Latinos and the False Attribution to Niketas Stethatos of the Contra Latinos et de processione Spiritus Sancti*

It is possible to provide some other examples from Nicholas' *corpus* to show how our understanding of these works in their own context, i.e. the twelfth-century Byzantine theological debate, has been frustrated more by some scholars' enduring prejudices, than from a forger's fancy. In 1866, Andronikos Demetrakopoulos published the text of another theological work by Nicholas, the so-called *Ad magnum domesticum* (*inc.* Τὰς ἀφορμὰς τῶν παρόντων (...); *des.* (...) εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων ἀμήν, RAP 19828),<sup>46</sup> but unfortunately with a significant number of *lacunae* and only on the basis of the manuscript in Moscow, Государственный исторический музей (ГИМ), Synod. gr. 366 = Vladimir 239, diktyon 43991, while the manuscript tradition is wider.<sup>47</sup> This fundamental work, dated by Dräseke to around 1147 and probably addressed to the *megas domestikos* John Axouch,<sup>48</sup> contains some of the main arguments of Nicholas' doctrinal elaboration on the Holy Spirit; but, unfortunately, it has been considered as partly plagiarizing a former text by Niketas Stethatos, although this is certainly not the case.<sup>49</sup>

Around the same time, in 1897, the Russian archimandrite Arsenij Ivačenko published in Novgorod the Greek text and the Russian translation of an anti-Latin theological text on the procession of the Holy Spirit—Nicholas of Methone's *Memoriae contra Latinos* (*inc.* Τὸ περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος λέγειν περὶ θεοῦ λέγειν (...), *des.* (...) προχείρως εἶχομεν δοῦναί σοι; RAP 19835)—which he found within the collection of writings of a fourteenth-century manuscript, today in Moscow, Государственный исторический музей (ГИМ), Synod. gr. 366 = Vladimir 239, diktyon 43991, which is the only witness of most of Nicholas of Methone's theological works.<sup>50</sup> Arsenij published the text attributing it to the bishop of Methone on the basis of the title he found in the rub-

46 The work corresponds to the item n. 7 of Angelou's list of Nicholas of Methone's writings. Cf. Angelou, *Introduction*, in Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, pp. xxxii–xxxiii. The text is still only available in Demetrakopoulos, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη*, pp. 199–218.

47 The text, in fact, is also transmitted, by the thirteenth-century manuscript Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, B 53 (= gr. 12) and the fourteenth-century one Brescia, Biblioteca Civica Queriniana, A.iv.3.

48 Cf. J. Dräseke, "Nikolaos von Methone", in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 1(1892), p. 471; Angelou, *Introduction*, in Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, p. xxxii.

49 Cf. Michel, *Humbert und Kerullarios*, p. 364.

50 A. Ivačenko, Два неизданных произведения Николая, епископа Мефонского, писателя XII века, (Novgorod: Типография Игнатовскаго, 1897), pp. 5–49.

ric of the manuscript: *tit.* Νικολάου φιλοσόφου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης ἀπομνημονεύματα (memories) ἐκ τῶν ἐν διαφόροις λόγοις γεγραμμένων κατὰ Λατίνων περὶ τῆς εἰς τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα βλασφημίας. The text, in fact, is a dense patchwork of *excerpta, memoriae* or *memoranda*, recollected from other works by Nicholas of Methone himself concerning pneumatological doctrines and the *Filioque*: from the *Adversus Latinos de Spiritu Sancto*, the *Refutationes theologicae doctrinae Latinorum* or *Κεφαλαιώδεις ἔλεγχοι*, and, finally, the letter/oration *Ad magnum domesticum*, probably addressed to John Axuch, about the Holy Spirit and the Pentecost.

In 1930, however, the German scholar Anton Michel published in his volume *Humbert und Kerullarios*, on the basis of some manuscripts of Niketas Choniates' *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei*, the so-called *Contra Latinos et de processione Spiritus Sancti* (*inc.* Τὸ περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος λέγειν περὶ θεοῦ λέγειν (...), *des.* (...) ιδιότροπος ἑκατέρου ἢ πρόδος καὶ μονότροπος; RAP 19631),<sup>51</sup> a text identical to the *Memoriae contra Latinos* but with some minor differences. Michel titled the work Ἑτέρα σύνθεσις κατὰ Λατίνων, ἐν οἷς βλασφημοῦσιν εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον λέγοντες ἐκ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦτο ἐκπορεύεσθαι, and attributed it to the eleventh-century author Niketas Stethatos, even though the attribution to the monk of Stoudios (τοῦ Στηθάτου) appears only in one manuscript and was signed by a later hand.<sup>52</sup> Around twenty years ago, Alexei Barmin proposed revoking the attribution of Niketas Stethatos to this text,<sup>53</sup> yet several scientific contributions are currently trying to understand and contextualise this fundamental text within the framework of the thought and extant production of the monk of Stoudios.<sup>54</sup> However, my research on the manuscript tradition has found some important pieces of evidence that might allow us to reconsider the debate about this text, which has even been called “the foundational text of Byzantine anti-Latin

51 Michel's critical text is only based on the manuscripts Vat. gr. 680 and Laur. Plut. 1x.24.

52 The addition is only reported by the manuscript Vat. gr. 680, f. 407<sup>v</sup>. Cf. R. Devreesse, *Codices Vaticani Graeci, tomus III codices 604–866* (Roma: Bibliotheca Vaticana, 1950), p. 141: “τοῦ Στηθάτου add. alia manus—nempe Nicetae Pectorati opusculum.” The detail has not escaped the attention of A.V. Barmin, “Кто написал Другой свод против латинян?”, in *Византийский временник* 60/85(2001), p. 121.

53 Barmin, “Кто написал Другой свод против латинян?”, pp. 121–125.

54 Cf. D. Krausmüller, “Hiding in Plain Sight: Heterodox Trinitarian Speculation in the Writings of Niketas Stethatos”, in *Scrinium* 9(2013), p. 276; D. Krausmüller, “Aristotle in Cappadocian Garb: the Trinitarian Speculation of Nicetas Stethatos and Leo of Chalcedon”, in *Erytheia* 37(2016), pp. 37–54; D. Krausmüller, “Between Tritheism and Sabellianism: Trinitarian Speculation in John Italos' and Nicetas Stethatos' Confessions of Faith”, in *Scrinium* 12(2016), pp. 261–280; D. Krausmüller, “The Procession of the Holy Spirit from the Divine Substance: Observations about the Trinitarian Theology of Symeon the New Theologian and Nicetas Stethatos”, in *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 60(2015), pp. 75–91.

polemic";<sup>55</sup> or "the most sophisticated Orthodox response to the Western teaching of the *filioque*".<sup>56</sup>

These pieces of evidence aim to show that the two presumed different texts simply represent different moments of the textual transmission of a single work, which should indeed be considered as a collection of *excerpta*—ἀπομνημονεύματα, *memoriae* or *memoranda*—by Nicholas of Methone himself. The latter would hence likely change our analysis of the intellectual and theological debates contemporary to the events of 1054,<sup>57</sup> although this will not be discussed in detail in this paper.<sup>58</sup> Anton Michel believed that the *Ad magnum domesticum* represented an emblematic case of Nicholas' plagiarism from the presumed work of Stethatos. The attribution of Nicholas of Methone's *Memoriae contra Latinos* to Niketas Stethatos should certainly be considered a mistake in recent scholarship, although it is true that the text of the *Memoriae contra Latinos* shows a great number of textual borrowings, particularly from Nicholas' *Ad magnum domesticum de Spiritu Sancto*. So, to add some textual pieces of evidence, let me provide some cases of the interesting textual correspondences between these two works to show that they both may indeed be attributed to Nicholas of Methone. Both *Ad magnum domesticum de Spiritu Sancto* and the *Memoriae contra Latinos*, for instance, devoted several passages to the clarification of a passage by Gregory of Nazianzus' *Or.* 41, *In Pentecosten*,<sup>59</sup> particularly to his usage of the word οὐσιωδῶς, employed by Gregory as referring to the manifestation of the Spirit at Pentecost. I will not explore the philosophical background and implications of these texts, but I would like to highlight, from a purely philological point of view, the consistency of the inter-textual coincidences and correspondences between the two works. According to both *Ad magnum domesticum* and *Memoriae contra Latinos*, the word τις, in Gregory's text, could be understood as a reference to Aristotle and, con-

55 Cf. Krausmüller, "Hiding in Plain Sight", p. 276.

56 Cf. Krausmüller, "Between Tritheism and Sabellianism", p. 268.

57 Cf. A. Kaldellis, "Keroularios in 1054: Nonconfrontational to the Papal Legates and Loyal to the Emperor", in N.G. Chrissis, A. Kolia-Dermitzaki, A. Papageorgiou (eds), *Byzantium and the West: Perception and Reality (11th–15th c.)* (London / New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 9–24.

58 See C.N. Benvenuto, "Un quaderno di excerpta d'autore: le *Memoriae contra Latinos* de Spiritu Sancto tra Niceta Stetato, Nicola di Metone e Niceta Coniata", in *Medioevo greco* 24 (2024), pp. 63–84.

59 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 41, ed. C. Moreschini (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1990), 11, p. 340, 20–27: Ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον, ἀμυδρῶς· τὸ δὲ δεύτερον, ἐκτυπώτερον· τὸ δὲ νῦν, τελεώτερον, οὐκ ἔτι ἐνεργεῖα παρόν, ὡς πρότερον, οὐσιωδῶς δέ, ὡς ἂν εἴποι τις, συγγινόμενόν τε καὶ συμπολιτεύμενον. Ἐπρεπε γάρ, Υἱοῦ σωματικῶς ἡμῖν ὁμιλήσαντος, καὶ αὐτὸ φανῆναι σωματικῶς· καὶ Χριστοῦ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐπανελθόντος, ἐκεῖνο πρὸς ἡμᾶς κατελθεῖν.



sequently, both provide an interesting “Aristotelian” explanation of the word (οὐσιωδῶς) used in the passage quoted from Gregory’s oration, arguing that the term is to be understood in reference to the Aristotelian idea of “first substance” (according to Aristotle, *Categoriae* v).<sup>60</sup>

In the *Ad magnum domesticum*, 208 Demetrakopoulos we can read:

ἐπειδὴ οὐσία λέγεται μὲν καὶ νοεῖται καὶ τὸ καθόλου τε καὶ κοινόν, ὡς ὁ καθόλου ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἡ ἀνθρωπότης, λέγεται δὲ καὶ τὸ καθέκαστον καὶ παρὰ τοῖς φιλοσόφοις λεγόμενον ἄτομον, ὡς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ὁ Πέτρος τυχὸν ἢ ὁ Παῦλος, ὁ καὶ πρώτην οὐσίαν Ἀριστοτέλης εἶναι μάλιστα βούλεται, πρὸς δὲ τὰ τάχα καὶ τό, ὡς ἂν εἴποι τις, οὐσιωδῶς ὁ Θεολόγος προσθεὶς δόξειεν ἂν ἀποτείνεσθαι, μεταφερομένου δὴ καὶ εἰς τὸ θεῖον τοῦ τῆς οὐσίας ὀνόματος καὶ θεωρουμένου ὡσαύτως κάκει τοῦ τε κοινοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἰδιοῦ.

Since with the term “in substance” we say and mean the universal and the common, like the human in general or humanity, while we call “particular” what is called by the philosophers “individual” (παρὰ τοῖς φιλοσόφοις λεγόμενον ἄτομον), like “this man”, whether it is Peter or Paul, what Aristotle certainly considers to be the first substance, to which the Theologian would seem to allude by adding the words, “as someone might say, in substance”, being in this way the name of the substance shifted towards the divine and both the common and the particular are contemplated in it.

Indeed, a closer look at the text of the *Memoriae contra Latinos* shows that the passage is quoted almost *verbatim* from the *Ad magnum domesticum*.<sup>61</sup>

ἐπεὶ καὶ οὐσία λέγεται μὲν καὶ τὸ καθόλου τε καὶ κοινόν ὡς ὁ καθόλου ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἡ ἀνθρωπότης, λέγεται δὲ καὶ τὸ καθ’ ἑκάστων τε καὶ ἄτομον ὡς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ Πέτρος τυχὸν ἢ ὁ Παῦλος—ἦν καὶ πρώτην καὶ μάλιστα κυρίως οὐσίαν ὁ περιττὸς τὴν ἕξω σοφίαν Ἀριστοτέλης φησίν, ὡς οὐκ ἐπινοίᾳ κατὰ τὴν

60 Aristotle, *Categoriae*, ed. L. Minio-Paluello (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), v, 2a, 11–16: Οὐσία δὲ ἐστὶν ἡ κυριώτατά τε καὶ πρώτως καὶ μάλιστα λεγομένη, ἢ μήτε καθ’ ὑποκειμένου τινὸς λέγεται μήτε ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ τινὶ ἐστὶν, οἷον ὁ τις ἄνθρωπος ἢ ὁ τις ἵππος. δευτέραι δὲ οὐσὶαι λέγονται, ἐν οἷς εἶδεν αἱ πρώτως οὐσὶαι λεγόμεναι ὑπάρχουσιν, ταῦτά τε καὶ τὰ τῶν εἰδῶν τούτων γέννη.

61 The passage corresponds *verbatim* to Niketas Stethatos, *Contra Latinos et de processione Spiritus Sancti*, ed. A. Michel (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 1930), p. 400, l. 10–16.

καθόλου φανταζομένην, ἀλλὰ πραγματικῶς καὶ ὄντως ὑφισταμένην καὶ φανε-  
ρῶς κατανοουμένην καὶ ὁρωμένην.<sup>62</sup>

Since both the universal and the common are called “substance”, like man in general and humanity, but the particular or the “individual” is also called in this way, like “this man”, whether it is of Peter or Paul—what Aristotle, excellent in pagan wisdom, undoubtedly calls first substance and substance in the most proper sense, as it is not conceived abstractly by thought, but concretely and truly subsistent and manifestly visible and knowable.

A preliminary analysis of Stethatos' *corpus* has shown that the use of some of these conceptual and stylistic frameworks, frequently employed in both Nicholas' *Ad magnum domesticum* and *Memoriae contra Latinos*, is not otherwise attested in the writings of the eleventh-century author. The use of the same framework can also be found elsewhere in Nicholas' theological *corpus*. For instance, one could compare Chapter 60 of Nicholas' *Refutatio institutionis Platonicae Procli*:

Εἰ πάντων τὸ ἐν μόνον αἴτιον, οὐδὲν ἕτερον οὔτε πλειόνων οὔτε ἐλασσόνων αἴτιον, πάντα δὲ τὰ ὄντα καλὰ καὶ οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἐτέρου κατὰ τὸ εἶναι κρείττον ἢ χεῖρον εἰ μὴ κατὰ ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας ἀνάληψιν. ἃ δὲ φησιν οὗτος ὅλα τουτέστι τὰ ἀπλούστερα καὶ καθολικώτερα, ταῦτα οὐδὲ κυρίως εἰσίν, ὅτι μὴδὲ καθ' ἑαυτὰ ὑφεστήκασιν, ἀλλ' ἐν τοῖς μερικωτέροις καὶ μάλιστα τοῖς καθ' ἕκαστα θεωρεῖται. διὸ καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης πρώτας οὐσίας καὶ κυρίως εἶναι φησι τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα, δευτέρας δὲ λέγεσθαι τὰ γένη καὶ τὰ εἶδη καὶ μάλλον τὰ εἶδη ἢ τὰ γένη. εἰ δὲ καὶ σύγκειται τὰ μερικώτερα ἐκ τῶν καθολικωτέρων, ὥς ἐκ μερῶν ὅλα, ὥσπερ τὸ μὲν καθ' ἕκαστον ἐκ τοῦ εἴδους καὶ τῶν κατ' αὐτὸ ἰδιωμάτων, τὸ δὲ εἶδος ἐκ τοῦ γένους καὶ τῶν συστατικῶν διαφορῶν, πῶς οὐ μέρη τὰ ἀπλούστερα καὶ καθολικώτερα τῶν συνθετωτέρων καὶ μερικωτέρων. ὥστε καὶ εἰς τοῦναντίον τῷ σοφῷ περιστραφῆσεται ἢ ἀπόδειξις.<sup>63</sup>

If there is one cause of all things, and there is not another cause either of more things or of fewer, then all the beings are good, and nothing is superior or inferior to another in its being, but only in acquisition of vir-

62 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Memoriae contra Latinos de Spiritu Sancto*, ed. A. Ivačenko (Novgorod: Типография Игнатовскаго, 1897), p. 41, l. 18–30.

63 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutatio institutionis platonicae Procli*, ed. A.D. Angelou (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 60, l. 1–15.

tue and vice. And the things that he calls wholes, that is, the more simple and more universal things, do not, strictly speaking, exist, for they do not subsist in themselves but are contemplated in the more particular things, and especially in the individuals. Wherefore also Aristotle says that the particulars (τὰ καθ' ἑκάστα) are primary substances and [substances] proper, but the genera and the forms, and more the forms than the genera, are called secondary [substances]. And if the more particular (τὰ μερικώτερα) things are composed from the more universal things, as wholes from parts, e.g. the particular from the species and its properties, and the species from the genus and the constituent differences, how are the more simple and more universal things not parts of the more composite and more particular (μερικωτέρων)? So that the demonstration will be turned round even into the opposite by the wise man.<sup>64</sup>

One could also compare a passage from his work against Sothericos Panteugenos, *Adversus Soterichum Antiochiae patr.* (Or. 6),<sup>65</sup> which corresponds *verbatimim* to a passage of Nicholas of Methone's oration *Ad Manuelem Comnenum imperatorem de synodo*.<sup>66</sup> Both the two passages make reference as well to the Aristotelian distinction between first and second substance:

Ἰδέας μὲν γάρ τινας ἀναπλάττει Πλάτων ὁ τῶν παρ' Ἑλλήσι σοφῶν ἐξοχώτατος, οὕτω τάχα τὰ γένη καὶ τὰ εἶδη καλῶν· ὅθεν καὶ τούτων τὰς μὲν καθολικώτερας, τὰς δὲ μερικωτέρας ἐνάδας φησὶν, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ καὶ ἀνυποστάτους ταύτας εἰσάγει κατὰ τὴν ὑπόθεσιν τοῦ νέου τούτου σοφοῦ· πολλοῦ γε καὶ δεῖ· καθ' ὅσον καὶ πρώτας εἶναι ταύτας καὶ ἀνυποστάτους οὐσίας εἴτουν φύσεις, μάλιστα τὰς καθολικωτέρας, ἐξ ὧν καὶ τὰς μερικωτέρας ὑφίστασθαι διισχυρίζεται, ὡς καὶ θεοὺς ταύτας πρώτους καὶ δευτέρους ἀναγορεύειν, καὶ τούτων αὐθις τὰλλα λέγειν ὑφίστασθαι. Ἀλλὰ ταύτην τὴν Πλάτωνος δόξαν ἀρκούντως ἀνέτρεψεν ὁ μετ' ἐκείνον εὐθύς τῷ χρόνῳ περιττὸς τὴν σοφίαν Ἀριστοτέλης, ὃς καὶ τερετίσματα τοὺς περὶ τῶν ἰδεῶν τούτων λόγους τοῦ Πλάτωνος εὐστόχως ὠνόμασεν,

64 Translation by J. Robinson. Cf. the PhD dissertation by J. Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th century Byzantium*. A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Notre Dame (Indiana), July 2014, pp. 272–273.

65 Nicholas of Methone, *Tractatus adversus Soterichum*, ed. A. Demetrakopoulos, (Ἐν Λειψίᾳ: τύποις Βιγάνδου, 1866), p. 324, l. 9–27.

66 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Ad Manuelem Comnenum imperatorem de synodo*, ed. A. Demetrakopoulos, (Ἐν Λειψίᾳ: τύποις Βιγάνδου, 1865), I, p. 13, l. 10–29.

ὥς μηδὲν πρὸς κατάληψιν τοῦ ὄντος συντείνοντας, μηδὲ ψόφων κενῶν καὶ πρὸς ἁρμονίαν ἀσυντελῶν διαφέροντας. "Ὅθεν καὶ οἱ τὸν περίπατον Ἀριστοτέλους διαδεξάμενοι, αὐτὰς δὴ ταύτας τὰς ἰδέας ἐν ἐπινοίαις κείσθαι ψιλαῖς ἀπεφώναντο.<sup>67</sup>

Plato, the most prominent among the sages of the Hellenes, fabricates certain "Ideas"; this is how he calls the genera and the species. For this reason, he claims that some of these Ideas are more universal henads, whereas others are more particular; but he does not introduce them as having no real existence, as this new sage [i.e., Soterichos] surmises. Quite on the contrary, insofar as he claims that these are primary and self-subsistent substances or natures, [and are such] to the highest degree the more universal, which give existence to the more particular, he proclaims them to be first and second gods and says that the rest of beings acquire their existence from them. But the extraordinarily wise Aristotle, who came immediately after him in time, abundantly rejected Plato's doctrine; he successfully called Plato's arguments in favour [of the existence] of the Ideas "twitterings", because they do not add anything to our comprehension of being and differ in nothing from empty noises, which are useless for the production of harmony. This is why the philosophers who succeeded Aristotle in the Peripatos declared that these very ideas are simply concepts [in our thought].<sup>68</sup>

Nicholas of Methone's *Memoriae contra Latinos* still needs to be regarded as a case study of the practices of Byzantine authorship during Komnenian age. In one of the oldest available manuscripts that I have analysed—Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, B 53, diktyon 56262 (13th century)—the text of the *Memoriae* ends with an explicit reference to Nicholas of Methone's "personal authorial agency", and in a certain sense to Nicholas' own authorial "voice".<sup>69</sup> In the manuscript preserved in the Biblioteca Vallicelliana, it is in fact possible to find a brief, but fundamental, passage in which the author of the patchwork—almost certainly, therefore, Nicholas himself—declares that the booklet is a collection of his own excerpts or *memoriae* (ἀπομνημονεύματα) and writes to an illustrious

67 Nicholas of Methone, *Tractatus adversus Soterichum*, p. 324, l. 9–27.

68 Translation by P. Golitsis. Cf. P. Golitsis, "Aristotelian Attraction and Repulsion in Byzantium", in *Analogia* 7(2019), p. 37.

69 Cf. S. Papaioannou, "Voice, Signature, Mask: The Byzantine Author", in A. Pizzzone (ed.), *The Author in Middle Byzantine Literature. Modes, Functions, and Identities* (Boston / Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), pp. 21–40.

addressee, saying that he is offering the collection of excerpts of his own previous works as a gift:

Ταῦτά σοι ἐν τῷ παρόντι, πανσέβαστε καὶ πάντιμε κεφαλὴ, παρ' ἡμῶν ἐσχε-  
δίασται ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἐν διαφόροις λόγοις γεγραμμένων ἡμῖν κατὰ  
τῆς τῶν Λατίνων εἰς τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα βλασφημίας, ὅτι μὴ τὸ τοὺς λόγους ἔχον  
βιβλίον προχείρως εἴχομεν δοῦναί σοι.<sup>70</sup>

These notes, which I recalled to my memory, were collected by me in this booklet, venerable excellence, from what I myself wrote in different pamphlets against the blasphemy addressed by the Latins to the Holy Spirit, since I didn't have at hand a copy of the volume containing the writings in order to give it to you.

We can deduce, therefore, that these pieces of evidence corroborate the idea that Nicholas of Methone's *Memoriae contra Latinos* are not borrowing or plagiarizing earlier works, but that indeed the textual correspondences we have analysed in the two writings (i.e. Nicholas' *Memoriae contra Latinos* and *Ad magnum domesticum*) are simply to be considered as interesting cases of Nicholas' self-quotations; and the *Memoriae contra Latinos* are indeed to be considered as a mere collection of excerpts from Nicholas of Methone's previous works on the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, the *Memoriae contra Latinos* are possibly to be considered as the last work on the *Filioque* written by Nicholas of Methone, since they contain a consistent series of explicit quotations from the previous ones.

## 6 Conclusion

The literary "afterlife" of Nicholas of Methone lasted from the twelfth to at least the seventeenth century; his theological texts were quoted, abridged, incorporated, transformed by contemporary and later authors such as Hugo Eterianus, Andronikos Kamateros, Niketas Choniates, and Nicholas-Nektarios of Casole. It was probably only in the nineteenth century that the figure of one of the greatest theologians of twelfth-century Byzantium shifted silently into that of an obscure compiler or plagiarist. We may hope that time is mature

<sup>70</sup> The same passage is also available in the Moscow manuscript employed by Arsenij Ivašenko, i.e. Государственный исторический музей (ГИМ), *Synod. gr.* 366 = Vladimir 239, f. 9. Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Memoriae contra Latinos de Spiritu Sancto*, p. 49.

enough that one may read Nicholas' anti-Latin works as twelfth-century documents in themselves. Certainly, Nicholas' work could have a crucial role for our better understanding of the *Filioque* controversy and of East-West relations during Komnenian age. Nicholas' theological *corpus* needs to be reshaped through a multidisciplinary approach and within different methodological frameworks in order to provide new critical editions of these texts. His textual history needs to be completely reconsidered with a new survey of the manuscript tradition, eventually trying to clarify in detail the nature of any intervention made by Simonides or other modern scholars who edited Nicholas' texts.

Nicholas of Methone's philosophical background has been the main focus of recent studies, yet, nevertheless, a great part of Nicholas' production was dedicated to the debate on theological themes related to the procession of the Holy Spirit and the discussion about the *Filioque*. These works could well have a crucial role in our overall understanding of Nicholas' thought, but this fundamental aspect has been almost totally neglected, from both a philological and hermeneutical point of view by scholarly investigations, and Nicholas' polemical work on the Holy Spirit is still extremely understudied.

Nicholas of Methone, with his charge of plagiarism, represents a "cold case". However, the theological production of the Byzantine twelfth century offers a promising field for investigating the theoretical conceptions and concrete practices of Byzantine authorship. Amid the presumed anonymity and seemingly repetitive nature of this vast literary output, the tools of a philological analysis could allow us to find the traces of a continual textual transformation, raising the question whether hints of any personal authorial intervention could be found. Thus, the presumed charge of plagiarism which has affected Nicholas' reputation as an author—with particular regard to his theological production—could be completely revoked if one reconsiders these texts in light of typical twelfth-century practices of composition and circulation of theological literature.

These texts deserve to be reconsidered as twelfth-century documents in themselves. Let me quote, in this respect, some words from one of the scholars who had the most profound knowledge of the twelfth century: in 1989, Alexander Petrovič Kazhdan, in his review of the latest edition of Nicholas of Methone's *Ἀνάπτυξις* wrote that "the unity of the Trinity was for Nicholas not an antiquarian question to be considered in connection with philosophical errors of the fifth century, since Nicholas lived and worked when the 'Latin question' was the major problem that Byzantium faced [...]. Byzantine monarchy, on the one hand, and Western hierarchy, on the other—such was the social confrontation of two worlds, and in this context the *Refutation*, with its emphasis on the

divine 'monarchy' and with its rejection of hierarchical emanation, can be read as a genuine twelfth-century document."<sup>71</sup>

## Bibliography

### *Primary Sources*

#### Manuscripts

- Athens, National Library of Greece, MS 477, f. 1–24.  
 Athens, National Library of Greece, Μετόχιον Παναγίου Τάφου 494, f. 67–79.  
 București, Biblioteca Academiei Române, gr. 318 (= Litzica 560), f. 339–370.  
 Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. IX.12, f. 145–170<sup>v</sup>.  
 Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. IX.24, f. 262–288<sup>v</sup>.  
 Jerusalem, Library of the Orthodox Patriarchate, Panaghiou Taphou 108, f. 180<sup>v</sup>–183.  
 Moscow, Государственный исторический музей (ГИМ), Synod. gr. 366 = Vladimir 239, f. 1–9.  
 Moscow, Государственный исторический музей (ГИМ), Synod. gr. 423 = Vladimir 245, f. 274–282.  
 München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, gr. 28, f. 266–283<sup>v</sup>.  
 München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, gr. 65, f. 348–369.  
 München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, gr. 66, f. 76–81<sup>v</sup>.  
 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Barocci 215, f. 1–14<sup>v</sup>.  
 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Roe 22.  
 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 1234.  
 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 1261, f. 118–127<sup>v</sup>.  
 Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, B.53 (= gr. 12), f. 168–185<sup>v</sup>.  
 Vaticano (Città del), Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. gr. 200, f. 114–116.  
 Vaticano (Città del), Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 680, f. 407<sup>v</sup>.  
 Vatopedi (Holy Monastery of), Athos, MS 229.  
 Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, App. III.3 (*olim* Nanianus gr. 227), f. 182–187<sup>v</sup>.  
 Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, gr. IV.58, f. 210<sup>v</sup>–219.

#### Printed Sources

- Aristotle, *Categoriae*, ed. L. Minio-Paluello, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1949.  
 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 41, ed. C. Moreschini, Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 1990.

<sup>71</sup> A.P. Kazhdan, review of A.D. Angelou, *Nicholas of Methone. Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology* [*Corpus philosophorum Medii Aevi—Philosophi Byzantini* 1], Leiden 1984, in *Speculum* 64.1(1989), pp. 196–199.

- John Bekkos, *De unione Ecclesiarum*, ed. H. Lämmer, Friburgi Brisgoviae, sumtibus Herder, 1864.
- Nicholas of Methone, *Refutatio institutionis theologicae Procli Platonici*, ed. J.Th. Voemel, in F. Creuzer, *Initia Philosophiae ac Theologiae ex platoniciis fontibus ducta. Pars quarta*, Frankfurt a. Main, Broenner, 1825.
- Nicholas of Methone, 'Ανάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου / *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas' life and works by A.D. Angelou, Athens / Leiden, The Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984.
- Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Latinos de Spiritu Sancto*, ed. C. Simonides, 'Εν Λονδίῳ, τύποις Γιλβέρτου καὶ Πρίβινγτωνος, 1858.
- Nicholas of Methone, *Ad Manuelem Comnenum imperatorem de synodo*, ed. A. Demetrakopoulos, 'Εν Λειψίῳ, τύποις Βιγάνδου, 1865.
- Nicholas of Methone, *Adversus Soterichum Antiochiae patr.*, ed. A. Demetrakopoulos, 'Εν Λειψίῳ, τύποις Βιγάνδου, 1866.
- Nicholas of Methone, *Ad magnum domesticum de Spiritu Sancto*, ed. A. Demetrakopoulos, 'Εν Λειψίῳ, τύποις Βιγάνδου, 1866.
- Nicholas of Methone, *Memoriae contra Latinos de Spiritu Sancto*, ed. A. Ivačenko, Novgorod, Типография Игнатовскаго, 1897.
- Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae doctrinae Latinorum*, ed. A. Demetrakopoulos, 'Εν Λειψίῳ, τύποις Βιγάνδου, 1866.
- Nicholas of Methone, *Refutationes theologicae doctrinae Latinorum*, ed. C.N. Benvenuto, Potenza, Basilicata Univeristy Press 2024.
- Nicholas Mouzalon, *De processione Spiritus Sancti*, ed. Th. Zeses, Thessaloniki, 1978.
- Niketas Stethatos, *Contra Latinos et de processione Spiritu Sanctu*, ed. A. Michel, Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh, 1930.
- Theophylact of Ohrid, *Allocutio ad quemdam ex suis familiaribus de iis quos Latini incusantur*, in Theophylacte d'Achrida, *Discours, Traités, Poésies*, ed. P. Gautier, Thessaloniki, Association de recherches byzantines, 1980, pp. 247–285.

### Secondary Sources

- Amato, E., "Sul discusso plagio della Refutatio Procli Institutionis theologicae di Procopio di Gaza ad opera di Nicola di Metone: nuovi apporti dalla tradizione manoscritta", in *Medioevo Greco* 10(2010), pp. 5–12.
- Angelou, A.D., *Introduction*, in *Nicholas of Methone. Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology: A Critical Edition with an Introduction on Nicholas' Life and Works by Athanasios D. Angelou*, Leiden, Brill, 1984.
- Barmin, A.V., "Кто написал Другой свод против латинян?", in *Византийский временник* 60(85) 2001, pp. 121–125.
- Benvenuto, C.N., "A Distorted Lemma: Στεφάνης Ἀθηναῖος ἱερομόναχος and a False Biography of Nicholas of Methone", in *Trends in Classics* 15.1(2023), pp. 165–177.



- Bucossi, A., "Dialogues and Anthologies of the Sacred Arsenal by Andronikos Kama-teros: Sources, Arrangements, Purposes", in C. Macé, P. Van Deun (eds), *Encyclopaedic Trends in Byzantium—Proceedings of the International Conference held in Leuven, 6–8 May 2009*, Leuven, Peeters, 2011, pp. 269–286.
- Bucossi, A., "Dibattiti teologici alla corte di Manuele Comneno", in A. Rigo, A. Babuin, M. Trizio (eds), *Vie per Bisanzio. VII Congresso nazionale dell'Associazione Italiana di Studi Bizantini. Venezia, 25–28 novembre 2009*, Bari, Edizioni di Pagina, 2013, pp. 311–321.
- Cameron, A., *Byzantine Matters*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014.
- Cameron, A., *Arguing it out: Discussion in Twelfth-century Byzantium*, Budapest / New York, Central European University Press, 2016.
- Canart, P., "Les palimpsestes en écriture majuscule des fonds grecs de la Bibliothèque Vaticane", in S. Lucà (ed.), *Libri palinsesti greci: conservazione, restauro digitale, studio. Atti del Convegno internazionale, Villa Mondragone—Monte Porzio Catone—Università di Roma "Tor Vergata"—Biblioteca del Monumento Nazionale di Grottaferrata, 21–24 apr. 2004*, Roma, Comitato per le celebrazioni del millenario della Fondazione dell'Abbazia di Grottaferrata, 2008, pp. 71–84.
- Canfora, L., *Il papiro di Artemidoro*, Roma / Bari, Laterza, 2008.
- Canfora, L., *Il viaggio di Artemidoro*, Milano, Rizzoli, 2010.
- Canfora, L., Bossina, L., *Wie kann das ein Artemidor-Papyrus sein? Ma come fa a essere un papiro di Artemidoro?*, Bari, Edizioni di Pagina, 2008.
- Canfora, L., Acquafredda, M.R., Caratozzolo, M., Cuomo, V., *Costantino Simonidis. Opere greche*, I. *Eulyros di Cefalonia, Ἐθνικά / Ἀνθρώπινα. Liste di manoscritti greci (1848–1864)*, Bari, Edizioni di Pagina, 2014.
- Cavallera, F., "Le Trésor de la foi orthodoxe de Nicéas Acominatos Choniates", in *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 5(1913), pp. 124–137.
- Chiesa, P., Rafaiiani, M., "Dal manoscritto Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 1490. Un nuovo testimone della «Kurzfassung u» della Epistola Presbiteri Iohannis e del pitacium contro il Filioque attestato da Gerhoch di Reichersberg", in *Filologia mediolatina* 27(2020), pp. 421–435.
- Demetrakopoulos, A., *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη. Bibliotheca ecclesiastica continens Graecorum theologorum opera*, vol. 1, Ἐν Λειψίᾳ, τύποις Βιγάνδου, 1866.
- Demetrakopoulos, A., *Νικολάου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης λόγοι δύο*, Ἐν Λειψίᾳ, τύποις Βιγάνδου, 1865.
- Devreesse, R., *Codices Vaticani Graeci, tomus III codices 604–866*, Rome, Bibliotheca Vaticana, 1950.
- van Dieten, J.-L., *Zur Überlieferung der Panoplia Dogmatike des Niketas Choniates. Codex Parisinus Graecus 1234*, in F. DÖLGER, *Polychronion: Festschrift für Franz Dölger zum 75 Geburtstag*, Heidelberg, C. Winter, 1966.
- van Dieten, J.-L., *Zur Überlieferung und Veröffentlichung der Panoplia Dogmatike des Niketas Choniates*, Amsterdam, Hakkert, 1970.

- Dräseke, J., "Nikolaos von Methone", in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 1(1892), pp. 438–478.
- Dräseke, J., "Zu Nikolaos von Methone", in *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 41(1898), pp. 402–411.
- Elliott, J.K., *Codex Sinaiticus and the Simonides Affair: An Examination of the Nineteenth-Century Claim that Codex Sinaiticus was not an Ancient Manuscript*, Thessaloniki, Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies, 1982.
- Fabricius, J.A., *Bibliotheca Graeca sive notitia scriptorum veterum Graecorum*, vol. XI, Hamburgi, sumtu Theodori Cristophori Felginer, 1722.
- Follieri, E., "Santi di Metone: Atanasio vescovo, Leone taumaturgo", in *Byzantion* 41(1971), pp. 408–410.
- Gioffreda, A., Trizio, M., "Nicholas of Methone, Procopius of Gaza and Proclus of Lycia", in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes*. Vol. 2. *Translations and Acculturations*, Leiden / Boston, Brill, 2020, pp. 94–135.
- Golitsis, P., "Aristotelian Attraction and Repulsion in Byzantium", in *Analogia* 7(2019), pp. 17–42.
- Hoeck, J.M., Loenertz, R.J., *Nikolaos-Nektarios von Otranto, Abt von Casole: Beiträge zur Geschichte der ost-westlichen Beziehungen unter Innozenz III und Friedrich II*, Ettal, Buch-Kunstverlag, 1965.
- Ivačenko, A., *Два неизданных произведения Николая, епископа Меффонского, писателя XII века*, Novgorod, Типография Игнатовского, 1897.
- Jeffreys, E.M., "We Need to Talk about Byzantium: or, Byzantium, its Reception of the Classical World as Discussed in Current Scholarship, and Should Classicists Pay Attention?", in *Classical Receptions Journal* 6.1(2014), pp. 158–174.
- Kaldellis, A., "Keroularios in 1054: Noncofrontational to the Papal Legates and Loyal to the Emperor", in N.G. Christis, A. Kolia-Dermizaki, A. Papageorgiou (eds), *Byzantium and the West: Perception and Reality (11th–15th c.)*, London / New York, Routledge, 2019, pp. 9–24.
- Kazhdan, A.P., review of A.D. Angelou, *Nicholas of Methone. Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*, in *Speculum* 64.1(1989), pp. 196–199.
- Krausmüller, D., "Hiding in Plain Sight: Heterodox Trinitarian Speculation in the Writings of Niketas Stethatos", in *Scrinium* 9(2013), pp. 254–284.
- Krausmüller, D., "The Procession of the Holy Spirit from the Divine Substance: Observations about the Trinitarian Theology of Symeon the New Theologian and Nicetas Stethatos", in *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 60(2015), pp. 75–91.
- Krausmüller, D., "Aristotle in Cappadocian Garb: the Trinitarian Speculation of Nicetas Stethatos and Leo of Chalcedon", in *Erytheia* 37(2016), pp. 37–54.
- Krausmüller, D., "Between Tritheism and Sabellianism: Trinitarian Speculation in John Italos' and Nicetas Stethatos' Confessions of Faith", in *Scrinium* 12(2016), pp. 261–280.
- Krumbacher, K., *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur von Justinian bis zum Ende des Oströmischen Reiches (527–1453)*, München, C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1897.

- Lämmer, H., *Scriptorum Graeciae orthodoxae bibliotheca selecta*, Friburg, Herder, 1864.
- Michel, A., *Humbert und Kerullarios: Quellen und Studien zum Schisma des XI Jahrhunderts*, vol. 2, Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh, 1930.
- Muci, M., "Il terzo *Syntagma* di Nicola Nettareio di Otranto", in *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 2(2008), pp. 449–505.
- Müller, A.E., Katsiakiori-Rankl, A., Diamantopoulou, L., Gastgeber, Ch., (eds), *Die getäuschte Wissenschaft: Ein Genie betrügt Europa—Konstantinos Simonides*, Wien, Vienna University Press, 2017.
- Papaioannou, S., "Voice, Signature, Mask: The Byzantine Author", in A. Pizzone (ed.), *The Author in Middle Byzantine Literature. Modes, Functions, and Identities*, Boston / Berlin, De Gruyter, 2014, pp. 21–40.
- Pinto, P.M., "Costantino Simonides in the Gennadius Library", in *The New Griffon* 12(2011), pp. 85–102.
- Podolak, P., "Nicetas Archbishop of Nicomedia: a Forgotten Figure in Twelfth-Century Controversy surrounding the Filioque", in *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neellenici*, 53(2016), pp. 151–172.
- Radiciotti, P., "Manoscritti digrafici grecolatini e latinogreci nell'Alto Medioevo", in *Römische Historische Mitteilungen* 40(1998), pp. 49–118.
- Reinhold Jeck, U., "Theodor Voemels byzantinistische Impulse. Dokumente zu Entstehung und früher Wirkungsgeschichte der Editio princeps der Refutatio institutionis theologiae Procli Platonici des Nikolaos von Methone", in *Bochumer Philosphisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittelalter* 18.1(2015), pp. 164–194.
- Robinson, J., *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th century Byzantium*. A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Notre Dame (Indiana), 2014.
- Sakellion, I.A., *Katálogos χειρογράφων της Εθνικής Βιβλιοθήκης της Ελλάδος*, 'Εν Ἀθήναις, ἐκ τοῦ ἐθνικοῦ τυπογραφείου καὶ λειτογραφείου, 1931.
- Simonides, C., *Μέμνων σύγγραμμα ἀρχαιολογικόν*, 'Εν Μονάχῳ, 1857.
- Simonides, C., *Νικολάου τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου ἐπισκόπου Μεθώνης πρὸς Λατίνους περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς οὐ μὴν καὶ ἐκ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἐκπορεύεται*, 'Εν Λονδίῳ, τύποις Γιλβέρτου καὶ 'Ριβίνγτωνος, 1858 (= Simonides, C., *Ὁρθόξων Ἑλλήνων θεολογικαὶ γραφαὶ τέσσαρες*, 'Εν Λονδίῳ, τύποις Γιλβέρτου καὶ 'Ριβίνγτωνος, 1859).
- Zeses, Th., "Ὁ πατριάρχης Νικόλαος Δ' Μουζάλων (Παράρτημα: Μουζάλωνος, Περὶ τῆς ἐκπορεύσεως τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος)", in *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἑπετηρὶς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς* 23(1978), pp. 307–329.

**PART 3**

*Nicholas of Methone's Reception and Legacy*





## Scholia on Proclus' *Elements of Theology* in Marc. gr. Z 512. New light on the discussion on participation in Nicholas of Methone

Carlos Steel

KU Leuven

The *Marcianus graecus* Z 512 (= M) transmits the oldest preserved copy of Proclus' *Elementatio theologica*.<sup>1</sup> This manuscript of the late 13th century contains a variety of texts on very different subjects—grammar, rhetoric, poetry, astrology—including works by Michael Psellos and Theodoros Prodromos.<sup>2</sup> After excerpts from Proclus' *Hypotyposis*, the *Elementatio theologica* follows on ff. 128<sup>r</sup>–176<sup>v</sup>. It is a beautiful copy written in the *Fettaugen* style until f. 173<sup>v</sup>. From f. 174<sup>r</sup> on (at prop. 203, p. 178,1 αἱ δὲ ἔσχαται) another contemporary hand (writing rather in “beta-gamma” style) takes over and continues the copy until the end of the *Elements* and the beginning of the following text (letter 1.21 of Alciphron).<sup>3</sup> The *Marcianus* manuscript represents the text tradition from Psellos' school. Its model, or a sister manuscript deriving from this model, was used by William of Moerbeke for his Latin translation. The *Marcianus* was radically revised in the early 14th century: original readings were erased and variants mostly coming from the α-tradition (connected to Nicholas of Methone's *Refutatio*) were introduced, with titles added. The different layers of readings before

- 1 The *Parisinus* gr. 2423 dates from about the same period, but it is unfortunately incomplete.
- 2 *Bibliothecae Diui Marci Venetiarum codices graeci manuscripti*. Volumen 11: *Thesaurus Antiquus. Codices 300–625*, ed. E. Mioni (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1985), pp. 369–374. On the history of the text of the *Elementatio theologica* see E. Dodds, “Introduction”, in Proclus, *The Elements of Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963<sup>2</sup>), pp. xxxiii–xlv and my contribution, “La tradition du texte de l'*Elementatio Theologica* de Proclus”, in G. Aubry, L. Brisson, P. Hoffman, L. Lavaud (eds), *Les Éléments de théologie de Proclus: Interprétations, réceptions antiques et modernes* (Paris: Hermann, 2021), pp. 27–67. I am very grateful to Dragos Calma for obtaining beautiful colour images of the manuscript thanks to funding from the European Research Council within the framework of the project *Neoplatonism and Abrahamic Traditions* (ERC\_CoG\_771640).
- 3 I forgot to mention the intervention of this second hand in Steel, “La tradition du texte”, p. 31 (see Dodds, “Introduction”, p. xxxv).

and after correction are found in the numerous manuscripts (27!) that derive directly or indirectly from the *Marcianus*.

In this contribution I intend to examine the scholia on the text that have been written in the margin in the first part of the text.<sup>4</sup> As I will show, they throw an interesting light on discussions on participation that are antecedents of the most important theological controversy in the 14th century, the debate between Gregory Palamas and his opponents, above all Nikephoros Gregoras. I will first give a survey of all ancient scholia on the text and in a second part will focus on a recurrent theme in the scholia: how to interpret participation and Proclus' claim that the First is unparticipated.

### 1 Part One: *Scholia in Procli Elementationem theologicam*

The scholia are found in the margins of M as far as f. 155<sup>v</sup>, that is, as far as prop. 121. I distinguish three layers of scholia:

- 1) Most scholia are in a hand that clearly resembles the hand of the copyist of the main text writing in *Fettaugen* style. They are indexed (\*).
- 2) There are some scholia in another contemporary hand, writing in clear black ink, for instance on f. 128<sup>r-v</sup>. This may have been the same hand that added titles to some propositions following the  $\alpha$ -tradition. They are indexed ( $\div$ ).
- 3) Some scholia are in smaller characters and lighter brown. I presume that they are in a different but contemporary hand, but it often remains unsettled. They are indexed  $\div$ .

Some scholia are difficult to read because pages have been cut in the upper or inferior margin. Fortunately, there is a copy of M, the Par. gr. 2028 [sigle Pa], f. 74<sup>r</sup>–105<sup>r</sup>, a parchment manuscript, bound with a more recent paper manuscript of Aristotle *De anima* and *De sensu*, copied by Constantinos Lascaris. The Proclus copy may be of the 14th–15th century (prop. 1–4 have been added by a later hand; prop. 211 at the end is missing). The scribe added the scholia from M in the margin or inserted them before or after the propositions. Although this scribe makes many errors, his copy is very useful to supplement what cannot be read in M. I have added these supplements between brackets, [...]. Moreover, this copy also helps us to recover some scholia that must have been on the lost pages of M (one folium after what is now f. 130 and another after what is now f. 132 have been lost in M). A recent copy of Par. gr. 2028 is

4 Some examples of these scholia were given in an appendix of Steel, "La tradition du texte".

the Par. gr. 1842 (17th century), which also contains some scholia. Interestingly, no scholia are found in the manuscripts that depend on M *ante correctionem* of which the Par. gr. 2045 is the leading manuscript. More surprising is the fact that they are not found, as far as I had access to digital images, in any of the other recent manuscripts, which derive mostly from Bodl., Laud. graec. 18, a copy of M made in 1358 by Stelianos Choumnos.

The (\*)scholia written by the hand that also copied the main text were probably already in the manuscript that the copyist used as his model. For the copyist sometimes makes errors in copying, or is uncertain, which shows that he was not himself the author of those scholia. (Examples of such errors are found in scholia at prop. 1, 8, 22, 34, 40, 47, 767, 68, 74, 78, 84, 116, and 121.) Moreover, the scholia are copied in the inferior or superior margins, without signs of reference to the main text. Some scholia even appear on a page after the proposition they refer to. If, however, the (\*)scholia were already found in the model of M, they were older than the late 13th century when M was written and may date from the 11–12th century. We know that Psellos had a copy of the *Elements of Theology* in the text tradition to which the *Marcianus* belongs.<sup>5</sup> It is therefore possible that the (\*)scholia that were found in the model of M go back to Psellos' school. The other scholia were added into M and date from the first half of the 14th century, when the Proclus text was also radically revised.

In the following survey of scholia, passages supplemented by Par. gr. 2028 are between [...] brackets; words added by myself are between <...>; and words deleted are between {...}. Editorial comments are between (...).<sup>6</sup> When possible, I indicate the proposition to which the scholium refers.

#### f. 128<sup>r</sup>

*ad titulum:*

∴ὅτι τὴν στοιχείωσιν τὴν θεολογικὴν τινες ἐπιγράφουσι· καθολικοὶ λόγοι περὶ θείων·-

Note that some entitle the *Elements of Theology*: General assertions about the divine (principles).<sup>7</sup>

*ad prop. 1:*

∴περὶ ἑνὸς καὶ πλῆθους.

<sup>5</sup> See Steel, "La tradition du texte", pp. 36–37.

<sup>6</sup> I thank John D. Demetracopoulos for having read a first version and having suggested corrections.

<sup>7</sup> I could not identify who are these τινες.



- ∴ τὸ ἓν πρὸ πάντων καὶ πρὸ τοῦ ὄντος καὶ πρὸ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ νοῦ· διὸ τὸ πρῶτον αἷτιον ἓν καλεῖ:-
- ∴ τὸ ὅλον ἓν καὶ μεθέξει ἓν:-
- ∴ πᾶν πλῆθος μετέχει που τοῦ ἑνός· τὸ ἓν ἀμέθεκτόν ἐστι ἀπλῶς:-
- ∴ ὅτι μετέχεται τὸ ἓν καὶ πάντα μετέχει τοῦ ἑνός:-
- ∴ ὅτι πῇ μετέχεται (scr.: μετέχεσθαι M) τὸ ἓν, οὐχ ἀπλῶς· πῇ οὖν ἐστι μεθεκτόν, οὐχ ἀπλῶς, ἀμέθεκτον δ' ἀπλῶς:-
- ∴ τὰ μεθέξει ἓν γενητά ἐστι ἓν:-

#### About One and Multitude.

The One is before all things and before Being and before the essence of the Intellect; therefore he calls the first cause One.

The whole is one and one by participation.

Every multitude participates somehow in the One, whereas the One is absolutely unparticipated.

Note that the One is participated and that all participate in the One.

Note that the One is somehow participated, not absolutely: it is thus somehow capable of being participated, not absolutely, whereas it is absolutely unparticipated.

The things that are one by participation have become one.

#### f. 128<sup>v</sup>

*ad prop. 2:*

- ∴ ἡ μετοχή κοινωνίαν τινὰ καὶ ἔνωσιν δηλοῖ:-

Participation indicates some communion and union.

*ad prop. 3:*

- ∴ πᾶν τὸ μεθέξει <ἓν> δηλονότι καὶ γενητόν καὶ αἰτιατόν· καὶ ὅτι ἡ μέθεξις γένεσις ἐστίν:-

Whatever is <one> by participation is manifestly also generated and caused, and note that participation is a generation.

*ad prop. 4:*

- ∴ ἄλλο τὸ ἠγνόμενον καὶ ἄλλο τὸ ἓν· ἄλλο τὸ ἐνώσει ἓν καὶ ἄλλο τὸ καθαυτὸ ἓν, ὅπερ ἓν καὶ ἀπλῶς ἓν.

One thing is what is unified and another the One, and one thing is what is by union one and another what is by itself one, that is One and absolutely One.

f. 129<sup>v</sup>*ad prop. 5:*

ἄμα (6,16)] :: ἄμα γὰρ τὸ λογικὸν καὶ τὸ ἄλογον ἐν τῷ γένει ὡς ἀντιδιηρημένα

The rational and the irrational are together in their genus as contradistinguished.

*ad prop. 6:*

\*ὅτι τὸ ἡνωμένον ἐξ ἐνάδων:-

\*ὅτι καὶ ἡ ἔνωσις ἐνώσει ἐστὶν ἐνὰς καὶ μετοχὴ τοῦ ἐνός:-

Note that what is unified is from henads.

Note that even union is a henad by union and a participation in the One.

*ad prop. 7:*

\*ὅτι τὸ παράγον ἀμέθεκτόν ἐστι καὶ ἀκάτακτον, πρὸς τὰ παραγόμενα ἀσύντακτον:-

Note that what produces is unparticipated and non-ordered as well as uncoordinated with what is produced.

f. 130<sup>r</sup>*ad prop. 8:*

\*[ὅτι τὸ ἀ]μέθεκτον<sup>8</sup> οὐ κατ' ἄρνησιν<sup>9</sup> ἢ (Pa: ἢ M) ἀναίρεσιν παντελοῦς μεθέξεως ἢ ἐνώσεως ἢ σχέσεως ἀμέθεκτον λέγεται, ἀλλὰ κατὰ ὑπεροχὴν ἢ ὑπερβολὴν· ὑπεροχὴ δὲ πᾶσα ἐν σχέσει καὶ κατασχέσει· ἔπειτα μετέχειν ἐξ ἀνάγκης τοῦ αἰτίου τὰ αἰτιατὰ λέγεται:-

ἐπειδὴ τὸ πρῶτον αἶτιον ἐν καὶ ἀγαθὸν ὁ Πλάτων καλεῖ, διὰ τοῦτο ὁ Πρόκλος πρῶτον περὶ τοῦ ἐνός διέλαβε, / 130<sup>v</sup> / δεύτερον δὲ περὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ:-

\*ὅτι τοῦτ' ἀγαθὸν ἢ τὰγαθὸν ἀμέθεκτόν ἐστι καὶ ἄσχετον καὶ ἀσύντακτον καὶ ἐπέκεινα:-

Note that what is unparticipated is not said to be unparticipated because of negation or removal of all participation or union or relation, but be-

8 The beginning of this scholion is illegible in M; Pa reads τὸ τοῦ ἀμέθεκτου.

9 κατ' ἄρνησιν is my correction. M has κατὰ περὶσιν (?); Pa reads κατὰ περεῖτωσιν. In support of my correction cf. Gregory Palamas, *Contra Nicephorum Gregorae* 2, ed. P.K. Chrestou, in *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, ed. P.K. Chrestou, vol. 4 (Thessaloniki: Kyriakos, 1988), oratio 2.29.17–18: ἢ πρὸς ἄρνησιν καὶ ἀναίρεσιν τῆς ἀκτίστου θελήσεως.

cause of superiority or excellence. For every superiority implies relation and respect; next, that which is caused is said to participate necessarily in its cause.

Since Plato calls the first cause One and Good, for that reason Proclus determined about the One first, and then about the Good.

Note that this Good or 'the-Good' is unparticipated and unrelated and uncoordinated and beyond.

*ad prop. 9:*

\*περί αὐτάρκους, καὶ τελείου καὶ ἀτελοῦς, ὃ δεύτερόν ἐστι τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ:-  
ἄλλο αὐτάρκες καὶ [ἄλλο] ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἐπαναβεβηκὸς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ αὐτάρκους,  
ὅτι καὶ τὸ αὐτάρκες μετέχει, διὸ καὶ ἔλαττον τοῦ πρώτου:-

About the self-sufficient, both the perfect and imperfect, which is inferior to the Good. One thing is the self-sufficient and the other the Good that transcends the good that is self-sufficient, for the self-sufficient too participates and is therefore inferior to the First.

*ad prop. 12* (deest in M<sup>10</sup>):

[περί ἀρχῆς καὶ αἰτίας· ὅτι ἀνάγκη τὴν αἰτίαν μετέχεσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν αἰτιατῶν:-  
ὅτι τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ αἴτιον καλεῖ καὶ ἀρχὴν πρώτην, καὶ τοῦτο ἐστὶ τὸ πρῶτον αἴτιον:-  
ὅτι καὶ ἐνταῦθα μετέχεσθαι τὴν πρώτην αἰτίαν δηλοῖ καὶ τὸ πρῶτως ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἐν τῷ  
κη'· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, πῶς ἀμέθεκτον τὸ πρῶτον; παντελῶς ἢ κατὰ στέρησιν;]:-

About the principle and cause.

Note that the cause must necessarily be participated by the things caused.

Note that he calls the Good both cause and first principle and that this is the first cause.

Note that he declares both here and in prop. 28. that the first cause and the primary Good are participated. If this is the case, in what sense is the First 'unparticipated'? In an absolute sense or according to privation?

**f. 131<sup>v</sup>**

*ad prop. 15:*

÷ἐπιστροφὴ ἐστὶ τὸ συνάπτειν κατὰ τι μόνιον πρὸς πάντα τὰ λοιπὰ μόρια:-

10 As we know those scholia only from Pa, we cannot know whether they were firsthand or not in M.

÷ τί τὸ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστρέφον, καὶ πῶς τῆς εἰς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστροφῆς (sic)· ὅτι τοῦ ἀσωμάτου ἴδιον τὸ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστρεπτικόν:-

Reversion is to conjoin according to one part with all other parts.

What is what reverts upon itself, and how does it happen? Note that reversion upon itself is proper to the incorporeal.

f. 132<sup>r</sup>

*ad prop. 17:*

\*ὅτι καὶ τὸ αὐτοκίνητον πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστρέφει, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἀσώματον καὶ πρῶτως.

Note that what is self-moving reverts upon itself and thereby is incorporeal and firstly <self-moved>.

*ad prop. 18:*

\*περὶ τῆς κατ' οὐσίαν μεταδόσεως ἢ μετοχῆς, καὶ τίς ἢ κατ' οὐσίαν ἢ ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας μετάδοσις [ἢ μετοχή καὶ ὅπως λέγεται]

About giving a share in being or participation, and what is this giving a share in being or from being or participation and in what sense it is said.

f. 132<sup>v</sup>

\*ὅτι καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς κατ' οὐσίαν μεταδόσεως τὸ μὲν κρεῖττον, τὸ δὲ ἥττον, καὶ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον, τὸ δὲ δεύτερον, καὶ τὸ μὲν ὑπερέχον, τὸ δὲ ὑφειμένον, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἰσότης καὶ ταυτότης ἐπὶ τούτων, οὐδὲ τὸ ἐν κατὰ πάντων.

Note that, in case of sharing in being, something is better, something less, and something primary, something secondary, and something superior, something inferior, and that there is no equality and identity in them, nor are they all said to be one.

f. 133<sup>r</sup>

*ad prop. 22:*

÷ ὅτι τὸ μοναδικὸν μονογενὲς καλεῖ (ad l. 2)

Note that he calls the monadic the 'only-born'.

÷ τουτέστι, καὶ πλείω δῶμεν εἶναι τὰ ἀρχικὰ αἰτία (scr.: αἰτία M), τὸ αὐτὸ ἀδύνατόν ἐστιν. (ad. l. 3)

That is to say: even if we admit that there are more principal causes, there is the same impossibility.

**f. 133<sup>v</sup>**

*ad prop. 24–25:*

\*ὅτι τὸ ἀμέθεκτον οὐχ' ἐφ' ἑνὸς λέγεται, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ πλείονων:-

\*ὅτι τὸ ἀμέθεκτον τὸ ἐξηρημένον {καὶ} καὶ ὑπερέχον καὶ ἐξάιρετον δηλοῖ:-

\*ὅτι ἄλλο τὸ μετέχον, ἄλλο τὸ [μετεχόμενον καὶ ἄλλο τὸ ἀ]μέθεκτον· ἐνταῦθα οὖν ἀμέθεκτον τὸ μὴ μετεχόμενον δηλοῖ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ [μετεχομένου]:-

\*ὅτι τὸ πρῶτον μετεχόμενον λέγεται ὡς πάντων καὶ οὐ τινός:-

\*ὅτι καὶ μετέχεσθαι αὐτὸ λέγεται καὶ ἀμέθεκτον εἶναι καὶ ἐξηρηθῆναι πάντων:-

Note that 'unparticipated' is not said in one sense, but in many.

Note that the (term) 'unparticipated' indicates what is transcendent and superior and exceptional.

Note that one thing is the participant, another what is participated and another what is unparticipated. Here 'unparticipated' indicates what is not participated and what exists before what is participated.

Note that the first is called participated as pertaining to all, not to something.

Note that it is said that it [i.e. the first] is both participated and is unparticipated and transcending all things.

**f. 134<sup>v</sup>**

*ad prop. 27:*

\*ὅτι τῇ δυνάμει παράγει τὸ παράγον:- ὅτι οὐ μέρος τοῦ παράγοντος τὸ παραγόμενον:-

Note that the producer produces by power; that what is produced is not a part of the producer.

**f. 135<sup>r</sup>**

*ad prop. 28:*

\*ἢ μετοχῇ κοινωνίαν τινὰ δηλοῖ, καὶ τὸ μετέχον κατὰ τι κοινωνεῖ <τῷ> μετεχομένῳ  
[scr.: μετεχόμενον M]:-

Participation indicates some communion, and what participates has something in common with what is participated.

÷ ἐκάτερον λέγει τὸ διακεκρῖσθαι καὶ τὸ μετέχειν (ad p. 32, 23)

By 'both' (ἐκάτερον) he means distinction and participation.

\*[πῶς] οὖν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας; καὶ μεταδίδωσι τῆς οὐσίας καὶ μετέχει τῆς οὐσίας:-

How then from being? It imparts being and it participates in being.

f. 135<sup>v</sup>

*ad prop.* 28:

\*ἀνάγκη φησὶ τὸ αἰτιατὸν τοῦ αἰτίου μετέχειν:-

ὅτι ἡ μετοχὴ ἐνὸς δηλοῖ τὴν κατὰσχέσιν:-

It is necessary, he says (p. 32, 20–21), that the effect participates in its cause.

Note that the participation of something indicates its relation.

\*{εἰ} πῶς ἐκείθεν ἔχει τὴν οὐσίαν ἐδήλωσε· πῶς μετέχει τοῦ αἰτίου τὸ αἰτιατὸν λέγει· οὐ γὰρ ὡς [μέρος] ὃν τῆς οὐσίας ἐκείνου, ἀλλ' ὡς διὰ τὴν αἰτίαν καὶ τὴν τῆς αἰτίας σχέσιν ἡνωμένον ἐκείνῳ, εἴ γε διὰ τὴν αἰτίαν τὸ εἶναι τοῦτο καὶ ἡ οὐσία καὶ ἡ ὑπαρξίς· ὥστε τὸ τῆς αἰτίας μετέχον σχέσεως μετέχει· ἡ γὰρ αἰτία [ἐν σχέσει νοεῖται]:-

He explained how it derives its being from there. He says how the effect participates in the cause: for it is not as if it were a part of its being, but as being united with it according to causality and the causal relation, if this being and essence and existence really are because of this cause. Therefore, what participates in a cause participates in a relation (to that cause), for a cause is thought to stand in relation.

∴ ὅτι τὴν μετοχὴν [ἡ] ἔνωσις δηλοῖ

Note that union indicates participation.

*ad prop.* 30:

∴ ὅτι διττὴ ἡ πρόοδος

Note that procession is twofold.

∴ διὰ γε ἔνωσιν ἢ σχέσιν

Because of union or relation (ad p. 34, 18).

f. 136<sup>r</sup>

\*Ἰάμβλιχος διττὰς λέγει τὰς ἀπογεννήσεις, {τὴν θε (?)} τὴν μὲν ἐν ἑαυτῷ μένουσαν, τὴν δὲ ἔξω προϊούσαν καὶ κατὰ πρόοδον, καὶ τὴν μὲν ἄσχετον, τὴν δὲ σχετικὴν.

Iamblichus speaks of two kinds of generation: the one remains within oneself, the other proceeds outwards and according to procession, and the one is without relation, the other is relative.

*ad prop. 31:*

∴ ὅτι τὸ ὅμοιον οὐ κατὰ πάντα ταῦτόν:-

Note that the similar is not in all respects the same.

\*ὅτι ἡ [ἐπιστροφή] ὁμοιότης ἐστὶ τοῦ ἐπιστρεφόμενου πρὸς ὃ ἐπιστρέφει· ὁμοιωθῆναι γὰρ βούλεται καὶ μιμεῖσθαι ἐκεῖνο

Note that reversion is an assimilation of what reverts to that towards which it reverts: for it wants to be similar and to imitate it.

f. 136<sup>v</sup>

*ad prop. 34:*

\*ὅτι καὶ οὐσιώδης ἐπιστροφή καὶ οὐκ οὐσιώδης, ἀλλὰ σχετικὴ, διότι ἀρχὴν ἔχει τὸν νοῦν:-

Note that there is both essential and not essential reversion, but the latter is relational because it has the intellect as principle.

f. 137<sup>r</sup>

\*ὅτι ἀπ' ἐκείνου τὴν οὐσίαν ἔχει καὶ συγγενὲς εἶναι κατ' οὐσίαν καὶ ὅμοιον, καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα· οὐ καθ' ὁμοιότητα, ἀλλὰ κατ' οἰκειότητα καὶ ἔνωσιν ἢ σχέσιν, διότι προσεχῶς αὐτὸ τὸ (scr.: τοῦ M) εἶναι ἐξ ἐκείνου καὶ ἀμέσως καὶ διότι ἡ οὐσία αὐτοῦ παρ' ἐκείνου ἐστὶν καὶ τῆς οὐσίας αἴτιον ἐκεῖνο διὰ τὴν δύναμιν τὴν παραγαγοῦσαν τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ:-

Note that it (i.e. what reverts) has its being from it (i.e. that upon which it reverts) as well as the fact that it is by its essence cognate to it and similar, and suchlike; not according to (full) similitude, but according to kinship and union and relation, because it has its being proximately from it and immediately and because its being is from that and that is the cause of its being according to the power that produces its being.

f. 137<sup>v</sup>*ad prop. 38:*

\*ὅτι ἡ ἐπιστροφὴ τοῦ εἶ ἐστι καὶ διὰ τὸ εἶ καὶ πρὸς τὸ εἶ

Note that reversion is of well-being and because of well-being and towards well-being.

*ad prop. 39:*

\*ὅτι ἡ ἐπιστροφὴ οὐ μόνον τῆς οὐσίας ἀλλὰ καὶ γνώσεως:-

Note that there is not only reversion of being, but also of cognition.

*ad prop. 40:*

\*τίνα ἐστὶ τὰ παρ' ἑαυτῶν (scr.: ἑαυτοῦ M) ὑφιστάμενα ὅτι αὐθυπόστατα;- εἴ τι αὐθυπόστατον, ἐκεῖνο καὶ αὐταρκες, καὶ εἴ τι αὐταρκες, ἐκεῖνο καὶ αὐθυπόστατον:-

What are the beings that subsist by themselves? They are self-subsisting. If something is self-subsisting, it is also self-sufficient, and if something is self-sufficient, it is also self-subsistent.

f. 138<sup>r</sup>

\*ὅτι τὸ αὐθυπόστατον μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον καὶ τὸ πρῶτον οὐκ αὐθυπόστατον:-

Note that the self-subsistent comes after the First and that the First is not self-subsistent.

*ad prop. 41:*

\*ὅτι ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν παράγεσθαι λέγει τὰ καθ' ἑαυτὰ ὄντα καὶ ὑφεστώτα καὶ μὴ δεόμενα ἑτέρου εἰς τὸ εἶναι καὶ τὸ ὑφίστασθαι:-

Note that he says that those beings are produced by themselves that exist and subsist by themselves and do not need something else to be and to subsist.

*ad prop. 42:*

\*νοῦς ἑαυτὸν νοεῖ (scr.: ἑαυτόνῳ M) καὶ νοητὸν ἐστὶν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς νοῦς καὶ νοητὸν καὶ νοούμενον:-

The intellect thinks itself and is the intelligible of itself and the same intellect is both intelligible and thought.



**f. 138<sup>v</sup>**

·:τί τὸ ἴδιον τοῦ αὐθυποστάτου:-

What is the distinctive feature of the self-subsistent?

**f. 139<sup>r</sup>**

*ad prop. 47*, p. 46;33:

·:τὸ σύνθετον (scr.: δύνατον p.c. M) ἀντὶ ἀνομοιομεροῦς ἔλαβε:-

He took 'composite' for 'not of like parts'.

*ad prop. 48*:

·:πῶς τὸ μὴ αἰδίδιον οὐκ αὐθυπόστατόν. ὅτι δύο τρόποι καθ' οὓς τί ἐστὶ καὶ οὐκ αἰδίδιον:-

How is what is not perpetual not self-subsistent? That there are two modes according to which something can be non-perpetual.

**f. 140<sup>r</sup>**

*ad prop. 53*:

*title*: \* περὶ αἰώνος καὶ τῶν αἰωνίων

·:ὁ ἐν τῷ αἰωνίῳ αἶων (p. 50,28) ἀντὶ ἀσχέτου καὶ καθ' αὐτό:-

the eternity in the eternal thing instead of "without relation and on itself"

·: ὅτι ἡ μετάληψις σχέσιν δηλοῖ:-

Note that participation indicates a relation

\*Ἐνταῦθα ἀμέθεκτον λέγει τὸ καθ' αὐτὸ ὄν, οὐ τὸ μὴ μετεχόμενον ἀπλῶς· τὸ δὲ τοιοῦτον καὶ ἄσχετον ὡς καθ' αὐτὸ ὄν καὶ οὐ μεθεκτὸν ἢ ἐν ἐτέροις:-

He calls here what exists by itself unparticipated, not what is absolutely not participated; what is suchlike is also unrelated as it exists by itself and is not participable nor in other things.

**f. 140<sup>v</sup>**

*ad prop. 55*:

\*ὅτι ὁ χρόνος διττῶς λέγεται, ὁ μὲν ὡς ὅλος, ὁ δὲ ὡς μέρος:-

\*ὅτι διττὴ ἡ αἰδιότης, ἡ μὲν αἰώνιος, ἡ δὲ χρονική:-

Note that time is said in two modes, one as a whole, the other as part.

Note that sempiternity is twofold, one eternal, the other temporal.

*ad prop. 56:*

\*ὅτι περιέχεται τὰ δεύτερα ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ δυναμικῶς:-

Note that secondary beings are contained in the first by power.

\*ὅτι διὰ τὴν δύναμιν τὴν οὐσιώδη τοῦ παράγοντος / f. 141<sup>r</sup>/ αὐτῆς <τῆς> οὐσίας εἶναι λέγει {τοῦ παράγοντος} τοῦ παράγοντος τὸ παραγόμενον καὶ μετέχειν τῆς οὐσίας καὶ κατ'οὐσίαν ὑφessestῆκεναι:-

Note that he says that because of the essential power of the producer the product is of the being of the producer and participates in its being and subsists according to its being.

f. 143<sup>r</sup>

*ad prop. 65. p. 62.16–17:*

∴ τοῖς νοητῶς ὑφessestῆσιν ὁ λόγος ἀρμόζει οὗτος

This statement applies to what exists intelligibly.

f. 143<sup>v</sup>

*ad prop. 67:*

\*ὅτι τὸ εἶδος ὅλον καλεῖ καὶ ὁλότητα καὶ τὰ καθέκαστα καὶ ἄτομα μέρη:-

\*περὶ ὅλου καὶ {καὶ} ὁλότητος καὶ μεγέθους· πόσαι (scr.: πᾶσαι M) διαφοραὶ ὅλου καὶ ὁλότητος:-

\*τὸ κατὰ τι ταὐτὸν καὶ κατὰ τι τῶν ὅλων (scr.: ὄντων) ἐκβέβληκεν ἐν τῷ ξς':-<sup>11</sup>

Note that he calls the form a whole and wholeness and the particulars and individuals parts.

About the whole and wholeness and magnitude: how many differences of the whole and of wholeness.

What is the same in some respect and what is in some respect he removed from wholes in proposition 66.

11 M has only ξ, I changed it into ξς (= prop. 66). The reference seems to prop. 66, p. 62, 27 ἢ ταὐτὸν τι πέπονθεν and 30 ταὐτὰ ἐστὶ κατὰ τὸ ἓν. I modified ὄντων into ὅλων because the argument distinguishes things that are the same (or different) from things that are related as *wholes* and parts.

*ad prop. 68:*

·:ὅτι (scr.: τὸ M) ἔστι τι πρῶτον ὅλον καὶ δεύτερον ὅλον καὶ σύνθετον ὅλον:-

Note that there is some first whole and a second whole and a composite whole.

*ad prop. 69:*

\*ὅτι τὸ ἐκ τῶν μερῶν ὅλον δεύτερόν ἐστι τοῦ πρὸ τῶν μερῶν ὅλου:-

Note that the whole that consists of parts is inferior to the whole that is prior to parts.

**f. 144<sup>v</sup>**

*ad prop. 73:*

\*ὅτι μετὰ τὸ ὄν ἡ ὁλότης καὶ τὸ ὅλον· οὐ γὰρ πᾶν ὄν καὶ ὅλον ἐστίν:-

Note that wholeness and the whole come after being, for not every being is a whole.

**f. 145<sup>r</sup>**

*ad prop. 74:*

\*[ὡς] τὸ ὅλον τοῦ ὄντος ἐπέλαττον, οὕτω (scr.: οὐ γὰρ? M) τοῦ ὅλου τὸ εἶδος ἐπέλαττον· ἐπὶ πλεον ἄρα τὸ μὲν ὄν τοῦ ὅλου, τὸ δὲ ὅλον τοῦ εἶδους:- ὅτι πρὸ τῶν εἰδῶν τὸ ὅλον· ὅτι καὶ πρὸ [τῶν εἰδῶν τὸ ὄν]· διὸ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ νοῦ καὶ πρὸ τῆς οὐσίας:-

Just as the whole is less extensive than being, so the form is less extensive than the whole; therefore being is more extensive than the whole, the whole more than the form. Note that the whole is before the forms and that being too is before the forms; therefore it is before the intellect and before (its) substance.

**f. 146<sup>r</sup>**

*ad prop. 78–79:*

÷ διττὴν δύνάμιν λέγει τὴν τε δραστικὴν τοῦ δρῶντος αἰτίου καὶ τὴν κατ' ἐπιτηδεύουσα τοῦ πάσχοντος:-

He speaks of a twofold power: one is the effective power of the agent cause, the other the receptive power of what is acted upon.

·:ὅτι αἱ ἐνέργειαι (scr.: ἐνεργεῖαι M) δεύτεραι δυνάμεις εἰκότως λέγονται:-

Note that activities are rightly called second powers.

\*ὅτι ἡ δύναμις καθ' αὐτὸ (*sic*) ἡ ἀπλῶς καὶ κοινῶς λεγομένη δύναμις:-

Note that power in itself is absolutely power and what is commonly called power.

\*ὅτι ἡ τελεία δύναμις ἐγγὺς τῆς ἐνεργείας καὶ τοῦ ἐνεργεῖν ἢ ταὐτὴ τούτοις:-

Note that perfect power is close to act and acting or is identical with them.

**f. 146<sup>v</sup>**

\*ὅτι αἱ ἐνέργειαι αἱ λεγόμεναι δυνάμει κατὰ τὰς τελείας δυνάμεις λέγονται δυνάμεις:-

\*ὅτι καὶ ἡ [δύναμ]ις διχῶς λέγεται παρὰ τοῖς φιλοσόφοις καὶ τὸ δυνάμει διχῶς:-

\*ὅτι καὶ ἡ δύναμις δυνάμει λέγεται καὶ [τὸ] δυνάμει δύναμις:-

\*ἔοικεν ὁ Πρόκλος τὸ μὲν δυνάμει μοναχῶς λέγειν—καὶ γὰρ τὸ ἀτελὲς μόνον—, τὴν [δὲ δύναμιν διχῶς].:-

Note that the activities that are called “in potency” are called “powers” according to the perfect powers.

Note that ‘power’ is said by the philosophers in a twofold sense, and also ‘in potency’.

Note that also ‘power’ can be said to be ‘in potency’ and ‘in potency’ ‘power’.

Proclus seems to speak of ‘in potency’ in a single sense—for only the imperfect <power is in potency>—and of ‘power’ in a twofold sense.

**f. 147<sup>r</sup>**

*ad prop. 84:*

\*[ὅτι] τὰ ἀσώματα καὶ νοητὰ ἄπειρα (*scr.*: ἅπερ M) λέγει οὐ κατὰ πλῆθος ἢ μέγεθος ἀλλὰ κατὰ δύναμιν μόνον:-

Note that he calls the incorporeal and intelligible beings infinite not according to magnitude or multitude, but only according to power.

**f. 147<sup>v</sup>**

*ad prop. 86:*

\*ὅτι τριχῶς τὸ ἄπειρον λέγει:-

Note that he speaks of ‘infinite’ in three senses.

f. 148<sup>r</sup>*ad prop.* 87–88:

\*ὅτι τὸ ὄν προαιώνιον· καὶ ὁ πρῶτος ἄρα θεὸς προαιώνιος:-

\*ὅτι τὸ μετεχόμενον τοῦ αἰῶνος μετὰ τὸν αἰῶνα ἔσται καὶ δεύτερον ἐκείνου· οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸ μετεχόμενον χρόνου ἐστὶ καὶ δεύτερον τοῦ χρόνου:-

Note that being is before eternity; the first God is therefore also ‘before eternity’.

Note that what participates in eternity is after eternity and inferior to it; hence what participates in time is also inferior to time.

*ad prop.* 89:

title: \*περὶ ἀπείρου καὶ πέρατος

f. 148<sup>v</sup>*ad prop.* 90:

\*τὸ πρότερον [scr.: πρῶτον] τοῦ περατοειδοῦς (-δῆς?) τὸ ἄπειρον καὶ πᾶσα ἀπειρία πέρατος:-

The first before the limited is the infinite and every infinitude is before the limit.

f. 149<sup>r</sup>*ad prop.* 94

\*ὅτι πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἡ ἀπειρία.

Note that infinity is before eternity.

f. 150<sup>r</sup>*ad prop.* 99:

\*ὅτι τὸ ἀμέθεκτον ἀγέννητον λέγει.

Note that he calls the unparticipated ungenerated.

\*ζητητέον ἐνταῦθα τὸ ἀμέθεκτον τί σημαίνει, πότερον τὸ μὴ μετέχεσθαι ἢ τὸ μὴ μετέχειν. ἔοικε γὰρ ὁ λόγος τὸ μὴ μετέχειν ἄλλου σημαίνειν, μὴδὲ ἀπ’ ἄλλης αἰτίας ὑφίστασθαι.

One must investigate here what the meaning of ‘unparticipated’ is, whether it is not to be participated or not to participate. For the argu-

ment seems that it means not to participate in something else, neither to exist from some other cause.

f. 150<sup>v</sup>

*ad prop. 100*, p. 90,5:

∴ τῆς ταυτότητος αἴτιον τὸ ἓν λέγεται:-

By 'cause of identity' is meant the One.

*ad 100*, p. 90,14–16:

∴ ὅτι τὸ πρὸς τι πρῶτον ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις:-

Note that what is in relation is found in the others.

f. 152<sup>v</sup>

*ad prop. 109*:

∴ ὅτι τὸ μετέχον μερικὸν καθὸ μετέχει:-

Note that what participates is particular insofar as it participates.

f. 154<sup>r</sup>

*ad prop. 116*:

\*ὅτι ἂς ἀμεθέκτους<sup>12</sup> εἶπε πρότ(ερον) ὄντας (*sic*) ἐν ἐκάστη σειρᾷ μονάδας ἢ ἐνάδας, ταύτας νῦν μετεχομένας λέγει διὰ τὸ πρῶτιστον ἓν:-

Note: what he first said were unparticipated in every series, namely monads or henads, he now calls participated because of the first One.

f. 155<sup>v</sup>

*ad prop. 121*:

ὅτι ἡ ὑπαρξις (scr.: προτ(. ) M) τῷ ἀγαθῷ (scr.: ἀγαθοῦ M) χαρακτηρίζεται:-

Note: existence is characterized by the Good.

12 ἂς μεθέκτους *sic* M. In *prop. 100* Proclus argues that every series is referable to one unparticipated monad (l. 6). Now it is said that all henads or monads can be participated. For ὄντας one expects οὐσας.

## 2 Part II: Comments on the Scholia

### 2.1 *The Problem of Participation*

In many scholia the scholiast discusses the problem of participation, and in particular the question of how Proclus can affirm that the first cause is ‘unparticipated’, whereas he admits himself that all beings somehow participate in the One, as in the first line of the first proposition: “Every multitude somehow participates in the One.” To solve this problem the scholiast<sup>13</sup> notices that the term ‘unparticipated’ is used in many senses (sch. ad prop. 24–25). In one (radical) sense ‘unparticipated’ means that something cannot at all be participated and is not participated by anything; in another (weaker) sense the term is used to indicate that a cause is transcendent, superior, out of range of what participates in it. When we take the term in this second sense, ‘unparticipated’ does not indicate a total removal of every form of participation.

As the scholiast observes: “Note that what is unparticipated is not said to be unparticipated because of negation or removal of all participation or union or relation, but because of superiority or excellence. For every superiority is found in relation and respect” (sch. 8). It is in this weaker sense that Proclus uses the term. As the scholiast notices again at prop. 99: “One must investigate here what the meaning of ‘unparticipated’ is, whether it is not to be participated [in the passive sense] or not to participate [in the active sense]. For the argument seems that it means not to participate in something else, neither to exist from some other cause.” Notice further the scholium at prop. 24, where Proclus distinguishes between the participant, what is participated and the unparticipated: “Here ‘unparticipated’ indicates what is not participated and what exists before what is participated”, but the scholiast adds: “Note that the first is called participated as pertaining to all, not to something.” In sum, “it is said that the first is both participated and unparticipated (in the sense of) transcending all things.” The scholiast also notices that Proclus sometimes calls the monads (henads) of each series unparticipated (as in prop. 100), but later seems to retract his view, insisting that all henads except the One are participable (prop. 116).

A crucial text for the scholiast is prop. 28, p. 32, 20–21: ἀλλὰ μὴν ἀνάγκη τὸ αἰτιατὸν τοῦ αἰτίου μετέχειν, ὡς ἐκείθεν ἔχον τὴν οὐσίαν, on which he comments as follows: “How the effect derives its being from there has been shown; how it participates in the cause he now explains: for it is not as if it were a part of its

13 In this concluding summary I mainly use the scholia of the first(\*) scholiast. As for the other scholiast (:), he comments that “the One is somehow participated, not absolutely, whereas it is absolutely unparticipated”.

being, but as being united with it according to causality and the causal relation; for the effect's being and its essence and existence are because of this cause, so that what participates in its cause participates in a relation (to that cause), for the cause is thought to be in relation."<sup>14</sup> Participation indicates above all a participation in being. For something to participate in the First means to stand in a causal relation to it and to partake in being that comes from the First: ἐκείθεν ἔχον τὴν οὐσίαν. The scholiast keeps saying that "participation indicates a relation" (ὅτι ἡ μετάληψις σχέσιν δηλοῖ), "that participation indicates some communion, and that what participates has something in common with what is participated" (at prop. 28). "Note that it (i.e. what reverts) has its being from it (i.e. that upon which it reverts) and is by its essence cognate to it and similar, and suchlike; not according to (full) similitude, but according to kinship and union and relation, because it has its being proximately from it and immediately and because its being is from that and that is the cause of its being according to the power that produces its being" (at prop. 34). But he qualifies "not according to full similitude", thus also in sch. at prop. 18: "Note that, in case of sharing of being, something is better, something less, and something primary, something secondary, and something superior, something inferior, and that there is no equality and identity in them, nor are they all said to be one." Likewise, though the effect is related to its cause, the scholiast insists that the First, as the producing cause, is "unordered and uncoordinated with respect to what is produced" (sch. at prop. 7); "that it is unrelated and uncoordinated and beyond" (sch. at prop. 8), and for that reason may be called "unparticipated." The First stands in a relation to what it is caused, and yet is unrelated, uncaused. See also sch. at prop. 53: "He calls what exists in itself unparticipated, not that it is absolutely not participated; what is suchlike is also unrelated (ἄσχετος) as it exists in itself and is not participable nor in other things."

Whatever the attempts of the scholiast may be, he does not go much further than the paradoxical conclusion that the One is both participated and unparticipated, both related and unrelated, depending on how one understands 'un/participated'. However, he seems to indicate another way out of this paradox in the scholium in which he quotes Iamblichus and speaks of two kinds of generation: one without relation, another relative (see below).

We find a similar perplexity about how to understand ἀμέθεκτον in the *Refutation* of Nicholas of Methone.<sup>15</sup> Already in his preface, Nicholas criticizes Proclus for this reason: "This philosopher, at the very beginning of the enterprise

14 See also sch. at prop. 8 and at prop. 12 where same text is quoted.

15 On how Nicholas discusses Proclus' view on participation, see J. Robinson, "Dionysius Against Proclus: the Apophatic Critique in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation of the Ele-*



he set forth, says in the first proposition that every multitude in some way participates in the One, [...] and in the fifth he shows that the multitude participates in the One in every way, so that the One is participated by the multitude in every way, and, proceeding to the 24th chapter, he proves that the first One, which is only One, is entirely unparticipated, as it is, manifestly, not participated either by any multitude or by any one; and thus he is convicted of overturning himself [...] in saying that the same thing is altogether unparticipated and participated.”<sup>16</sup> If Proclus admits that “all things participate in the First”, “he clearly agrees with all who say it is participable. Therefore, the many series and their principles are superfluous. And since the One and First is conceded to be participated, we are far from supposing that others besides this are unparticipated, unless then as even non-existent.”<sup>17</sup> Therefore, “it is not at all out of place to say that the divine itself is participated, being divided indivisibly and being participated by all things in the measure in which each is able to participate in it.”<sup>18</sup>

Although Nicholas and the scholiast come to the same conclusion, namely that the First cause is both unparticipated and participated, I see no influence of Nicholas’ arguments in the scholia nor in Nicholas from the scholia. After all, that conclusion was generally admitted in patristic thought. What is lacking in Nicholas is a discussion of the meaning of the term “unparticipated” and above all the connection made between participation and relation.<sup>19</sup>

---

ments of Theology”, in D.D. Butorac, D.A. Layne (eds), *Proclus and his Legacy* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 249–269, in particular p. 256 ff.

- 16 See Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation of Proclus’ Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas’ life and works by A.D. Angelou (Athens / Leiden: The Academy of Athens Athens / Brill, 1984), intr. p. 4.3–13 (translation J. Robinson, *Nicholas of Methone’s Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th Century Byzantium*. A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Graduate Program in Medieval Studies, Notre Dame (Indiana), 2014.). E. Dodds refers to this criticism on p. 211 (*ad prop.* 22): “[...] [Proclus] lays himself open to charges of inconsistency: τὸ ἓν is ἀμέθεκτον, yet we have already been told (*prop.* 1) that πᾶν πλῆθος μετέχει πῇ τοῦ ἑνός and cf. I. 6 of the present proposition. Nicholas makes great play with this difficulty; but the answer is that a term which is *proprie* ἀμέθεκτον is yet indirectly μεθεκτόν through the μετεχόμενα which it generates (cf. *prop.* 56).” Nicholas, however, considers these indirect μετεχόμενα, such as Being, Life and the different henads of the series as non-existent (ἀνυποστάτους)—in other words, purely conceptual distinctions (see also n. 17).
- 17 See Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 100, p. 98.6–10 (translation Robinson).
- 18 See Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 63, p. 65.7–10 (translation Robinson).
- 19 The term σχέσις is used several times by Nicholas, but in the sense of “mere relations” without any ontological reality. See Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 59, p. 62.3 (on intermediate entities): μόνας ψιλὰς ἀναπλάττων σχέσεις πραγμάτων ἐρήμους; 67, p. 69.9 (on the

The discussion on participation becomes extremely important in the 14th century in the discussions around Palamas. Palamas' view is another attempt to solve the question of how God, the unparticipated cause beyond all being, can be participated and become the being of all beings. He distinguishes between the ἀμέθεκτος ὑπερουσία of God and its δυνάμεις τε καὶ ἐνέργειαι that can be participated by the created beings.<sup>20</sup> His acceptance of something μετὰ τὸν unparticipated God and creatures gave rise to many criticisms among his opponents. Nikephoros Gregoras was certainly right to have seen in Palamas a presence of Proclus' teaching on participation.<sup>21</sup> He quotes the full text of proposition 24, where a distinction is made between the unparticipated, the participated, and the participating things, and expresses his surprise that somebody who is so much against the influence of pagan philosophy, as is Palamas, could be so close to Proclus.<sup>22</sup>

One remarkable item in this context is the scholium at prop. 12: "Note that he declares both here and in prop. 28 that the first cause and the primary Good are participated. If this is the case, in what sense is the First 'unparticipated'? In an absolute sense or according to privation?" The last formulation (παντελῶς ἢ κατὰ στέρησιν;) is very interesting. Proclus is the first to have coined the expression παντελῶς ἀμέθεκτον (see TP II, p. 22,21 and p. 57, 21–22). Following Proclus, the Pseudo-Dionysius distinguished between God's unparticipated giving of light and the different participations in it. See *De eccl. hier.*, 38,7–8, a text often used by Palamas and his opponents: ἡ τῶν νοερῶν ὄψεων ἀνομοιότης τὴν ὑπερπλήρη τῆς πατρικῆς ἀγαθότητος φωτοδοσίαν ἢ παντελῶς ἀμέθεκτον ποιεῖ καὶ πρὸς τὴν αὐτῶν ἀντιτυπίαν ἀδιάδοτον ἢ τὰς μετουσίας ποιεῖ διαφόρους. Follow-

---

whole before parts): ὧν αἱ ὁλότητες σχέσεις μόνον εἰσὶν ἐν πράγμασιν, ἔχουσί πως πρὸς ἄλληλα θεωρούμεναι, οὐκ αὐταὶ οὖσαι πράγματα; and 66, p. 69.25: σχέσεις ψιλαὶ ὑποκειμένοις ἑτέροις ἐνθεωρούμεναι.

20 See in particular Gregory Palamas, *Pro hesychastis* 3, ed. P.K. Chrestou, Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμά Συγγράμματα, ed. P.K. Chrestou, vol. 1 (Thessalonike: Kyromanos, 1988<sup>2</sup>), pp. 615–694 3,2,23–24. On Palamas and participation see E. Perl, "St Gregory Palamas and the Metaphysics of Creation," in *Dionysius* 14(1990), pp. 105–130; J. Demetracopoulos, "Palamas Transformed: Palamite Interpretations of the Distinction between God's 'Essence' and 'Energies' in Late Byzantium", in M. Hinterberger, C. Schabel (eds), *Greeks, Latins, and Intellectual History 1204–1500* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), pp. 263–372.

21 Palamas' main authority is (Ps.-)Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, ed. B.R. Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum* 1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990), p. 222.16: μεθεκτῶς δὲ τὰς ἐκδιδομένας ἐκ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀμεθέκτου προνοητικὰς δυνάμεις (a very Proclean passage!).

22 See Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, ed. L. Schopen (Bonn: Weber, 1830), *Logos* 23.2 and 35.15–17 with quotation of the full text of prop. 24. See the contribution of Börje Bydén in this volume.

ing Dionysius, Maximus Confessor in *Amb. ad Ion.* 45, 15, 11–12 distinguishes a participation according to presence or privation (κατὰ τὴν ἔξιν ἢ τὴν στέρησιν) from what is absolutely unparticipated (παντελῶς ἀμεθέκτου κατὰ φύσιν), again a text often used in the Palamite controversy. John Kapariossotes summarizes (*contra Pal.*, 2, 7, 43–48) Palamas' views as follows: ὅτι ἡ μὲν θεία οὐσία ἀμέθεκτός ἐστι παντελῶς, ἡ δὲ θεία ἐνέργεια μεθεκτὴ. And he criticizes this view because, as he says, “if the divine cause were absolutely unparticipated, it would not care about us.” If, however, it becomes our cause, it will somehow communicate with us according to the relation existing between what is cause and what is caused (τῇ κατὰ τὸ αἷτιον καὶ αἰτιατὸν σχέσει) and he concludes that where there is communication, there is participation (ἐνθα δὲ κοινωνία, καὶ μετοχὴ τις οὐκ ἄπαστι). One has the impression that this opponent of Palamas read the scholia on Proclus.

For these reasons, I first thought that the scholia in M related to the debate around Palamas' position. However, if the main scholia(\*) come from the model of M, they cannot be dated to the 14th century. Most probably they were found in a manuscript that belonged to the 12th century. As said before, manuscript M represents a text tradition from the school of Psellos. One may therefore suppose that the original group of scholia come from that school too. The text in M was radically corrected in the early 14th century (before 1358, when a copy, *Bodleian. Laud. graec.* 18, was made). The corrector used a manuscript of the tradition of Nicholas of Methone. He also added titles from that tradition and may have been responsible for some marginal and intertextual notes. As for Nikephoros Gregoras, he certainly used a manuscript of the Nicholas-tradition for his Proclus quotations, not the *Marcianus* or any of its descendants.<sup>23</sup>

## 2.2 *The Iamblichus Fragment*

On f. 136<sup>r</sup> one reads a scholium about Iamblichus' conception of causal generation. The context is prop. 30 where it is said that what is produced “both remains in the producing cause and proceeds from it”:

Ἰαμβλῖχος δίττας λέγει τὰς ἀπογεννήσεις, {τὴν θε<sup>24</sup> (?) } τὴν μὲν ἐν ἑαυτῷ μένουσαν, τὴν δὲ ἔξω προϊούσαν καὶ κατὰ πρόοδον, καὶ τὴν μὲν ἄσχετον, τὴν δὲ σχετικὴν.

23 On Gregoras copy of the *Elementatio* see Steel, “La tradition du texte”, 37–38.

24 I could not make sense of the addition τὴν θε, which is also found in the copy of M, Par. gr. 2028.

Iamblichus speaks of two kinds of generation: one remains within one-self, the other proceeds outwards and according to procession, and one is without relation, the other is relative.

This reference to Iamblichus is surprising, as this doctrine is nowhere else attested. The closest parallel I could find is in a quotation of Iamblichus by Simplicius, *In Cat.* 135.23–25. In this text Iamblichus gives a metaphysical explanation for how the power of the One produces the two types of quantity, discrete and continuous: “According to its activity that stays within, it produces discrete quantity; according to its proceeding activity, continuous quantity. Since it both remains and proceeds together, it generates both.” (κατὰ μὲν τὴν ἐστῶσαν αὐτοῦ ἐνέργειαν τὸ διωρισμένον, κατὰ δὲ τὴν προϊούσαν τὸ συνεχὲς δημιουργεῖ· ἐπεὶ δὲ ἅμα καὶ μένει καὶ πρόεισιν, τὰ δύο ἀπογεννᾷ.) The distinction between an activity staying within the cause (as it were inherent in it) and its activity going outwards is often found in Proclus and very often in Pseudo-Simplicius, *On the Soul* (probably following Iamblichus). See, for instance, Proclus, *In Tim.* 3, 221.3–4: ὡς γὰρ αὐτὸς νοήσας ποιεῖ καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς ἔνδον ἐνεργείας ἀπογεννᾷ τὴν ἔξω προϊούσαν, and Ps.-Simplicius, *In de an.* 225.24–25: τὰ δὲ νοητικὰ ὑφέϊται τῶν νοητῶν ὡς εἴσω μερόντων προϊόντα εἰς τὰ ἔξω.

Is it possible that someone, having read this section in Simplicius' *In Cat.* commentary, attributed this view to Iamblichus? Could it have been Psellos? Psellos expresses his admiration for the Proclean doctrine about “remaining, proceeding, and reverting”. He quotes the full text of prop. 35 and calls it the core (κεφάλαιον) of Hellenic theology and underlines its contribution to Christian doctrine, in particular about the Trinity.<sup>25</sup> But one could not exclude the possibility that the scholium is much older and comes from the Alexandrian tradition of the text.

*To conclude*, the scholia in M throw a fascinating light on the discussion on participation in the period between Psellos and the debate around Palamas. They are, in their different layers, both precursors of that debate and contemporary with it. They show again the lasting fascination for Proclus' theological thought, which, through centuries of reading Dionysian writings, had indirectly impregnated Byzantine intellectual life deeply.

25 See Michale Psellos, *Philosophia Minora*. Vol. II. *Opuscula psychologica, theologica, daemonologica*. ed D.J. O'Meara (Leipzig: Teubner, 1989), p. 118.4–17.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

#### Manuscripts

- Proclus, *Elementatio theologica*  
 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud. gr. 18  
 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 1842  
 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 2028  
 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 2045  
 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 2423  
 Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, gr. Z 512 (coll. 678)

#### Printed Sources

- Bibliothecae Diui Marci Venetiarum codices graeci manuscripti*. Volumen 11: *Thesaurus Antiquus. Codices 300–625*, ed. E. Mioni, Roma, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1985  
 (Ps.-)Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, ed. B.R. Suchla, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1990, pp. 107–231.  
 Gregory Palamas, *Pro hesychastis* 3, ed. P.K. Chrestou, Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα, ed. P.K. Chrestou, vol. 1, Thessalonike, Kyromanos, 1988.  
 Gregory Palamas, *Contra Nicephorum Gregoram* 2, ed. P.K. Chrestou, in Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα, ed. P.K. Chrestou, vol. 4, Thessalonike, Kyromanos, 1988.  
 Michael Psellos, *Philosophia Minora*. Vol. 11. *Opuscula psychologica, theologica, daemonologica*. ed D.J. O'Meara, Leipzig, Teubner, 1989.  
 Nicholas of Methone, *Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου* / *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas' life and works by A.D. Angelou, Athens / Leiden, The Academy of Athens Athens / Brill, 1984.  
 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, ed. L. Schopen, Bonn, Weber, 1830.  
 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. and transl. E.R. Dodds, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963<sup>2</sup>.

### Secondary Sources

- Bydén, B., "Proclus (and Nicholas of Methone) in the Hesychast Controversy", in this volume, pp. 400–421.  
 Demetracopoulos, J., "Palamas Transformed: Palamite Interpretations of the Distinction between God's 'Essence' and 'Energies' in Late Byzantium", in M. Hinterberger, C. Schabel (eds), *Greeks, Latins, and Intellectual History 1204–1500* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), pp. 263–372.  
 Perl, E., "St Gregory Palamas and the Metaphysics of Creation", in *Dionysius* 14 (1990), 105–130; "Palamas Transformed: Palamite Interpretations of the Distinction be-

tween God's 'Essence' and 'Energies' in Late Byzantium", in M. Hinterberger, C. Schabel (eds), *Greeks, Latins, and Intellectual History 1204–1500*, Leuven, Peeters, 2011, pp. 263–372.

Robinson, J., *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th Century Byzantium*. A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Graduate Program in Medieval Studies, Notre Dame (Indiana), 2014.

Robinson, J., "Dionysius Against Proclus: The Apophatic Critique in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation of the Elements of Theology*", in D.D. Butorac, D.A. Layne (eds), *Proclus and his Legacy*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2017, pp. 249–269.

Steel, C., "La tradition du texte de l'*Elementatio Theologica* de Proclus", in G. Aubry, L. Brisson, P. Hoffman, L. Lavaud (eds), *Les Éléments de théologie de Proclus: Interprétations, réceptions antiques et modernes*, Paris, Hermann, 2021, pp. 27–67.

## Proclus (and Nicholas of Methone) in the Hesychast Controversy

Börje Bydén

University of Padua

We<sup>1</sup> do not hear much of Proclus during the fourteenth-century Hesychast controversy, but we do hear mention of Pseudo-Dionysius, so I suppose the spirit of Proclus haunts this episode.<sup>2</sup>

This is what Ken Parry wrote in a brief overview of Proclean studies in Byzantium published a few years ago. Parry's supposition is undoubtedly correct. The interpretation of Ps.-Dionysian apophaticism lay at the very heart of the controversy, since it appeared to define the possible modes and methods of human participation in God. And behind Ps.-Dionysius loomed Proclus.

To what extent the main protagonists of the controversy were also under the direct influence of the Platonic Successor is a question as thorny as it is intriguing. They were obviously familiar with his name. It crops up a couple of times in the correspondence between Gregory Palamas and Barlaam of Calabria.<sup>3</sup> Both times the reference is to a couple of anecdotes reported by Marinus about phenomena observed in the vicinity of Proclus' head: the light that surrounded it during a public lecture and the Aesculapian serpent that visited it shortly before the death of its possessor.<sup>4</sup> Palamas connects the two anecdotes (obviously reinterpreting the serpent in a Christian sense) and suggests

1 A first version of this paper was presented at a workshop devoted to "Proclus in Byzantium", organized by Charles Barber and Stephen Gersh at the University of Notre Dame's London Centre in the Spring of 2013. I am grateful to Joshua Robinson for the opportunity to revise it for publication in this volume.

2 K. Parry, "Reading Proclus Diadochus in Byzantium", in H. Tarrant, D. Baltzly (eds), *Reading Plato in Antiquity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), pp. 223–235, here p. 230.

3 Gregory Palamas, *Epistula 1 ad Barlaam*, ed. J. Meyendorff, in P.K. Chrestou (ed.), Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα, vol. 1 (Thessalonike: Kyromanos, 1988<sup>2</sup>), 47, p. 252, l. 27–253, l. 11; Barlaam of Calabria, *Epistula 3*, ed. G. Schirò (Palermo: Istituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neogreci, 1954), l. 325–331 TLG.

4 Marinus, *Vita Procli*, ed. H.-D. Saffrey, A.-P. Segonds (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002), p. 23.14–29; p. 30.12–21.

that they reveal the true provenance of pagan “enlightenment”, for which Barlaam had expressed his admiration. In his reply, Barlaam sarcastically hints that the “uncreated” light experienced by the Hesychasts may be a similar phenomenon. These passages only illustrate the fact that in fourteenth-century Byzantium Proclus’ name was indeed a byword for all the dazzling and dangerous temptations of pagan philosophy.

To what extent Barlaam made actual use of Proclus’ works in the context of the controversy is not so easy to determine, since most of his writings from this part of his career (notably, *Against the Messalians*) were destroyed in 1341.<sup>5</sup> Still, Michele Trizio has not only discovered tacit borrowings from the Platonic Successor’s commentaries on Plato’s *Alcibiades* and *Parmenides* in Barlaam’s letters to Ignatius (*Ep.* 4–5); he has also identified a number of probable Proclean sources for the Calabrian’s lost works, on the basis of reports in Palamas’ works.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, John Demetracopoulos has suggested that the notion of the universal usefulness of dialectic (also in theology) expressed in Barlaam’s earlier (mid-1330s) treatises *Against the Latins* (1, 1.3 and 2, 1.9) is “inherited” from Proclus’ description of Socratic dialectic.<sup>7</sup> Demetracopoulos also suspects Proclean influence (from the *Platonic Theology*) on some of Barlaam’s terminology in the first treatise *Against the Latins*.<sup>8</sup> As for Barlaam’s only surviving work

5 R. Sinkewicz, “The Solutions Addressed to George Lapithes by Barlaam the Calabrian and Their Philosophical Context”, in *Mediaeval Studies* 43(1981), pp. 151–217, here p. 192.

6 M. Trizio, “‘Una è la verità che pervade ogni cosa’: La sapienza profana nelle opere perdute di Barlaam Calabro”, in A. Rigo (ed.), *Byzantine Theology and its Philosophical Background* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 108–140.

7 In his commentary on the *Parmenides*? He does not say. Cf. J.A. Demetracopoulos, “Thomas Aquinas’ Impact on Late Byzantine Theology and Philosophy: The Issues of Method or ‘Modus Sciendi’ and ‘Dignitas Hominis’”, in A. Speer, P. Steinkrüger (eds), *Knotenpunkt Byzanz: Wissensformen und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 333–410, here pp. 349–350.

8 J.A. Demetracopoulos, “Further Evidence On the Ancient, Patristic, and Byzantine Sources of Barlaam the Calabrian’s *Contra Latinos*: À propos de A. Fyrigos (ed.), *Barlaam Calabro, Opere contro i Latini*”, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 96(2003), pp. 83–122, here p. 85. The phrase concerned is τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὖσιν ἄκρα in the sense of τὰ περὶ Θεόν. Demetracopoulos likewise argues (“Υστεροβυζαντινὴ κοσμολογία: ἡ κριτικὴ τοῦ Γρηγορίου Παλαμά στὴ διδασκαλία τῶν Πλωτίνου καὶ Πρόκλου περὶ κοσμικῆς ψυχῆς”, in *Φιλοσοφία: Ἐπετηρὶς τοῦ Κέντρου Ἑρευνῆς τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Φιλοσοφίας* 31(2001), pp. 175–191, here pp. 186–187) that some of the terminology in Palamas’ description of the pagan conception of a world soul in *Capita CL* 3 (especially 3.35–40) is owed to Proclus’ *Platonic Theology* (1.14; 1.15; 1.27; 3.12; 5.31) and *Elements of Theology* (prop. 11). But as he himself notes elsewhere (“Γρηγορίου Παλαμά Κεφάλαια ἑκατὸν πενήκοντα, 1–14: Ἐπερὶ κόσμου, Κείμενο, μετάφραση καὶ ἐρμηνευτικὰ σχόλια”, in *Βυζαντιακά* 20(2000), pp. 295–348, here p. 321; pp. 324–325), some of this terminology is used differently by Proclus and some of it is Neoplatonic commonplace.



in Greek with a more narrowly philosophical content, *The Solutions to George Lapithes* (mid-1330s), Robert Sinkewicz pointed out in a seminal paper that it features some distinctly Proclean terminology and occasional word-to-word correspondence to passages in Syrianus, Proclus' revered teacher (*In Metaph.*).<sup>9</sup>

If, however, we limit ourselves to extant and printed texts related to the controversy, there is really only one author who makes explicit reference to Proclus' doctrines. This is Nikephoros Gregoras, in two passages of his *Roman History* (Logos 23.2 and Logos 35.15–17). And these are the passages on which this paper will focus.<sup>10</sup>

Gregoras, it seems, harboured no doubts that Proclus exerted a direct influence over his main adversary, Palamas. In fact, he claims that the latter's doctrines are partly copied from the former's works. To ascertain the truth of this claim would require a more extensive study than I have been able to carry out for this occasion, but I will at least try to describe with some precision what it is in Palamas' doctrines that Gregoras accuses him of having lifted from Proclus. The claim is made explicitly in Logos 23.2 and recurs implicitly in Logos 35.15–17.<sup>11</sup> Both times it refers specifically to Palamas' doctrine of participation, at which, Gregoras suggests, his adversary has arrived by adopting some of the least palatable views of Proclus, although his error has been compounded by additions of his own, of which the Platonists would never have approved.<sup>12</sup>

9 Sinkewicz, "The Solutions", pp. 174–182.

10 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, ed. L. Schopen, vol. 2 (Bonn: Weber, 1830), p. 1094.7–1111.12, and Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historiae Byzantinae libri postremi*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn: Weber, 1855), p. 481.22–483.11. For the sake of completeness I should also mention the quotation of Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*, 139 (ed. A.D. Angelou, Athens / Leiden: Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984, p. 129, l. 13–25), in a polemic against John vi Kantakouzenos, preserved in Vat. gr. 1096 and tentatively attributed by its editor, Polemis (*Theologica varia inedita saeculi XIV*, ed. I.D. Polemis, [Turnhout: Brepols, 2012]), to John Kyparissiotis, but more likely to be the work of the scribe himself, Gregoras' erstwhile student Isaac Argyros (see A. Gioffreda, M. Trizio, "Nicholas of Methone, Procopius of Gaza and Proclus of Lycia", in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes*, Vol. 2. *Translations and Acculturations* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2020), pp. 94–135, here pp. 124–128). Proclus is mentioned in this work (*Adversus Cantacuzenum* 158.1 TLG), but only in his capacity as author of the work refuted in the work from which the author of *Adversus Cantacuzenum* quotes (which the latter apparently believed to have been written by Procopius of Gaza: for the latest contribution to the debate over the authorship of Nicholas' *Refutation*, see Gioffreda, Trizio, "Nicholas of Methone").

11 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.2.6, p. 1103.1–6: Ἀλλὰ τοῦτον [sc. τὸν Πρόκλον] ὁ Χριστιανὸς ἐμιμήσατο Παλαμᾶς ἀμαθῶς τε καὶ κακοτρόπως [...]; Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historiae Byzantinae*, 35.15, p. 482.5–8: σκεπτέον οὖν καὶ ὅπως συμφώνως ἐκείνῳ [sc. τῷ Πρόκλῳ] καὶ Παλαμᾶς [...] ἐδογμάτισεν [...]. See also n. 62 below.

12 It seems to have been Gregory Akindynos who first thought of comparing Palamas' views on participation to those of Proclus. Unfortunately, the work (ἐτέρα ἐκθεσις καὶ ἀνασκευὴ

These passages in the *Roman History* were written from the vantage-point of an already defeated man, in the summer of 1352 and later.<sup>13</sup> The final act of the Hesychast controversy had been played out in the early summer of 1351, when emperor John VI Kantakouzenos summoned all the bishops to a council in the palace of Blachernai, an event that Gregoras described as a Robber Council (ληστρικὸν συνέδριον),<sup>14</sup> in allusion to the council of Ephesus in 449.<sup>15</sup> The outcome of the council was a foregone conclusion. Kantakouzenos was a long-standing champion of Hesychasm. His intention was to restore peace to the divided church by having all its leading members ratify the decisions already made by two preceding councils, in 1341 and 1347. Since then, two successive Palamite patriarchs had worked indefatigably to fill the episcopal sees with dependable supporters. Palamas himself had been made archbishop of Thessaloniki. Most serious opponents had been put out of action. Barlaam of Calabria was chased into exile already in 1341. Patriarch John XIV Kalekas was deposed in 1347, the year of the plague, and died a few months later. Gregory Akindynos, too, shuffled off this mortal coil in 1348. It was left to Gregoras to speak on behalf of the anti-Palamites at Blachernai, although recurrent bouts of headache occasionally forced him to hand over the word to his students and other associates. In the end, he was excommunicated and placed under house arrest in the Chora monastery.

At the last session of the council, the triumphant Palamites made their first serious effort to codify their doctrines in the name of the Holy Orthodox Catholic Church. The results of their labours, published in the Synodal Tome,<sup>16</sup> were

---

τῶν τοῦ Παλαμά πονηροτάτων αἰρέσεων) in which he is reported by J.A. Demetracopoulos to have done so is also still unedited, so I have not been able to make out what if any relation his comparison bears to that of Gregoras. Demetracopoulos refers to an edition then in preparation by J. Nadal Cañellas. Cf. J.A. Demetracopoulos, "Palamas Transformed: Palamite Interpretations of the Distinction between God's 'Essence' and 'Energies' in Late Byzantium", in M. Hinterberger, C. Schabel (eds), *Greeks, Latins, and Intellectual History 1204–1500* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), pp. 263–372, here p. 277 and n. 35.

13 According to J.L. van Dieten, Logoi 18–27.8 were composed during Gregoras' house arrest between June and August 1352. J.L. van Dieten, *Nikephoros Gregoras, Rhomäische Geschichte / Historia Rhomaike*, vol. 4 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1994), pp. 1–5.

14 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 20.7.8, p. 995.13, *et alibi*.

15 On the other hand, it is celebrated by some modern Palamites as the concluding part of the Ninth Oecumenical Council—the Eighth being the council of Constantinople in 879.

16 Edited by I.N. Karmiris and most recently by F. Lauritzen. Cf. I.N. Karmiris, *Τὰ Δογματικά καὶ Συμβολικά Μνημεία τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, vol. 1 (Athens: s.n., 1952), pp. 310–342; F. Lauritzen, "Synod of 1351", in A. Melloni (ed.), *The Great Councils of the Orthodox Churches: From Constantinople 861 to Constantinople 1872* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), pp. 179–218.

summarized in six paragraphs by one prominent 20th-century orthodox theologian and Palamite scholar as follows:<sup>17</sup>

1. There is a distinction between Divine Essence (οὐσία) and Divine Energy (ἐνέργεια). They differ from each other in that the Divine Energy is participated (μετέχεται) and divided indivisibly, and is named and somehow comprehended, albeit dimly, from its effects, whereas the Divine Essence is unparticipated (ἀμέθεκτος), undivided and nameless, that is, completely above names and incomprehensible.<sup>18</sup>
2. The Divine Energy is uncreated (ἄκτιστος).<sup>19</sup>
3. This does not give rise to any complexity in God.<sup>20</sup>
4. The Divine and uncreated Energy is called “Divinity” (θείότης) by the Saints.<sup>21</sup>
5. We know that the Divine Essence and the Divine Natural Energy are inseparable. For no energy can exist separately from the essence to which it belongs.<sup>22</sup>
6. The Light of the Lord’s Transfiguration is uncreated.<sup>23</sup>

According to his own account, Gregoras responded directly to the Synodal Tome with his Sixth Dogmatic Oration, which forms part of the third volume of his *Roman History* (*Logos* 35.3–46). This is where the claim that Palamas’ doctrine of participation is dependent on that of Proclus occurs for the second time in the *Roman History*.<sup>24</sup> Most of the Sixth Dogmatic Oration, including the passage asserting Palamas’ dependence on Proclus, is a reproduction with minor changes of one of the Orations included in Gregoras’ unedited *Antirrhetica posteriora*, or *Confutations of the Palamite Tome* (?1356).<sup>25</sup> Since Gregoras states in

17 P.K. Chrestou, ‘Ο Κήρυξ τῆς Χάριτος καὶ τοῦ Φωτός (Koufalia: Ἐκδόσεις Ἱερᾶς Μονῆς Ἀγίου Γρηγορίου Παλαμά, 1984), pp. 126–127, as quoted by Klemes, “Οἱ Ἡσυχαστικὲς Σύνοδοι τοῦ 14’ αἰῶνος ὡς ἡ Θ’ Οἰκουμενικὴ Σύνοδος τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας”, 2012, p. 10 (my translation).

18 Cf. the Synodal Tome, secs 19–29.

19 Cf. the Synodal Tome, secs 30–31.

20 Cf. the Synodal Tome, secs 32–33.

21 Cf. the Synodal Tome, secs 34–37.

22 Cf. the Synodal Tome, secs 38–45.

23 Cf. the Synodal Tome, sec. 46.

24 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historiae Byzantinae*, 35.14–17, p. 481.5–483.11.

25 MS Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 56.14, ff. 83<sup>r</sup>–90<sup>v</sup> (Logos 6) ≈ Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historiae Byzantinae*, 35, p. 474.7–497.16. The passage on Palamas and Proclus is found at 85<sup>r</sup>–v. An edition of the *Antirrhetica posteriora* in preparation by M. Paparozzi is mentioned by H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1978), vol. 1, p. 52 n. 43, but has never appeared. The Laurentianus is *codex unicus*. On the work and the manuscript, see M. Paparozzi, “Appunti per lo stu-

both Orations that he has demonstrated Palamas' agreement with Proclus on many other points in his previous polemics (ἐν ταῖς προτέραις ἡμῶν ἀντιρρήσεσιν),<sup>26</sup> one would expect also to find some sort of comparison of their views in the *Antirrhethica priora*, or *Confutations of Those Who Introduce Newfangled and Unlawful Doctrines Into the Church of God* (?1347).

Any such expectations, however, are futile.<sup>27</sup> It is possible, in view of the fact that Gregoras in the same sentence equates Proclus' views with Plato's,<sup>28</sup> that the reference is to the comparison of Palamas' and Plato's views in *Antirrhethica priora* 1.10.6.<sup>29</sup> This would allow us, at any rate, to take the phrase "on many other points" literally, for the only comparison of Palamas' and Proclus' views in Gregoras' extant works concerns their doctrines of participation. And true as it is that the *Antirrhethica priora* contain a discussion about participation (*Logos* 2, cf. *Logos* 3.4), it is entirely based on patristic sources. Accordingly, the only way to take the statement that he has previously demonstrated Palamas' agreement with Proclus literally is to surmise that Gregoras really has in mind the passage in the *Roman History* in which the claim that Palamas' doctrine of participation is lifted from Proclus first occurs (i.e. *Logos* 23).

Anyway, to proceed in order, let us first look at the last-mentioned passage. It belongs to the lengthy report, in the second volume of the *Roman History*, of a discussion between Gregoras and his former friend, the renegade Demetrios Kabasilas, which is supposed to have taken place in the aftermath of the Council of Blachernai, in the autumn of 1351, at the Chora Monastery (*Logos* 22.4–23.3). In the following I will summarize and paraphrase Gregoras' texts

---

dio degli inediti *Antirrhethici posteriores* di Niceforo Gregoras", in *Atti della Accademia dei Lincei* 1973, *Rendiconti: Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, ser. 8, vol. 28, fasc. 7–12 (Roma: Tipografia della Accademia, 1974), pp. 921–951.

26 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historiae Byzantinae*, 35.14, p. 481.5–9; *Antirrhethica posteriora* 6 (MS Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 56.14, f. 85<sup>r</sup>). Text in n. 28 below.

27 F. Tinnefeld maintains that the reference (in the *Roman History*) is indeed to the *Antirrhethica priora*, where Gregoras alludes "an drei Stellen ohne Namensnennung auf Proklos-Formulierungen"; but none of the three passages he cites can be described as a demonstration of Palamas' agreement with Proclus. F. Tinnefeld, *Nikephoros Gregoras, Rhomäische Geschichte / Historia Rhomaike*, vol. 6 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 2007), p. 132 n. 430.

28 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historiae Byzantinae*, 35.14, p. 481.5–9: (...) τῷ μὲν Ἑλληνι Πρόκλῳ, καὶ πάνθ' ὁμοδόξῳ Πλάτῳ, ὁμοδοξεῖν μὲν καὶ ἀλλαγῇ πολλᾷ, καθὰ καὶ πρόσθεν ἡμῖν κατὰ τῶν πρόσθεν αὐτοῦ βλασφημιῶν ἐν ταῖς προτέραις ἡμῶν ἀντιρρήσεσιν ἀποδεδεικται (...) ; cf. Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.1.11, p. 1093.12–18: (...) εἴσεται δ' ἐν ταῦτῳ (sc. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*) καὶ τὴν Πλάτωνος περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα δόξαν ἐξ αὐτοῦ, εἴπερ αὐτὸς (sc. ὁ Πρόκλος) τῷ γε πλείονι μέρει τὰ κεῖνου φθέγγεται πάντα.

29 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Antirrhethica* 1, ed. H.-V. Beyer (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1976), p. 213.1–17. On this passage, see further below, nn. 36 and 59.

rather extensively. My excuse is that these texts seem to be little known, in part, no doubt, because there are no other translations than the Latin ones accompanying Schopen's and Bekker's editions,<sup>30</sup> plus van Dieten's and Tinnefeld's German summaries, which are sometimes exceedingly brief.<sup>31</sup>

The part of the discussion leading up to the passage in which Palamas is said to have copied Proclus contains some illuminating remarks on the relevance of pagan philosophy to theology. Gregoras' approach to this question is a classic example of what has traditionally been known as "Byzantine humanism". The world, he explains to Kabasilas, is the same for everyone, Christian or infidel, and so are the arts and the sciences. It is no wonder, then, if pagan and patristic authors, in spite of their religious differences, agree even on many points of theological significance.<sup>32</sup> In his debates with the Palamites, he says, he had first expected to be assailed precisely for having recourse, on occasion, to the arguments of pagan authors; however, Palamas has saved him the trouble of defending this practice by himself invoking the agreement of the Holy Fathers and the philosophers.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, Gregoras proceeds to examine the Palamite doctrines in the light of both pagan and Christian authorities.

He begins by laying out his opponents' theses: there is a difference between essence and energy in the simple and incorporeal nature that is God, such that God's essence is completely unparticipated by created beings, whereas His energy is participated (cf. the first paragraph of Chrestou's summary of the Synodal Tome quoted above). Both essence and energy are uncreated, but the essence is causally prior to the energy. The energy divides into various forms (εἶδη), such as Wisdom, Power, Life, Truth, Will, Sanctity.<sup>34</sup> As far as I can judge,

30 By Schopen for vol. 2; by Reisacker and Rosenstein for vol. 3, book 35.

31 van Dieten, *Nikephoros Gregoras, Rhomäische Geschichte*, vol. 4; Tinnefeld, *Nikephoros Gregoras, Rhomäische Geschichte*, vol. 6.

32 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.2.4, p. 1099.3–21; cf. Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.1.4–5, p. 1086.16–1087.13, especially p. 1087.7–9: μηδὲ γὰρ εἶναι τῆς θρησκείας τὴν ἐπιστήμην, μηδὲ βλάβην ἐκείθεν ὑφορᾶσθαι μηδ' ἡντινοῦν (...).

33 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.1.2, p. 1082.14–1083.1; 22.4.10, p. 1074.6–10; 22.4.11, p. 1076.9–11; p. 1079.7–11.

34 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.1.4, p. 1086.2–16: Καὶ πρῶτον μὲν δὴ κείσθω ζήτημα τοῦτ' αἰς παρούσαις χρδαίαις· εἰ ἐπὶ τῆς ἀπλῆς καὶ ἀσωμάτου φύσεως (λέγω δὴ τοῦ θεοῦ) διαφορὰν ἡντινοῦν δογματίζειν οὐσίας καὶ ἐνεργείας ἐξεῖν· ὡς τὴν μὲν οὐσίαν ἀμέθεκτον εἶναι κτίσμασιν ἅπασιν κομιδῇ ("αὐτὴ γὰρ καθ' αὐτήν", φησὶν, "ἡ θεία μετεχομένη τε καὶ λαμβανομένη φύσις ἢ φυρμὸν πείσεται, ἢ τὴν παθητὴν ἐξαναλώσει φύσιν, πρὶν ἂν ληφθῇ· οὐδεὶς γάρ, φησὶν, ὕψεται τὸ πρόσωπόν μου, καὶ ζήσεται"), τὴν δ' ἐνεργεῖαν μόνῃ ἅπασιν κτίσμασιν γίνεσθαι μεθεκτὴν, μόνῃ μὲν τῷ ἀκτίστῳ μηδὲν ἐκείνης διαφέρουσιν· ὡς δ' αἰτίαν ὑπερκειμένην ἔχουσιν ἐκείνην, τούτῳ δὲ διαφέρουσιν εἶναι δὲ τὴν ἐνεργεῖαν εἰς εἶδη διαιρουμένην, σοφίαν, δύναμιν,

this is basically a fair summary of Palamas' position, although I am not aware of any such use of the word "forms" for the different manifestations of divine energy in his works.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps the word was chosen by Gregoras in order to suggest affinity with Plato's theory of Forms. Such an affinity is definitely suggested in the *Antirrhetica priora*, in a passage for which the editor, Beyer, has not found any Palamite source either.<sup>36</sup> The thesis that God's essence and His energy are related as cause and effect is not mentioned in Chrestou's summary of the Synodal Tome quoted above, but is in fact emphatically argued in the latter work (secs 27–28; for the hierarchical implications, cf. sec. 38).

Next Gregoras adduces passages from Plotinus and Aristotle to show that the pagan philosophers, contrary to what Palamas maintains, agree with the Fathers—he mentions Athanasius, Basil, Cyril and Theodore (Graptos) but quotes only Maximus the Confessor and Ps.-Dionysius—that there can be no such difference, either in God or in Intellect (which the Fathers alternately identified with God and His image). The same is obviously true of the One: Plotinus and Proclus, he says, testify to this.<sup>37</sup>

---

ζωήν, ἀλήθειαν, βούλησιν, ἀγιασμόν, καὶ ὅσα μυρία τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσι ταῖς αὐτοῦ διαιρέσεσιν ἔξεστι διαγιγνώσκειν σαφέστερον ὀψέσιν ἄγουσιν οἰκειαῖς εἰς πίστιν ἑαυτοὺς ἀκριβῆ.

35 Although Palamas does say, apparently paraphrasing a scholion on Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium* 61 (Σ 14), that the divine energy is an "illumination subsisting according to [or: on the level of] form [or species]" (τὴν κατ' εἶδος ἐνυπόστατον ἔλλαμψιν). The scholion refers to the author of *Ad Thalassium* 61 in the third person and is therefore not likely to be by Maximus, but was often cited by the Palamites as such. Cf. Gregory Palamas, *Pro hesychastis* 3, ed. P.K. Chrestou, in Chrestou (ed.), *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, 1.29, p. 641.5–8; M. Constan, *Maximos the Confessor, On Difficulties in Sacred Scripture: The Responses to Thalassios* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018), pp. 55–57. Constan (*Maximos the Confessor*, p. 447 n. 37) explains that κατ' εἶδος would be understood by later Byzantine writers "as referring to a visible manifestation of the uncreated light of God", and helpfully refers to David Dishypatos, *Ad Nicolaum Cabasilam contra Barlaam et Acindynum* (p. 72.18–21 TLG), who cites the scholion and concludes that "they [sc. the theologians] also call the deifying energy a 'form'" (καὶ εἶδος οὖν τὴν θεοποιὸν ἐνέργειαν ὀνομάζουσι). Cf. David Dishypatos, *Ad Nicolaum Cabasilam contra Barlaam et Acindynum*, ed. D.G. Tsames, *Δαβὶδ Δισυπάτου λόγος κατὰ Βαρλαάμ καὶ Ἀκινδύνου πρὸς Νικόλαον Καβάσιλαν* (Thessalonike: Centre for Byzantine Research, 1976), pp. 39–107.

36 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Antirrhetica* I, 1.10.6, p. 213.12–17; cf. Nikephoros Gregoras, *Antirrhetica* I, 1.8.2, p. 183.4–5 (with Beyer's n. o.).

37 No difference between essence and energy in God: Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.1.6–7, p. 1088.1–1090.4; in Intellect: Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.1.8–9, p. 1090.4–1091.19; in the One: Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.1.10, p. 1091.19–1093.12. The Plotinus citations in 23.1.6–9 are from *Enneads* 6.7–8 (for details, see van Dieten, *Nikephoros Gregoras, Rhomäische Geschichte*, vol. 4, p. 331 n. 558 and p. 333 n. 562). The Aristotelian passages are (a) a free rendition of *De interpretatione* 13, 23a21–

Clearly, then, Gregoras has no objection in principle to seeking guidance from pagan philosophers in general or Proclus in particular, even in theological matters. On the contrary, he first provides a rationale for seeking it and then acts accordingly. But he goes on to point out that it is all-important, in dealing with pagan material, to make sure that one does not, out of ignorance if not malevolence, adopt views that are in conflict with the traditional holy doctrines of the church. This, he explains, is what is so clearly illustrated by the case of the uneducated Palamites, who believe that there are no less than three natures involved in the transfiguration of the Saviour, one consisting in His humanity, and two in His two “divinities” (θεότητες), one of which is imperceptible and absolutely unparticipated by anything, and one of which is a second uncreated divinity, which *is* participated and which has been, in the phrase of Gregory of Nazianzus (*Oratio* 40.6), “shown forth” (παραδειχθείση θεότης).<sup>38</sup>

At the root of the Palamite error, Gregoras says, is Proclus’ doctrine of participation. Whereas most of Proclus’ theological doctrines steer clear of heresy, Palamas in his ignorance chose to cleave to this particular one, which is particularly unsound.<sup>39</sup> To prove his case, Gregoras quotes (both here and in the Sixth Dogmatic Oration) Prop. 24 of the *Elements of Theology*.<sup>40</sup> Not only does

---

23 with Ammonius’ commentary (ed. A. Busse, Berlin: G. Reimer, 1897), p. 248.27–30 (or perhaps of a commentary or paraphrase based on the latter); (b) a free rendition of *De caelo* 2.3, 286a8–10 (or of a paraphrase of it); and (c) Theodore Metochites’ paraphrase of *De anima* 3.5 (MS Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 303, f. 175<sup>v</sup>; as van Dieten points out [*Nikephoros Gregoras, Rhomäische Geschichte*, vol. 4, 333 n. 562], 26 words of this quotation are missing in Schopen’s text). Ps.-Dionysius is consistently quoted from Euthymios Zigabenos’ *Panoplia dogmatica*, presumably because the original works were inaccessible to Gregoras in Chora. On Gregoras’ claims to have been deprived of his copies of the Bible and the Fathers, see van Dieten, *Nikephoros Gregoras, Rhomäische Geschichte*, vol. 4, p. 332–333 n. 561. The Plotinus citations in 23.1.10 are from *Enneads* 6.9; for details, see van Dieten, *Nikephoros Gregoras, Rhomäische Geschichte*, vol. 4, p. 333 n. 563. The Proclus testimony consists of *Elements of Theology* 3, proposition and proof, quoted in extenso, although Gregoras leaves it to his audience to ascertain Proclus’ general agreement in the *Elements of Theology* with Plotinus, “since my headache does not allow me to pore over it” (Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.1.11, p. 1093.12–16).

38 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.2.4–5, p. 1099.23–1100.20.

39 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.2.6, p. 1101.11–14: σκεπτέον ἐνταῦθα πρὸς θεοῦ, πὼς πολλῶν τῶν τοῦ Ἑλλήνος ὄντων δογμάτων περὶ θεοῦ, ὧν τὰ πλείω τοῦ νοσεῖν πως ἀπήλλακται, ὅδε τῷ μάλα νοσοῦντι προσετέθηκει μέρος (...).

40 Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, ed. E.R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 24, p. 28.8–20 in Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.2.6 (p. 1100.22–1101.11); and Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, p. 28.8–18 in Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historiae Byzantinae*, 35.14 (p. 481.11–21).

he quote the full text of the proposition with its proof, he also provides his own critical commentary.

On Gregoras' reading of *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 24, Proclus distinguishes three ranks (τάξεις): one to which he assigns the unparticipated and superordinate God, a second to which he assigns the participated class of things, and a third to which he assigns the participating things. What is unparticipated is as much superior to the participated things as the latter are to the participating things. Thus far we have a relatively straightforward paraphrase of Proclus' words. All this, however, Gregoras continues, is in contradiction to what Proclus has previously tried to demonstrate, namely, that the One as the principle of all things (*Elements of Theology*, Prop. 21) is in every way participated by every manifold entity (*Elements of Theology*, Prop. 1 and 5), that is, by all things.<sup>41</sup> Gregoras suggests that the reason why Proclus inserted a second rank between God and the participating things is that he feared lest God would be partitioned by His participants, as though He were a corporeal thing. For he had not yet understood that God, being simple, is present as a whole everywhere and nowhere, and is participated by everything, but unparticipatedly, and is divided, although undividedly.<sup>42</sup>

It is tempting to read the last statement as a concession that Proclus had not read the works of Dionysius the Areopagite.<sup>43</sup> If this is what Gregoras means, he has a different opinion from that of Nicholas of Methone, who adhered, in his *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*, to the thesis, proposed already in the *Suda*, that Proclus plagiarized Dionysius.<sup>44</sup> Apparently, then, Gregoras must have explained the similarity of Proclus' and Ps.-Dionysius' views in some other way, probably by assuming that they drew on the same Platonic tradition (he shows elsewhere that he has no qualms about assuming the dependence of the Fathers on pagan philosophers).<sup>45</sup>

41 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.2.6, 1101.15–1102.7. Cf. Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 1, p. 2.1: Πάν πληθος μετέχει πῇ τοῦ ενός; *Elements of Theology* 5, p. 6.2–3: πάντῃ ἄρα μετέχει [τὸ πληθος] τοῦ ενός.

42 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.2.6, p. 1102.7–11: ἀλλ' εἰκοιε δεδιότι, μὴ καὶ τὸ θεῖον ὑπὸ τῶν πασχόντων, καθάπερ τὰ σώματα, μερισθῇ. οὐδὲ γὰρ ἔφθη μαθών, ὡς ὁ θεὸς ἀπλοῦς ὢν πανταχῇ ἐστὶν ὀλικῶς, καὶ οὐδαμοῦ· καὶ μετέχεται μὲν ὑφ' ἀπάντων, ἀμεθέκτως δέ· καὶ μερίζεται μὲν, ἀμερίστως δέ (...). For the last part, cf. Nicholas of Methone's comments on the *Elements of Theology* 166 (ed. Angelou, p. 147.6–11) and especially on the *Elements of Theology* 103 (ed. Angelou, p. 100.32–101.10).

43 Cf. (Ps.-)Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, 2.5, ed. B.R. Suchla (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990), p. 128.17–129.3.

44 In his comment on the *Elements of Theology* 122 (ed. Angelou, p. 117.25–29). Cf. *Suda*, ed. A. Adler (Leipzig: Teubner, 1928–1935), δ 1170, vol. 2, p. 108.24–30.

45 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.1.1, p. 1080.6–1081.4: ἥς [sc. Μούσης Ἑλληνικῆς



Yet there can be no doubt that Gregoras' remark about Proclus' inconsistency is based on his reading of Nicholas. The resemblances are too close to be coincidental, not only as regards the general drift, but even down to some details of phrasing (see below). The charge of inconsistency between the *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 24 on the one hand and *Prop.* 1 and 5 on the other is made by Nicholas already in his proem (p. 4.3–15 Angelou) and repeated in his comment on Prop. 24 (p. 32.20–33.7 Angelou). And in his comment on Prop. 23 (p. 31.15–32.5 Angelou), Nicholas offers the same explanation as Gregoras does of Proclus' reluctance to allow participation in the One, namely, that the philosopher lapsed into thinking in corporeal terms about incorporeal things and thus feared that the One if participated might suffer something like corporeal division and lose its unity. This fear, Nicholas implies, is unwarranted, since, he says, there are even corporeal things, like vocal sounds, as well as intelligible things of the lowest order, such as the individual thoughts of a teacher, which are shared by many (listeners), and to that extent divided, without losing their essential unity. There is all the more reason, then, he concludes, to think that incorporeal things of a higher order can be participated while preserving their unity.

Gregoras comes to the same conclusion, but uses a different counterexample to block the inference from participation to partition: after all, the soul is participated (albeit unparticipatedly) by all the body parts and yet exists as a whole in each of them. There are no special souls for special organs; rather, each body part is activated by the whole soul in accordance with its nature and position: if the hand were constructed like a mouth, it would presumably also be able to speak.<sup>46</sup>

Dependence is also suggested by the verbal correspondences between the following three passages (Gregoras on the left):

---

καὶ πάσης ἐπιστημονικῆς μαθησεως] οἱ μὲν θύραθεν ἔφθησαν παραδόντες σοφοί, τῶν τε θείων προστάται δογματῶν τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐκείθεν παρειληφότες τήν τε γλῶτταν ὥπλισαν ἀσφαλῶς καὶ ἅμα κατ' ἐκλογὴν τὸ μὲν ἐξεταστικόν τε καὶ θεωρητικὸν ἐδέξαντο, ὅσον δ' εἰς δαίμονας φέρεται καὶ ἀπωλείας βυθὸν διέπτυσαν (...).

- 46 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.2.6, p. 1102.11–19: κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα τῆς ἡμετέρας ψυχῆς, ἀπλῆς οἷον οὐσίας καὶ αὐτῆς. καὶ γὰρ καὶ αὕτη πανταχοῦ τοῦ σώματος ὅλη ὀλικῶς ὑπάρχουσα μετέχεται μὲν ὑφ' ἑκάστου τῶν τοῦ σώματος μερῶν, ἀμεθέκτως δέ. οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲν ἰδίᾳ τούτων οὐδαμῇ γίνεσθαι πέφυκε ψυχὴ· πλὴν ἑκαστον τῶν τοῦ σώματος μερῶν, ὡς ἔχει φύσεως ἅμα καὶ θέσεως, ὑπὸ γε τῆς κινούσης ὁμοῦ καὶ ζωούσης ἐνεργεῖται ψυχῆς· ὥστε καὶ εἰ ἦν ἐν τραχήλῳ ἢ ἐν χειρὶ κατασκευὴ στόματος, λάλος ἂν (οἶμαι) ἦν καὶ ἡ χεὶρ καὶ ὁ τράχηλος.

He seems to fear lest even the divine may be divided, like bodies, by the things that are affected.<sup>47</sup>

For he seems to fear lest, in saying that the one and whole is participated, he might divide it like a body (...).<sup>48</sup>

If this is the case, then *a fortiori* God, who is present everywhere and fills all things, will be participated by all things.<sup>49</sup>

How could that which is equally present in all things and fills all things not be participated by all things?<sup>50</sup>

For even when He becomes present in all things individually He is a whole, and He remains a whole in Himself and in all things and before all things, and the same [God] is as a whole participated and as a whole unparticipated.<sup>51</sup>

[For the incorporeal is not divided, but,] even when it becomes present in all things individually, it is a whole and remains a whole in itself, so that the same thing is in all things and before all things both participated as a whole and unparticipated as a whole.<sup>52</sup>

On the other hand, Gregoras' two quotations of Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 24, as transmitted in MS Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1095, f. 82<sup>v</sup> and f. 245<sup>v</sup>, provide no firm evidence for his dependence on

47 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.2.6, p. 1102.7–8: ἀλλ' ἔοικε δεδιότι, μὴ καὶ τὸ θεῖον ὑπὸ τῶν πασχόντων, καθάπερ τὰ σώματα, μερισθῇ.

48 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 23, p. 31.17–18: δεδοικέναι γὰρ ἔοικε μὴ τὸ ἐν καὶ ὅλον εἰπὼν μεθεκτὸν μερίσῃ σωματικῶς (...). I have used J.M. Robinson's excellent translation ("Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation* of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th-Century Byzantium", PhD Thesis, University of Notre Dame, Indiana) as a basis for the passages of Nicholas, but modified it considerably in order to bring out the similarities to Gregoras.

49 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.2.6, p. 1102.19–21: εἰ οὖν οὕτω τοῦτο, πολλῶ ἂν μάλλον ὑπὸ πάντων μετέχοιτο θεός, ὁ πανταχοῦ παρὼν καὶ τὰ πάντα πληρῶν.

50 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 23, p. 32.12–13: Τὸ πᾶσιν ὁμοίως παρὼν καὶ πάντα πληροῦν πῶς οὐχὶ καὶ ὑπὸ πάντων μετέχεται;

51 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.2.6, p. 1102.21–1103.1: καὶ ἐν ἐκάστῳ γὰρ τῶν πάντων γινόμενος ὅλος ἐστὶ· καὶ ὅλος μένει καθ' ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἐν πᾶσι καὶ πρὸ τῶν πάντων καὶ ὅλος μεθεκτός ὁ αὐτός καὶ ὅλος ἀμέθεκτος.

52 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 23, p. 32.14–17: οὐ γὰρ μερίζεται τὸ ἀσώματον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν ἐκάστῳ τῶν πάντων γινόμενον ὅλον ἐστὶ καὶ ὅλον μένει καθ' ἑαυτό, ὥστε ἔστι καὶ ἐν πᾶσι καὶ πρὸ τῶν πάντων καὶ μεθεκτὸν ὅλον τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ ὅλον ἀμέθεκτον.

any particular textual source. There is one notable variant in each of them.<sup>53</sup> In Logos 23.2.6, p. 1101.1–2 Schopen (the first quotation), Gregoras writes (a) ἀτελὲς μὲν ὃν πρὸ τῆς μεθέξεως instead of Dodds' πρὸ τῆς μεθέξεως ἀτελὲς ὄν (*Elements of Theology*, Prop. 24, p. 28.10); in Logos 35.14, p. 481.15–16 Bekker (the second quotation), he writes (b) κατὰ τοῦτο (...) instead of Dodds' ταύτῃ (...) (*Elements of Theology*, Prop. 24, p. 28.12).<sup>54</sup> Since the second quotation has Proclus' text instead of (a) and the first quotation has Proclus' text instead of (b), it seems *prima facie* likely that these two variants were introduced by Gregoras himself. The alternative, of course, is to assume that he used a different exemplar for each quotation. Now, in the case of (a), the *prima facie* likelihood is strengthened by the fact that Gregoras' variant is not represented in the direct tradition of the *Elements of Theology* (including Nicholas' *Refutation*); in the case of (b), however, the matter is complicated by the fact that M exhibits κατὰ τοῦτο added by a second hand above the line in the *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 24, p. 28.12, which has then been interpolated before ταύτῃ in its descendant O (dated 1358). It is possible that this variant in M has its origin in Gregoras' quotations.<sup>55</sup>

In his quotation of the *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 3 (cf. n. 37 above),<sup>56</sup> finally, Gregoras is closer to the MSS of Nicholas (and B, which belongs to the same family) than to any other MS, but there are also a couple of deviations from their text: p. 4.2 αὐτὸ μὲν γὰρ οὐχ ἔν ἐστι Dodds B C D E Greg.: om. M P Q; p. 4.8 ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ἐνός Dodds M P Q: ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ἐν εἶναι B C D E: τῷ μὴ ἐν εἶναι Greg.; p. 4.8bis αὐτοῖς Dodds M P Q Greg.: αὐτῷ B C D E.

In sum, Gregoras may well have drawn on more than one MS of the *Elements of Theology*, but at least one of them also contained Nicholas' refutation.

- 
- 53 I refer to Proclus MSS by the sigla employed by Dodds: B = MS Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 237; C (Nicholas' *Refutation*) = MS Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 626; D (Nicholas' *Refutation*) = MS Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, P 206 sup. (Martini-Bassi 648); M = MS Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, gr. Z 512 (coll. 678); P = MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, grec 2423; Q = MS Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, gr. Z 521 (coll. 316); E (Nicholas' *Refutation*) = MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, grec 1256; O = MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud gr. 18. Readings are as reported by Dodds, except for E, which I have collated myself, since it is only occasionally cited by Dodds. I'd like to thank Carlos Steel for helpful discussion of M.
- 54 The second quotation is identical to that in MS Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 56.14, ff. 85<sup>r-v</sup> (see n. 25 above).
- 55 There are also a few variants common to both quotations: p. 28.10 μὲν om. O Greg.; p. 28.11 γενόμενον B C M P<sup>ac</sup> Q: γινόμενον D P<sup>ac</sup> E Greg. In p. 28.12, Gregoras follows the majority of MSS in writing καθὼ where B and D have καθ' ὃ, and likewise in not writing ἄν after γὰρ as in P and Q.
- 56 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.1.11, p. 1093.19–1094.6; MS Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1095, f. 80<sup>v</sup>.

When Nicholas and Gregoras criticize Proclus for inconsistency, this may seem slightly disingenuous. After all, they both themselves affirm that God is both participated as a whole and unparticipated as a whole.<sup>57</sup> What they really cannot accept, of course, is Proclus' resolution of this apparent contradiction, that is, the introduction of a second rank consisting of participated things, whose function is to bridge the gap between divine immanence and divine transcendence.<sup>58</sup> Now, what Palamas has done, according to Gregoras, is to follow Proclus both in positing an unparticipated and superordinate God and in positing a second rank consisting of participated and subordinate divinities (his θεότητες) as well as a third rank consisting of human beings and other virtuous things in the sensible realm. The only difference in this regard that Gregoras notes between Proclus and Palamas is that Proclus does not qualify the entities in the second and third ranks as uncreated (ἄκτιστα) and unoriginated (ἀναρχα), whereas Palamas gratuitously makes this addition.<sup>59</sup>

Gregoras later argues in much the same way concerning the relation between Plato and Palamas: Palamas follows Plato, except that he calls his secondary divinities “uncreated”, which neither Plato nor Pythagoras nor any other Greek philosopher would ever do.<sup>60</sup> There is a complication here, in that Gregoras begins by comparing Palamas' divinities to the created gods in *Timaeus* 41a–b, but then makes it clear that he in fact equates them with Platonic Forms, which he describes as “co-unoriginated and co-eternal [sc. with the creator], but other-natured”,<sup>61</sup> and yet apparently denies that Plato (or any other Greek philosopher) would ever have called “uncreated”.<sup>62</sup>

57 Cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation*, 69, p. 69.28–71.5; 81, p. 84.5–19; see further J. Robinson, “Dionysius Against Proclus: the Apophatic Critique in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation of the Elements of Theology*”, in D.D. Buttorac, D.A. Layne (eds), *Proclus and His Legacy* (Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 249–269, here pp. 257–263.

58 As observed, in the case of Gregoras, by E. von Ivánka, and, in the case of Nicholas, by Robinson. E. von Ivánka, *Plato Christianus: Übernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1964), p. 403. Robinson, “Dionysius Against Proclus”, p. 263.

59 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.2.7, p. 1103.1–1104.4. The allegation that Palamas ascribes uncreatedness and unoriginatedness to third-rank entities is baffling: τρίτην δὲ χώραν ἔνειμε τοῖς τε ἀνθρώποις καὶ ὅσα ὑπὸ τὴν αἴσθησιν ἐνάρετα πράγματα, καθὰ πολλάκις εἴρηται τε καὶ εἰρήσεται ἡμῖν καὶ ἅμα ἀναρχά τε καὶ ἄκτιστα εἶναι ὠρίσαστο, μετὰ πολλῆς τῆς αὐθεντίας ποιησάμενος τὴν προσθήκην (p. 1103.10–13). The same allegation recurs at Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.2.10, p. 1108.17–20.

60 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.2.9–10, p. 1106.18–1108.20. The argument also occurs in Nikephoros Gregoras, *Antirrhetica* I, 1.10.6, p. 213.

61 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.2.10, p. 1107.10–11: (...) συνανάρχους μὲν καὶ συναιδίους, ἑτεροφυεῖς δέ.

62 It may of course well be true that no Greek philosopher described the Forms as ἄκτιστα:

In short, then, Gregoras in the second volume of the *Roman History* accuses Palamas of following Proclus in positing secondary and participated divinities and for departing from Proclus (and everybody else) in calling these divinities “uncreated” and “unoriginated”.

Turning now to the Sixth Dogmatic Oration (*Logos* 35.3–46), we will find that Gregoras has altered his interpretation of the *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 24, but still maintains that Palamas’ three-ranks theory is identical with that of Proclus, except in ascribing uncreatedness to the second-rank entities. The alteration consists in understanding Proclus’ second rank as being filled by entities both participating and participated, something which seems to throw the Platonic Successor’s entire system into confusion.<sup>63</sup> Why has Gregoras altered his interpretation of Proclus in this peculiar way? One possibility is that he has adapted it to fit his interpretation of Palamas, whose uncreated light is also described in the same passage as both participating and participated.<sup>64</sup> Whether—and if so, why—Gregoras’ interpretation of Palamas changed between the composition of *Logos* 23 and that of *Logos* 35, I cannot say, but Palamas does in fact seem to identify the divine energies with the participations-in-themselves (αὐτομετοχαί) mentioned by Ps.-Dionysius in two passages,<sup>65</sup> which are said, in one of these passages (*Div. nom.* 5.5), to participate in being.<sup>66</sup> Palamas frequently cites the other passage (*Div. nom.* 12.4) in support of the view that there can be priority and posteriority within God,<sup>67</sup>

---

the word is first attested in the very passage of Plutarch quoted by Gregoras at Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.2.10, p. 1108.5–12.

63 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historiae Byzantinae*, 35.15, p. 481.22–482.12: ‘Ορᾶς πῶς καὶ Πρόκλος ἐκεῖνος ὁ τοῖς εἰδώλοις προσκειμένος τρεῖς παραδίδωσι τάξεις, καὶ τῇ μὲν πρώτῃ τὸ ἀμέθεκτον ἀπονέμει καὶ τέλειον καὶ ἡγούμενον εἶτουν ὑπερκείμενον, τῇ δὲ δευτέρᾳ τὸ μετέχον καὶ μετεχόμενον καὶ τοῦ πρώτου καταδεέστερον, καὶ ἅμα μέσον ἀτελοῦς καὶ τελείου, τῇ δὲ τρίτῃ τὸ τε ἀτελές καὶ μετέχον μὲν, οὐ μετεχόμενον δέ. σκεπτέον οὖν καὶ ὅπως συμφώνως ἐκείνῳ καὶ Παλαμάς ὄντα διπλοῦν τὸν Χριστὸν κακὰ μόνων δυοῖν φύσεων, θεότητος λέγω καὶ ἀνθρωπότητος, σύνθετον, εἰς τριπλοῦν αὐτὸς αὐτὸν κατὰ τὸ Θαβώριον ἐδογματίσεν ὅρος μεταπεπλάσθαι· μέσσην γὰρ ἄλλην ἄκτιστον παρεμβάλων θεότητα, τὸ φῶς ἐκεῖνο, ὑφειμένην ἐκήρυξε καὶ αὐτὸς κατὰ Πρόκλον κεκτῆσθαι τὴν τάξιν μεταξὺ τελείου καὶ ἀτελοῦς, καὶ μετέχον καὶ μετεχόμενον εἶναι.

64 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historiae Byzantinae*, 35.15, p. 482.8–12 (text in the preceding note).

65 (Ps.-)Dionysius the Areopagite, *De Divinis nominibus*, 5.5, p. 184.11–16; 12.4, p. 225.17–20.

66 (Ps.-)Dionysius the Areopagite, *De Divinis nominibus*, 5.5, p. 184.12–15: (...) τὰς αὐτομετοχὰς εὐρήσεις τοῦ εἶναι πρῶτον αὐτὰς μετεχούσας καὶ τῷ εἶναι πρῶτον μὲν οὐσας, ἔπειτα τοῦδε ἢ τοῦδε ἀρχὰς οὐσας καὶ τῷ μετέχειν τοῦ εἶναι καὶ οὐσας καὶ μετεχομένας. Εἰ δὲ τὰυτα τῇ μετοχῇ τοῦ εἶναι ἔστι, πολλῷ γε μάλλον τὰ αὐτῶν μετέχοντα.

67 Gregory Palamas, *Epistula 3 ad Acindynum*, ed. J. Meyendorff, in Chrestou (ed.), Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα, vol. 1, p. 305.9–30; *Orationes antirrheticae contra Acindynum*, ed. L. Kontogiannes, B. Fanourgakes, in Chrestou (ed.), Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα, vol. 3, 4.12.29, p. 262.28–263.10; 5.12.45, p. 321.12–29; *Orationes dogmaticae*, ed. G. Mantzar-

and so does the Synodal Tome of 1351 (sec. 39). It is true that Palamas, in his most extensive discussion of this aspect of the divine energies,<sup>68</sup> takes pains to explain that the participations in question are not themselves in any way participating in anything in their capacity of participations and first principles, but only participate in being-in-itself in their capacity of being, but this was evidently enough for Gregory Akindynos to infer that they cannot possibly be unoriginated, but must be created.<sup>69</sup>

The same conclusion is also reached by Gregoras, but via a different trajectory, in which the divine energies' participation in being plays no part. At the end of his discussion of Palamas' doctrine of participation,<sup>70</sup> he attempts to prove his saintly adversary's mistake with the help of a hypothetical syllogism. The phrasing is a bit messy, but the argument, I think, is this: If God surpasses all things, those participated as well as those participating, infinitely many times infinitely, as Maximus says and Palamas agrees,<sup>71</sup> and if, as Basil the Great said,<sup>72</sup> those things are equal which are in equal measure surpassed, it follows that the participated light must be equal to all participating things. Hence, since everything is either created or uncreated, and created and uncreated things cannot be equal, either the participated light is created or all participating things are uncreated.<sup>73</sup> Since the latter disjunct is impossible, then, the former must be true.

If we turn back to Gregoras' discussion of the identity of Palamas' and Proclus' doctrines in *Logos* 35.14–16, it is worth noting that it is immediately preceded by a passage (*Logos* 35.11–13) in which he attempts to show that the Council of Blachernai has distorted the sense of a patristic text that it adduced in support of a real distinction between two uncreated divinities (Synodal Tome of 1351, sec. 46). This text is a snippet from Maximus the Confessor's *Diversa cap-*

---

ides, in Chrestou (ed.), *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμά Συγγράμματα*, vol. 2, 5.24, p. 250.14–251.15; 6.8, p. 267.29–268.19; *Contra Gregoram* 2, ed. P.K. Chrestou, in Chrestou (ed.), *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμά Συγγράμματα*, vol. 4, 37, p. 291.25–292.14.

68 Gregory Palamas, *Capita CL*, ed. R.E. Sinkewicz (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988), 87–89, pp. 184–188.

69 Gregory Akindynos, *Refutatio magna*, ed. J. Nadal Cañellas (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), 2.19, ll. 53–76, p. 112.

70 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historiae Byzantinae*, 35.16–17, p. 482.17–483.11.

71 Maximus the Confessor, *Capita ducenta ad theologiam Deique Filii in carne dispensationem spectantia* 1.49, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris: Migne = PG90, 1865), col. 1101A; Gregory Palamas, *Pro hesychastis* 3, 2.7, p. 662.16–21 *et alibi*; see also Beyer in Nikephoros Gregoras, *Antirrhetica* I, p. 178 n. b.

72 Basil the Great, *Adversus Eunomium* 1.27 (Paris: Migne = PG29, 1857), col. 569C.

73 Cf. Nikephoros Gregoras, *Antirrhetica priora*, I, 3.4.14–15, pp. 403–405.

*ita ad theologiam et oeconomiam spectantia* (1.7),<sup>74</sup> according to which God, “in whose essence created beings do not participate (...) wills that those capable of so doing shall participate in Him according to some other mode.”<sup>75</sup> Gregoras points out that the subsequent lines, not quoted in the Synodal Tome of 1351, state that “even that mode (ὁ τρόπος) according to which He wills to be participated in remains perpetually concealed (ἀνέκφαντος) from all men”,<sup>76</sup> and thus, he concludes, is *not* “manifest” (φαينوμένην [sc. ἐνέργειαν]), let alone “visible”.<sup>77</sup>

This appears not to be such an efficient argument against the visibility of the uncreated light, since the Palamites may reasonably reply that the visibility of the means or medium of participation in no way precludes the concealedness of the mode of participation (in other words, it may be possible to participate in God through uncreated light regardless of whether it is possible to understand how this could work). On the other hand, the quotation may be seen to support a general argument against any sort of attempt to explain how it is that human beings can participate in God, so that is probably how it is intended. After all, what is offered by the theory of the uncreated light is an explanation as to how it is that God can be participated in spite of being essentially unparticipated.

Gregoras’ own doctrine of participation is traditional but hardly intellectually satisfying. As Ps.-Dionysius said (quoted, as always, from the paraphrase in Euthymios Zigabenos’ *Panoplia dogmatica*),<sup>78</sup> God is participated by everything, according to his essence no less than according to his “energies”, although, of course, unparticipatedly. And that is all there is to the matter.<sup>79</sup> The upshot seems to be that Gregoras’ criticism of Palamas for having introduced a second rank of uncreated divinities is fundamentally motivated by his rejection of the applicability of the categories of the human intellect to the mysterious realm of the divine.

74 Maximus the Confessor, *Diversa capita ad theologiam et oeconomiam spectantia* (Paris: Migne = PG90, 1865), coll. 1180C–1181A.

75 *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, transl. G.E.H. Palmer, P. Sherrard, K. Ware, vol. 2 (London: Faber & Faber, 1982), p. 165.

76 *The Philokalia*, p. 165. Gregoras actually quotes the main clause as “(...) is comprehensible to God alone and concealed to all other [beings]” (Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historiae Byzantinae*, 35.13, p. 481.1–2).

77 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historiae Byzantinae*, 35.13, p. 480.22–481.5; “visible”: Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historiae Byzantinae*, 35.16, p. 482.14.

78 Euthymios Zigabenos, *Panoplia dogmatica* (Paris: Migne, 1865) PG 130, 132A; cf. (Ps.-)Dionysius the Areopagite, *De Divinis nominibus*, 2.5.

79 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, 23.2.8, p. 1104.5–1105.10. Cf. Nikephoros Gregoras, *Antirrhetica posteriora* 4, MS Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 56.14, f. 47<sup>r-v</sup>.

At the end of the day, I suppose the really interesting question is the one that I have evaded in this paper, namely whether Gregoras was right. Regardless of the dubious accuracy of Gregoras' interpretations of Palamas' and Proclus' doctrines of participation, is there any reason to suspect that Palamas—who was not by any standards a “Byzantine humanist”—was indeed drawing directly on Proclus, or is all the Proclean influence on Palamism mediated by Ps.-Dionysius and his followers? Well, as I said at the outset, this is a question for a more extensive study. But in order to end on an encouraging note—and with another quotation—some scholars who have discussed the question seem to be inclined to think that Gregoras was right, for instance John Demetracopoulos, who argues in a recent paper that “Palamas consciously and directly integrated some of Syrianus' and Proclus' metaphysical tenets (...) in his description of the structure of divine reality.”<sup>80</sup>

## Bibliography

### *Primary Sources*

#### Manuscripts

- Nikephoros Gregoras, *Antirrhetica posteriora*, MS Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 56.14, ff. 1<sup>r</sup>–162<sup>r</sup>.
- Nikephoros Gregoras, *Roman History* 18–37, MS Vaticano (Cità del), Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1095, ff. 14<sup>r</sup>–275<sup>v</sup>.
- Theodore Metochites, *Paraphrase of Aristotle's De anima*, MS Vaticano (Cità del), Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 303, ff. 111<sup>r</sup>–187<sup>v</sup>.
- Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*  
 Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, P 206 sup. (Martini-Bassi 648) (with Nicholas' *Refutation*)  
 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud. gr. 18  
 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 1256 (with Nicholas' *Refutation*)  
 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 2423  
 Vaticano (Cità del), Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 237  
 Vaticano (Cità del), Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 626 (with Nicholas' *Refutation*)  
 Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, gr. Z 512 (coll. 678)  
 Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, gr. Z 521 (coll. 316)

80 J.A. Demetracopoulos, “Palamas Transformed”, p. 278; cf. pp. 355–356 with n. 293. See also Carlos Steel's contribution to this volume. A cautionary note is struck by S. Mariev, “Neoplatonic Philosophy in Byzantium: An Introduction”, in S. Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism* (Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 1–29, here pp. 16–18.



## Printed Sources

- Ammonius Hermiae, *In Aristotelis De interpretatione commentarius*, ed. A. Busse, Berlin, G. Reimer, 1897.
- Aristotle, *De interpretatione*, ed. L. Minio-Paluello, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1949.
- Aristotle, *De caelo*, ed. P. Moraux, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1965.
- Barlaam of Calabria, *Epistulae*, ed. G. Schirò, Palermo, Istituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neogreci, 1954.
- Basil of Caesarea, *Adversus Eunomium*, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris, Migne, 1857 (= PG 29), coll. 497–768.
- David Dishypatos, *Ad Nicolaum Cabasilam contra Barlaam et Acindynum*, ed. D.G. Tsames, Thessalonike, Centre for Byzantine Research, 1976.
- (Ps.-)Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, ed. B.R. Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum* 1, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1990, pp. 107–231.
- Gregory Akindynos, *Refutationes duae operis Gregorii Palamae*, ed. J. Nadal Cañellas, Turnhout, Brepols, 1995.
- Gregory Palamas, *Orationes dogmaticae*, ed. G. Mantzarides, in P.K. Chrestou (ed.), *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, vol. 2, Thessalonike, Kyromanos, 1966, pp. 69–277.
- Gregory Palamas, *Orationes antirrheticae contra Acindynum*, ed. L. Kontogiannes, B. Fanourgakes, in *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, ed. P.K. Chrestou, vol. 3, Thessalonike, Kyromanos, 1970.
- Gregory Palamas, *Capita CL*, ed. R.E. Sinkewicz, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988.
- Gregory Palamas, *Contra Nicephorum Gregoram* 2, ed. P.K. Chrestou, in *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, ed. P.K. Chrestou, vol. 4, Thessalonike, Kyromanos, 1988, pp. 265–320.
- Gregory Palamas, *Epistula 1 ad Barlaam*, ed. J. Meyendorff, in *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, ed. P.K. Chrestou, vol. 1, Thessalonike, Kyromanos, 1988<sup>2</sup>, pp. 225–259.
- Gregory Palamas, *Epistula 3 ad Acindynum*, ed. J. Meyendorff, in *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, ed. P.K. Chrestou, vol. 1, Thessalonike, Kyromanos, 1988<sup>2</sup>, pp. 296–312.
- Gregory Palamas, *Pro hesychastis* 3, ed. P.K. Chrestou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, ed. P.K. Chrestou, vol. 1, Thessalonike, Kyromanos, 1988<sup>2</sup>, pp. 615–694.
- Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio 40*, Introduction, texte critique et notes par C. Moreschini, traduction par P. Gallay, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1990.
- [John Kyparissiotis] (?Isaac Argyros), *Adversus Cantacuzenum*, in *Theologica varia inedita saeculi XIV*, ed. I.D. Polemis, Turnhout, Brepols, 2012.
- Marinus, *Vita Procli*, ed. H.-D. Saffrey, A.-P. Segonds, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2002.
- Maximus the Confessor, *Capita ducenta ad theologiam Deique Filii in carne dispensationem spectantia*, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris, Migne, 1865 (= PG 90), coll. 1084–1173.
- Maximus the Confessor, *Diversa capita ad theologiam et oeconomiam spectantia*, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris, Migne, 1865 (= PG 90), coll. 1177–1392.

- Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, ed. C. Laga, C. Steel, 2 vols, Turnhout, Brepols, 1980 et 1990.
- Maximus the Confessor, *On Difficulties in Sacred Scripture: The Responses to Thalassios*, Introduction and Translation by M. Conostas, Washington, The Catholic University of America Press, 2018.
- Nicholas of Methone, Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου / *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas' life and works by A.D. Angelou, Athens / Leiden, The Academy of Athens Athens / Brill, 1984.
- Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, ed. L. Schopen, Bonn, Weber, 1830.
- Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historiae Byzantinae libri postremi*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonn, Weber, 1855.
- Nikephoros Gregoras, *Antirrhetica* 1, ed. H.-V. Beyer, Wien, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1976.
- The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, translated from the Greek and edited by G.E.H. Palmer, P. Sherrard, K. Ware, vol. 2, London, Faber & Faber, 1982.
- Plato, *Timaeus*, ed. J. Burnet, vol. 4, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1902.
- Plotinus, *Enneads*, ed. P. Henry, H.-R. Schwyzer, 3 vols, Leiden, Brill, 1951–1973.
- Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. E.R. Dodds, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963<sup>2</sup>.
- Proclus, *Platonic Theology*, ed. H.-D. Saffrey, L.G. Westerink, 6 vols, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1968–1997.
- Suda* = *Suidae Lexicon*, ed. A. Adler, 4 vols, Leipzig, Teubner, 1928–1935.
- Synodal Tome of 1351 = *Concilium Constantinopolitanum* 1351, ed. F. Lauritzen, in A. Meloni (ed.), *The Great Councils of the Orthodox Churches: From Constantinople 861 to Constantinople 1872*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2016, pp. 179–218.

### Secondary Sources

- Chrestou, P.K., Ὁ Κήρυξ τῆς Χάριτος καὶ τοῦ Φωτός, Koufalia, Ἐκδόσεις Ἱερᾶς Μονῆς Ἀγίου Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ, 1984.
- Conostas, M. see *Maximos the Confessor. On Difficulties in Sacred Scripture*.
- Demetracopoulos, J.A., “Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ Κεφάλαια ἑκατὸν πενήτηκοντα, 1–14: Ἐπὶ κόσμου, Κείμενο, μετάφραση καὶ ἐρμηνευτικὰ σχόλια”, in *Βυζαντιακά* 20(2000), pp. 295–348.
- Demetracopoulos, J.A., “Υστεροβυζαντινὴ κοσμολογία: ἡ κριτικὴ τοῦ Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ στὴ διδασκαλία τῶν Πλωτίνου καὶ Πρόκλου περὶ κοσμικῆς ψυχῆς”, in *Φιλοσοφία: Ἐπετηρὶς τοῦ Κέντρου Ἑρευνῆς τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Φιλοσοφίας* 31(2001), pp. 175–191.
- Demetracopoulos, J.A., “Further Evidence On the Ancient, Patristic, and Byzantine Sources of Barlaam the Calabrian's *Contra Latinos*: À propos de A. Fyrigos (ed.), *Barlaam Calabro, Opere contro i Latini*”, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 96(2003), pp. 83–122.
- Demetracopoulos, J.A., “Palamas Transformed: Palamite Interpretations of the Distinc-

- tion between God's 'Essence' and 'Energies' in Late Byzantium", in M. Hinterberger, C. Schabel (eds), *Greeks, Latins, and Intellectual History 1204–1500*, Leuven, Peeters, 2011, pp. 263–372.
- Demetracopoulos, J.A., "Thomas Aquinas' Impact on Late Byzantine Theology and Philosophy: The Issues of Method or 'Modus Sciendi' and 'Dignitas Hominis'", in A. Speer, P. Steinkrüger (eds), *Knotenpunkt Byzanz: Wissensformen und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2012, pp. 333–410.
- Gioffreda, A., Trizio, M., "Nicholas of Methone, Procopius of Gaza and Proclus of Lycia", in D. Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes. Vol. 2. Translations and Acculturations*, Leiden / Boston, Brill, 2020, pp. 94–135.
- Hunger, H., *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, 2 vols, Munich, C.H. Beck, 1978.
- Karmires, I.N., *Tà Δογματικά καὶ Συμβολικά Μνημεία τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, vol. 1, Athens: s.n., 1952.
- Klemes (2012) = Κλήμης Ἐπίσκοπος Γαρδικίου, "Οἱ Ἑσυχαστικῆς Σύνοδοι τοῦ 1Δ' αἰῶνος ὡς ἡ Θ' Οἰκουμενικὴ Σύνοδος τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας", <https://www.imoph.org/pdfs/2012/12/05/20121205aHsuxastSynodoi-11-12/20121205aHsuxastSynodoi-11-12.pdf>.
- Mariev, S., "Neoplatonic Philosophy in Byzantium: An Introduction", in S. Mariev (ed.), *Byzantine Perspectives on Neoplatonism*, Berlin / Boston, De Gruyter, 2017, pp. 1–29.
- Paparozi, M., "Appunti per lo studio degli inediti *Antirrhetici posteriores* di Niceforo Gregoras", in *Atti della Accademia dei Lincei 1973, Rendiconti: Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, ser. 8, vol. 28, fasc. 7–12, Roma, Tipografia della Accademia, 1974, pp. 921–951.
- Parry, K., "Reading Proclus Diadochus in Byzantium", in H. Tarrant and D. Baltzly (eds), *Reading Plato in Antiquity*, London, Bloomsbury, 2006, pp. 223–235.
- Robinson, J., *Nicholas of Methone's Refutation of Proclus: Theology and Neoplatonism in 12th Century Byzantium*. A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Graduate Program in Medieval Studies, Notre Dame (Indiana), 2014.
- Robinson, J., "Dionysius Against Proclus: the Apophatic Critique in Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation of the Elements of Theology*", in D.D. Butorac, D.A. Layne (eds), *Proclus and His Legacy*, Berlin / Boston, De Gruyter, pp. 249–269.
- Sinkewicz, R., "The Solutions Addressed to George Lapithes by Barlaam the Calabrian and Their Philosophical Context", in *Mediaeval Studies* 43 (1981), pp. 151–217.
- Tinnefeld, F., *Nikephoros Gregoras. Rhomäische Geschichte: Historia Rhomaike*, in Fortsetzung der Arbeit von J.-L. van Dieten übersetzt und erläutert von F. Tinnefeld, vol. 6, Stuttgart, Anton Hiersemann, 2007.
- Trizio, M., "Una è la verità che pervade ogni cosa: La sapienza profana nelle opere per-

- dute di Barlaam Calabro", in A. Rigo (ed.), *Byzantine Theology and its Philosophical Background*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2011, pp. 108–140.
- Van Dieten, J.L., *Nikephoros Gregoras. Rhomäische Geschichte: Historia Rhomaike*, übersetzt und erläutert von J.L. van Dieten, vol. 4, Stuttgart, Anton Hiersemann, 1994.
- Von Ivánka, E., *Plato Christianus: Übernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter*, Einsiedeln, Johannes Verlag, 1964.

# Marsilio Ficino and Nicholas of Methone on Platonic Theology

Stephen Gersh

University of Notre Dame

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In his commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*, Marsilio Ficino concludes a passage discussing the contrast between the two principles named the “one-many” (*unum multa*) and the “absolute one” (*simpliciter unum*) respectively with an important remark:

For if there were to be a multitude in it [sc. the first One], to speak in the Platonic manner, this will not be the One itself but something made one and consequently will be made one not by itself but by the absolute One itself that is superior, in the way that something formed has the source

---

<sup>1</sup> The following editions have been used for the citation of texts in this essay: Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*, ed. A.D. Angelou (Athens / Leiden: Academy of Athens / Brill, 1984); Marsilio Ficino, *Commentaries on Plato*, vol. 2, *Parmenides*, ed. M. Vanhaelen (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2012); Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plotinus*, vols. 5–6 *Ennead III–IV*, ed. S. Gersh (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2017–2018); Marsilio Ficino, *Plotini divini [...] De rebus philosophicis libri LIIII in Enneades sex distributi, a Marsilio Ficino e graeca lingua in Latinam versi et ab eodem doctissimis commentariis illustrata* (Basel: Pietro Perna, 1559); Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, vols. 1–6, ed. M.J.B. Allen, J. Hankins (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2001–2006); Marsilio Ficino, *On Dionysius the Areopagite*, vols. 1–2, ed. M.J.B. Allen (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2015); Marsilio Ficino, *Platonis Opera Omnia quae extant Marsilio Ficino interprete [...]* (Frankfurt: Claude Marne and Johann Aubry's heirs, 1602). Notes regarding the Ficino editions: 1. I have replaced the translations in most of these editions with my own versions and I have occasionally emended the texts (where noted below); 2. Citations from parts of the Plotinus commentary outside my edition published so far are according to the chapter and page numbering in the standard but corrupt *Marsilii Ficini [...] Opera et quae hactenus extitere et quae in lucem nunc primum prodire omnia [...]* (Basel: Heinrich Petri, 1576—photographic reprints: Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus 1959, and later). For *Enneads* V–VI, the chapter-numbering in this edition is identical with that in the forthcoming volumes of my edition.

of its formation elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> However, Nicholas the Greek theologian and bishop of Methone clearly shows how the Platonic arguments removing a multitude from the first principle do not count against the Christian Trinity in which, with the simplicity and unity of its nature maintained, a certain relation alone produces distinction albeit without any composition: something we also indicate briefly in certain annotations on his work.<sup>3</sup>

This passage is interesting for a number of reasons: in the first place, because it provides evidence of Ficino's reading not only of such philosophical and theological authors from the Byzantine world as Michael Psellos and Gemistos Plethon but also of the twelfth-century bishop Nicholas of Methone, and more importantly because the very work of the bishop that is here alluded to—the *Refutation (Anaptyxis) of Proclus' Elements of Theology*—survives in one MS—Paris, BnF, gr 1256—equipped with Ficino's own Latin glosses on its first five leaves.<sup>4</sup> In addition, that Ficino seemingly goes out of his way to cite his own manuscript annotations at a crucial point in his discussion of what is arguably the pivotal text of Platonic theology seems to underline the importance of the doctrinal issues raised. In fact, the Florentine commentator at least by this time in his career<sup>5</sup> seems to refer only to earlier works of his that have already been

- 
- 2 In other words, the attribution of multiplicity to the first one would—in a self-contradictory manner—render it simultaneously a first and a second one.
  - 3 Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, c. 56. 6, 11, p. 46: *Si enim multitudo sit in eo, ut platonice loquar, non unum ipsum erit sed unitum nec a seipso unitum—sicut et quod formatum est aliunde formatum—igitur ab ipso simpliciter uno superiore erit unitum. Quomodo vero platonicae rationes multitudinem primo tollentes Christianae trinitati non detrahant in qua, servata penitus simplicitate et unitate naturae, relatio quaedam sola quandam distinctionem facit, compositionem vero nullam, Nicolaus theologus Graecus Methones episcopus evidenter ostendit ac nos in annotationibus quibusdam in eum breviter designamus.*
  - 4 On this manuscript see M. Sicherl, "Neuentdeckte Handschriften von Marsilio Ficino und Johannes Reuchlin", in *Scriptorium* 16 (1962), pp. 50–61, at p. 61, no. 23; J. Monfasani, "Marsilio Ficino and the Plato-Aristotle Controversy", in M.J.B. Allen, V. Rees (with M. Davies) (eds), *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy* (Leiden: Brill 2002), pp. 179–202, at pp. 200–201—for the transcription of the Ficinian glosses in this article see below—; and C. Förstel, "Marsilio Ficino e il Parigino Greco 1816 di Plotino", in S. Gentile, S. Toussaint (eds), *Marsilio Ficino. Fonte, testi, fortuna. Atti del Convegno Internazionale (Firenze 1–3 ottobre 1999)* (Rome: Storia e Letteratura 2006), pp. 65–88.
  - 5 Ficino wrote the definitive version of his commentary on the *Parmenides* between 1492 and 1494, although there may well have been earlier drafts. See P.O. Kristeller, *Supplementum Ficinianum. Marsilii Ficini Florentini philosophi platonici opuscula inedita et dispersa* (Florence: Olschki, 1937), I, cxx. The commentary was printed for the first time in 1496.

printed: i.e. especially the *Platonic Theology* and *De Amore* (commentary on the *Symposium*).<sup>6</sup>

The cross-reference in the *Parmenides* commentary to the glosses on the *Anaptyxis* noted above<sup>7</sup> is actually embedded in a more complex system of intertextual allusions that needs to be summarized before we turn to the important philosophical and theological questions that Ficino wishes to address.<sup>8</sup> The intertextual framework indicated by the latter's various explicit citations has the following components:<sup>9</sup> *a.* Ficino's *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, referring to Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* which in its turn refers to Plato's *Parmenides*—this material in conjunction with Nicholas of Methone *Anaptyxis*;<sup>10</sup> *b.* Ficino's *Commentary on Plotinus' Enneads* referencing Plotinus' *Enneads*—this material again in conjunction with Nicholas of Methone's *Anaptyxis*;<sup>11</sup> *c.* Ficino's *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* referring to Ficino's *Commentary on Plotinus' Enneads*.<sup>12</sup> The contexts of Ficino's cross-references also include citations of Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus (or unspecified *Scotisti*)<sup>13</sup> and—in this case both directly and indirectly via the *Anaptyxis*—of Dionysius the Areopagite and Gregory Nazianzen.<sup>14</sup>

6 These were printed in 1482 and 1484 respectively. Ficino does on rare occasions refer to writings still in manuscript form: for instance, in the Plotinus commentary he mentions his commentary on Priscianus Lydus' *Metaphrasis*. However, this was at the time undoubtedly a more substantial and organized work clearly destined for publication, eventually appearing in print together with the version of Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* and other Platonic *opuscula* in 1497. By contrast, we do not know to what kind of "work in progress" (if any) the extant glosses on Nicholas of Methone were intended to contribute.

7 The glosses must be dated before 1492 since they are also used (if not explicitly cited) in the commentary on Plotinus first printed in that year. On the latter work see below.

8 Obviously, an understanding of Ficino's relation to Proclus is an important component in understanding the broader context here. Materials fundamental to this issue have been studied especially by H.-D. Saffrey, "Notes platoniciennes de Marsile Ficin dans un manuscrit de Proclus (Cod. Riccardianus 70)", in *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et de Renaissance* 21 (1959), pp. 161–184; D. Robichaud, "Fragments of Marsilio Ficino's Translations and Use of Proclus' *Elements of Theology* and *Elements of Physics*: Evidence and Study", in *Vivarium* 54 (2016), pp. 46–107. For a useful general survey see M.J.B. Allen, "Marsilio Ficino", in S. Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus. From Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 353–379.

9 That is, in addition to the obvious reference of Nicholas' *Anaptyxis* to Proclus' *Elements of Theology*.

10 See Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 56. 6 and 57. 7, 11, p. 46, 54–56.

11 See Ficino, *In Enneadem*, v. 3. 12 and (implicitly) v. 6. 3.

12 See Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 57. 4, 11, pp. 50–52.

13 See Ficino, *In Enneadem*, v. 3. 12 and v. 6. 3.

14 See Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 57. 7 and (implicitly) 57. 8, 11, pp. 54–56 and 56–58. Of course,

A careful comparison of the material in these cross-references not only indicates the extraordinarily high level of hermeneutical complexity that Platonic studies had reached at their peak towards the end of the fifteenth century but also pinpoints the philosophical-theological topics that were for Ficino most urgent and which we should therefore consider in some detail in the present essay. These topics are: first, the relation between God and multiplicity in Platonism and the relations within the divine Trinity of Christianity;<sup>15</sup> second, the dynamic character of relations within the divine Trinity and between the divine Trinity and the created world;<sup>16</sup> and third, comparison of the divine Trinity of Christianity with the “false” trinity of post-Plotinian *platonici*.<sup>17</sup>

## 2 Translation of Ficino’s Autograph Notes in MS Paris, BnF, gr 1256<sup>18</sup>

Before turning to these three philosophical topics developed in relation to the bishop of Methone’s text by Ficino, it will perhaps be useful for the reader to have a full English translation of the relevant glosses:

1. P 2r at R 4. 3–18: ἀρχόμενος ... ἀνακαθαίρουσιν

He says the Proclus erred because he contradicted himself, saying that every multitude wholly participates in unity, and then that unity is un-participated. He also erred because he says that the One itself is outside of all number, while nevertheless saying that it was the First One, given that what is first is related to subsequent things and coordinated with them.

2. P 2r at R 4. 21: Διόνυσιον. Dionysius.

3. P 2r at R 4. 21–30: Dionysius says that the Divinity is both one and three; also, that neither the one nor the three is numerable, but that they are above such things, being also their cause and measure.

---

Ficino also had an extensive direct knowledge of Dionysius the Areopagite on whom he eventually wrote a formal commentary (printed s. d. but probably in 1496 or 1497).

15 See Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 56–57, II, pp. 36–58.

16 See Ficino, *In Enneadem*, v. 3. 12 and. v. 6. 3.

17 See Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, c. 58. 1, II, pp. 58–62.

18 I have relied upon the transcription by Monfasani, albeit proposing one minor correction. For the reader’s convenience, the numbering introduced by this scholar (##1–15) has been retained. Also following Monfasani, the notation *P* = the MS Paris, BnF Gr 1256, and the notation *R* = Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation of Proclus’ Elements of Theology* [see note 1].



4. P 2 r at R 4. 31–5. 3: The divine Trinity is not measured by number and does not participate in unity, this being the property of number. However, the Trinity is not a number.

5. P 2 r at R 5. 5–15: The Nazianzen says that the Divinity is also a trinity on the grounds that it is a unity and *vice versa*, this being because it does not lack [*careat coni.*, *caveat Monfasani*] the good things that come from it. Fertility and self-motion are good things: that is to say, they are in God. For if God were infertile, whence would fertility arise? If he were immobile, whence would motion arise? These could not come about from another beginning, since there are not two beginnings. Therefore, fertility and motion are in God. But motion in God signifies actual effecting. Therefore, the Nazianzen says that “unity from the beginning having moved towards a duality emerges in the end as a trinity”. Therefore, because it is a unity—indeed, a unity that is fertile and self-moving—it is therefore a trinity, and because it is a trinity that is not numerable but is the cause and measure of number, it is therefore the One itself above number, essence, and intellect.

6. P 2 r at R 5. 10–11: The Nazianzen

7. P 2 v at R 5. 20–6. 6: The divine Trinity is above every multitude, even a multitude that is imagined. Therefore, it is not included in that proposition which says “Every multitude ... etc.” and does not participate in unity but is the One itself. Rather, it is above the quantitative unity that is divided in opposition to multitude. A proposition of Proclus follows concerning the multitude that is opposed to unity and concerning the unity that is opposed to multitude. For these things are coordinated, whereas God is not coordinated.

8. P 3 r at R 6. 17–21: Dionysius says that the soul has an intellect by which it perceives intelligible things, and also a unity superior to intellect by which it is united in an ineffable manner with the divine unity which is above intellect and intelligible things.

9. P 3 r at R 7. 6–8: The divine Trinity does not participate in unity, for it itself is unity in itself. Moreover, the Trinity itself is in a formal sense the beginning of all union and number in things.

10. P 3 v at R 7. 23–24: Unity itself is in the divine Trinity and in each Person. And the Trinity is the Unity itself.

11. P 3v at R 8. 4–16: In the Trinity, neither does union produce a confusion of the Persons nor does the difference of the Persons produce separation. Moreover, one should not say that the Trinity is something unified but that it is both unity itself and the Trinity itself above essence, and that it is not only above quantitative number and essential composition but also above all union and division that can be thought about. And since it exists above all things as the cause of all, it is coordinated with none. It does not fall under the proposition concerning things to be enumerated among everything unified: that is, when it is said: “Everything that is unified ... etc.”

12. P 4r at R 8. 23–27: We say that unity itself in God is the Trinity itself, neither dividing the unity itself on account of the Trinity nor confusing the Trinity on account of the essential or rather super-essential unity.

13. P 4v at R 9. 17–29: That every multitude is after the One follows from the multitude that is distinct from the One and participates in it and in some way is coordinated and compared with the One. But in God the Trinity itself is the Unity itself, this very thing being superior to every unity and multitude that can be coordinated or on the other hand be distinguished.

14. P 4v at R 10. 3–4: Proclus understands the multitude of unities to be a number of gods.

15. P 5r at R 10. 8–17: Where multitude is, there is a thing separated from unity itself but composed of unities or unified things. However, the same Divinity is both unity and Trinity. In this Trinity there is one essence, power, act, and will, the distinction being however only through hypostatic properties.

### 3 Three Principal Topics within Ficino's Response to Nicholas of Methone

#### 3.1 *The Relation between God and Multiplicity and the Relations within the Divine Trinity*

The first of our selected topics is that of the relation between God and multiplicity in Platonism and the relations within the divine Trinity of Christianity. This is for Ficino by far the most important topic, being explored in almost all of his glosses on the *Anaptyxis* and in the arguments of chapters 56–57 of his com-

mentary on the *Parmenides*, chapter 12 of his commentary on *Ennead* v.3, and chapter 3 of that on *Ennead* v.6. Its starting-point is—following Plato: *Parmenides* 137c—the first negative conclusions of the first *suppositio* (= hypothesis) of the second part of the dialogue: “If there is a One, that One will certainly not be many, and therefore neither should there be any part of it nor should it itself be a whole” (“si unum est, non utique multa erit ipsum unum (...) neque igitur partem esse illius aliquam neque totum ipsum esse oportet”).<sup>19</sup> Through Nicholas’ *Anaptyxis* these conclusions are connected by Ficino especially with the propositions of Proclus’ *Elements of Theology* comprising the statement<sup>20</sup> that every multitude somehow ( $\pi\eta$ ) participates in the One, and including the statement<sup>21</sup> that the One is un-participated ( $\acute{\alpha}\mu\acute{\epsilon}\theta\epsilon\chi\tau\omicron\nu$ ).<sup>22</sup> The relation to Christian dogma was obviously underscored for Ficino by Nicholas’ remark in the same passage that Proclus was perhaps scoffing at the worshippers of the Trinity in elaborating these propositions<sup>23</sup> and is reinforced by his subsequent reference to Dionysius’ statement that Christians worship a God who is both one and three and neither one nor three.<sup>24</sup>

The teaching of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* that the One has no multitude (or number) and no opposition of whole and parts<sup>25</sup> leads, in the various texts embodying Ficino’s commentary, to the consideration primarily of three questions. The first relevant question might be formulated as: “Of what principle or principles can the multitude denied of the primary One conversely be affirmed?” The answer in the *Parmenides* commentary is that multitude is here asserted “of the second principle: that is, the intellectual and intelligible multitude: that is, a multiplicity such as that which befits the first intellect which knows itself being replete with the Ideas and the Genera, and likewise befits the pure and divine intellects that follow”.<sup>26</sup> The nature of this second principle is further clarified in a passage of the same work where Ficino contrasts the nature of opposition in relation to a “subject” (*subiectum*) and in

19 Ficino, *Platonis Opera Omnia* 1117.

20 Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 1, 2, 1–14.

21 Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 24, 28, 8–20.

22 Ficino, annotation #1 on Nicholas of Methone, *Anaptyxis*, 4, 3–18. In this passage Nicholas also notes the remark within the proof of prop. 5, 6, 2–3 that multitude in every way ( $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\eta$ ) participates in the One.

23 Nicholas of Methone, *Anaptyxis*, 4, 3–18.

24 Nicholas of Methone, *Anaptyxis*, 4, 3–18 4, 19–24 (citing (Ps.-)Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus*, 13, 3, 980c–981d).

25 For denial of multitude see Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 56–58, 11, pp. 36–62; for denial of number, *In Parmenidem*, 57, 4 and 57, 7, 11, pp. 50–52 and 54–56; for denial of whole and parts, *In Parmenidem*, 57, 1–3, 11, pp. 48–50.

26 Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 56, 5, 11, p. 44: *de secundo: id est, intellectualem intelligibilemque*

relation to “essence” (*essentia*) respectively. In the latter case, “just as the multitude is not separate from union, so is the one not separated from the multitude (...) insofar as it is a one, it cannot be many, although, insofar as it is a unity of a multitude, it can certainly be called ‘the One-Many.’”<sup>27</sup> The final phrase allows us to identify more precisely the principle which Ficino has in these passages described as the first intellect and as an inseparable unity and multitude, since his words recall a foundational doctrine stated in his *Platonic Theology*. Here, a doctrine is attributed to the Pythagoreans of “five levels of all things” (*quinque rerum omnium gradus*): in ascending order, body which is “many” (*multa*), “quality” which is “many and one” (*multa et unum*), soul which is “one and many” (*unum et multa*), “angel” which is “one-many” (*unum multa*), and God who is “one” (*unum*).<sup>28</sup>

After identifying the multitude denied of God in the *Parmenides* with the multitude affirmed of angel(s),<sup>29</sup> a second pertinent question might be formulated as: “What kind of multitude is denied of God but affirmed of angel(s)?” Here, we can perhaps best trace the development of Ficino’s much more complicated response—in both the commentary on the *Parmenides* and in that on the *Enneads*—by distinguishing the following points: *a*. The multitude is determined by *ratio* (“reason” or “reason-principle”); *b*. the multitude is an evolving triad comprising: *b*<sub>1</sub> being, life, and intellect, or *b*<sub>2</sub> number, Genera, and Ideas; *c*. the multitude is an order of intellectual unities. In developing these points, Ficino is elaborating the second negative conclusion of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*: that the One cannot have parts or be a whole.

*a. The multitude is determined by ratio*

Three passages from the commentary on the *Parmenides* elaborate this concept: first, Ficino notes that the various constituents of the second principle “are in reality one substance, although they differ there accord-

---

*multitudinem: id est, multiplicatam talem qualis convenit intellectui primo seipsum intelligenti idearum generumque pleno, eademque sequentibus convenit intellectibus puris atque divinis.*

27 Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 56. 6, 11, pp. 44–46: *sicut multitudo non est seorsum ab unione, ita nec unum seorsum a multitudine (...) neque qua ratione unum est esse potest multa, sed qua condicione est multitudinis unum, hac utique “unum multa” nominari potest.*

28 Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, I. 1. 2 and III. 1. 1, I, pp. 14–16 and 212.

29 We here employ the graphism “angel(s)” in order to account for the ambivalent unity and multiplicity indicated by the phrase *unum* [no connective *et*] *multa*. On this point see further the discussion below. At *Platonic Theology*, I. 5. 10–14, I, pp. 72–78, Ficino cites the authority of Aristotle, Avicenna, and Dionysius for the innumerable character of the angelic *gradus*.

ing to a certain reason-principle" ("re ipsa unam esse substantiam, haec autem ibi quadam ratione differre");<sup>30</sup> second, he informs us that these constituents "are ideal reason-principles, differing among themselves in an absolute way, of the properties of lower things" ("ideales inferiorum proprietatum rationes sunt absolute inter se differentes");<sup>31</sup> third, Ficino notes that "certain reason-principles of nature are inherent in and precedent in the first formal being which is the source of the many beings" ("in primo ente formali entium multorum fonte naturales quaedam rationes inessent atque praecedent").<sup>32</sup> A fundamental doctrine of the Florentine—especially prominent in the commentary on Plotinus—is clearly at issue here. According to this, the emanation of the five levels of reality is coordinated with and by a descending series of reason-principles consisting primarily of the ideal, formal, and seminal types.<sup>33</sup> On the second or angelic level there is probably to be understood an emanative transition from an absolute status of reason-principles in the angelic essence to an ideal status in the angelic mind proper.<sup>34</sup>

*b1. The multitude is an evolving triad comprising being, life, and intellect.*

Ficino also explains that the second principle is structured internally as a dynamic triad beginning with essence—or the intelligible—and ending with intellect. "For since the first essence possesses all the perfections of essence, it possesses life and intellect ... we are compelled to join the intellect to the intelligible in the same essence ... this is the universal intelligible sphere of which Parmenides sings in his poem."<sup>35</sup> The reference to Parmenides emphasizes the agreement with respect to this doctrine between Plato and the earlier philosophical tradition. The Florentine adds that "these differentiae should be placed within the first being, although they indeed do not unfold at the first level, where being

30 Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 56. 1, II, pp. 36–38.

31 Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 56. 2, II, pp. 38–40.

32 Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 57. 4, II, pp. 50–52.

33 There are various further complications in that the ideal reason-principles are identical with absolute reason-principles, the lines of demarcation between the levels are somewhat fluid, and there is additionally a single material reason-principle.

34 From the cognitive viewpoint, a concurrent transition from notional to real distinctions is also to be understood.

35 Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 56. 1, II, pp. 36–38: *essentia enim prima cum omnes perfectiones essentiae habeat, vitam habet et intellectum (...) intellectum cum intelligibili in eadem essentia copulare coacti (...) universam hanc sphaeram intelligibilem Parmenides in poemate canit.*

*simpliciter* resides, but at a certain subsequent level, where it proceeds through life and intelligence.”<sup>36</sup> The differentiae mentioned here correspond to the items mentioned in the next passage.

*b2. The multitude is an evolving triad comprising number, Genera, and Ideas*

Ficino further explains that the dynamic triad which structures the second principle internally also begins with number—i.e. the multitude—and ends with the Ideas.

How, just as the One precedes being, so does multitude or number in the intelligible world precede the numerous beings and all the compositions of wholes ... we have stated sufficiently in commenting on Plotinus in his books *On the Ideas*, *On the Genera of Beings*, and *On Numbers*.<sup>37</sup>

The agreement with respect to this doctrine between Plato and the later philosophical tradition is underlined by the reference to Plotinus. The commentator further notes that “surely the five Genera unfold more broadly in the essence that is now living, the Ideas doing so rather in the living thing that is now intellectual, for within essence these things are hardly differentiated, although the properties that are generally necessary to all beings are inherent there.”<sup>38</sup>

*c. The multitude is an order of intellectual unities.*

An extended passage in the commentary on the *Parmenides* develops this idea. Here, Ficino argues that the primal cause of multitude—i.e. the absolute One—is also the source of union, and also that the multitude that is at issue here is not a particular kind of multitude but “certain unities propagated and distributed everywhere by the absolute One itself in its fertility” (“unitates quaedam ab ipsa simpliciter unitate fecunde

36 Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 56. 2, 11, pp. 38–40: *differentias illas in ente primo ponendas, sed eas non primo quidem gradu quo simpliciter ens est, sed sequente quodam gradu quo per vitam intelligentiamque progreditur explicari.*

37 Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 57. 4, 11, pp. 50–52: *quomodo vero sicut unum antecedit ens, sic et multitudo vel numerus in mundo intelligibili antecedit entia numerosa et compositiones totorum quaslibet (...) satis in libris De Ideis, et Generibus Entis et Numeris diximus cum Plotino.*

38 Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 56. 2, 11, pp. 38–40: *quinque sane genera in essentia iam vivente, ideae potius in vivo iam intellectuali latius explicantur. Vix enim in essentia discernuntur; insunt tamen ibi propria cunctis entibus communiter necessaria.*

propagatae passim atque distributae”).<sup>39</sup> Ficino continues by noting the difference between the Platonic and Peripatetic teachings regarding the priority or non-priority of unity and being. The passage then concludes by saying that beings obtain their existence from the absolute One, their determinateness from the first being,<sup>40</sup> and their multiplicity “only from the absolute One by which the number of the unities also is infused into beings” (“ab ipso solum simpliciter uno a quo et unitatum numerus entibus est infusus”).<sup>41</sup> Another fundamental doctrine of the Florentine—elaborated most fully in the commentary on Dionysius—is here under review. According to this doctrine, the multitude of emanative unities constituting the second principle which is infused by the absolute One corresponds to a multitude of the intellectual unities through which the angels are joined to God. It is through these unities that the angels receive the supernatural light and enjoy their creator albeit without fully comprehending his mysteries.<sup>42</sup>

We have argued that the teaching of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*—i.e. that the One has no multitude (or number) and no opposition of whole and parts—leads to the consideration primarily of three questions in the various texts embodying Ficino’s commentary. The third relevant question might be formulated as:

How does the denial of multitude to the primary One in Platonism—in whatever way that multitude is understood by them—impinge upon the Christian attribution of relational number to the Trinity?

In order to answer this question, we should recall Ficino’s view that the Platonic arguments removing a multitude from the first principle do not count against the Christian Trinity in which a certain relation alone produces distinction within the divine simplicity and that this point had been well established by Nicholas of Methone. Now, although Ficino to the greatest extent stands by this statement, he does make a tentative step towards establishing a *rap-*

39 Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 57. 5, 11, pp. 52–54. The word *fecundae* transcribed by Vanhaelen from the 1496 edition is probably a typological variant of *fecundē* (adverb) which here perhaps makes better sense both syntactically and doctrinally.

40 On this “first being” (*primum ens*) see below.

41 Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 57. 5, 11, pp. 52–54.

42 On this doctrine see Ficino, *In De Divinis Nominibus*, 21. 3, 1, pp. 146–148; et 99. 2–4, 1, pp. 336–338. It is also mentioned in his annotation #8 on the *Anaptyxis*.

*prochement* between Platonists and Christians on this issue in the *Parmenides* commentary. Here, in noting that  $\langle a \rangle$  according to the former, in relation to the primal One multitude is judged to be “not so much opposite as different” (“non tam opposita ... quam diversa”) and  $\langle b \rangle$  that according to the latter, there is in the Trinity “a certain relation” (*relatio quaedam*) that produces distinction without composition<sup>43</sup> he seems to suggest an approximation between the peculiar differentiation within the Platonic duality of first principles and the relational number within the triune godhead. In the Plotinus commentary, as we shall see, he moves a little further along this path of *rapprochement*.

### 3.2 *The Dynamic Character of the Trinity's Internal and External Relations*

In connection with the second of our selected topics<sup>44</sup>—the dynamic character of relations within the divine Trinity and between the divine Trinity and the created world—, we should turn to the other work of Ficino that refers to Nicholas of Methone: that is, the commentary on Plotinus' *Enneads*, the relevant passages occurring in the commentaries on *Ennead* v. 3, c. 12 and on v. 6, c. 3.<sup>45</sup> In Ficino's discussion of treatise v. 3, the reference is quite explicit. Having brought into question the best discursive attempts to grasp the intratrinitarian relations, he concludes that “a mystery must be believed in relation to the divinity, as Nicholas the Greek philosopher maintains strenuously against Proclus”.<sup>46</sup> The passage in the *Anaptyxis* to which Ficino's annotations #7–8 are attached seems to be loosely paraphrased here.<sup>47</sup> In Ficino's discussion of treatise v. 6, the reference is more indirect. Ficino here explains that

43 Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 56. 6, 11, pp. 44–46.

44 For the three topics see p. 425.

45 The commentary on Plotinus is one of the most important (but hitherto least studied) of Ficino's works and—together with his commentary on Dionysius the Areopagite—can be seen as the definitive statement of his later philosophy. Introductions to the Plotinus commentary can be found in S. Gersh, “Marsilio Ficino as Commentator on Plotinus. Some Case Studies”, in S. Gersh (ed.), *Plotinus' Legacy. The Transformation of Platonism from the Renaissance to the Modern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 19–43; S. Gersh, “Styles and Methods of Philosophical Interpretation in Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on Plotinus”, in A. Corrias, E. del Soldato (eds), *Harmony and Contrast. Plato and Aristotle in the Early Modern Period* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2022), pp. 17–40; S. Gersh, “Analytical Studies” in the two volumes of the edition of the commentary on *Enneads* III–IV [see note 1]; A. Corrias, *The Renaissance of Plotinus. The Soul and Human Nature in Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on the Enneads* (London: Routledge, 2020).

46 Ficino, *In Enneadem*, v. 3. 12: *mysterium denique divinitati credendum, quod et Nicolaus Graecus philosophus defendit strenue contra Proclum*.

47 Nicholas of Methone, *Anaptyxis*, 5.16–7.2.



“the divine Trinity (as Dionysius the Areopagite establishes and Gregory Nazianzen asserts) is the same as unity itself there [sc. in the godhead]”, adding that this can be grasped through the analogy of light and heat forming a unity in heaven.<sup>48</sup> The development of the commentator’s argument surrounding this passage—with its telling doxographical reference—directs us clearly to his annotations #2–6 (especially #5) and the passage in the *Anaptyxis* to which they are attached.<sup>49</sup> Leaving aside the rather vague and generic character of the reference to the divine mystery, we will here concentrate on the major philosophical-theological issues raised primarily by annotation 5.

Ficino’s annotation deals primarily with two issues: *a.* that of the fertility and motion of the godhead vested in its motion from unity through duality to trinity, this being expanded in the Plotinus commentary into a discussion centred on the divine *act*; *b.* that of the number of the godhead which is rather what transcends and is the source of number, the Plotinus commentary expanding this into discussion centred on the divine *number*. In a formal sense, both passages in the commentary interweave a discussion of the unity and plurality of the first principle’s act with a discussion of the relational number applicable to the Trinity and with the introduction of various analogies between the created and the creator.

In his commentary on *Ennead* v. 3, c. 12, Ficino explores the relationship between the divine act and the divine number in such a manner as to emphasize the continuity between the internal and the external act.<sup>50</sup> The exegetical starting-point is Plotinus’ criticism of certain anonymous Platonists who within the first principle “posit an essence that is indeed one but a multitude of acts absolutely distinct from one another” (“essentiam quidem unam ponunt, actus vero multos inter se absolute distinctos”).<sup>51</sup> Ficino argues that the Greek writer first performs a *reductio ad absurdum* on his opponents’ thesis, and then states his own position: namely, that the principle which is absolutely one produces all things—and especially, being, life, and intelligence—“without any act

48 Ficino, *In Enneadem*, v. 6. 3: *divina Trinitas (ut Dionysius Areopagita confirmat et Gregorius Nazianzenus asserit) idem ibi est quod et ipsa unitas.*

49 Nicholas of Methone, *Anaptyxis*, 4.19–5.15.

50 The identity of the first principle’s internal and external acts is indicated by two arguments to be considered below: 1. The first principle’s production without any act of a mediative nature; and 2. The multiplication of the first principle’s act by the variety of its imitability. On these points, see below.

51 Ficino notes here that Plotinus’ argument “does not apply” (*nihil pertinere*) to the divine Thomas [Aquinas] when distinguishing the Trinity according to relations, but that its applicability to the corresponding Scotist teaching is doubtful. See the note below regarding the commentary on *Ennead* v. 6. 3.

that is mediative" ("nullo actu ... medio") but "with the stability itself of his most absolute simplicity" ("ipsomet simplicitatis absolutissimae statu")<sup>52</sup>—this statement indicates the identification of the internal or external acts or at the very least their emanative continuity with one another. The Florentine does not expand on the significance of this conception which was clearly intended by Plotinus to indicate that the first principle's unitary act—despite the determinate individual actualizations of subsequent terms—does not itself involve any inclination or decline. Rather, the commentator simply uses the obvious rejection of any attribution of number or composition to the first principle implied in Plotinus' account of the latter's unitary act to introduce a comparison with the words: "But the number of the relations discovered by Christian authors does not at all do this" ("relationum vero numerus apud Christianos inventus id minime facit"). In other words, the relational number attributed to the Trinity by Christian thinkers is not to be understood as the compounding mathematical number rightly denied by Plotinus with respect to his first principle. The remainder of this chapter then summarizes the doctrine of Trinitarian number: first, negatively by arguing that this number is not found in any beings, categories, or transcendentals, cannot be imagined, and does not occur in essences, forms, or qualities. It is rather necessary to turn to "divine authority" (*divina auctoritas*) for some illumination: that is, by arguing affirmatively that the number is of persons or of properties,<sup>53</sup> or that we are dealing with distinction according to relation or an absolute distinction.

In this chapter of the commentary on *Ennead* v. 3, Ficino has basically contrasted an interpretation of Plotinus' doctrine of the unitary act of the first principle with an account of the Christian teaching about the relational number of the triune God. His approach is to suggest that the two approaches are merely different from or even complementary to one another. However, in the chapter of the commentary on *Ennead* v. 6, Ficino uses Plotinus' discussion as the basis for a more constructive development which brings the pagan and Christian positions into greater alignment. Here, we discover that the notion of the first principle's unitary act can be linked with the trinitarian number through the notion of infinite power.

Examination of the relationship between the divine act and the divine number from this slightly different angle begins in the first section of the commentary on *Ennead* v. 6, c. 3.<sup>54</sup> The exegetical starting-point is now Plotinus' view

52 See note 51 above.

53 Ficino means: father, son, spirit (= persons) and fatherhood, sonship, spiration (= properties).

54 Ficino, *In Enneadem*, v. 6. 3.

that distinction among forms within intellect's understanding of itself, "even if no relation has there been added to them" ("etiam si nulla illic relatio<sup>55</sup> illis accesserit"), is incompatible with the first principle's simplicity. The combination of the notions of absence of multiplicity and absence of relation leads Ficino to explain the doctrine somewhat redolent of Thomism whereby the first principle does not itself possess a plurality of forms by somehow understanding that plurality. Rather, "it sees all things by looking into itself through its one form and in a single act: that is, considering its most simple form as something imitated by different things in various ways" ("per unam sui formam actu unico se inspiciens omnia conspicit, videlicet simplicissimam formam suam considerans aliter ab aliis atque aliter imitandam")<sup>56</sup>—another statement clearly indicating the identification of the internal or external acts or at the very least their emanative continuity with one another. Before proceeding further, Ficino is careful to note that the Platonic teaching that formed the starting-point of his excursion into Christian theology, if not identical with the latter, is at least not opposed to it.

In the next stage of his discussion, the commentator first appeals in a general way to the authority of Dionysius the Areopagite and Gregory Nazianzen regarding the identity of unity and trinity in the godhead. He explains that although opposites—for instance, slowness and rapidity of motion—are distinct in the lower world, because the divine nature through its "infinite power" (*virtus infinita*) can unite all things to one another and to itself, these opposites can be brought into union in the divine sphere—that is, as rest. Ficino now brings the continuity between the internal and the external divine act assumed by Plotinus—which now emerges as a reduction of *external* opposites to *internal* unity—into conjunction with both the divine act and the divine number stated by these Christian authorities. He argues that according to the principle of infinite power as uniting opposites, Dionysius and Gregory can be seen as agreeing with the Plotinian teaching regarding the continuity between the internal and external divine act when they speak of the unitary godhead as producing an offspring that is "innermost and equal as far as triunity" ("intima aequalisque usque in Trinitatem").<sup>57</sup> In the same context, Ficino stresses that

55 Reading *relatio* following the 1559 edition (not *relati* according to the 1576 edition).

56 See note 51 above.

57 The argument at this point is elliptical and therefore hard to follow. It unfolds on the basis of a complex set of assumptions—emerging not so much in this text as in his commentary on Plotinus' *Ennead* 11. 4: "On Matter" and his commentary on Plato's *Philebus*—that [1] there is a continuum of infinity equivalent to the duality of higher and lower matter(s); [2] this continuum derives from the divine infinity itself; [3] the divine infinity relates to

the Trinity is not a multitude participating in or referred back to a higher unity but has a distinction that is arranged through “a certain relation” (*relatio quaedam*) since the latter “introduces only a very minimal difference without compounding” (“differentiam quam minimam afferre nihilque componere”).<sup>58</sup>

The relationship between the divine act and the divine number is examined in the final section of the commentary on *Ennead* v. 6, c. 3 from yet another angle. Here, the exegetical starting-point in Plotinus’ view that distinction among forms within intellect’s understanding of itself is incompatible with the first principle’s simplicity leads not so much to a *quasi*-Thomistic treatment of the issue as in the first section of this chapter but explicitly to an encounter with another branch of Scholasticism. Without necessarily committing himself to this viewpoint, the commentator explains how the followers of Scotus maintain that a multitude which is not the cause of some compounding through potency and act might be worthy of God, then going on to explain that the multitude of persons envisaged in the present context by Dionysius and Gregory is indeed that of a certain act or acts that “do no compounding and do not arise from a potency” (“componentes nihil neque ex potentia exeuntes”).<sup>59</sup> Ficino concludes by noting that the activity of this multitude of persons—just like the multitude of Ideas mentioned in Plotinus’ text—is best understood as certain rays of light that are intimate to the light and into which the latter propagates itself.

### 3.3 *Comparison between the “Trinities” of Christianity and Post-Plotinian Platonism*

The third of our selected topics<sup>60</sup> involves the comparison of the divine Trinity of Christianity with the “false” trinity of post-Plotinian Platonism. The importance of this topic for Ficino is underlined by its being referenced in the last two of his Latin glosses on the *Anaptyxis*<sup>61</sup> and also developed in the arguments of chapters 56–58 of his commentary on the *Parmenides*. Its starting-point is Nicholas’ citation of Proclus’ *Elements of Theology*, prop. 6: “Every multitude is composed either of unified things or of henads” (πάν πληθος ἢ ἐξ ἡνωμένων ἐστὶν ἢ ἐξ ἐνάδων).<sup>62</sup> According to the bishop of Methone, the ancient Platonist is

---

the continuum of infinity as *esse* (“act of being”) to *essentia* (“essence”). Ficino’s doctrine here is a subtle blend of authentically Plotinian and Thomistic principles.

58 Ficino, *In Enneadem*, v. 6. 3.

59 See R. Cross, “Duns Scotus on Divine Substance and the Trinity”, in *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 11(2003), pp. 181–201.

60 For the three topics see p. 425.

61 Ficino, *Annotationes* #14–15.

62 Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 6, 6. 22–30.

shown by this proposition to be worshipping a multitude of gods despite having shown that the One-in-Itself is established before all things. Proclus had thus failed to grasp that God could be threefold without thereby becoming a multitude. He continued to believe in a multitude of gods distinguished by many differences from one another in the Greek manner, whereas between the divine hypostases of Christianity there is not difference but unity of substance, power, and activity.<sup>63</sup>

In the relevant chapters of his *Parmenides* commentary, Ficino argues decisively against the doctrine—explicitly attributed to Syrianus and Proclus—that there is a multitude of henads or gods before being. He begins his argument by noting the Greek writers' view that "the essential points stated in all the conclusions are the existence of certain separate gods" ("omnium conclusionum capita deos quosdam seorsum existentes esse"), and that terms like "multitude", "part", "whole", "straight and spherical shape", "similarity", "dissimilarity", and so forth correspond to "certain divinities" (*numina quaedam*). In fact, it is through the negative conclusions of the first hypothesis that these gods are shown to be inferior to the first principle, and through the corresponding affirmative conclusions that each god is shown to be in its own order. Ficino concludes by observing that as an interpretation of Plato's text "this seems to be a poetical rather than a philosophical construct" ("inventum hoc poeticum potius quam philosophicum esse videtur") and that one should in preference understand the various terms as denoting "certain properties of universal being" ("propria quaedam entis universi").<sup>64</sup>

Ficino also makes a detailed comparison of his own interpretation of the *Parmenides* at this point with the exegesis of the dialogue by Syrianus and Proclus, doing this by distinguishing *two* stages within the dynamic evolution of the first term derived from and subsequent to the One itself.<sup>65</sup> First, he summarizes the view of these Platonists that there are no "oppositional differences among Genera and Ideas" ("oppositionales generum idearumque differentiae") within the primal being.<sup>66</sup> According to them, this is because  $\langle 1 \rangle$  this being is closest to the One and  $\langle 2 \rangle$  it has the most unity with the One. Moreover, these Platonists hold that there is no "non-being" (*non ens*) in the primal being whereby the "same" is not the "other", "rest" is not "motion", and

63 Nicholas of Methone, 10. 1–20.

64 Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 56. 3, ed. Vanhaelen, 11, pp. 40–42.

65 As we have seen earlier, this will be for Ficino the angel(s) as "one-many".

66 This will correspond to the *being* of being (first triad within being) together with its henad according to the system of Syrianus and Proclus as reported in the latter's *Platonic Theology*.

so forth. According to them, this is because <1> none of the aforementioned opposites can be predicated of everything, whereas <2> being *simpliciter* is predicated universally. The view of Syrianus and Proclus is that these oppositional differences are rather to be placed within the “intellectual essence” (*intellectualis essentia*) which follows the primal being.<sup>67</sup> In contrast with all this, Ficino declares his preference for the opinion of the “more ancient ones” (*antiquiores*), the implied reference here being to Plotinus.<sup>68</sup> These earlier thinkers [A] placed such differences within the “first being” (*ens primum*) but not at the latter’s “first stage” (*primus gradus*)<sup>69</sup> and also [B] made them “unfold” (*explicari*) at a certain subsequent stage where there is a “procession” (*progredi*) through life and intelligence. Ficino’s view is that this teaching of the more ancient authorities resolves the problematic issues mentioned above in connection with the range of predications. Thus, <A> the five Genera unfold more broadly in “an essence that is now living” (*in essentia iam vivente*) and the Ideas rather in “a living essence that is now intellectual” (*in vivo iam intellectuali*), whereas <B> these Genera and Ideas are scarcely distinguished in the essence itself despite the presence there of the necessary properties of all things.<sup>70</sup>

These final remarks indicate a transition to the next phase of Ficino’s reply to the post-Plotinian thinkers in which he distinguishes *three* stages within the dynamic evolution of the first term derived from and subsequent to the One itself. In the next chapter of his commentary on the *Parmenides*, Ficino begins by explaining how Syrianus and Proclus established “a certain trinity of three substances outside the first principle” (“trinitas quaedam substantiarum trium extra primum”) consisting of the “first being” (*prima essentia*)—the causal principle of being—, the “first life” (*prima vita*)—the causal principle of living—, and the “first intellect” (*intellectus primus*)—the causal principle of understanding. The Florentine soundly rejects the reasoning on which these thinkers based their doctrine or at least seemed to have done so.<sup>71</sup> First, they placed the causal principle of being before that of life apparently on the grounds that the gift of being is extended more widely to subsequent things

67 This will correspond to the *intellect* of being (third triad within being) together with its henad according to the system of Syrianus and Proclus as reported in the latter’s *Platonic Theology*.

68 Also, probably to Dionysius the Areopagite, whom the Florentine holds to be Plotinus’ predecessor.

69 Or “first level”—that Latin substantive *gradus* has equally temporal and spatial connotations which Ficino is prepared to exploit.

70 Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 56. 2, ed. Vanhaelen, II, pp. 38–40.

71 Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, 57. 8, ed. Vanhaelen, II, pp. 56–58.

than is the gift of life and the gift of intellect. However, since there is on the level of effects a contradiction between the order of precedence with respect to extension of the gifts<sup>72</sup> and the order of precedence according to value of those gifts,<sup>73</sup> the argument of Syrianus and Proclus transferring the former order to the level of causes with the exclusion of the latter seems to be logically incoherent.<sup>74</sup> Second, it was a mistake on the later Platonists' part to postulate a multitude of causal principles in order to generate the required effects when one would have been sufficient. Rather, we should accept Plotinus' view that the order of precedence according to the extension of the gifts on the level of effects is consistent with a kind of "order of generation" (*generationis ordo*) on the level of causes where the essence of the first being "is somehow first, but soon *lives*, and then soon *understands*" ("prius quodammodo sit [...] mox vero vivat, mox intelligat"). Ficino's final point—that if the first being were perfect in its first stage, it would have no appetite towards the Good itself—seems to be the really decisive one, for the dynamic evolution of the first term derived from and subsequent to the One must be fundamentally reversionary in nature.<sup>75</sup>

We have seen that Ficino argues decisively against the view—explicitly attributed to Syrianus and Proclus—that there is a multitude of henads or gods before being. However, it would be a mistake to conclude that there are no traces or even analogues of such a theory in his Christian version of Platonism. In fact, the *Parmenides* commentary argues without demur that, when we look for the primal cause of multitude, we find that this is identical with the origin of union, provided that we understand "the primal cause of multitude" in the correct manner. It is perhaps obvious that things are one because of their dependence on that which can also be called "unity itself" (*unitas ipsa*), but it is also true albeit less obviously so that things are many because of that same dependence on the primal unity. Indeed, the many things exist through "multitude itself" (*ipsa multitudo*), although this multitude is not a particular multitude but absolute multitude which is equivalent to certain unities propagated

72 I.e. being above life above intelligence.

73 I.e. intelligence above life above being.

74 I have here paraphrased what I take to be Ficino's argument which is obscure because of its lack of detail. The Florentine simply refers to the teachings of Plotinus and Dionysius the Areopagite at this point and notes that he has discussed the issue further in his commentaries on those texts. Fortunately, there is a discussion at Ficino, *In Dionysii De divinis nominibus* (206, II, pp. 130–134) which states the issue somewhat more carefully and in agreement with my paraphrase.

75 This is because there is no procession or inclination in the causality of the Plotinian One. See the detailed discussion in section 3.2 above.

and distributed by the absolute unity.<sup>76</sup> As we have seen in our earlier discussion of this passage, the multitude of emanative unities constituting the second principle which is distributed by the absolute One corresponds to a multitude of the intellectual unities through which the blessed angels are joined to God.<sup>77</sup>

#### 4 Conclusions

We began by noting how in his commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*, Ficino concludes a passage discussing the contrast between the two principles named the "one-many" (*unum multa*) and the "absolute one" (*simpliciter unum*) by remarking that the Platonic arguments removing a multitude from the first principle do not count against the Christian Trinity, and that the writings of Nicholas the Greek theologian and bishop of Methone had been particularly successful in pointing this out. We continued by suggesting that this same passage of the *Parmenides* commentary was important first, because it provided evidence of Ficino's reading of an important Byzantine theologian—indeed, providing a cross-reference to an extant set of his own glosses on the bishop of Methone's work—; and second, because it linked the said Byzantine writer especially with the Florentine commentator's own reflections on some of the deepest questions of Platonic metaphysics.

There is perhaps one further reason why this particular textual confrontation is important at least for students of Ficino. That is because it provides supporting evidence of the Florentine's preference for the "Egyptian" school of Platonism typified by the writings of Plotinus over the "Lycian" school represented by the teachings of Syrianus and Proclus. Statements of this preference form a continuous theme throughout Ficino's career.<sup>78</sup> It perhaps first emerges clearly in the philosophical-historical discussions of the final books of his *Platonic Theology*<sup>79</sup> and comes to fruition in his commentaries on Plotinus and Dionysius the Areopagite. We now discover that the author of the *Anaptyxis* has appeared as a most opportune ally in steering the direction of Ficino's interpretative approach. Given his unparalleled expertise in the history of the Platonic tradition, Ficino was probably aware that Nicholas of Methone—

76 Ficino, *In Parmenidem*, c. 57. 5, ed. Vanhaelen, II, pp. 52–54.

77 See above in section 3.1, § c.

78 For a discussion of Ficino's "historical" classification of the Platonic philosophical schools of late antiquity see M.J.B. Allen, *Synoptic Art. Marsilio Ficino on the History of Platonic Interpretation* (Florence: Olschki, 1998), pp. 51–92.

79 See Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, xvii, 4, vi, pp. 44–62.



sometimes accidentally and perhaps often willfully—misunderstood that Greek whom he ironically styled a “wise man”. Nevertheless, the bishop’s role as an authoritative Christian witness to what was good and not so good about Platonism in the eyes of Ficino should not be underestimated.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

#### Manuscripts

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr 1256.

#### Printed Sources

(Ps.-)Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, ed. B.R. Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum* 1, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1990, pp. 107–231.

Marsilio Ficino, *Commentaries on Plato*, vol. 2, *Parmenides*, ed. M. Vanhaelen, Cambridge (Ma.), Harvard University Press, 2012.

Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plotinus*, vols. 5–6 *Ennead III–IV*, ed. S. Gersh, Cambridge, (Ma.), Harvard University Press, 2017–2018.

Marsilio Ficino, *On Dionysius the Areopagite*, vols. 1–2, ed. M.J.B. Allen, Cambridge (Ma.), Harvard University Press, 2015.

Marsilio Ficino, *Opera et quae hactenus extitere et quae in lucem nunc primum prodire omnia [...]*, Basel, Heinrich Petri, 1576 [repr. Torino, Bottega d’Erasmus 1959, and later].

Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, vols. 1–6, ed. M.J.B. Allen, J. Hankins, Cambridge (Ma.), Harvard University Press, 2001–2006.

Marsilio Ficino, *Platonis Opera Omnia quae extant Marsilio Ficino interprete [...]*, Frankfurt, Claude Marne and Johann Aubry’s heirs, 1602.

Marsilio Ficino, *Plotini divini [...] De rebus philosophicis libri LIII in Enneades sex distributi, a Marsilio Ficino e graeca lingua in Latinam versi et ab eodem doctissimis commentariis illustrati*, Basel, Pietro Perna, 1559.

Nicholas of Methone, Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου / *Refutation of Proclus’ Elements of Theology*. A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas’ life and works by A.D. Angelou, Athens / Leiden, The Academy of Athens Athens / Brill, 1984.

Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. E.R. Dodds, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963<sup>2</sup>.

### Secondary Sources

Allen, M.J.B., “Marsilio Ficino”, in Gersh (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus*, pp. 353–379.

Allen, M.J.B., *Synoptic Art. Marsilio Ficino on the History of Platonic Interpretation*, Florence, Olschki, 1998.

- Corrias, A., *The Renaissance of Plotinus. The Soul and Human Nature in Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on the Enneads*, London, Routledge, 2021.
- Cross, R., "Duns Scotus on Divine Substance and the Trinity", in *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 11(2003), pp. 181–201.
- Förstel, C., "Marsilio Ficino e il Parigino Greco 1816 di Plotino", in S. Gentile, S. Toussaint (eds), *Marsilio Ficino. Fonte, testi, fortuna. Atti del Convegno Internazionale (Firenze 1–3 ottobre 1999)*, Roma, Storia e Letteratura 2006, pp. 65–88.
- Gersh, S. (ed), *Interpreting Proclus. From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Gersh, S., "Analytical Studies" in Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plotinus*.
- Gersh, S., "Marsilio Ficino as Commentator on Plotinus. Some Case Studies", in Gersh, S. (ed.), *Plotinus' Legacy. The Transformation of Platonism from the Renaissance to the Modern Era*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019, pp. 19–43.
- Gersh, S., "Styles and Methods of Philosophical Interpretation in Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on Plotinus", in A. Corrias, E. del Soldato (eds), *Harmony and Contrast. Plato and Aristotle in the Early Modern Period*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022, pp. 17–40.
- Kristeller, O.P., *Supplementum Ficinianum. Marsilii Ficini Florentini philosophi platonici opuscula inedita et dispersa*, Florence, Olschki, 1937.
- Monfasani, J., "Marsilio Ficino and the Plato-Aristotle Controversy", in M.J.B. Allen, V. Rees, with M. Davies (eds), *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, Leiden, Brill, 2002, pp. 179–202.
- Robichaud, D., "Fragments of Marsilio Ficino's Translations and Use of Proclus' *Elements of Theology* and *Elements of Physics*: Evidence and Study", in *Vivarium* 54(2016), pp. 46–107.
- Saffrey, M.-D., "Notes platoniciennes de Marsile Ficin dans un manuscrit de Proclus (Cod. Riccardianus 70)", in *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et de Renaissance* 21(1959), pp. 161–184.
- Sicherl, M., "Neuentdeckte Handschriften von Marsilio Ficino und Johannes Reuchlin", *Scriptorium* 16(1962), pp. 50–61.



# Index of Manuscripts

## Athens

National Library of Greece

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| MS 477                         | 352 |
| MS 494 (olim. Ἀγιοι Ανάργυροι) | 358 |

## Brescia

Biblioteca Civica Queriniana

|        |          |
|--------|----------|
| A.IV.3 | 332, 359 |
|--------|----------|

## București

Biblioteca Academiei Române

|                         |     |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Gr. 318 (= Litzica 560) | 358 |
|-------------------------|-----|

## Firenze

Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana

|             |                         |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| Plut. 9.12  | 332, 356                |
| Plut. 9.24  | 332, 354, 356, 357, 360 |
| Plut. 56.14 | 404, 405, 412, 416      |

## Jerusalem

Library of the Orthodox Patriarchate

|                      |     |
|----------------------|-----|
| Panaghiou Taphou 108 | 357 |
|----------------------|-----|

## Leiden

Universitaire Bibliotheken

|                             |    |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Voss. gr. O <sup>o</sup> 14 | 59 |
|-----------------------------|----|

## Madrid

Biblioteca Nacional de España

|         |    |
|---------|----|
| MS 4754 | 58 |
|---------|----|

Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de El Escorial

|                          |    |
|--------------------------|----|
| MS X-1-11 (= Andrés 353) | 58 |
|--------------------------|----|

## Milano

Biblioteca Ambrosiana

|                                |         |
|--------------------------------|---------|
| P 206 sup. (Martini-Bassi 648) | 59, 412 |
| R 125 sup. (Martini-Bassi 727) | 59      |

## Moscow

State Historical Museum

|                                 |          |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| Synod. gr. 366 (= Vladimir 239) | 359, 366 |
| Synod. gr. 423 (= Vladimir 245) | 355      |

## München

Bayerische Staatsbibliothek

|        |          |
|--------|----------|
| gr. 28 | 352      |
| gr. 65 | 354, 356 |
| gr. 66 | 354, 355 |
| gr. 99 | 58       |

## Oxford

Bodleian Library

|              |         |
|--------------|---------|
| Barocci 215  | 352     |
| Laud. gr. 18 | 60, 412 |
| Roe 22       | 354     |

## Paris

Bibliothèque nationale de France

|                 |                          |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| gr. 1234        | 357                      |
| gr. 1256        | 8, 59, 412, 423, 425–427 |
| gr. 1261        | 354                      |
| gr. 1842        | 377                      |
| gr. 2002        | 58                       |
| gr. 2028        | 376, 377–391, 396        |
| gr. 2045        | 59, 377                  |
| gr. 2423        | 16, 52, 60, 375, 412     |
| Suppl. gr. 1232 | 356                      |

## Roma

Biblioteca Vallicelliana

|                 |          |
|-----------------|----------|
| B.53 (= gr. 12) | 359, 365 |
|-----------------|----------|

## Vatopedi (Holy Monastery of)

|        |     |
|--------|-----|
| MS 229 | 357 |
|--------|-----|

## Vaticano (Città del)

Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

|               |          |
|---------------|----------|
| Barb. gr. 291 | 332      |
| Pal. gr. 232  | 354, 356 |
| Vat. gr. 237  | 59, 412  |
| Vat. gr. 303  | 408      |

Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (*cont.*)

|               |          |
|---------------|----------|
| Vat. gr. 316  | 58       |
| Vat. gr. 626  | 59, 412  |
| Vat. gr. 680  | 357, 360 |
| Vat. gr. 1095 | 411–412  |
| Vat. gr. 1457 | 58       |

**Venezia**

Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana

|                                                   |     |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----|
| App. III.3 (= 8593; <i>olim</i> Nanianus gr. 227) | 355 |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----|

|                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| gr. IV.58 (= 1206) | 354                  |
| gr. Z. 265 (= 516) | 58                   |
| gr. Z. 512 (= 678) | 16, 52, 60, 64, 375– |
|                    | 397, 412             |
| gr. Z. 521 (= 316) | 52, 60, 64, 412      |

**Wien**

Österreichische Nationalbibliothek

|               |    |
|---------------|----|
| phil. gr. 203 | 58 |
|---------------|----|

# Index of Names (before 1800)

- Alcinous 201  
 Alexander of Aphrodisias 109, 122  
 Alexios I Komnenos 33, 44, 91, 107  
 Amelius Portus 53, 60, 63  
 Ammonius Hermiae 116, 121, 122, 407, 408  
 Andronikos Kamateros 320, 333, 334, 355, 366  
 Anna Komnena 107, 108, 131  
 Anthony the Great (St.) 40  
 Arethas of Caeserea 265  
 Aristotle 4, 6, 24, 33, 36, 40–42, 47, 81, 92, 93, 96, 110–113, 119, 121–124, 127, 130, 132, 149, 151, 152, 163, 174, 175, 177, 180, 185, 186, 191–193, 195, 228, 239, 255, 265, 297, 306, 308, 324, 327, 332–334, 361–365, 376, 407, 429  
 Arius 96, 98, 302, 312  
 Asclepius of Tralles 117  
 Athanasius of Alexandria 39, 275, 407  
 Augustine of Hippo 92  
 Avicenna 429  
  
 Barlaam of Calabria 400, 401, 403, 407  
 Basil of Caesarea 220, 234, 245, 265, 315, 407, 415  
  
 Clement of Alexandria 41, 44, 219  
 Constantinos Lascaris 376  
 Cyril of Alexandria 36, 41, 44, 275, 299, 407  
 (Ps)Cyril of Alexandria 243  
  
 Damascius 94, 95, 212, 213, 252, 307  
 David (Biblical figure) 23, 24, 26  
 David Dishypatos 407  
 David IV the Builder 22, 23, 51, 91  
 David the Conqueror 327  
 Dimitrios Kabasilas 405, 406  
 (Ps)Dionysius the Areopagite 3, 5, 9, 15, 24, 32, 47, 49, 51, 57, 71, 94, 97, 100, 102, 120, 146, 148, 149, 153, 158, 159, 161, 173, 202, 203, 208, 209, 214–220, 224, 225, 227, 229, 234–236, 238, 239, 241–244, 246, 252, 253, 275–278, 282, 283, 286, 300, 302–304, 306, 307, 313–316, 395–397, 400, 407–409, 414, 416, 417, 424–426, 428, 429, 432–434, 436, 437, 439–441  
 (Ps)Elias 327  
 Eunapius 257  
 Eunomius 244, 312  
 Euthymios Zigabenos 408, 416  
 Evagrius Ponticus 29, 40–42, 46, 47  
 Eustratios of Nicaea 2, 4, 6, 14, 42–51, 54, 56, 57, 107–132, 139, 167, 185, 186, 334, 351  
  
 Gennadios Scholarios 330  
 Gerhoch of Reichersberg 357  
 Gregory of Nyssa 192–194, 196, 266  
 Gregory Akindynos 402, 403, 415  
 Gregory Nazianzen 3, 6, 38, 39, 71, 82, 99, 100, 149, 234, 236–239, 241–246, 250, 252, 253, 255–257, 294–299, 303, 314, 315, 330, 331, 361, 362, 408, 424, 434, 437  
 Gregory Pakourianos (Bakurianisdze, Bakurian) 22  
 Gregory Palamas 8, 92, 275, 376, 395–397, 400–408, 413–417  
  
 Hermias of Alexandria 116, 117, 120, 252  
 Hierotheos 242  
 Hugo Eterianus 308, 340, 356, 366  
 Humbert of Silva Candida 334  
  
 Iamblichus 37, 95, 96, 121, 139, 250, 302, 384, 393, 396, 397, 424  
 Ioanne Petritsi 2–4, 9, 13–31, 37–39, 42–44, 47, 50–57, 60–63, 69–79, 81–88, 91, 95–98, 100–105, 212  
 Isaac Argyros 402  
 Isaac Sebastocrator 139  
  
 Johann Aubry 422  
 Johann Albert Fabricius 348, 349, 353  
 John VI Kantakouzenos 402, 403  
 John XIV Kalekas 403  
 John Axouch 293, 359, 360  
 John Bekkos 358  
 John Duns Scotus 424, 434, 437  
 John of Damascus 39, 234, 243, 246–248, 265, 336  
 John of Scythopolis 234, 244, 246, 251–253, 306  
 John Climacus 15

- John Italos 2, 13, 14, 22, 27, 29–37, 40, 42–47, 50–52, 54, 56–59, 70, 91, 96, 97, 104, 106, 108, 139, 167, 168, 185, 216, 226, 228, 229
- John Kyparissiotēs 396, 402
- John Philoponus 5, 30, 31, 36, 37, 93, 108, 112, 116, 117, 152, 202–205, 214, 216–218, 220–229, 255
- John Scotus Eriugena 96
- John Xiphilinos 96
- Joseph Bryennios 326, 330
- Julian the Apostate 41, 95
- John Kinnamos 341
- Leontius of Byzantium 265
- Macedonius I of Constantinople 312, 330
- Manuel I Komnenos 1, 14, 228, 333, 334, 356
- Marinus 27, 29, 400
- Marsilio Ficino 2, 4, 8, 9, 422–425, 427–442
- Maximus the Confessor 5, 6, 40, 120, 202, 203, 214, 216–220, 223–227, 229, 234, 239, 244–246, 248, 253, 257, 395, 396, 407, 415, 416
- Meletius Pegas 358
- Michael Cerularius 334, 335
- Michael Syncellus 248
- Michael Psellos 7, 13, 14, 20, 22, 43, 52, 57, 70, 95, 96, 130, 139, 185, 229, 233, 375, 377, 396, 397, 423
- Michael of Thessaloniki 54
- Nathanael Chycas 358
- Nemesius of Emesa 22, 23, 25, 26, 234
- Nicholas Blemmydes 348, 353
- Nicholas IV Mouzalon 248, 294, 354, 358
- Nicholas of Myra 353
- Nicholas-Nektarios of Casole 338, 356, 366
- Nikephoros Basilakes 54
- Nikephoros Gregoras 8, 376, 395, 396, 402–417
- Niketas Byzantios 317, 334
- Niketas Choniates 338, 354, 356, 357, 360, 366
- Niketas of Maroneia 340–341
- Niketas of Thessaloniki 297, 308, 326, 327, 341
- Niketas Stethatos 293, 314, 325, 334, 335, 337, 339, 359–363
- Origen 2, 27, 29, 35, 37–42, 46, 47, 54, 56, 57, 91–93, 201, 216, 263
- Pantainos the Philosopher 218, 219
- Paul (apostle) 38, 39, 299, 320
- Peter (apostle) 338
- Philo of Alexandria 201, 250
- Photius I of Constantinople 234, 317, 318, 329, 332–334, 336, 351, 354
- Plato 8, 27–29, 32, 39–41, 86, 87, 92, 93, 96, 100, 119, 121, 129, 143, 149, 150, 152, 170, 176, 177, 182, 183, 186, 190, 201, 221, 222, 228, 250, 262, 264, 267, 268, 270, 272, 274, 275, 277, 278, 302, 328, 344, 365, 380, 401, 405, 407, 413, 414, 422, 424, 428, 430–433, 436, 437, 438, 441
- Plotinus 2, 8, 9, 25, 27, 33, 35, 37, 41–42, 44, 54, 92, 95, 100, 116, 120, 155, 159, 180, 222, 256–257, 263, 274, 407, 408, 422, 424, 425, 431, 433–437, 439–441
- Plutarch (of Athens) 176, 306, 413
- Porphyry (of Tyre) 96, 167, 180, 189, 265, 327
- Proclus (Diadochus) 1–9, 13, 14, 16–18, 20, 22–23, 26–33, 37–39, 42, 43, 47, 49–51, 54–57, 60–63, 69–77, 79–88, 91, 93–104, 107–109, 111, 113, 115–118, 120, 122–132, 139–163, 167–190, 193–197, 201–217, 219, 220, 222, 225–229, 233–236, 238–240, 243, 245, 246, 248–250, 253, 254, 258, 261–278, 280–285, 287, 291, 302–304, 306–309, 313, 314, 317, 331, 340, 341, 375–377, 380, 389, 391–397, 400–402, 404–415, 417, 424–428, 433, 437–441
- Procopius of Gaza 349, 350, 402
- Pythagoras 413
- Robert Grosseteste 107
- Sabellius (of Pentapolis) 302, 312
- Sergius of Reshaina 47
- Simplicius of Cilicia 111, 397
- (Ps)Simplicius 397
- Sothericos Panteugenos 364, 365
- Stelianos Choumnos 377
- Symeon of Phndzahank' 16, 22, 57
- Symeon the New Theologian 40, 51
- Syrianus 116–118, 143, 263, 302, 402, 417, 438–441

Theodore Graptos 407  
Theodore of Kyros 41  
Theodore of Smyrna 55, 357  
Theodore Metochites 408  
Theodorus Prodomos 375  
Theodoret of Cyrus 41, 44

Theophylacht of Ochrid 15, 334, 351, 354,  
355  
Thomas Aquinas 275, 276, 284, 424, 434  
William of Moerbeke 20, 52, 53, 60, 375



# Index of Names (after 1800)

- Adler, A. 409  
Aertsen, J. 161, 165  
Alexidse, L. 2, 16–19, 22–26, 69, 70–72, 75, 78, 86, 87, 186, 201, 210, 212  
Allen, M. 422–424, 441  
Amato, E. 291, 349  
Angelou, A. 13, 50, 54, 69, 71, 97, 107, 131, 139, 140, 161, 168, 169, 184, 185, 191, 205, 235, 264, 290–293, 308, 334, 340, 341, 348, 351, 354, 355, 359, 363, 368, 394, 402, 409, 410, 422  
Angold, M. 324  
Arabatzis, G. 108  
Arsenij (Ivačenko) 293, 303, 334, 359, 363, 366  
Aubry, G. 19, 141, 169, 375  
Aubenque, P. 264
- Babuin, A. 351  
Baltzly, D. 169, 179, 180, 183, 188, 189, 400  
Barber, C. 43, 108, 400  
Barmin, A. 337, 360  
Barnes, J. 47, 110, 152, 327  
Baxter, D. 176, 177  
Bekker, I. 402, 406, 412  
Benakis, L. 186  
Benevich, G. 220  
Benvenuto, C. 7, 292–294, 301, 320, 335, 348, 349, 354, 358, 361  
Beyer, H.-V. 405, 407, 415  
Bergemann, L. 17, 19, 22, 24, 25, 69  
Biard, J. 108  
Blanchet, M. 292  
Boese, H. 126  
Bonazzi, M. 117  
Bos, E. 156, 157  
Bossina, L. 347  
Boulgares, E. 326  
Boys-Stones, G. 201  
Breton, S. 265  
Brisson, L. 19, 141, 169, 375  
Bucossi, A. 6, 7, 292, 297, 320, 326, 327, 332, 338, 341, 347, 351, 355  
Busse, A. 122, 152, 180, 408  
Butorac, D. 19, 171, 205, 235, 290, 394, 413  
Bydén, B. 8, 395
- Calma, D. 1, 19, 43, 71, 130, 131, 141, 163, 185, 186, 217, 220, 229, 233, 291, 349, 375, 402  
Cameron, A. 350  
Canart, P. 356  
Cañellas, N. 403, 415  
Canfora, L. 336, 347  
Cavallera, F. 357  
Chadwick, H. 93  
Charles-Saget, A. 163, 263, 268, 272, 274, 281  
Chase, M. 122, 205  
Chelidze, E. 15, 22, 23, 27  
Chiesa, P. 357  
Chlup, R. 126  
Chrissis, N. 335, 361  
Chrestou, P. 275, 379, 395, 400, 404, 406, 407, 414, 415  
Chiaradonna, R. 111, 117, 188  
Cleary, J. 115, 126  
Clucas, L. 96  
Combès, J. 95  
Constas, M. 407  
Corcella, A. 291, 347  
Corrias, A. 433  
Corrigan, K. 220  
Corsini, E. 282, 283  
Cosentino, S. 324  
Courtine, J.F. 277  
Creuzer, F. 60, 63, 349  
Cross, R. 437
- D'Amelia, L. 297, 326, 327, 341  
D'Ancona Costa, C. 222  
Darrouzès, J. 335  
Davies, M. 423  
Demetracopoulos, J. 377, 395, 401, 403, 417  
Demetrakopoulos, A. 152, 291–293, 320, 332, 353–357, 359, 362, 364  
Dendrinis, C. 44, 107  
De Durand, L. 315  
De Raeymaecker, L. 284  
De Rijk, L. 156  
Del Soldato 433  
Devreesse, R. 360  
D'Hoine, P. 169, 171, 186, 188, 189  
Diehl, E. 111, 117, 302  
Diels, H. 111

- Dillon, J. 118, 126, 143, 314  
 Dindorf, L. 257  
 Dindorf, W. 348  
 Dodds, E. 16–21, 41, 51–54, 56, 59–63, 69, 73,  
     111, 115, 140, 150, 169, 182, 263, 265, 270,  
     272, 274, 375, 394, 408, 412  
 Dölger, F. 357  
 d'Onofrio, G. 317  
 Dörrie, H. 163  
 Doutreleau, L. 315  
 Dräseke, J. 353, 359  
 Drobner, H. 192
- Ebbesen, S. 108  
 Edwards, M. 47, 57  
 Ehrhard, A. 349–351  
 Elliot, J. 347, 348  
 Emlyn-Jones, C. 93  
 Emilsson, E. 222  
 Evans, D. 47
- Falà, J. 202  
 Falcon, A. 111  
 Fanourgakes, B. 414  
 Follieri, E. 349, 353  
 Förstel, C. 423  
 Friedlein, G. 117, 142  
 Fyrigos, A. 401
- Gärtner, H. 176  
 Gaul, N. 337  
 Gautier, P. 355  
 Gazzini, C. 332  
 Géhin, P. 29  
 Gentile, S. 423  
 Gerson, L. 218, 222  
 Gersh, S. 2, 4, 8, 9, 18, 43, 69, 70, 108, 130,  
     139, 185, 186, 217, 233, 262, 279, 291, 400,  
     422, 424, 433  
 Gertz, S. 212  
 Giarenis, I. 44, 107  
 Gigineishvili, L. 2, 3, 13–15, 19, 20, 22–24,  
     26–29, 38, 39, 59, 70  
 Gilson, E. 278, 286–288  
 Giocarinis, K. 107  
 Gioffreda, A. 131, 291, 349, 402  
 Girardi, M. 42  
 Glenn, R. 314  
 Gleede, B. 220
- Gogoberidze, M. 15  
 Golitsis, P. 365  
 Gorgodze, S. 22, 23  
 Goulet, R. 155  
 Goulet-Cazé, M.-O. 155  
 Gouillard, J. 30, 34–37, 43, 228  
 Greig, J. 1, 5, 167, 184, 191, 192, 194, 195, 204,  
     205, 208, 211, 212, 217, 249, 255, 290, 331  
 Grünbart, M. 337  
 Günther, H.-C. 16, 18, 21  
 Gutas, D. 132
- Hadot, P. 274  
 Hammond, C. 92  
 Hankins, J. 422  
 Hankinson, R. 111  
 Harrison, N. 250  
 Harte, V. 177  
 Hatlie, P. 248  
 Hayduck, M. 108, 117, 122  
 Heil, G. 244  
 Helmig, C. 118, 119, 183, 186  
 Henry, P. 116  
 Heylbut, G. 111  
 Hinterberger, M. 395, 403  
 Hoeck, J. 338, 356  
 Hoffmann, P. 19, 141, 155, 169, 375  
 Horn, C. 26  
 Hultsch, F. 157  
 Hunger, H. 404
- Ierodiakonou, K. 116, 185, 186  
 Ikaltoeli, A. 23  
 Iremadze, T. 18, 70  
 Ivačenko, A. 293, 303, 334, 359, 363  
 Isaac, D. 65
- Jeck, U. 349  
 Jeffreys, E.M. 350  
 Jenkins, D. 43, 107, 108  
 Joannou, P. 44–46, 58, 229  
 Jourjon, M. 342  
 Jugie, M. 331, 335, 342, 345
- Kalbfleisch, K. 111  
 Kaldellis, A. 132, 228, 335, 361  
 Kambylis, A. 108  
 Kapriev, G. 139  
 Karamanolis, G. 201, 220

- Karmiris, I. 403  
 Kauchtschischvili, S. 15, 16, 69, 96  
 Kazhdan, A. 291, 293, 308, 340, 341, 367, 368  
 Kekelidze, K. 15, 22, 27  
 Ketschaknadze, N. 31, 34, 35, 45, 58  
 Kiosoglou, S.-A. 168, 201  
 Klemes (Metropolitan of Larissa and Platon) 404  
 Klima, G. 47  
 Kobec, A. 167  
 Kolia-Dermitzaki, A. 335, 361  
 Kontogiannes, L. 414  
 Kontouma[-Conticello], V. 243  
 Koslicki, K. 177  
 Kotter, P. 248  
 Kraft, A. 13, 14, 30, 31, 37, 54, 57, 228  
 Krausmüller, D. 36, 210, 337, 360, 361  
 Kristeller, P.O. 423  
 Kroll, W. 116, 120, 157  
 Krumbacher, K. 349–351  
  
 Laga, C. 120, 419  
 Lamberton, R. 155  
 Lamberg, E. 180  
 Lämmer, H. 358, 372  
 Lang, D. 16, 17  
 Lang, H.S. 204  
 Laurent, V. 335  
 Lauritzen, F. 70, 71, 403  
 Lavaud, L. 19, 141, 169, 375  
 Layne, D. 19, 171, 205, 235, 290, 394, 413  
 Le Moli, A. 89  
 Lewis, D. 177, 178, 196  
 Lilla, S. 126  
 Lloyd, A.C. 117, 180  
 Loenertz, R. 338, 356  
 Longo, A. 118  
 Lossky, V. 277, 278  
 Louis, P. 229, 342  
 Lourié, B. 26  
 Louth, A. 257  
 Lucà, S. 356  
 Lucarini, C. 116, 252  
 Luna, C. 142, 143, 155  
  
 Macé, C. 355  
 Macro, A. 204  
 Madec, G. 155  
  
 Magdalino, P. 324, 334  
 Mai, A. 349  
 Majercik, R. 116  
 Manganelli, G. 347  
 Mannelli, S. 248  
 Mantzarides, G. 418  
 Maréchaux, P. 291  
 Mariev, S. 70, 86, 108, 130, 131, 139, 171, 234, 291, 417  
 Marin, M. 42  
 Markesinis, B. 19  
 Marmodoro, A. 192  
 Marr, N. 15  
 Martijn, M. 171, 188  
 Meijer, P. 156, 157  
 Melikishvili, D. 15, 16, 23, 27  
 Melloni, A. 403  
 Mercken, H. 107  
 Meyendorff, J. 401, 414  
 Michel, A. 291, 293, 334, 335, 337, 338, 350, 351, 359–362  
 Minio-Paluello, L. 163, 342, 362, 418  
 Mioni, E. 375  
 Migne, J.-P. 94, 100, 192, 229, 265, 266, 276, 342, 344, 415, 416  
 Miles, G. 130  
 Mirotadze, N. 15, 16  
 Monfasani, J. 423, 425, 426  
 Moraux, P. 109, 418  
 Moreschini, C. 116, 252, 342, 361, 418  
 Morrow, G. 118  
 Mossay, J. 71, 342  
 Mtchedlidze, M. 69, 71  
 Muci, M. 356  
 Müller, A.E. 347  
  
 Natadze, N. 18  
 Nutsubidse, S. 15, 16, 26, 69, 96  
  
 O'Brien, C. 211  
 O'Brien, D. 155  
 O'Meara, D.J. 130, 143, 185, 397  
 Odorico, P. 336  
 Oosthout, A. 5, 169–171, 177, 180, 183, 201, 260  
 Oosthout, H. 167  
 Opsomer, J. 4, 5, 111, 145, 167, 170, 171, 174, 178, 179, 182–185, 187, 188, 195, 201, 204  
 Ostrovsky, A. 26

- Pallis, D. 47, 57  
 Palmer, G.E.H. 416  
 Pantskhava, I. 18  
 Papageorgiou, A. 335, 361  
 Papaioannou, S. 130, 365  
 Paparozzi, M. 404  
 Parry, K. 400  
 Pasquali, G. 143, 304  
 Pedersen, T. 117  
 Perczel, I. 2, 6, 30, 31, 37, 38, 42, 47, 54, 57,  
     59, 201, 228  
 Perkams, M. 186  
 Perl, E. 395  
 Perrone, L. 19, 70  
 Perrot, A. 155  
 Petit, L. 331, 351  
 Petridou, L. 6, 191, 192, 194  
 Pieralli, L. 248  
 Piccione, R.M. 186  
 Pickavé, M. 161  
 Pinto, P. 347, 348, 372  
 Pizzone, A. 365  
 Podolak, P. 308, 324, 332, 338, 356  
 Podskalsky, G. 130, 334  
 Polemis, I. 402  
 Pomeroy, M. 324  
 Preddy, W. 93  
 Prince, B.D. 192  
  
 Quante, M. 145  
  
 Rabe, H. 93, 229, 259  
 Rackham, H. 33  
 Radiciotti, P. 356  
 Rafaiani, M. 357  
 Raphava, M. 16, 22  
 Rees, V. 423  
 Reisacker, J. 406  
 Reinsch, D.R. 95, 108  
 Ricoeur, P. 275  
 Rigo, A. 44, 107, 332, 351, 401  
 Ritter, A.M. 244  
 Robichaud, D. 424  
 Robinson, J. 1, 3, 5, 69, 71, 79, 86, 87,  
     97, 130, 131, 139, 140, 147, 150–153,  
     157, 160, 161, 168, 171–173, 179, 184,  
     185, 201, 205–207, 209, 211–213,  
     225, 226, 229, 233, 234, 235, 271,  
     276, 290, 292, 303, 306, 309, 310,  
     311, 321, 341, 364, 393, 394, 400, 411,  
     413  
 Romano, F. 208  
 Roques, R. 276, 278, 283  
 Rosan, L. 263  
 Rosenstein, N. 406  
 Ross, W.D. 110, 111  
 Ruggieri, V. 248  
  
 Saffrey, H. 116, 143, 155, 170, 262, 273, 400,  
     424  
 Sakellion, I. 352  
 Sathas, C. 96  
 Schabel, C. 395, 403  
 Schopen, L. 395, 402, 406, 408, 412  
 Schwartz, E. 342  
 Schirò, G. 401  
 Schopen, L. 395, 402, 406, 408, 412  
 Schwyzer, H. 116  
 Sedley, D. 201  
 Segonds, A.-P. 28, 142, 143, 155, 170, 400  
 Sesboué, B. 315  
 Share, M. 221, 222  
 Sharples, R. 111  
 Shchukin, T. 220  
 Sheppard, A.D.R. 111  
 Sherrard, P. 416  
 Sherwood, P. 217  
 Siderides, X.A. 331  
 Simonides, C. 7, 293, 301, 312, 313, 347–355,  
     367  
 Sicherl, M. 423  
 Siniosoglou, N. 31, 132  
 Sinkewicz, R. 401, 402, 415  
 Siorvanes, L. 129  
 Slings, S. 230  
 Somers, V. 71  
 Sorabji, R. 107, 327  
 Speer, A. 401  
 Spira, A. 192  
 Steckel, N. 337  
 Steel, C. 7, 8, 13, 19–21, 28, 43, 51, 52, 111, 115,  
     116, 120, 126, 142, 143, 161, 163, 170, 199,  
     201, 208, 252, 313, 375–377, 396, 412, 417  
 Steinkrüger, P. 401  
 Steiris, D. 47, 57  
 Stiglmayr, J. 291  
 Suchla, B. 94, 120, 158, 215, 236, 300, 306,  
     395, 409

- Taormina, D. 208  
 Tarrant, H. 302, 400  
 Taylor, A.E. 190  
 Taylor, C. 123  
 Taylor, T. 262  
 Thaler, N. 155  
 Terezis, C. 6, 191, 192, 194, 261, 280  
 Tevzadze, G. 18  
 Tinnefeld, F. 405, 406  
 Trabattoni, F. 111, 117, 188  
 Trapp, E. 306  
 Trizio, M. 4, 6, 13, 14, 42–44, 57, 70, 71, 107,  
 108, 111, 115–117, 120, 129, 131, 139, 145,  
 152, 185, 186, 193, 228, 291, 301, 334, 349,  
 351, 401, 402  
 Trouillard, J. 268, 277  
 Tsames, D.G. 407  
 Tskitishvili, T. 22  
 Turner, J. 220  
 Toma, P. 338  
 Toussaint, S. 423  
  
 Valpy, A. 135  
 Van den Berg, R. 117  
 Van Deun, P. 355  
 Van Dieten, J-L. 357, 403, 406–408  
 Van Riel, G. 28, 171, 183, 188, 192, 193  
 Vanhaelen, M. 422, 432, 438, 439, 441  
 Varlamova, M. 220, 223  
  
 Vasilakis, D. 94  
 Vater, C. 202  
 Ventrella, G. 291  
 Vespignani, G. 324  
 Verrycken, K. 218  
 Vitelli, H. 112  
 Voemel, J. 349  
 Von Ivanka, E. 413  
  
 Wakefield, P. 220  
 Wallies, M. 116, 152  
 Ware, K. 416  
 Wauters, T. 192, 193  
 Wear, S. 211  
 Weissler, S. 155  
 Westerink, L. 95, 116, 136, 143, 170, 229, 258,  
 262, 273, 278  
 Whittaker, J. 163  
 Wigand, O. 343  
  
 Yannopoulos, P. 71  
  
 Zachhuber, J. 192, 210  
 Zago, A. 308, 324, 356  
 Zattero, I. 202  
 Zervos, C. 130  
 Zeses, Th. 248, 294, 358  
 Ziegler, K. 176  
 Ziolkowski, J. 107

## Nicholas of Methone, Reader of Proclus in Byzantium

### *Context and Legacy*

Edited by Jonathan Greig, Joshua Robinson and Dragos Calma

This volume is the first complete study of the 12th-century CE Byzantine philosopher Nicholas of Methone, offering a critical examination of a key moment in 11th–12th-century Byzantine philosophy. Although traditionally regarded as a polemical commentator on the late Neoplatonist Proclus, this volume highlights Nicholas' substantial contribution to metaphysics and philosophical theology. It also situates his work within the broader intellectual context where Neoplatonism and its relation to Byzantine Christian theology were actively debated. The contributions gathered here are of particular significance for those interested in the Byzantine afterlife of late antique Neoplatonism and its legacy in the later Byzantine tradition and the Renaissance.

**Jonathan Greig**, Ph.D. (2018), LMU Munich, is Research Associate at HU Berlin and KU Leuven. His most recent monograph is *The First Principle in Late Neoplatonism* (Brill, 2021), and he has published on other topics in late antique and Byzantine philosophy.

**Joshua Robinson**, Ph.D. (2014), University of Notre Dame, is Byzantine Studies Librarian at Dumbarton Oaks Library. He has published on Byzantine theology and philosophy.

**Dragos Calma**, Ph.D. (2008), Sorbonne University, Associate Professor at University College Dublin, directs the ERC Grant *Neoplat: Neoplatonism and Abrahamic Traditions* supporting the research and publication of the current volume, of *Neoplatonism in the Middle Ages* (2 vols), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes* (3 vols), and others.



BRILL.COM/HMTP  
ISSN 2666-9307  
ISBN 978-90-04-51289-4

Cover image: © Florentin Tanas, *Sursaut* (detail), sculpture, Paris 2018, used with permission of the artist.