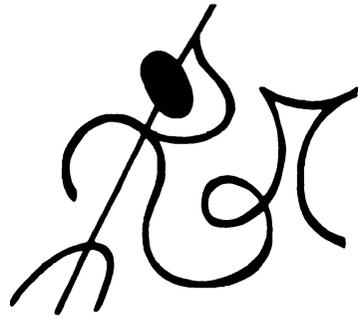


The Philosophy of Gemistos Plethon

Platonism in Late Byzantium, between
Hellenism and Orthodoxy

VOJTĚCH HLADKÝ

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Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

ASHGATE

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τῆ Ἑλένη

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Introduction

George Gemistos Plethon is certainly one of the most important, but at the same time also one of the more mysterious figures of Byzantine and Renaissance philosophy. The lectures on Plato he gave to the Florentine humanists during his stay in Italy – directly or indirectly – helped to promote the renewal of Platonic philosophy in the West. However his own version of Platonism has arguably not yet been sufficiently explored and his religious beliefs and their relation to his philosophical thought have not received a satisfactory treatment either. Both topics, his Platonism and his religious beliefs, will be the focus of the present study.

The Man and his Work

George Gemistos, later also surnamed Plethon, was born in Constantinople presumably to a *pronotarios* of St Sophia, Demetrios Gemistos,¹ some time before 1360.² He might have studied under the famous philosopher Demetrios Kydones, who played an important role in introducing Latin scholasticism into Byzantine thought,³ and a mysterious Jew Elissaeus,⁴ but we cannot be entirely sure in either of these two cases. Gemistos appeared in Constantinople around 1405, but shortly afterwards moved to Mistra, the capital of the Despotate of Morea (the present Peloponnese) where he was active at the court of the Despot as one of his officials⁵ and at the same time as a distinguished humanist and teacher of

¹ Bessarion, *De nat.* 93.10 (Latin version): *Plethon Constantinopolitanus*, Alexandre 1858, p. v, n.1. For George Gemistos' father Demetrios see Woodhouse 1986, p. 17.

² This date can be deduced from the statement of George of Trebizond, according to which Gemistos died almost one hundred years old (*centum enim pene misera aetate annos complevit*), *Comp.* III, penultimate chapter = LEGRAND III, p. 289; cf. Woodhouse 1986, p. 5.

³ From the passage in which Gemistos mentions his discussion with Kydones about Plato, *Ad Bess.* II 467.18–22, it is clear that he at least knew him. Nonetheless whether he was really his pupil remains far from certain – see Woodhouse 1986, p. 22, *pace* Demetracopoulos 2004, pp. 29–31, Demetracopoulos 2006, p. 279; see below, p. 184, n.95.

⁴ See below, pp. 191–204.

⁵ See Filelfo's letter from 1441, *Ad Sax.*: [*Gemistus*] *est enim iam admodum senex, quique magistratum gerit nescio quem.*

ancient Greek thought and culture.⁶ He must have soon become well known as a statesman, philosopher and an authority on the ancient Greek world. In spite of being a layman, he travelled as a counsellor with the Byzantine delegation to Italy to participate in the Council at Ferrara and Florence in 1438–1439 where the Church union was to be concluded. There he met Italian humanists and gave his famous lectures on Plato's philosophy.⁷ After the Council whose result, namely, the union of the Eastern and Western Churches, he rejected, Gemistos returned to the Peloponnese and spent the rest of his life in Mistra.⁸ He died most probably in 1454, although the year 1452 is usually accepted as the date of his death.⁹ A few years afterwards, he was accused of paganism and ancient Greek polytheism by his main personal as well as philosophical opponent, Scholarios, who finally managed to seize and burn Gemistos' most important work, the *Laws*, discovered after his death.¹⁰ His alleged polytheism, inspired by Plato, subsequently began to provoke condemnation and censure but also fascination among Byzantine and Renaissance thinkers, and his remains were even transferred to Italy in 1464 by his admirer Sigismondo Malatesta, who buried Gemistos in his neo-pagan Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini.¹¹ Writing around 1490, Ficino famously claims that Gemistos' lectures on Plato during the time of the Council were an impulse which 20 years later inspired Cosimo de' Medici to found the Platonic Academy in Florence and to charge him with

⁶ Woodhouse 1986, pp. 33–47, 79–118.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 118–88.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 215–39, 267–82, 308–21.

⁹ Monfasani 1976, pp. 163–70, 2005a, pp. 118, 119–20, 2006 *contra* e.g. Alexandre 1858, p. xliii, with n.2, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 3, 5, who accept the earlier date on the basis of a manuscript note: Μην. ιουν. Κς' Νιέ' έτελεύτησεν ο δίδασκαλος ο Γόμοστος [sic] ήμέρα δευτέρα, ώρα α' της ήμέρας [= 26 June 1452]. One may note the corruption of Gemistos' name to 'Gomostos' which may be explained by the fact that the note stems from Demetrios Raoul Kabakes, notorious for his bad spelling of Greek; see Monfasani 2006, p. 459. In contrast, Monfasani concludes for 1454 on the basis of his overall reconstruction of the chronology of Trebizond's works, travels of Bessarion and his associates, as well as a treatise by Gemistos opponent Matthew Kamariotes. Moreover, there is one fact that may further support the later date of his death. When Scholarios is writing about the events in the late 1440s and the early 1450s, he says that although Gemistos replied to his *Defence of Aristotle*, he himself could not do the same because of 'the fate of our country'. "Ο μὲν οὖν αὐθις ἀντέγραφε, τὸν αὐτὸν πρὸς τε Ἀριστοτέλη καὶ ἡμᾶς, ἐκείνῳ δῆθεν συνηγοροῦντας, ἀγῶνα πεποιημένος. Ἡμᾶς δὲ ἢ τῆς πατρίδος ἀντιγράφειν αὐ ἐκώλυε συμφορὰ ... *Ad Jos.* 156.14–16. It is thus the fall of Constantinople, and not the death of Gemistos, which is mentioned as the obstacle that prevented Scholarios from answering properly. This would certainly fit better with the sequence of events in which Gemistos died a year after 1453 and not the year before.

¹⁰ See below, pp. 223–4.

¹¹ Woodhouse 1986, pp. 159–60, 374–5.

making a Latin translation of Plato.¹² His (posthumous) portraits have been identified in a painting by Cristofano dell'Altissimo kept in Uffizi and in a famous fresco, the Procession of the Magi by Benozzo Gozzoli, in the Palazzo Medici Riccardi, both in Florence.¹³ In the later tradition he was regarded either as a scholar and Platonic philosopher – although not always as a reviver of ancient paganism – or as a prominent anti-Unionist.¹⁴

Gemistos left behind numerous texts covering such diverse disciplines as grammar, rhetoric, literature, music, geography, astronomy, ancient history, politics, religion, philosophy and theology.¹⁵ Although some of them are only excerpts and summaries from ancient authors, most probably made in his school for teaching purposes, the wide range of his interests definitely shows that he was not only an excellent scholar, but, in fact, a kind of polymath.¹⁶ For practical reasons, the present study will have to concentrate only on the texts that are in some way relevant for his philosophy, although those political, religious and theological treatises that contribute to the understanding of his philosophical thought will be discussed here too.

¹² Ficino, *Enn., prohemium*. There is a scholarly dispute how faithfully Ficino's account describes the real events and in what way it should be in fact understood; cf. recently Monfasani 2011c, esp. 65–6, 68, with further literature.

¹³ Neri 2001, pp. 12–14, Ronchey 2006, pp. 115, 464, tab. 40, 42.

¹⁴ Knös 1950, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 375–8, Monfasani 1994, 2005b.

¹⁵ For an overview of Gemistos' works see Woodhouse 1986, pp. xvi–xviii. Unfortunately Woodhouse fails to note that later Masai 1963 found out that an unpublished treatise *On Fortune* (Περὶ τύχης) is in fact a text by Alexander of Aphrodisias and not by Gemistos as he claimed in his previous works. Similarly, *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit* (Περὶ τῆς ἐκπορεύσεως τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος) is a later forgery published under the name of Gemistos: see Monfasani 1994. For other Gemistos' unpublished texts and the survey of manuscripts see also Masai–Masai 1954, Dedes 1981. See also Tambrun 2006, pp. 35–50, and Neri 2010, pp. 196–225.

¹⁶ Woodhouse 1986, pp. 27–8.

Gemistos and Scholarship

The secondary literature on Gemistos is surprisingly rich.¹⁷ Modern Plethonic scholarship begins with the works of Wilhelm Gass,¹⁸ and especially Charles Alexandre,¹⁹ who around the middle of the nineteenth century published some of Gemistos' key texts, along with studies on them. Alexandre's edition of Plethon's *Laws*, accompanied by other shorter texts related to it, has not been superseded, although in the meantime some more of the text of the *Laws* has been discovered by Renée and François Masai. Alexandre's book is also a turning point in the overall interpretation of Gemistos' religious beliefs, because while Gass was not still sure about his paganism,²⁰ Alexandre's extensive edition of the *Laws* is widely accepted by modern scholars as the decisive proof of it. In the second half of the same century, Fritz Schultze made the first important attempt to reconstruct Gemistos' metaphysical system as a whole.²¹ He was followed by a Greek scholar Ioannes P. Mamalakis who published important works on Gemistos in the late 1930s,²² as well as Milton V. Anastos who wrote detailed and very interesting studies on diverse aspects of his thought and learning shortly after World War II.²³ Nevertheless, arguably the most important works on Gemistos' philosophy still remain those by François Masai from the 1950s, who has also re-examined the tradition of the transmission of his texts and discovered some important manuscripts.²⁴ On the basis of Gemistos' autographs discovered by Masai, Bernadette Lagarde wrote an excellent PhD thesis, unfortunately so far unpublished, in which she edited, translated and commented on his *On the Differences of Aristotle from Plato*.²⁵ Furthermore, she later also published the *Reply to Scholarios' Defence of Aristotle*.²⁶ Of the many Greek scholars who contributed

¹⁷ See the list of the secondary literature at the end of this study, including the systematic bibliographies cited there, pp. 341–59. In this study of his philosophical thought only the most important contributions that have significantly influenced the discussion of his work may be taken fully into account. There are thus many occasional informative or, in contrast, very specialized writings on some aspects of his thought and legacy, interesting as they sometimes may be, that must be necessarily left aside.

¹⁸ Gass 1844.

¹⁹ Alexandre 1858.

²⁰ Gass 1844, pp. 35–7.

²¹ Schultze 1874.

²² Mamalakis 1939, 1955; for other works on Gemistos by this and following authors see the systematic bibliographies, below, p. 341.

²³ Anastos 1948.

²⁴ Especially Masai–Masai 1954 and Masai 1956, 1963, 1976.

²⁵ Lagarde 1976, the Greek text was published as *De diff.* in 1973.

²⁶ *Contra Schol.*

significantly to Plethonic scholarship we should mention especially Theodoros S. Nikolaou,²⁷ Leonidas Bargeliotes²⁸ and Christos P. Baloglou,²⁹ the last one being especially interested in political and economic aspects of Gemistos' writings. John Monfasani³⁰ and James Hankins,³¹ both writing about topics related to Gemistos, made very important contributions to understanding his work in the context of contemporary Renaissance thought. Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker, specializing on Gemistos, prepared several important editions of his texts and, as well as many articles, wrote an PhD thesis and monograph on him.³² In Italian Moreno Neri published several translations of Gemistos' works and studies on him, recently followed by a general overview of his life and thought published jointly with an extensive commentary on his treatise *On virtues*.³³ Fabio Pagani made an important discovery of Gemistos' radical alterations of Plato's text in manuscripts.³⁴ In English Niketas Siniossoglou recently published a significant monograph on Gemistos whom he considers to be an outcome of the previous tradition of Byzantine humanistic and pagan thought and influential in the rise of modern secularism.³⁵ Last, in 1986 Christopher M. Woodhouse published a complex and detailed study of Gemistos' life, the events in which he took part, and his writings, whose most important parts he translated or summarized in English.³⁶ Even if Gemistos' philosophy and religious beliefs will be treated from a significantly different perspective here, the present work is much indebted to this exceptional book, which provides an ideal starting point for anybody interested in the remarkable thinker of Mistra. Thus, although the present study can hopefully be understood on its own as far as Gemistos' philosophy is concerned, for his life as well as historical context the reader is referred to Woodhouse's book.³⁷

²⁷ All his papers on Gemistos were collected in Nikolaou 2005.

²⁸ e.g. Bargeliotes 1973, 1975, 1976, 1979, 1980, 1989, 1990–1993.

²⁹ e.g. Baloglou 2002.

³⁰ Monfasani 1976, 1992, 1994, 2002b, 2005a–b, 2006, 2008, 2011a–c, 2012a–d, (forthcoming).

³¹ Hankins 1991.

³² Especially *De virt., Or. mag.*, Tambrun-Krasker 1992, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2005, 2006. For a critical account of the last work see Hladký 2009.

³³ Neri 2010; see also Neri 2001.

³⁴ Pagani 2008, 2009; see also below, pp. 263–7.

³⁵ Siniossoglou 2011.

³⁶ Woodhouse 1986. In his review, Monfasani 1988 discusses some shortcomings of Woodhouse's book. Cf. also n.15.

³⁷ For the history of the Despotate of Mistra and the general cultural context there see Zakythinos 1932, 1953, Runciman 1980.

What is now, as it seems, most needed for the proper understanding and appreciation of Gemistos' thought, is a kind of global *schizzo*, a systematic overview of his philosophy, concentrating especially on his Platonism. Such an overall reconstruction must be primarily based on his own texts, and it should be collated with the testimonies of other writers and supplemented by them only as second level sources. Plethonic scholarship often relies too much on external information about his personality, certainly extraordinary and fascinating, and thus tends to interpret his works from the perspective of the contemporaries who might have misunderstood or were even overtly hostile to him. Unfortunately, this leads many interpreters to regard some of his texts as hypocritical, purely tactical and not representative of Gemistos' real thought. The best example of this approach is perhaps Siniosoglou's book where, furthermore, Plethon's thought is interpreted against the background of broader intellectual discussions of his day. Unfortunately, there are only few cases when Gemistos explicitly names or reacts to some of his alleged opponents (as, for instance, Palamism which he nowhere seems to discuss). Using indirect philosophical and textual evidence to interpret his works thus remains speculative. Furthermore, Siniosoglou supposes that Plethon is the most important representative of an alleged secret tradition of Byzantine intellectual paganism lasting for centuries. However, as it seems to the present author, for such a tradition we have no straightforward and unambiguous evidence.³⁸

³⁸ Siniosoglou 2011. It is also difficult to accept Siniosoglou's definition of paganism and Christianity. According to him, paganism is represented by both Byzantine humanism and Plethon's Platonism, and equated with rationality, secularism and modernity. In contrast, Christianity, associated by Siniosoglou mainly with Palamism, is supposed to suffer from irrationality and fideism. Because of such an a priori definition of the given terms already at the very beginning the whole book gives a strong impression of being rather written *à la thèse*, however interesting it may be.

There are other objections that can be raised to Siniosoglou's approach too. He repeatedly argues that Byzantine intellectuals frequently hid their real pagan interests behind Christian rhetoric and we thus must read their real beliefs between the lines. Such an interpretative principle is, however, a dangerous one since it may just help us to discover in the texts whatever we have decided to find at the very beginning. Furthermore, Siniosoglou argues for the incompatibility of ancient pagan thought in general, and Platonism in particular, with Byzantine culture, which means that the intellectuals of Byzantium who engaged in its study must have been secret pagans. This goes against the consensus of scholarship according to which Byzantine culture largely absorbed ancient heritage, although used for its own purposes and in a well-delineated framework of general education. One could thus ask if everybody who shows an interest in ancient thought or Platonism is necessarily a pagan. It may hold not only for Byzantium or Renaissance, but also for present-day ancient philosophers and teachers of classics. For further criticism of Siniosoglou's book see

The approach of the present study is thus the reverse – it will attempt to concentrate firstly on Gemistos’ texts, provide a detailed interpretation of them while accepting all as serious, however they may vary in the expression of his philosophical and religious beliefs, and interpret them in their proper context. Subsequently external testimonies may be introduced, which must be, nonetheless, always submitted to a careful examination, which is especially necessary in the case of Gemistos’ real religious views. Only then conclusions can be drawn. Since the present study intentionally keeps as close as possible to Plethon’s original text, some of its parts are indeed very descriptive, the fact of which its author is well aware, being a kind of ‘happy positivist’. One may also object that the present study to some extent suffers from insensitivity to the context and that it does not pay sufficient attention to the different genres and occasions in which Gemistos’ texts were written, using them just as a quarry for his doctrine. As we hope to be able to show, such an approach may be justified by the exceptional inner coherence of Plethon’s Platonism, whose different aspects are scattered throughout his various writings. This study should be thus an attempt to collect all these bits together and to place them into the proper place in general picture of Gemistos’ philosophy.

To discuss Gemistos’ thought properly, it is convenient to divide his writings into three groups that correspond to the most important aspects of his philosophy. The first one is the so-called public philosophy, that means the philosophy Gemistos presented publicly as his own and more or less clearly reflects what he himself held. The second group is the Platonism contained in his commentaries and interpretations of the thought of others, especially of Plato and the *Chaldaean Oracles*. The enigmatic *Laws*, discovered after Gemistos’ death, belong with the latter group of texts, for the reasons that will become apparent later on, subsumed here under a common designation as *philosophia perennis*. Finally, the third part of the present work will treat the problem of Gemistos’ religious beliefs, including his sole treatise dealing with Christian theology, often considered as hypocritical and not representing his real opinions. This part will also discuss at length external testimonies as well as the content and the intentions of the *Laws*, on which the usual conclusion about his paganism is based. For reasons that will be discussed only in the third part of this study, the name ‘Gemistos’ will be used – to some extent in a similar manner as it is in Woodhouse’s book – when his personality or public philosophy is meant, whereas his surname ‘Plethon’ will be restricted solely to the context of the *philosophia perennis*.

PART I
Public Philosophy

Chapter 1

Platonic Reforms

The part of Gemistos' philosophy that was openly presented as his own thought to a larger public consists of five texts containing several more or less general philosophical arguments and reasoning. We may divide them into two groups. The first one comprises a letter and two speeches of a political character, written most probably during 1414–1418. The other two texts are funeral orations, on the Despoina Cleope Malatesta and Empress Helen Dragaš (Dragases), which were delivered much later, in 1433 and 1450 respectively, and will be discussed below.¹ The earliest of the political texts is Gemistos' letter to Manuel II, usually cited as *On the Isthmus*, which informs the Emperor about the situation in the Peloponnese, where Gemistos had moved probably not long before and proposes some basic reforms to improve the unfavourable situation there.² The letter was written probably in 1414, just before the Emperor's visit to the peninsula.³ The second text, philosophically by far the most interesting, is an advisory speech in ancient style, known as the *Address to Theodore*, the ruling Despot of Morea at that time. Written some time during 1416–1418,⁴ it urges the introduction of radical reforms in the Despotate. The reform proposals of the speech were further developed in the last of these texts, composed in 1418, the *Address to Manuel*, to whom *On the Isthmus* had been already directed. Moreover, the speech clearly presupposes that the Emperor also knows the *Address to Theodore*.⁵

According to what Gemistos says in *On the Isthmus*, the main reason why it is not possible to defend the Peloponnese against the incursions of 'barbarians', that is, the Ottoman Turks together with the Italians and other Latins, is its bad political organization (κακοπολιτεία). The cases of the Lacedaemonians, Persians and Romans, as well as the barbarians who threaten the state now, show that

¹ Zakythinos 1932, pp. 190, 240, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 113, 309–10.

² Baloglou 2002, pp. 35–6.

³ Baloglou 2002, p. 97, Woodhouse 1986, p. 100, date the letter to the years 1415–1416; Masai 1956, pp. 387–8, before 1415; Blum 1988, p. 30, with n.8, unconvincingly to 1427; cf. Neri 2010, pp. 48–9, n.55.

⁴ Baloglou 2002, p. 99, Woodhouse 1986, p. 92, Masai 1956, pp. 387–8, *contra* Zakythinos 1932, p. 176.

⁵ *Ad Man.* 265.18–20; cf. Zakythinos 1932, pp. 175–6, Baloglou 2002, p. 103, Woodhouse 1986, p. 92, Masai 1956, pp. 387–8.

their success or failure depends on the virtue (ἀρετή) of a political organization or constitution (πολιτεία). The reform is thus urgently needed, because the present weakness of the Despotate can only be counterbalanced by an improvement in the quality of its political organization.⁶ In the *Address to Theodore*, Gemistos claims in a similar manner that the only way a city or nation can change from worse to better is through the reform of its state organization (πολιτεία). There is no other cause for its well-being or the opposite, because, even if it were the result of chance, the situation of such a city would be uncertain and could change quickly. The prosperity of a city is in fact mostly due to the virtue of its constitution and, conversely, it deteriorates if its constitution is corrupted.⁷

Gemistos then gives a series of examples from ancient mythology and history to support this claim. He connects the rise of the Greeks (Hellenes) with Heracles who, instead of lawlessness and outright injustice (ἀνομία καὶ ἀδικία καθαρά), introduced law and zeal for virtue. Before him the Greek nation was ruled by strangers and was not significant in any way. Afterwards many successes in Greece and abroad may be remembered. Similarly the Lacedaemonians became the leaders of all the Greeks only after Lycurgus proclaimed his famous constitution, and they remained in this position as long as they were observing it. Then came the time of the Thebans whose leader, Epameinondas, had received a Pythagorean education. He, in turn, trained Philip of Macedon while the future king was kept as a hostage in Thebes. Philip, along with Aristotle, was responsible for the education of his famous son, Alexander the Great who, having conquered the Persians, was to become the leader of all the Greeks and the king of all Asia. The great power of the Romans (apparently not only of the ancient Romans, but also of the Byzantines) was due to the virtue of their constitution and it lasted till the Saracens appeared. These were originally a minor group of the Arabs and were subordinated to the Romans. When they introduced new laws and constitution to the Arabs, they managed to seize 'the biggest and best part of the Roman empire'. They thus conquered Libya and introduced their political order (πολιτεία) to the Persians as well as to many other nations who eagerly follow these laws and for this reason prosper. This is also true of the barbarians, that is, the Turks, 'who have been very successful in the fight against us' because 'using these laws, they are greatly powerful'.⁸ We have a short treatise by Gemistos, or rather an excerpt from the work of the monk Theophanes, which shows that he was interested in the history of early Islam.⁹ Muhammad is there called 'the leader of the Arabs and their lawgiver

⁶ *De Isthmo* 309.4–310.18.

⁷ *Ad Theod.* 116.16–24.

⁸ *Ibid.* 116.24–118.12.

⁹ Klein-Franke 1972, pp. 2–4.

(ὁ ἀραβάρχης> τε καὶ νομοθέτης>)', which suggests that, for Gemistos, he was a political as well as a religious reformer, who was ultimately responsible for the military successes of his followers including the contemporary Turks.¹⁰

In the *Address to Theodore* Gemistos then sets the present political situation of the Byzantine state into a broader historical context, identifying the Turks, 'the neighbouring barbarians, who have deprived our empire of many fertile parts', with the ancient Parapamisadae. These were previously attacked and defeated by Alexander the Great and 'his Greeks', and now, after a long time, having become stronger, they seek revenge for his Indian campaign on 'us ... the Greeks ("Ἕλληνες)'.¹¹ The identity of ancient and present inhabitants of the Peloponnese is even more emphatically declared in the *Address to Manuel*: 'We, whom you lead and rule over, are Greeks by descent ("Ἕλληνες τὸ γένος), as the language (φωνή) and traditional culture (πάτριος παιδεία) show.'¹² This is a notorious and frequently quoted statement of Gemistos, who is thus often seen as a forerunner of modern nationalism.¹³ As is well known, the Byzantines usually called themselves Romans (Ῥωμαῖοι) and the name 'Greek (Hellene)' was normally reserved for the ancient Greeks, that is, pagans.¹⁴ We must not, however, overlook the context of the whole passage. Gemistos situates current events in a global historical perspective, in which they represent the long-term result of ancient Greek history. The Byzantines are thus threatened by the Ottoman attacks because of the age-old antagonism originated by Alexander's expedition to the East. Contemporary nations are here apparently seen as descendants of the ancient ones. It was also a widespread Byzantine custom to designate the peoples settled down and living in the territories known from the ancient historians by the names of their ancient inhabitants.¹⁵

As has been said, the chief goal of Gemistos' speech is to persuade the Emperor of the necessity to defend the Peloponnese. To achieve this he claims that there cannot be any country for the Greeks to live in other than the Peloponnese, the adjacent European mainland and the neighbouring islands. The Greeks had

¹⁰ *Mab.*, Dedes 1981, p. 67.

¹¹ *Ad Theod.* 114.22–115.5.

¹² *Ad Man.* 247.14–15; cf. 250.1.

¹³ Zografidis, 2003, pp. 130–31, n.4, 2008, p. 238, n.4, with the literature cited there; Bargeliotes 1973, 1989, 1990–1993, Nikolaou 1989, pp. 99–102, Patrick Peritore 1977.

¹⁴ For the problem of Hellenic identity of the Byzantines see Kaldellis 2007; for a different usage of the name Hellenes see *ibid.*, pp. 184–7. For the usage of this name by Gemistos' contemporaries, especially Gennadios Scholarios and Laonikos Chalkokondyles, see Ditten 1964, Vryonis 1991 and Angelou 1996.

¹⁵ e.g. Ditten 1964.

lived in this country since time immemorial because it was not known to have been previously inhabited by any other nation, and from the peninsula they moved to and settled in many other countries. The Greeks originating from here also accomplished many famous deeds and even the founders of Constantinople were the Peloponnesian Dorians.¹⁶ To defend the Peloponnese is not only necessary but also realizable. In the *Address to Theodore* Gemistos demonstrates at length, using many mythological and historical examples, that many nations managed to overcome situations even worse than that of the Despotate at that time because of their determination.¹⁷

The *Funeral Oration on Helen*, although written more than 30 years later (in 1450), also shows that in the first place Gemistos has in mind broad affinities with the ancient past. Here he talks about the Byzantines in a more traditional way as 'this Roman nation of ours (τὸ τοῦτο ἡμέτερον τῶν Ῥωμαίων γένος)'¹⁸ and uses the traditional title of Byzantine rulers 'the Emperor of the Romans (βασιλεὺς Ῥωμαίων)'.¹⁹ In the *Address to Theodore* the continuity with the ancient Roman Empire is also implied when Gemistos says 'thus we can see how our affairs have evolved, since the great Roman Empire ... (ἐκ τῆς μεγίστης Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίας ...)'.²⁰ In Gemistos' historical perspective, among many other interconnections and mutual influences, an ethnic bond between the Greeks (Hellenes) and the Romans can be found: Rome was founded by the Trojans who after the fall of Troy moved under the leadership of Aeneas from Phrygia to Italy. They joined together with the Sabines, who were Lacedaemonians and came there from the Peloponnese. These two nations thus jointly founded the city that was to create 'the greatest and at the same time best Empire of all that are remembered'.²¹

Thus, according to Gemistos, the ancient Greeks and Romans are closely related because of their origin and cultural continuity. For him, the Byzantines were descendants of both Greeks and Romans, and the invoking of the ancient Greek past of the contemporary inhabitants of the Peloponnese is therefore just one side of the story. Despite all this, it must be admitted that to go back to the ancient Greek identity of the Peloponnesians and to call them by their ancient name was indeed a daring and extraordinary thought in the Byzantine context. What is not entirely clear and what will be the problem we shall have to deal with repeatedly is how far Gemistos was willing to go in his identification with the

¹⁶ *Ad Man.* 247.15–248.18.

¹⁷ *Ad Theod.* 115.20–116.15.

¹⁸ *In Hel.* 271.5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 272.7.

²⁰ *Ad Theod.* 129.13–14.

²¹ *Ibid.* 115.23–116.2; cf. *Ad Man.* 248.18–249.4.

ancient Hellenes, that is, pagans. The crucial question, appearing here already, is whether he was just trying to point out the historical roots of the Byzantines, or whether he was attempting to revive Hellenic culture and religion in its entirety.

In the *Address to Theodore*, after Gemistos presented in a large historical perspective the necessity of reforming the political order of the Peloponnese, he proceeded to his own considerations and proposals for the best constitution. According to him, there are three kinds of constitution (πολιτεία) – monarchy, oligarchy and democracy, appearing in several forms. Those pursuing what is best claim that the most perfect of them is a monarchy which uses the best counsellors (σύμβουλοι) and good laws. There should be a moderate number of counsellors, composed of educated men. This is because the mass of people are unable to discuss problems properly, lacking the necessary knowledge, and so their decisions are usually unreasonable. By contrast, a very limited number of counsellors would exclusively pursue their own profit and not the common good, and thus only a moderate number of them will pursue what is profitable for all. They should be moderately rich, because those who are very rich are only interested in gaining even more, while the poor seek, in the first place, to satisfy their needs.²² The solution proposed by Gemistos is thus a kind of compromise between monarchy and oligarchy – a system with one sole ruler advised by a wider body of counsellors. It seems to be a variant of the ideal constitution proposed by Plato in the *Republic*, which presupposes a ruling class composed of limited number of philosophers–guardians and which, in Gemistos' initial distinction, would be probably closest to an oligarchy.²³ However, he could base his decision for monarchy on Plato's *Statesman* and possibly also on some passages in the *Republic* itself, and this much better suits the context of Byzantium, in which, at least in theory, supreme power was reserved exclusively to the Emperor.²⁴ At the same time, nevertheless, Gemistos obviously tries to be faithful to the Platonic ideal of an oligarchy of philosophers from the *Republic* and so postulates a body

²² *Ad Theod.* 118.24–119.19; cf. 113.5–114.3.

²³ Plato, *Resp.* II 369b–376d, III–IV 412b–427c.

²⁴ Plato, *Polit.* 291d–303b, *Resp.* IX 579c–580c, 587b–588a. Plutarch, another possible source for Gemistos, out of these three kinds of constitution also prefers monarchy, *De mon.* For Plethon's general interest in Plutarch see Diller 1954, Mioni 1985, p. 385; *Marc. Gr.* 517 (= 886), fols 67–76v. See also Ellissen 1860, p. 146, n.32, p. 149, n.42, Baloglou 2002, pp. 190–93, nn.25–6. For a general outline of Byzantine political thought see Dvornik 1966; for a detailed analysis of the problem in late Byzantium see Angelov 2007.

of educated counsellors as the second highest authority in the state who should help the monarch to rule properly.

According to the *Address to Theodore*, almost every city or state is divided into three classes. The first are the self-sufficient producers (αὐτουργικόν), that is, farmers, shepherds and 'all who by themselves produce the fruit of the earth'. The second are the suppliers of services (διακονικόν), including craftsmen, merchants and retailers. Finally, the third is the ruling class (ἀρχικόν), composed of those whose main task is to preserve the whole city and serve as its guardians (φύλακες) if necessary. Its head is the Emperor or some other leader (βασιλεὺς ἢ τις ἡγεμῶν), but it covers judges, officials (ἄρχοντες) and soldiers as well, who all must naturally be supported by taxes.²⁵ In the *Address to Manuel*, the two tax-paying lower classes are jointly called 'helots', which was the name for the inhabitants of ancient Spartan territory who had no civil rights.²⁶ The producers and suppliers are thus apparently distinguished from the 'free' defenders and governors of the state. At the same time, it is also typical of Gemistos' interest in ancient Greece and his attempt to emphasize the historical continuity of the Peloponnese.

As the *Address to Theodore* continues, these three 'first kinds (γένη)' of people can be distinguished in the city by their very nature (κατὰ φύσιν) and each has its own occupation and work. It should be determined by good legislation that each of the kinds does what belongs to its competence only and should not become involved in the occupation reserved for the other kinds. The ruling class, especially, ought not to be engaged in trade and retailing because they are primarily responsible for the defence of the city and this is also the reason why they are supported by the taxes paid by the others. These, on the contrary, should not be obliged to serve as soldiers, because it is too burdensome to do both.²⁷

This is, in fact, Gemistos' long-term preoccupation,²⁸ which, along with the rejection of the common Byzantine usage of unreliable foreign mercenaries,²⁹ appears already in his earlier speech *On the Isthmus* as well as in the later *Address to Manuel*. There he even claims that if the defenders, who primarily fight for their freedom, and producers were not strictly separated, the state would not be able to defend itself because the producers would desert from the army and return back to their duties at home.³⁰ For these reasons Gemistos considers the strict division of the three kinds in his state as necessary. However, he may also have been influenced by Plato because the chief principle on which the ideal

²⁵ *Ad Theod.* 119.20–120.24; cf. *Ad Man.* 254.11–255.17.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 255.17–256.4, 256.11–13.

²⁷ *Ad Theod.* 121.1–14.

²⁸ *De Isthmo* 310.18–311.7, 311.21–312.12, *Ad Man.* 253.17–254.10.

²⁹ *Ad Theod.* 121.14–19, *Ad Man.* 252.14–253.5.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 251.5–252.5.

city of the *Republic* is based is basically the same: everybody, individuals and classes, should have one function only, fulfil only what is assigned to them as their duty and occupation and should not attempt to be active in several fields at the same time. This is equated with justice.³¹ In the *Republic*, the city is divided into three classes too – farmers (γεωργοί), craftsmen (δημιουργοί) and the guardians (φύλακες), including those ‘who are able to rule (ικανοὶ ἄρχειν)’. The guardians should be supported by the other two classes – basically for similar reasons as are given in Gemistos’ political writings. However, what is absent there is the communism of the *Republic*, including the life in common and the prohibition of personal property with the exception of the most indispensable things.³² This is again most probably due to the specific situation in which these proposals were to be realized. For Byzantine society of that time such type of communism would hardly have been acceptable (perhaps with the exception of monastic communities).

...

We may leave aside Gemistos’ proposals, sometimes very detailed and specific, about the organization of the army, taxation, punishments and public life in general.³³ For him the most important parts of the legislation are the laws concerning public as well as private opinions about the divine (τὸ θεῖον).

There are three main principles. First, there is one divine entity among the things that exist, an essence that surpasses everything. Second, this divine entity cares also about humankind and all human affairs, either small or great, are ordered by it. Third, it orders everything according to its judgement, always rightly and justly, and neither fails in its duty towards each thing nor can it be flattered and its intentions changed by human gifts.

According to Gemistos, the divine entity does not in fact need humans. However, they may still practise their religious ceremonies and sacrifice offerings to the divine if they are moderate and inspired by pious intentions. These religious practices should nevertheless be understood merely as symbols of the recognition that the source of our good is ‘out there’ in the divine and the fact that we have not started to be guilty of the first two kinds of impiety, that is, not believing that there is some divine entity and that it cares about the world, including humankind. However, such ceremonies and offerings should not be

³¹ Plato, *Resp.* II 370b–c, 374b, IV 433a–434c; cf. Baloglou 2002, pp. 197–8, n.37.

³² Plato, *Resp.* III 414b–417b; cf. Baloglou 2002, pp. 195–6, nn.32–4.

³³ For a detailed commentary on Gemistos’ political treatises see Masai 1956, pp. 66–101, and Baloglou 2002.

excessive as this would naturally be the third kind of impiety – an attempt to change the will of the divine and the way it orders the world.³⁴

Those who, both in public and private, respect these principles live in accordance with virtue (ἀρετή) and pursue the good. Vice and wrongdoing arise from a behaviour that follows the opposite principles. Now, Gemistos turns back to the three kinds of impiety. There are always some people who are mistaken in their belief that there is absolutely nothing divine in the universe; then there are those who believe that there is some divine, but it is not concerned in any way with human affairs; and finally those who, although accepting that there is something divine and moreover that it cares about humans, believe that they may ‘persuade and enchant’ it with religious ceremonies, offerings and prayers in order that it does not always fulfil what is just. In other words, Gemistos claims here that if the divine is just, it may not change its decisions. These two opposite opinions about the divine correspond to the two opposite manners of life mentioned above. The first has the pursuit of the good, the second pleasure as its chief goal of life.³⁵

As Gemistos says, according to all the Greeks (Hellenes) and ‘barbarians’ who ‘partake to some extent in intellect, man is a nature composed of a divine and a mortal essence’. The divine part of this is the soul, the mortal is the body. Those who follow ‘the divine in them (τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς θεῖον)’ that has prevailed over the other part, are of the right opinions about the divine, which is akin to it, and their whole life is guided by virtue and the good. The others who are subdued to ‘the mortal and animal in them’ are mistaken in their opinions about the divine and have devoted their life entirely to pleasure. There are also people ‘in between’ who either look for fame, which is in fact a (false) image of virtue and the good, or for money as a means to achieve pleasure.³⁶ As usual, Gemistos finds examples from history and mythology for both these manners of life. Thus Heracles, Lycurgus, Alexander and Cyrus represent the virtuous life revering the gods, Paris, Helen, Sardanapalus and Nero the opposite one.³⁷

Once more, Plato is the authority on which Gemistos grounds his reasoning. The distinction of the three kinds of impiety corresponds exactly to the discussion in book X of Plato’s *Laws* (and his *Republic* II).³⁸ The radical difference between the soul, ‘the divine part of us’, and the mortal body pursuing the pleasures is,

³⁴ *Ad Theod.* 125.3–22: see Appendix I,1, below, p. 287.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 125.22–126.11: see Appendix I,1, below, p. 287.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 126.11–126.23: see Appendix VI,1, below, p. 295.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 126.24–128.13.

³⁸ Plato, *Leg.* X 884a–907b, especially 885b, *Resp.* II 365d–e; cf. Webb 1989, p. 217. For Proclus’ interest in this passage of Plato’s *Laws* see Dillon 2001, pp. 250–54.

no doubt, also Platonic.³⁹ Notable is Gemistos' constant use of the expression 'the divine (τὸ θεῖον)' instead of 'God (ὁ θεός)'. He wanted perhaps to leave his claims about the divine principles as general as possible so as to be accepted by anybody 'who partakes in intellect' and to clearly distinguish his philosophical speculations from Christian theology. However, some of his proposals are obviously directed against the religious practice of his time. In the *Address to Manuel*, when he discusses the distribution of collected taxes, he allocates 'helots' to the high priests (τῶν ἱερέων οἱ ἐπὶ τῆς μείζονος ἱερωσύνης) who serve the community, just one to each, – that is, one taxpayer – to support them, because, living in celibacy (μοναυλία), they do not have to sustain a family.⁴⁰ From the last remark it is clear that Gemistos must have had in mind the higher orthodox clergy that cannot marry. In contrast, the monks should not be supported from public revenue at all (but at the same time they do not have to pay taxes), because they do not contribute to public welfare in any way. Gemistos treats them extremely harshly, calling them 'those who claim to philosophize (οἱ δὲ φιλοσοφεῖν μὲν φάσκοντες)', which in the Byzantine context often means to live the monastic life.⁴¹ They think that on this pretext they may profit from large amounts of public money. As they say, they stay apart of everything in order to worship God in private and care for their own souls. However, for Gemistos, it is not pious (ὄσιον) to support them for the sake of public security on the grounds of their virtue and at the same to take money from those to whom it really belongs. This would obviously be done in order that the monks pray to God for the well-being of the whole state. But this is again equivalent to the third kind of impiety, which consists in the belief that God will accept something else than the offerings that are appropriate.⁴²

³⁹ e.g. Plato, *Resp.* X 611b–612a, *Leg.* X 899d–900c, *Phd.* 62b, *Phaedr.* 250c, *Philb.* 31d–32d.

⁴⁰ *Ad Man.* 257.5–8; cf. 256.5–6.

⁴¹ Ellissen 1860, p. 142, n.19, Blum 1988, p. 187, n.6, Baloglou 2002, p. 252, n.19.

⁴² *Ad Man.* 257.5–258.4; cf. Katsafanas 2003.

Chapter 2

Fate of the Soul

The funeral orations on the Despoina Cleope and Empress Helen, composed in 1433 and 1450,¹ are undoubtedly quite unusual examples of Gemistos' rhetorical abilities. After an obligatory recapitulation of their descent, set by him, as was his custom, into a wider mythological and historical context and followed by a eulogy of their virtues, Gemistos surprised his contemporary listeners or readers with a series of purely rational arguments demonstrating the immortality of the soul without mentioning traditional Christian motifs. Gemistos had already made his name as a philosopher so perhaps he was even expected to do this, especially in the case of the second oration when he was possibly invited to repeat the success of the previous speech, composed almost 20 years earlier. As is well known, the immortality of the soul is a prominent theme in Platonism.²

In *On Cleope* Gemistos reminds the audience that the Despoina was from Italy, which in ancient times was occupied by the Romans who managed to conquer almost all the inhabited world.³ Then her beauty as well as her virtues are praised, and her prudence (φρόνησις), temperance (σωφροσύνη), clemency (ἐπιεικεία), honesty (χρησιότης), piety (εὐσεβεία), love for her husband (φιλανδρία) and nobleness (γενναιότης) are mentioned.⁴ Gemistos also emphasizes that Cleope converted to Orthodoxy. A sign of her piety 'was her worship of God (ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ λατρεία), which she demonstrated by prayers and continuous fasting according to our custom.'⁵ He similarly mentions that she 'abandoned the life here' and was 'received by God (ὕπὸ θεοῦ ἀνελημμένη)', 'she partook in our mysteries (τῶν ἡμετέρων μετεληφύα μυστηρίων)', that is Christian sacraments.⁶ Gemistos therefore here identifies himself – at least formally – with Orthodoxy.

In order to alleviate the grief at the death of the Despoina, he then proceeds to an argument demonstrating the immortality of the human soul. As he claims, if

¹ Zakythinos 1932, pp. 190, 240, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 113, 309–10. On Cleope see also Ronchey 2006.

² The whole Plato's *Phaedo* is dedicated to an argument in favour of the immortality of the human soul.

³ *In Cleop.* 165.2–7.

⁴ *Ibid.* 165.14–168.5.

⁵ *Ibid.* 167.13–14.

⁶ *Ibid.* 168.9–13.

there were nothing in a human being that is immortal, the desperation caused by death would be incurable. In fact, however, there is a part of us that is mortal and another that is immortal, which is actually the principal part of us and which is human in the proper sense of the term. The mortal part is a kind of tunic⁷ attached to our immortal part. It is therefore wrong to despair when we or our friends take off this tunic, if the principal part of us, what we ourselves are, not only survives and is preserved, but passes over to another life, better than the one here. Being the better and the purest part of us it can, having put aside its mortal and earthly garment, attain and enjoy the divine, especially if somebody cared for and was regularly acquainted with things divine here already. This must be certainly true of the recently deceased Cleope, who lived here, as has been emphasized, well and piously and is thus prepared for the life there. In contrast, the person who did not care about the divine here would feel dizzy there and would remain without contact with the divine because of not being accustomed to it.⁸

At this moment Gemistos feels a need to argue for the reality of life after death. First, he points out that belief in the immortality of the human soul is very ancient and widespread and that almost all people venerate the deceased, not as not existing any more, but, on the contrary, as being and continuing in their existence. People are of a similar opinion about the divine (τὸ θεῖον) as about the immortality of the soul. All people thus think that there is something divine and venerate it in a similar way as all of them venerate the dead as being and continuing in their existence. Although one can have doubts about any doctrine, it is impossible to doubt these opinions which are ‘obvious, common and accepted always and by all people.’⁹

Non-rational animals (τὰ ἄλογα) have no idea about the existence of the divine since they neither understand causation nor do they desire everlastingness (ἀϊδιότης) since they do not understand infinity. The understanding of causation and infinity (apart from other things) is accessible only to the rational nature (ἡ λογικὴ φύσις) by which mankind, having received the rational soul from God (ὁ θεός), both understands and desires the divine and everlastingness.

⁷ For the image of tunic (χιτών) see Plato, *Phd.* 86e–88b.

⁸ *In Cleop.* 169.1–170.3: τὸ μὲν τι ἡμῶν θνητὸν εἶναι, τὸ δ' ἀθάνατον δηλαδὴ, ὅτι τοῦτ' ἂν τὸ κυριώτατον ἡμῶν καὶ ὁ μάλιστα ἄνθρωπος εἴη, τὸ ἀθάνατον, τὸ δὲ θνητὸν τοῦτι χιτωνίου τινὸς δίκην τῷ ἀθανάτῳ ἂν εἴη ἡμῶν προσηρμοσμένον. “Ὡστ' οὐκ ἂν ἔχοι καλῶς ἐπὶ τῇ τοῦ χιτωνίου τοῦδε ἀποβολῇ οὐθ' ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν οὔτε τῶν φίλων σφόδρα τι ἀθυμεῖν, ἕως ἂν τὸ κυριώτατον ἡμῶν καὶ ὁ δὴ αὐτοὶ ἔσμεν οὐ μόνον συνεσθῆκοι τε καὶ σώζοιτο, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς ἀμείνοσι διατριβαῖς γεγρονὸς εἴη τῶν τῆδε, ἅτε ἄμεινόν τε καὶ εἰλικρινέστατον τῇ τοῦ θνητοῦ τε καὶ γεώδους τούτου περιβλήματος ἀποθέσει ἐφαπτόμενόν τε τῶν θείων καὶ ἀπολαῶν καὶ μάλιστα εἴ τῷ τις καὶ ἐντεῦθεν μελέτη τε καὶ συνήθεια εἴη πρὸς αὐτά.

⁹ *Ibid.* 171.7–172.8.

God would not enable a nature which is entirely different and mortal to know himself, but it must be somehow akin to him (πῆ καὶ οἰκεῖα). This is because knowing must have something in common with what is being known and what is in such a commonality must be somehow mutually akin. Nor would God have embedded the desire for everlastingness (ἄδιότητος ἐπιθυμία) into man if it were to have remain unaccomplished and worthless. God does not leave any major being existing according to nature unaccomplished but, as far as possible, accomplishes everything appropriately. Gemistos thus concludes that, because of these two things, the doctrine of the divine and the desire for everlastingness, the human soul is everlasting (ἄδιος).¹⁰ We may note en passant that the 'desire argument' would later also be used by Marsilio Ficino.¹¹

Gemistos supports his reasoning further by a rather peculiar argument concerning suicide. Non-rational animals do not kill themselves deliberately (ἐκ προνοίας), but there are some people who do. In general, there is nothing that would desire its own destruction. Non-rational animals neither desire everlastingness because they do not understand it nor for the same reason do they willingly (ἐκόντα) seek their own destruction. The human soul would not have such inclinations (ἐπί τι τοιοῦτον ὥμα), if the death of the body were to cause its destruction. According to Gemistos, a suicidal soul must therefore either consider it no longer profitable to stay in the body or must at least be convinced that a suicide will not bring any harm to itself and thus it will just go away, leaving the body.¹²

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In the funeral oration *On Helen*, as 20 years before, Gemistos begins by recalling the origin of the dead Empress. She is said to be 'Thracian', which is the name of an ancient tribe later used by the Byzantines for the Slavic peoples in Balkans (Helen was a Serb).¹³ Gemistos thus attempts, as usual, to demonstrate the continuity between antiquity and his own time. He says that the Thracians are an ancient nation which occupies a very large part of the inhabited world and which has been important and distinguished from ancient times. Eumolpus, who founded the Eleusinian mysteries for the Athenians which were connected with the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, was Thracian, and the cult of the Muses came also to Greece from Thrace.¹⁴ Gemistos then praises the virtues of

¹⁰ Ibid. 172.8–173.8.

¹¹ Kristeller 1943, pp. 339–44.

¹² *In Cleop.* 173.9–174.4.

¹³ Woodhouse 1986, p. 310.

¹⁴ *In Hel.* 267.3–269.6.

Helen, mentioning especially her intelligence (σύνεσις), nobleness (γενναιότης), temperance (σωφροσύνη) and justice (δικαιοσύνη).¹⁵

Then he proceeds again to an argument concerning the immortality of the human soul. Although it is impossible to refrain from grief when our relatives or friends die, we must consider their death as a departure of 'the better and principal part of us (τὸ ἄμεινον τε καὶ κυριώτερον ἡμῶν)' to the place proper to it, but not as its entire destruction.¹⁶ For Gemistos, the latter opinion makes those who accept it worse and more ignoble than those who claim the opposite, presumably because they are afraid of death and therefore, for instance, of fighting for their own country.¹⁷ Moreover, he tries to prove that this is also false. First, its falsity is obvious from the very fact that it makes people worse. As he puts it, the false opinion cannot make people better and the right one worse, but the opposite must be true. Second, we should not concentrate exclusively on what we have in common with beasts and think that our entire essence is similar to them. Taking into account other 'actions and contemplations of ours' as well, we must conclude that there is another essence in us, more divine than that of beasts. For Gemistos, there is nobody 'sane in thought' who would not believe – either because of his own considerations or because of the influence of others – that there is 'one God (Θεός τις εἷς) that presides over all and that he is the creator, being the producer of it and supremely good'. Nor is there anybody who would not accept that between God and us there is some other nature, either one by genus or divided in many genera, which is superior to us, although being much inferior to God. 'Because nobody will think that out of the works of God we are the supreme one.' Everybody also believes that the natures superior to us are intellects and the souls superior to ours. There cannot be any higher work or activity of these natures other than the contemplation of reality, the notion of the creator of all being at the top of it. There is no other activity that would be superior or happier for those who are capable of it, and it can be even achieved by human beings.¹⁸ In other words, the natures superior to us are intellective and not material. The mention of these natures, existing either in one genus or in more between God and us, may be considered as close to ancient

¹⁵ Ibid. 273.2–8.

¹⁶ Ibid. 274.1–12.

¹⁷ Plato, *Resp.* III 386a–387c.

¹⁸ *In Hel.* 274.12–276.11: Οὐ γὰρ ἀξιώσει τις τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἔργων τὸ κράτιστον ἡμᾶς γε εἶναι. Ταῦτας δὴ τὰς ἡμῶν κρείττους φύσεις οὐδεὶς ὅστις οὐ νοῦς ἂν φαίη εἶναι ἢ καὶ ψυχὰς τινὰς τῶν ἡμετέρων κρείττους. Εἰ δὲ τοιαῦτα ἐκεῖνα αἰ φύσεις, τί ἂν ἄλλο αὐτῶν τὸ κυριώτατον εἴη ἔργον καὶ πρᾶξις ἢ ἡ τῶν ὄντων θεωρία καὶ ἐπ' αὐτῇ ἡ τοῦ τῶν ὅλων δημιουργοῦ ἔννοια, ἥς τοῖς τυγχάνειν πεφουκῶσιν οὐδεμία τις ἂν ἄλλη γένοιτο κρείττων πρᾶξις οὐδὲ μακαριωτέρα, ἥς καὶ ἄνθρωπος πρὸς τῇ ἄλλῃ τῶν ὄντων θεωρίᾳ καὶ ταύτης δηλὸς ἐστί τυγχάνων.

paganism. However, it can be interpreted as a statement in perfect accord with the Christian faith because in the Byzantine theological tradition angelology, or the 'hierarchies' of the divine beings described by Dionysius the Areopagite, always played an important part, and this was probably how the passage was understood by Gemistos' contemporaries.¹⁹

This argument then proceeds as follows: human beings are not only capable of the animal action and behaviour, but they can also emulate the genera that are superior to us. This is, again, due to the conclusion that if man is himself capable of achieving, as far as possible, the same contemplation as they are, he must necessarily share not only their actions (ἔργα), but also their essences (οὐσίαι). This is due to the axiom that the actions must be analogous to the essences and the essences to the actions. Now, if somebody's actions are identical with those of animals, he must share a similar essence too. And conversely, if somebody's actions are the same as those of the genera superior to us, his essence must be similar to theirs. This enables Gemistos to conclude that man is composed of two different essences – the divine and the animal one. The animal part in us is naturally mortal, but the divine must be immortal if the essence of the genera higher than us is also such. This would be impossible if God, who is supremely good and free from all envy (φθόνου ἔξω παντός), did not produce – 'besides other things', that is presumably the material world – also the essences that are closer to him by their immortality. If they are immortal, the essence in us that is similar to them must be also such, because what is mortal could never become similar to the immortal, and what has a somehow limited and deficient potentiality to exist could never bear a resemblance to that which has not.²⁰

At this point Gemistos again introduces his argument concerning suicide, similar to the one we have just seen in the previous funeral oration. Those who kill themselves show that man is composed of two essences, a mortal and an immortal one, as has just been claimed. There is nothing that would be inclined (ὀρμᾶν) to its own destruction, but everything tends as much as possible not to abandon its being and preserve itself. If therefore somebody commits suicide, it is not so 'that his mortal part kills the mortal, but the immortal the mortal!'²¹ In other words, if human beings had been composed solely of one mortal essence, they would not be able to kill themselves because of the principle that everything tends to preserve its own existence. Thus we have to surmise from the occurrence of the human suicide that in the course of it the mortal part in man is destroyed by some different essence which survives, that is, by their immortal part.

¹⁹ See also below, p. 274.

²⁰ Ibid. 276.12–278.4.

²¹ Ibid. 278.4–279.2.

As in the previous oration, Gemistos claims that the most ancient and most venerable nations in the world believed in the immortality of the human soul. That this doctrine is ancient and widespread is demonstrated by a series of nations that all adhered to it – the Iberians, Celts, Tyrrhenians, Thracians, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Medes, Indians and others.²² As was said already at the beginning of the speech, death is therefore only departure of the principal part in us to a place proper to it. There those who are good will be rewarded and the bad will be punished ‘by the most just God, the judge whose intentions cannot be changed’.²³

²² Ibid. 279.3–8.

²³ Ibid. 279.9–280.8.

Chapter 3

Conclusion to Part I: Platonism in Practice

As we have just been able to observe, the starting point of Gemistos' considerations for reforming the political system of the Despotate of Morea and saving it against Ottoman attacks is the question of the right constitution and laws. In this context the activity of a lawgiver is crucial because the welfare of a state depends directly on its organization. This is already a Platonic motif discussed at length by Plato in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, to mention just his most important texts dealing with similar problems. In order to understand the difficult situation of the late Byzantine state in depth, Gemistos, as a humanist and an authority on ancient culture and thought, locates political philosophy within a broader historical perspective. This enables him to use many historical examples to prove his claim about the importance of a good constitution. At the same time he reveals the roots of contemporary problems, which, in his view, have resulted from a long-term competition between the East and the West, the ancients and the 'barbarians' from Asia. Furthermore, this leads him to a position in which he radically emphasizes the continuity between the nations known in antiquity and contemporary ones. From this perspective he finds it necessary to defend the Peloponnese from which the Greeks had originated. Although by emphasizing the ancient origin of the inhabitants of the Peloponnese he certainly goes well beyond the usual Byzantine conception of national identity, this does not mean that he disregards the tradition of the Roman Empire, of which Byzantium is the direct successor. On the contrary, the achievements of both Greeks and Romans represent for him the best ancient tradition, in which it is necessary to continue. However, what is apparently missing in his account is the Christian identity of the Byzantines. For Gemistos, the political or military success of a nation thus does not depend entirely on its religion but rather on its state organization. This, at least, along with the historical conditions mentioned above, enables him to explain why the Muslim Ottomans were so successful in their fight against the Christian Byzantines. They owe their efficient state organization to Muhammad.

In his own proposals for the best political constitution, Gemistos always tries to give rational arguments for his conceptions. However, in many cases he obviously derives his inspiration from antiquity, and more particularly from Plato, although he modifies some of his radical conclusions to suit the Byzantine context better.

The state should thus be ruled by a monarch, who is advised by a body of the counsellors. Society should be divided into three classes – producers, the suppliers of services, and rulers who are responsible for its defence. These classes should be engaged in their proper activities only, because otherwise society cannot work properly and is vulnerable to attacks from the outside. A central part in Gemistos' legislation is played by 'the divine', as he constantly emphasizes. Similarly to book X of Plato's *Laws*, there is something divine that cares about humans and whose will cannot be altered by their supplications. Gemistos rejects excessive forms of worship and goes even as far as to criticize contemporary monasticism, which does not contribute anything to the welfare of a society.

The considerations about the best organization of the state are supplemented with Gemistos' rational arguments for the immortality of the human soul presented in the funeral orations on the dead members of the imperial family. In the Platonic tradition this doctrine is crucial and it will become one of the major philosophical issues in Renaissance philosophy. As he claims, man is composed of two natures – the mortal body and the immortal soul which is akin to the divine. Human beings thus may behave according to their higher part, contemplate the divine and live righteously. Alternatively, they may behave according to the body and live similarly to beasts. Both doctrines about the existence of the divine and the immortality of the soul are connected, the latter depending on the former. They are also shared by the majority of people, which again proves their importance. Noteworthy is also Gemistos' mentioning of the non-material natures between God and us, which are most probably to be identified with angels or daemons.

The main features of Gemistos' philosophy presented to the public are thus certainly Platonic in their inspiration, but this does not mean that they are in conflict with Christianity. Although some of its contemporary peculiarities such as the excesses of monasticism are criticized, Gemistos speaks of it, especially in his funeral orations, as of 'our' religion and identifies himself – at least formally – with Orthodoxy. The principles of the divine, representing for him the core of all the legislation, as well as the doctrine of the immortality of the human soul, are formulated generally enough to be acceptable equally by Judaism, Christianity and Islam, but also by ancient Greek polytheism (at least in the form it appears in Platonic tradition). This is because Gemistos avoids possibly controversial issues, such as the question of whether the world was created by God in time or is everlasting, or whether the immortality of the human soul implies also its pre-existence before birth and periodical reincarnations. Moreover, by constant speaking of 'the divine', Gemistos may avoid complicated religious disputes about monotheism and polytheism, Christian belief in the Holy Trinity and the

conceptions in which the highest God is unique and 'simple'. However, all of these problems will re-appear in his *Laws*.

Gemistos, in other words, presents such basic principles that might be, as he claims, universally accepted by all the religions he could know. Furthermore, as he repeatedly says, these theological principles are so generally widespread because they are based on reason common to all people. Thus he is able to constitute universal religion that is at the same time the source of universal legislation, necessary to save the Despotate of Morea. Moreover, as has been already mentioned, it enables him to presuppose the existence of rules on which the fortune of the diverse nations believing in different religions depend and which have found their expression in a good constitution based on certain fundamental principles leading people to live according to virtue. These universal principles thus represent the basis of history which develops according to them. For this reason, they may also be reconstructed from past events. The apparent unimportance of the Christian religion in this conception might have been troublesome for some of his contemporaries, but we should not forget that, after all, Gemistos was a Platonic philosopher and an interpreter of the ancient Greek tradition, not a professional theologian. Furthermore, as has been said already, this conception makes it possible to understand better the recent military successes of the infidels and find a rational explanation for them.

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Although it seems that none of Gemistos' political proposals were put into practice, they must certainly have been appreciated by the Emperor and the Despot.¹ The same is true of his funeral orations, which probably further helped to spread his fame as a Platonic philosopher in the ancient sense. It is also interesting to compare Gemistos' approach to that of his pupil Bessarion who studied with him in Mistra in the first half of the 1430s (before 1436)² and whose relation to Gemistos will be discussed in full later on. Like his teacher, Bessarion composed a funeral oration on the dead Despoina Cleope in 1433, but, unlike the one written by Gemistos, it does not contain any philosophical speculations about the immortality of the human soul and is entirely Christian in

¹ Masai 1956, p. 94, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 99, 109.

² Mohler 1923, p. 45, Labowsky 1967, p. 687. For the early writings of Bessarion, collected by their author himself in the *Marc. Gr.* 533 (= 788), and their dating, see Mohler 1923, pp. 51–5, Loenertz 1944, pp. 116–21, Saffrey 1964, pp. 279–92, Stormon 1981, Mioni 1985, pp. 421–3, 1991, pp. 25–46, Rigo 1994, pp. 33–7.

its tone.³ In the speech to the Emperor John VIII about his wife Maria Comnena, who died in 1439 while the Byzantine delegation attended the Council of Florence,⁴ Bessarion perhaps attempted to imitate Gemistos in providing a more philosophical consolation. It thus contains a rational argument, which, however, demonstrates not the immortality of the soul, but, in contrast, the inevitability of death by showing the necessary corruption of everything in time, including man who is the rational animal (λογικὸν ζῶον). Bessarion then tries to offset the inescapable fate of mortals by traditional Christian hope in the future life with God that is better than the earthly one.⁵

Probably in 1444, just before the disastrous Battle of Varna that definitely destroyed all hopes for saving Byzantium, Bessarion, who meanwhile had become a cardinal and settled down in Italy, wrote a letter to Constantine Palaiologos, the Despot ruling Morea (1443–1449) at that time and, as Constantine XI, the future (and the last) Byzantine emperor (1449–1453).⁶ Bessarion's letter is the only surviving part of an obviously more extensive correspondence between them⁷ and it is interesting for us because it contains many parallels with the *Addresses* to the Despot Theodore and the Emperor Manuel written by Gemistos more than 25 years before. Like his teacher, Bessarion also urges the Despot to introduce reforms in order to be able to defend the Peloponnese against the Turkish threat. However, in contrast to Gemistos, his proposals are less radical and perhaps more realistic. The letter is especially remarkable and quite exceptional for the time because of the admiration that Bessarion expresses towards the development of the new technologies which he saw in Italy and which he proposes to introduce also in the Morea.⁸ Similarly to Gemistos' *Addresses*, the importance of good legislation, including also religious rituals, is particularly emphasized, and the local Spartan tradition of Lycurgus is recalled several times, although other famous lawgivers, namely Zalmoxis, Solon and Numa, are also mentioned.⁹ Moreover, the reform of the constitution is said to be a task for the philosopher-king such as Constantine.¹⁰ The population of the

³ Bessarion, *In Cleop.* See his other consolatory letters from this time, *Ep.* IX–XII 431–7, which are predominantly Christian in its tone, even though Plato and other ancient classical writers are occasionally mentioned.

⁴ Gentilini's introduction to Bessarion, *In Mar.*, p. 151, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 171–2.

⁵ Bessarion, *In Mar.* 72–187.

⁶ Mohler 1923, pp. 210–11, Zakythinis 1932, pp. 226–8, Keller 1955, p. 343, Labowsky 1967, p. 688.

⁷ Bessarion, *Ad Const.* 439.19, with Mohler's note *ad loc.*

⁸ Zakythinis 1932, pp. 226–8, Keller 1955.

⁹ Bessarion, *Ad Const.* 443.1–2, 445.3–7, 15–20.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 446.1–4.

Peloponnese should be divided into those working in agriculture (τὸ γεωργικόν) and those who fight (τὸ στρατηγικόν), the latter being chosen from the former, so that 'each gets his own' and is engaged in one art and occupation only.¹¹ Like Gemistos, Bessarion uses the same expression 'guardians (φύλακες)' taken from Plato's *Republic*.¹² He furthermore claims that for the soldiers' morale religious legislation is important, as the lawgivers and military leaders perceive, because the belief in the existence of 'something divine (θεῖόν τι)' helps to eliminate anxiety and uncertainty from the soul of people.¹³ Although, in a similar way as in Gemistos' writings, the word 'Hellenes'¹⁴ is used throughout the text to designate the inhabitants of the Despotate and many examples from history are invoked, its tone is, however, undoubtedly Christian.¹⁵ We may also note that the genre of reformatory and rather utopian speeches professed by both Gemistos and Bessarion would be further developed in Renaissance.

¹¹ Ibid. 442.11–13; cf. Lambros 1906, pp. 35–7.

¹² Bessarion, *Ad Const.* 441.4; cf. Lambros 1906, p. 37.

¹³ Bessarion, *Ad Const.* 446.20–29.

¹⁴ In 444.23 ἑλληνικὸν γένος is even compared to ῥωμαϊκόν, that is, Italians, as it is evident from the context.

¹⁵ For other detailed parallels between Gemistos' and Bessarion's texts see Lambros 1906, pp. 38–41, Zakythinos 1932, pp. 226–8.

PART II
Philosophia perennis

Chapter 4

Writings about the Perennial Philosophy

The 'perennial philosophy' as understood by Plethon is a rational conception of the world, shared by all the people who rely on their reason, and identical throughout different ages of history. With this conception Plethon initiated the Renaissance quest for both ancient and universal wisdom professed by the most eminent sages of the past. However, the term *philosophia perennis* itself is a later invention of Agostino Steuco, who named thus his book published in 1542.¹ Plethon elaborates his perennial philosophy in works that might be divided into three main groups.

To the core of the first one belongs the ancient *Chaldaean Oracles*, which Plethon attributes – for the reasons that will hopefully become clearer in the following discussion – to the Magi, the legendary disciples of the Persian sage Zoroaster.² According to ancient tradition the corpus of the *Chaldaean Oracles* originated under the rule of Marcus Aurelius (161–180) in the religious and magical 'underground' of Middle Platonism. Allegedly written by two Chaldaeans, they became a favourite reading of Neoplatonists from the time of Porphyry, being regarded by them as a kind of divine revelation which was in accord with the philosophy of 'the divine' Plato. The most influential Neoplatonic interpreter of the *Oracles* was Proclus (412–485) who in his philosophical project attempted to establish a broad concordance between Plato and inspired religious texts of ancient Greek tradition, most notably, the *Orphic Rhapsodies* and *Chaldaean Oracles*. Unfortunately, as in the case of other Neoplatonists, out of his several works on the *Oracles* none has survived and we must derive our knowledge of this text from numerous quotations, most notably in Proclus' writings and in those by Damascius. Proclus' commentary on the *Chaldaean Oracles* was apparently still available to the Byzantine Platonist Michael Psellos (about 1018 – after 1078) after whom any trace of it disappears.³

¹ For the origin and the Renaissance usage of the term *philosophia perennis* see Schmitt 1966, 1970, 1972; for Plethon's role in the tradition of *prisca theologia* culminating in Ficino see Vasoli 1994, 1999, pp. 11–50, 2001, Allen 1998, pp. 1–49.

² See the discussion in Part III of this work below, pp. 187–285.

³ See des Places' introduction to *Or. Chald.*, pp. 18–52, Athanassiadi 1999, 2005, Brisson 2003, 2006, pp. 128–35, Saffrey 1992.

While in his own writings on the *Oracles* Psellos drew upon Proclus,⁴ Plethon in turn based his own edition of its fragments⁵ on Psellos' *Commentary on the Chaldaean Oracles*.⁶ Plethon could have encountered some other *Oracles* in the writings of the Neoplatonists in which many of them are scattered throughout these texts. However, they are usually introduced simply as 'the Oracles' without the epithet 'Chaldaean' while under 'the Chaldaeans' something else, namely the Chaldaean astronomers, is meant.⁷ This helps us to understand why Plethon felt entitled to alter the title of his collection of the *Oracles* to *The Magian Oracles* and to ascribe them to Zoroaster's Magi. At the same time, however, it means that he ignored (or decided to ignore) the ancient tradition accepted even today which places the origin of the *Oracles* at the time of Marcus Aurelius and connects them with the Chaldaean theurgues.⁸ Furthermore, even if Plethon may have been able to recognize an *Oracle* he knew from Psellos' *Commentary*, in a Neoplatonic text, he could not have been entirely certain in other cases whether under the denotation 'Oracle' a specific *Chaldaean Oracle* or some other religious utterance was meant. For him, it was thus safer to keep to the quotations contained in Psellos' commentary and not to add any new fragments, prudently leaving such a complex work to later editors.

Although in his works on the *Chaldaean Oracles* Plethon draws upon Psellos' commentary he does not follow it slavishly, but makes his own use of it. He singles out the *Oracles* scattered throughout Psellos' text and makes an edition of fragments of his own.⁹ Moreover, he omits six *Oracles* commented upon by Psellos and corrects or alters the text where he considers it necessary. He provides us with two commentaries – the one comments on the *Oracles*

⁴ *Or. Chald.* 153–201, 218–24, Psellos is also the probable author of the excerpts from Proclus' *Commentary on the Chaldaean Philosophy*, *ibid.* 202–12.

⁵ *Or. mag.* I–XXXIV 1.1–4.8.

⁶ *Or. Chald.* 156–95.

⁷ Lewy 1978, pp. 443–7, Brisson 2000, pp. 119–20. For the references to the Neoplatonic works quoting the *Oracles* Plethon knew from Psellos' commentary, see the critical apparatus of *Or. Chald.* In the most cases the verses quoted are indeed introduced simply as 'the Oracles (Λόγια)' (sometimes it is specified that they come from the gods) or as utterances of 'the Theologians (Θεολόγοι)'. However, this designation is ambiguous since it can refer also to the Orphics; cf. Lewy 1978, p. 444. The only authors who connect the *Oracles* that Plethon knew through Psellos with the Chaldaeans are Christian writers (John Lydos, Nicephoros Gregoras, Psellos), not the Neoplatonists. However, the Neoplatonists sometimes, although very rarely, make such an identification, but always in the case of the *Chaldaean Oracles* that are not given in Psellos' commentary.

⁸ Tambrun-Krasker's introduction to *Or. mag.*, p. 38.

⁹ *Or. mag.* I–XXXIV 1.1–4.8.

one by one,¹⁰ whereas the other, *The Brief Clarification of What Is Said in These [Magian] Oracles Less Clearly*, is a kind of summary of the main doctrinal points Plethon detects in them.¹¹ In general, the sequence of fragments, as given by Plethon, is far more systematic than the order we find in Psellos. The original *Oracles* described the journey of the soul through the cosmos, and Plethon, too, in his edition and commentary follows the hierarchical structure which he thought he was able to reconstruct on the basis of the preserved text. In his edition of the *Oracles*, followed by his 'long' commentary, Plethon, roughly speaking, starts with the material world into which the human soul is placed, then describes the human soul and its divine nature, after that he turns his attention to daemons, the second god and the world of the Platonic Forms, and finally he gets to the supreme God, the Father and the creator of everything. *The Brief Clarification* follows a reversed order, beginning with the supreme god and proceeding through the levels of reality just described down to the material world.¹²

Now we may compare the explanation provided by both Plethon's 'long' commentary and the one by Psellos, which served as the basis of Plethon's, in more detail. In some cases Plethon provides us with a similar interpretation to Psellos, in others he makes Psellos' explanation more precise in some points and, finally, sometimes he intentionally proposes a different explanation. It may be noted that with some textual emendations as well as interpretations he gets closer to the original text and sense of the *Oracles* than Psellos.¹³ At the same time, however, it is clear that he relies on and takes over much information contained in Psellos' commentary, if not the majority of it. He sometimes even borrows some expressions and passages.¹⁴ The most significant difference between both authors is that Plethon completely suppresses all Christian motifs found in the commentary by Psellos, who either contrasts the Chaldaean beliefs with

¹⁰ Ibid. 4.9–19.22 [on I–XXXIV].

¹¹ *Decl. brev.*

¹² Tardieu 1987, p. 154, Tambrun-Krasker's commentary on *Or. mag.*, pp. 47–8.

¹³ For the manner in which Plethon emends and interprets the *Oracles* see Lewy 1978, pp. 474–5, Tardieu 1987, pp. 151–62, and Tambrun-Krasker's commentary on *Or. mag.*, especially pp. 48, 63, 69, 77, 81, 84, 88, 104, 117, 122, 124, 125, 133, 153–4. For a comparison with Psellos see Athanassiadi 2002.

¹⁴ For instance, even though Psellos and Plethon alike place a different *Oracle* at the beginning of their respective collection, they both feel a need to give a description of the basic structure of the places through which the human soul journeys in the commentary on the *Oracle* they comment as first. The description of the different places where the soul can go is also quite similar in the commentaries by both authors, even on the level of words, although Psellos gives a more precise localization of the souls within the cosmos, *Or. Chald.* 162–3 (1124a12–c2), *Or. mag.* 5.2–6 [on I].

Christianity or sometimes even tries to harmonize them.¹⁵ In contrast, Plethon restores the *Oracles* emphatically to ancient Greek thought, and places them in a more appropriate context, claiming that the doctrine they contain is in accord most notably with the Pythagoreans and Platonists.¹⁶

Furthermore, Plethon, unlike Psellos, completely ignores the theurgical context contained in the original *Chaldaean Oracles*. On the whole, as may be well seen on the *Oracles* he chooses to exclude from his own collection because he suspects their authenticity,¹⁷ Plethon searches for a philosophical rather than religious explanation of these notoriously mysterious utterances, which describe the journey of the soul as well as the means of its salvation in half philosophical, half mythical terms.¹⁸ For Plethon, the *Oracles* have nothing to do with theurgy or any religious rites or beliefs and they are a kind of philosophy veiled in poetic language. Partly because of such an approach, Plethon diverges in some important points from the original doctrine of the *Oracles* as reconstructed by modern scholarship.¹⁹ It is significant for his interpretation that the highest God is altogether transcendent and there is no place for Hecate,²⁰ or Power, that in the original *Oracles*, together with the First God or the Father and the Second God or the Demiurgic Intellect, forms a kind of trinity which allows the Christian interpretation provided by Psellos.²¹ (As we shall see, Hecate will get an entirely different role in Plethon's *Laws*.) Furthermore, he rejects the existence of the evil daemons claimed by the original *Oracles*.²²

Plethon's work thus gives an impression of a meticulous study of Psellos' text thanks to which he was able to edit, rearrange and write a commentary on his own version of the *Oracles*. At the same time he obviously takes a critical distance

¹⁵ *Or. Chald.* 163 (1125a4–10), 166 (1128c8–9), 167–8 (1129b7–8, c5–9) 169 (1132a4–5), 170 (1132c5–7), 178–9 (1140d1–8, 1141a13–b3, 12–15), 180–81 (1144a3–7, 1144a14–b5), 183–4 (1148a5–9).

¹⁶ *Or. mag.* 19.5–22.

¹⁷ Plethon excludes six *Oracles* which are found in Psellos, in one case because of metrical reasons, but mostly because of their non-philosophical content and the magical practices described in them: see Tardieu 1987, pp. 153–4, Tambrun-Krasker's commentary on *Or. mag.*, pp. 44–5, 155–6, Tambrun-Krasker 1992, p. 17, and Athanassiadi 2002, pp. 239–41.

¹⁸ Brisson 2003, pp. 111, 128–9.

¹⁹ Athanassiadi 1999.

²⁰ Hecate disappears from Plethon's edition and commentary on the text of the *Oracles* because of the corruption in the textual tradition, but it is also possible that Plethon deliberately excludes her from the text as incompatible with the philosophical content of the *Oracles*: see Tambrun-Krasker's commentary on *Or. mag.* X = *Or. Chald.* LII, pp. 79–81.

²¹ Des Places' introduction to *Or. Chald.*, pp. 12–14, 50–52, Majercik 1989, pp. 5–8, Brisson 2003, pp. 114–19.

²² Des Places' introduction to *Or. Chald.*, p. 14, Majercik 1989, pp. 13–14.

towards Psellos' work and feels a need to 'correct' it in some essential points. These include the identification of the *Oracles* as the sayings of Zoroastrian Magi, but also the harmonization of them with Plato's thought and not with Christianity. This could well have been because Plethon recognized in some Neoplatonic text one or more of the *Oracles* in Psellos. This discovery, in turn, might have led him to study the *Oracles* basically on their own, that is, establishing his own text and omitting the fragments he considered as suspect for some reason. Similarly he rejected some features of Psellos' commentary as incompatible with his own view on the *Oracles* as a non-Christian philosophical poetry congenial with Plato's doctrines. A thorough analysis of their contents with the help of Psellos' commentary devoid of some features he considered to be an influence of a later and corrupted tradition is thus obviously behind his independent and in a way very modern approach to the text.

We are not sure about the exact time of composition either of the 'long' commentary or of his *Brief Clarification on the Oracles*. It was perhaps already before the Council of Florence, but there is no convincing evidence enabling us to solve this question definitely.²³

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The second group of the writings concerning perennial philosophy may be dated more precisely. It consists of the texts in which Plethon attempts to demonstrate the priority of Plato's philosophy as compared to that of Aristotle.²⁴ The famous treatise *On the Differences of Aristotle from Plato* was written during the Council in Florence in 1439 and was directed towards Italian humanists who had an interest in Plato, still virtually unknown in the West at that time.²⁵ As the very title suggests, in this treatise Plethon tries to compare both ancient philosophers while showing the qualities of Plato and criticizing Aristotle. The work itself is divided into 10 sections which treat problems of (I) God, (II) being, (III) logic, (IV) the soul, (V) ethics, (VI) cosmology, (VII) finality in nature and art, (VIII) determinism, (IX) motion and (X) the Platonic Forms. The text is organized around the theses and quotations derived from the work of Aristotle, especially in the final section, by far the longest one, in which the Forms are treated, whereas, in general, Plato is quoted much less.²⁶

²³ See the discussion in Woodhouse 1986, pp. 50–51.

²⁴ For the various aspects of this problem see Bargeliotes 1980 and Moutsopoulos-Bargeliotes 1987.

²⁵ *Contra Schol.* XXIV 438.3–8, Woodhouse 1986, p. 156, Monfasani 1976, pp. 201–2.

²⁶ *De diff.* I 321.23–323.4, II 323.5–324.27, III 324.28–326.29, IV 326.30–328.4, V 328.5–330.6, VI 330.7–331.31, VII 331.32–332.23, VIII 332.24–334.4, IX 334.5–20,

Such an unusually radical critique of Aristotle, however, provoked immediate reactions not by the Western intellectuals for whom it was originally written,²⁷ but exclusively among the Byzantines. In the first half of the 1440s²⁸ the Emperor John VIII Palaiologos wrote a letter to Plethon in which he raised two questions provoked by the reading of the *Differences*. The first one is concerned

X 334.21–343.12. The structure of the text is well apparent in an excellent commented edition by Bernadette Lagarde, unfortunately so far unpublished, Lagarde 1976, vol. 1. Lagarde's localization of quotations from Plato and Aristotle was taken over in English translation by Woodhouse 1986, pp. 191–214, and German translation by Blum 1988, pp. 112–50.

Karamanolis 2002, pp. 264–7, argues that Plethon was inspired in his anti-Aristotelism by the Platonist Atticus and that he based his *Differences* on Eusebius' *Praep. evan.* XV.4–13, which contains Atticus' fragments. This claim must be seen in a broader context of the ancient problem of philosophical agreement between Plato and Aristotle, which Karamanolis studies in depth and detail elsewhere, Karamanolis 2006. He shows that, among the ancient Platonists, Atticus, in his radical criticism of Aristotle, was exceptional. This suggestion is certainly very stimulating and important, but it provokes some questions and doubts. First, even though the structure and topics in Eusebius and the *Differences* are really very similar, they are not identical, and this is even more true about the argumentation contained in both these texts. Atticus' criticism of Aristotle is also rather general, whereas Plethon quotes directly from his works; cf. the notes to Woodhouse's and Blum's translations of the *Differences* based on Lagarde 1976, vol. 1. Second, Plethon never mentions either Atticus or Eusebius, which is really strange if they were indeed the source of his anti-Aristotelianism. Instead, as we shall see, pp. 176–7, he names Plotinus and Proclus who, unlike Simplicius, were, as he claims, critical towards Aristotle. Third, Eusebius' Christian perspective, in which Atticus' fragments are used, is entirely alien to Plethon's perennial philosophy since Plato's teaching is subordinated there to the revelation given to the Jews.

However, in a manuscript kept in Munich (*Monac. Gr.* 490, fols 119v–120r), excerpts of Atticus from Eusebius are preserved which were attributed to Gemistos by Dedes 1981, pp. 76–7, because they are found among other Gemistos' works. Moreover, in a famous manuscript owned and annotated by Ficino and containing some key works by Gemistos (Florence, *Riccard.* 76) similar Atticus excerpts are also preserved; cf. Monfasani 2002b, pp. 185–6, with the references. Also other manuscripts (London, British Library, *Add.* 10065; Paris, BnF, *Suppl. Gr.* 0907) contain Atticus material in the vicinity of Gemistos' works; cf. pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr [accessed: 12 June 2012], under the heading 'Atticus philosophus, *De ideis Platonicis*'. Nevertheless, this trace would have to be examined properly by consulting the manuscripts. Finally, Nicolaus Scutellius, who under Plethon's name wrote a work based on the latter's *Differences* and criticizing Aristotle, made a similar Latin list based on Atticus: see Monfasani 2005b, pp. 6–8, 107–9. This all supports Karamanolis' claim. At the same time, however, it is clear that if indeed Gemistos used Atticus as a kind of inspiration for his own work, he certainly did not follow him slavishly, basing his own treatise on the study of the primary texts by Plato and Aristotle.

²⁷ For Gemistos' (negligible) influence on contemporary Western intellectuals see Monfasani 2012b.

²⁸ Benakis 1974, pp. 332–3.

with some rather particular logical problems; in the other he asks whether mortality belongs necessarily to the definition of man.²⁹ Both these questions were then answered at length by Plethon.³⁰ It has been suggested that Scholarios was familiar with this exchange if he was not in fact 'the guiding hand' behind the letter by the Emperor.³¹

Some time around 1444³² the most hostile attack against the *Differences* came from George Scholarios, who wrote a lengthy and aggressive *Defence of Aristotle*.³³ Plethon saw this reaction only in the late 1440s and he immediately, most probably in 1449,³⁴ wrote a similarly fierce response known as the *Reply to Scholarios*.³⁵ The work is again organized around quotations, in this case lengthy passages taken from Scholarios' treatise, which Plethon refutes point by point. Both works follow the general order laid down by the sections in the *Differences*. Nonetheless, Scholarios spends most of his time refuting the first section of the *Differences*, trying to show that Aristotle knew the notion of God in the Christian (and Platonic) sense while leaving 'for some other time' the discussion of the Forms, which Plethon treated in the last section of his *Differences*.³⁶ Similarly Plethon spends most of his time on the question of God while making fun of Scholarios for not being able to defend Aristotle against his objections concerning the Platonic Forms.³⁷ This shows well that the philosophical problems treated in these works are very much determined by the overall discussion between both thinkers.

Meanwhile, about 1447³⁸ and before he got Scholarios' *Defence of Aristotle*, Plethon exchanged two letters with Bessarion who inquired of him about some Platonic questions. The themes treated in this correspondence include the problem of self-constituted (αὐθυπόστατον), participated (μεθεκτόν) and unparticipated (ἀμέθεκτον) entities, synonymy and homonymy, fate, a notorious arithmetical passage from book VIII of Plato's *Republic* later commented upon

²⁹ John VIII Palaiologos, *Ad Gemist.*

³⁰ *Ad quaes.*; cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 229–32.

³¹ Benakis' introduction to *Ad quaes.*, pp. 332–3, Woodhouse 1986, p. 229.

³² Masai 1956, p. 406, Monfasani 1976, p. 206, and Woodhouse 1986, p. 237, accept the date 1443–1444; Turner 1969, p. 450, argues for the years 1444–1445.

³³ Scholarios, *Pro Arist.*

³⁴ Masai 1956, p. 406, Monfasani 1976, p. 206, Woodhouse 1986, p. 270.

³⁵ *Contra Schol.*

³⁶ Scholarios, *Pro Arist.* 10.17–43.38, 113.23–114.16.

³⁷ *Contra Schol.* VII–XXII 384.14–430.17, XXXI 500.1–3.

³⁸ Mohler 1923, pp. 336–7, Monfasani 1976, p. 208, Tihon's commentary on *Metb.*, pp. 21–2. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 232–3, thinks that the letters were written during the early 1440s.

by Ficino³⁹ as well as problems regarding the calendar.⁴⁰ It is usually assumed that Bessarion's questions had been inspired by a reading of the *Differences*;⁴¹ however, this might not be the case in view of the considerable time that had elapsed between Plethon's treatise and Bessarion's letters; also in his letters there seems to be no substantive thematic connection with Plethon's treatise.

In this context we should also note Plethon's editorial work on the text of the *Corpus Platonicum* in an attempt to provide a correct interpretation and appreciation of it. His personal copy of Plato's works is today preserved in three different manuscripts.⁴² His attempts to improve the text are obviously well thought out and some of his conjectures are indeed of a high quality. At the same time, however, he erased some parts of the text, sometimes even large ones since he obviously considered them wrong or misleading in the context of Plato's works. This 'censorial' practice affects the text of the *Gorgias*, *Symposium*, *Laws*, *Epinomis* and *Republic*, but Gemistos also treats in a similar way other authors as Herodotus and perhaps Diodorus.⁴³ Later on, we shall come back to the question of his motivation for such a practice, which to some extent reminds us of his treatment of Psellos' commentary on the *Chaldaean Oracles*.⁴⁴

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In a certain sense the third group combines both previous ones. The most important work, which belongs to it, is the *Laws* explicitly based on the doctrines of Zoroaster and Plato.⁴⁵ Its closing chapter, entitled 'Epinomis', proves that this book was intended as an imitation of the *Laws* of Plato, which is a problem that we shall return to at the end of this study. The modern edition of this work does not contain all the text that has been preserved. Some more of the text can be found in the manuscript Additional 5424 of the British Library⁴⁶ which will also be occasionally referred to.⁴⁷ *The Summary of the Doctrines of Zoroaster and Plato*⁴⁸ seems to be in the same relation to the *Laws* as *The Brief Clarification to The Explanation of the Oracles*. In both cases we have to do with a short summary

³⁹ Plato, *Resp.* VIII 546b–c; cf. Allen 1994.

⁴⁰ *Ad Bess.* I is the answer to *Ad Gemist.* I; *Ad Bess.* II to *Ad Gemist.* II.

⁴¹ Cf. Woodhouse 1986, p. 233, who, unlike Mohler, dates the letters to the early 1440s.

⁴² *Marc. Gr.* 188 (= 1022), 189 (= 704), *Laur. Plut.* LXXX, 19.

⁴³ Pagani 2009.

⁴⁴ See below, pp. 263–7.

⁴⁵ *Leg.* 2, 30–32 [1,2], 252 [III,43: *Epinomis*].

⁴⁶ Masai–Masai 1954, p. 554, 1956, pp. 399–400.

⁴⁷ Its transcription may be found in the *Manuscript Supplement*, below, pp. 311–20.

⁴⁸ *Zor. Plat.*

of much longer texts and it is thus possible that they were appended as a kind of recapitulation of the main ideas of these treatises.⁴⁹ As for the probable date of the composition of the *Laws*, which is crucial for the proper evaluation of it, it will be also discussed later on in its proper place.

The peculiar mythology of the *Laws*, which we shall also deal with further on, apparently influenced Plethon's edition of *Orphic Hymns*. Apart from many textual conjectures, he altered significantly the text of some of them and – almost without any exception – he has left only those which correspond directly to the gods of the mythology contained in his *Laws*.⁵⁰ This again reminds us of the practice we can observe when he is dealing with Plato's and other texts.

There are two other smaller philosophical works by Plethon related to those in which his 'perennial philosophy' is elaborated at length. The first one is *On Virtues*, a systematic exposition of a rationally based ethics,⁵¹ which was written certainly before Plethon's journey to Italy in 1438–1439, perhaps already in the first years of his stay in the Peloponnese.⁵² We may also note that there exist a Platonic dialogue *On Virtue* and an Aristotelian treatise *On Virtues*⁵³ which are generally regarded as spurious today.

⁴⁹ The close connection between the *Summary of the Doctrines of Zoroaster and Plato* and the *Laws* is also supported by the fact that they are both contained in *Add.* as well as in an early Arabic translation of some of Plethon's works. They are followed here by Plethon's edition of the *Chaldaean Oracles* (without his commentary) accompanied by few lines from *The Brief Clarification*. See Nicolet–Tardieu 1980, pp. 43–55, and also his edition of the Arabic text in an appendix to *Or. mag.* and *Decl. brev.*, pp. 157–71. However, only a detailed investigation of the manuscript tradition could confirm this suggestion.

⁵⁰ Cf. Quandt's editorial commentary and *addenda* to Orpheus, *Hymni*, pp. 19*–22*, 82–3, Keydell 1942, pp. 77–80.

⁵¹ *De virt.*

⁵² There is a copy of the text made by John Eugenikos in 1439, which means that the treatise must have been written before this date: see Tambrun–Krasner' introduction to *De virt.*, pp. xxviii–xxix, xlv–vi, Knös 1950, p. 178, Woodhouse 1986, p. 179, Mioni 1991, p. 49, Arabatzis 2003, pp. 221–4; Masai 1956, pp. 402–3, dates it, unconvincingly, after 1439.

⁵³ In the manuscript tradition the latter pseudo-Aristotelian treatise is often found together with the one by Plethon; cf. De Gregorio 1994, pp. 250–53, with n.21.

The *Prayer to the One God*⁵⁴ is presumably also an early text.⁵⁵ However, its author uses some rather poetic expressions describing the highest God⁵⁶ which we do not find in other texts by Plethon. For this reason and since it does not in fact contain anything substantially new, it can be left aside as less important and possibly even as spurious.

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As is already apparent from this preliminary account of the first two groups of the texts in which Plethon's 'perennial philosophy' is presented, its most important representatives are Plato and Zoroaster, the latter being the presumed inspirer of the *Magian Oracles*. Two whole treatises are dedicated by Plethon to the defence of the philosophy of the former, he edits and comments on the *Oracles* of the latter, and Zoroaster himself appears several times in his writings as the most ancient sage.⁵⁷ According to the testimony of Plutarch,⁵⁸ which Plethon refers to, he lived 5,000 years before the Trojan war, or alternatively, before the return of the Heracleidae.⁵⁹ The latter event is dated to 1103 BC in Plethon's astronomical treatise, while, according to tradition, the former one took place only some decades before.⁶⁰ Zoroaster is thus 'the most ancient man of those who are remembered'. Nevertheless, that does not mean that he is the first one, because, as Plethon claims, 'similar periods, lives and actions' repeat again and again forever, and perennial philosophy, too, is 'co-eternal with the whole heaven (συναΐδια ἂν τῷ παντὶ οὐρανῷ)'.⁶¹ This means that even though, according to our historical records, Zoroaster is indeed the most ancient sage, there is an infinite series of similarly wise men both before and after him. Of others mentioned by Plethon only the Egyptian Min is comparably old, having lived, as is sometimes

⁵⁴ *Ad deum unum*.

⁵⁵ Woodhouse 1986, p. 45, Blum 1988, p. 10.

⁵⁶ To take just the first sentence: παγγενέτορ, πανυπέρτατε, ἔξοχε ... βασιλεῦ, *Ad deum unum* 273, may stem from Plethon's hymn to Zeus, *Leg.* 202 [III,35], where these epithets of the supreme God, called in both passages similarly βασιλεύς, appear exactly in the same order. Of the other epithets ἔξοχε is used also in the *Laus* (in fact, quite frequently) whereas παμμέγιστε, πανοίκτιρμον, φιλανθρωπότατε, μόνε, συμπαθέστατε, ἀνεξιχνιάστον, ἀνεξερεύνητον, ἄφατον, πέλαγος, and ἄπειρος φιλανθρωπία can be found in the *Prayer to the One God* only.

⁵⁷ For a thorough treatment of Zoroaster's role in Plethon's philosophical system see Nikolaou 1971.

⁵⁸ Plutarch, *De Is.* 369d–e.

⁵⁹ *Or. mag.* 19.20–22, *Leg.* 252–4 [III,43: *Epinomis*], *Contra Schol.* V 378.16–19.

⁶⁰ Mercier's commentary on *Meth.*, pp. 228–9 ('–1102').

⁶¹ *Leg.* 252, 256 [III,43: *Epinomis*].

claimed, more than 3,000 years earlier.⁶² However, for Plethon, he was not a real sage because he introduced erroneous rites (ἀγιστεῖαι φαῦλαι) to the Egyptians who later adopted the doctrines of Zoroaster, although they could not change the faulty legislation of Min. The lawgiver of the Indians was the legendary Dionysus or Bacchus while the lawgiver of the western Iberians is unknown. The laws of both peoples are nearly contemporary to Zoroaster and in accord with his views.⁶³ According to Plethon, Plato did not attempt to conceive a philosophy of his own that would be radically new, but he accepted the ancient doctrines of Zoroaster.⁶⁴ It came to him through Pythagoras, who had come into contact with 'the Magi of Zoroaster', the presumed authors of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, in Asia.⁶⁵ For Plethon, the philosophy of Plato is thus in accord with that of Pythagoras and the teachings of Zoroaster as expressed in the *Oracles*.⁶⁶ Plato and the *Oracles* are supposed to share the common doctrine of the First God who leads the others, who is 'transcendent by his divinity (τῆ θεότητι

⁶² Alexandre's conjecture τούτου, *Leg.* 252–3, n.12, emending the codex reading τοῦτον seems to be mistaken. The sentence: ἔτι αὐ καὶ τοῦτον πλείοσι ἢ τρισχιλίους ἔτεσιν ἱστορούμενον πρεσβύτερον can well mean that 'like Zoroaster, Min (τοῦτον), too (ἔτι), is an old sage', not that he is 'even (ἔτι) more than three thousand years older than Zoroaster (τούτου)'. First, the sentence about Min is exactly parallel to the one about Zoroaster: πλείοσιν ἢ πεντακισχιλίους ἱστορούμενος τῆς Ἡρακλειδῶν καθόδου ἔτεσι πρεσβύτερος, the return of the Heracleidae being obviously the common beginning of the reckoning. Second, Zoroaster would not thus be the most ancient sage (ἄνδρα ἀρχαιότατον τῶν γε ἐν μνήμῃ οὐ δογμάτων τῶν γε ὀρθῶν ἐξηγητῆς ἔστιν ὁ παλαιότατος), as it is claimed on the same page, just before Min is mentioned.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 252–4 [III,43: *Epinomis*]; cf. *Contra Schol.* V 378.19–23. Plethon most probably derives his information about Min from Diodorus Siculus, whom he excerpted: *Diod. Plut.*, Diller 1956, pp. 34–7, Mioni 1985, p. 158, and Plutarch, who are supported by the authority of Herodotus. As he tells us, Min was the first king of the Egyptians, *Hist.* II,99. According to both Diodorus Siculus, *Bibl. hist.* I,45,1–2, and Plutarch, *De Is.* 354a–b, Min replaced the original simple life of the Egyptians with a luxurious one; however, according to the first author, he (previously) introduced to Egypt the veneration of the gods and sacrifices. In Diodorus, *Bibl. hist.* I,94,1–2, he is also named together with other famous legendary lawgivers, including Hermes (Trismegistus), Minos, Zoroaster, Zalmoxis and Moses; cf. Gentile 1990, pp. 64–9. For the Indians with their lawgiver Dionysus and the Iberians see Tambrun 2006, pp. 106–11, with references to the possible sources. Gemistos may rely here again on Diodorus, namely his *Bibl. hist.* III,63–4.

⁶⁴ *Contra Schol.* V 378.12–14.

⁶⁵ Cf. the title of Plethon's edition of *Chaldaean Oracles*: Μαγικά λόγια τῶν ἀπὸ Ζωροάστρου μάγων, *Or. mag.* I.1.

⁶⁶ *Contra Schol.* V 378.13–16, 378.23–380.1, *Ad Bess* I 459.8–10, *Or. mag.* 19.5–9; cf. *Leg.* 30–32 [I,2], 252–6 [III,43: *Epinomis*].

ἐξάιρετος),⁶⁷ and who is called ‘the Father’ by both.⁶⁸ Belief in the immortality of the soul⁶⁹ and in the astral body is also common to both of them.⁷⁰ Unlike the doctrines held by ‘the Egyptians’, according to the *Oracles* and Plato, there are no evil daemons.⁷¹ And, what is most important, for Plethon, the whole structure of reality in the teachings of Zoroaster and in Plato is the same.⁷²

The similarities of the doctrines explicitly recognized by Plethon among the treatises of the first two groups in which the ‘perennial’ philosophy is developed, enabled him to conceive the texts of the third group, that is, the *Laws* and the *Summary of the Doctrines of Zoroaster and Plato*, which are both based on the supposed teaching of Plato and Zoroaster. However, there is a significant difference between these treatises and other writings pertaining to perennial philosophy. The first two groups of texts are either explanations of Plato’s philosophy compared to that of Aristotle’s or commentaries on the *Magian Oracles*, whereas for the third group Plethon claims that it contains the rational theory that is closest to the truth. The *Laws* and the *Summary* also differ in using the ancient Greek names of the pagan gods for a description of metaphysical principles. Nevertheless, it should be noted already here that Plethon is far from being a polytheist, in the sense that an ancient pagan would have been. At the very beginning of the *Laws* he says that he intends to call the gods ‘recognized by philosophy’ by ‘the traditional Greek names’. In order to be ‘more in accordance with philosophy’, he feels a need to change them from the form into which the poets distorted them.⁷³ In another passage he adds that in a work on legislation it is not appropriate to use reasoning (λόγοι) instead of the traditional names of the gods ‘because it would be complicated for the majority’. Nevertheless it is similarly inappropriate to introduce names that are new or ‘barbarian’. The names familiar from the myths which were invented by the poets and which are ‘in disaccord with philosophy’ are somehow defiled, yet this does not mean that they must necessarily always remain so. If they are used to express the proper doctrine, they will not be misleading any more. Furthermore, it would

⁶⁷ *Contra Schol.* XXX 486.23–6; cf. XVII 414.2–3.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* XVII 412.8–9.

⁶⁹ *Or. mag.* 4.11–12 [on I], *Contra Schol.* XXIX 474.20–25; the immortality of the soul is implied here by the verb ἀπαθανατίζειν describing the activity it exercises on the body.

⁷⁰ *Or. mag.* 10.4–12.1 [on XIV], *Contra Schol.* XXIX 474.25–476.2.

⁷¹ *Ad Bess.* I 459.5–11.

⁷² *Or. mag.* 19.5–22. For the inspiration of the *Oracles* by Plato’s philosophy see Brisson 2000, pp. 111–12, Brisson 2003.

⁷³ *Leg.* 2: see Appendix X,5, below, p. 306, trans. Woodhouse (1986), p. 322.

be difficult to find a name that has not been misused in some way, even the very name of 'God' (τὸ θεοῦ ὄνομα) may be defiled by some people.⁷⁴

The chief reasons why Plethon decides to use the ancient Greek names of the gods in the *Laws* thus seem to be to a large extent practical ones and required by the specific genre of this writing, so that perennial philosophy may be more understandable for the majority. He intends the ideal system of laws to be used in a community, in which everybody cannot be naturally expected to understand the subtleties of the philosophical speculations on which they are based. At the same time, nonetheless, Plethon rejects the presentation of the gods known from ancient Greek mythology and wants to conceive a new theology that is more in accordance with his rational philosophy. If the ancient names were used properly, it might then become a kind of 'philosophy for the masses'. On this point Plethon comes close to what Plato says in books II and III of his *Republic*, in which the myths narrated by Homer and Hesiod are criticized. According to Plato, in contrast to what these poets and 'teachers of Greece' tell us, God is good and can be the source of no evil. Furthermore, he is perfect and cannot change, which also means that he cannot appear to humans in different forms and thus deceive them, because he rejects any falsehood.⁷⁵ Both Plato and Plethon, therefore advocate a kind of rational theology that which is irreconcilable with the traditional Greek myths known from the poets. In the *Reply to Scholarios*, Plethon further explains that Plato invents his own myths in order to make the deeper truth accessible to many and to counterbalance the bad influence of the poets. What may be otherwise said clearly, is necessarily somehow obscured in the myths because the majority, paradoxically, understand it better this way.⁷⁶ However, as Plethon tells Bessarion, it necessarily means that not all is said precisely (δι' ἀκριβείας) even in the myths narrated by Plato, because to express the truth imprecisely is in the very nature of myths.⁷⁷ In other words, if the higher truth is concealed in the myths, it is hidden there in an imperfect way as compared to the thinking based on reason.

The best way to approach Plethon's 'perennial philosophy' is thus through the introductory chapters of the *Laws*, which discuss its most basic presuppositions. Subsequently the *philosophia perennis* can be presented in a systematic way, with the help of others of Plethon's writings.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 130–32 [III,32].

⁷⁵ Plato, *Resp.* II–III 376e–398b; cf. X 606e–608b.

⁷⁶ *Contra Schol.* VI 382.23–384.7.

⁷⁷ *Ad Bess.* I 462.32–5.

Chapter 5

Introduction to the Perennial Philosophy

At the very beginning of the *Laws*, the main intentions behind Plethon's principal work are summarized. It is supposed to contain 'the theology according to Zoroaster and Plato'. As said previously, the gods 'recognized by philosophy' are to be called by their traditional Greek (Hellenic) names (τοῖς πατρίοις τοῖς Ἑλλησι θεῶν ὀνόμασιν); however, they should not be conceived in the form into which they have been distorted by the poets, but in the manner which is more 'in accordance with philosophy'. The ethics contained in the *Laws* was similarly devised to be in accord with the same sages, Plato and Zoroaster, but also with the Stoics. The constitution proposed in the *Laws* is Spartan, without its harshness, unacceptable for most people, and 'with the addition of philosophy, to be practised principally among the ruling class, this being the supreme merit of the Platonic systems of politics'.¹ The rites (ἅγιστεῖαι) described in this work should be simple, not superfluous, but sufficient; the physics is conceived mostly according to Aristotle. Finally, the book also touches upon the principles of logic, ancient Greek antiquities and healthy diet.²

In the first chapter of the *Laws* (I,1), Plethon reveals the background against which he intends to expound his philosophy: this work of his is supposed to be devoted to the laws and the best constitution according to which the 'people who think (διανοούμενοι ἄνθρωποι)' may lead life, both in the private and public spheres, that is, as much as it is possible, the best and most happy (εὐδαιμονέστατα). In the first place, by their nature all the people desire to live happily (εὐδαιμόνως βιοῦν). This is the chief goal (τέλος), for the sake of which everybody does everything. Nevertheless, opinions differ about what real happiness is.

Plethon now provides a classification of opinion which may be accepted by different people. As will gradually become clear, the alternative he himself adopts is always the last one. (1) Some people search for pleasure (ἡδονή), others for money, still others for glory, but some for virtue and the good (ἀρετή καὶ τὸ καλόν) because they consider virtue to be the only source of a happy and blessed life. (2) Opinions about virtue itself, however, also differ because not everybody similarly considers the same things to be good or shameful. Some people believe

¹ Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 322.

² *Leg.* 2–4.

that reason and knowledge (λόγος τε καὶ μάθησις) are not necessary for virtue. Some even avoid these because certain charlatan sophists (γόητες δὴ τινες σοφισταί) have persuaded them that such an occupation could be only a source of dishonour and ruin for them. Others, on the contrary, think that reason and knowledge is the summit of virtue and their main concern is how to become as prudent and sage as possible (φρονιμώτατοι τε καὶ σοφώτατοι). (3) Some people conduct very many sacrifices (θύματα) and other rites (ἀγιστεῖαι), others do not consider any of them as pious (ὄσιον), still others consider some as pious and some not. (4) Some profess celibacy (μοναυλία) and complete abstinence from sexual love (ἀφροδίσια), others think that marriage and the procreation of children is better and 'more divine'. (5) Some divide food into that forbidden even to taste and that which one is allowed to eat, while others believe that nothing is forbidden to eat and limit themselves in eating by measure (τὸ μέτρον) only. (6) Some let themselves get stained by dirt, others search for cleanliness 'as one of the goods.' (7) Some praise extreme poverty, others admit earning money in a moderate way. (8) Some pride themselves on shamelessness (ἡ ἀναιδεία), others prefer gracefulness (εὐσχημοσύνη) to its opposite. (9) Finally, some people believe that we should seek for virtue not because of virtue itself, but because of some reward from the gods, and that we should not consider it as something which provides happiness by itself. Others, on the contrary, claim that virtue should be pursued not because of a reward, but because of virtue itself. Still others think that it should be sought because of both, virtue itself and the reward from the gods.³

Although Plethon does not say so expressly, the Orthodox Church of his time (the non-rational ethics, the excessive rites), or, more precisely, as in the *Address to Manuel*, Orthodox monks (celibacy, fasts, contempt of hygiene, refusal of money, shamelessness) may be regarded as an obvious target of his criticism.⁴ However, such a conclusion is not the only possible one. For instance, in both Judaism and Islam some kinds of food are prohibited. But due to the overall classical tone of the *Laws* it is even more probable that Plethon meant various approaches to life he knew from different ancient authors. Thus the Cynics, for instance, despised cleanliness and other 'unnatural' customs, refused money and were extremely open in their behaviour, while celibacy could be found among the Pythagoreans or other 'holy men', and different philosophical schools disagreed on what virtue and the good consist in. Among ancient thinkers, as is well known from Plato's dialogues, there was also an important discussion whether virtue is connected with rational knowledge, or not.

³ Ibid. 16–20 [I,1].

⁴ Katsafanas 2003.

Given so many different opinions about human life, in order to choose among them rightly it is necessary to determine what the best life is and in what happiness (τὸ εὐδαιμον) really consists. However, this is impossible without previous examination of what human beings are, as well as what their nature (φύσις) and potentiality (δύναμις) is. But, according to Plethon, we cannot find out what the nature of man is without previous understanding of the nature of the whole (ἡ τῶν ὅλων φύσις), that is, of the nature of reality. We should thus ask which being is the 'eldest' (τί μὲν πρεσβύτατον τῶν ὄντων), that is, what the ultimate source of generation is, which natures are the 'second' and 'third', which are the 'last', and what is the potentiality of each of them. This clearly implies a hierarchical structure of reality and the distinction between what is more and what is less principal or important. Then, in the third step of his philosophical project, we should return back to the examination of man, in this case conceived as a part of a larger whole. Thus only after having determined what human beings are in relation to other things, it is possible to decide how they should live and act.⁵

We should note that in the *Reply to Scholarios* Plethon rejects the critique of Plato by Scholarios, who claims that Plato, unlike Aristotle, was not able properly to distinguish theoretical disciplines from one another. According to Plethon, it is not in fact possible to separate the disciplines absolutely, but some of them are less perfect and require the higher ones. As geometry needs arithmetic so that its objects may be quantified, so physics and ethics need theology, since physical things (τὰ φυσικά) cannot exist without the divine cause (ἡ ἀπὸ θεοῦ αἰτία), because it is their highest (κυριωτάτη) cause and the highest knowledge is about the causes of things. Ethics also needs theology and even legislation depends on God.⁶ In *On Virtues*, Plethon further claims that ethics is based on the physics or the understanding of nature (φυσική), which is one of virtues. This knowledge is a source of happiness, since thanks to it man lives according to his rational part (τὸ λογιστικόν), establishes his relation to the whole of the world, and finds out what is good for him and what is not.⁷ For Plethon, ethics thus depends on physics and the latter, in turn, on theology.

However, Plethon continues in his *Laws*, as in the case of man and his happiness, there are many differences in the opinions about the nature of things. (1) Some believe that there are absolutely no gods. (2) According to others, the gods exist, but they do not exercise any providential care of human affairs (τῶν δ' ἀνθρωπίνων οὐκ ἄν προνοεῖν πραγμάτων). (3) Still others claim that the gods exercise the providential care of all, both of the world and human affairs.

⁵ *Leg.* 20–22 [I,1].

⁶ *Contra Schol.* XXVI 444.28–446.21, 448.2–5, 450.8–14.

⁷ *De virt.* B,10 11.15–24.

These people are further divided into (a) those who believe that the gods are the cause not only of good things, but also of the bad ones and (b) those who think that the gods are not the source of anything bad, being the cause of good things only. Opinions also differ regarding the question of whether (aa) the gods can be persuaded (παραιτητοί) by human supplication to change their intentions or (bb) they carry out everything in accordance with their judgement (γνώμη), which proceeds according to fate (εἰμαρμένη) and chooses always the best of the possible alternatives.⁸ As we have seen above while discussing the *Address to Theodore*,⁹ the obvious source of this tripartite division is book X of Plato's *Laws* where three types of impious people are distinguished: (1) those who do not believe in the gods, (2) those who accept that the gods exist, but do not think that they care about humankind and (3) those who think that the gods can be influenced by the offerings and prayers.¹⁰

The opinions also differ about (1) the divine world: (a) some people believe that there is the only one God and absolutely nothing else may be revered or honoured by humans; (b) others think that there are many gods, similar to each other and identical by their divinity; (c) still others, however, claim that there is one transcendent and the highest God, the eldest leader of all and the other gods are of the second and third level of divinity. (2) Concerning the nature of the cosmos: (a) some believe that, with the exception of one creator God, this universe has been generated in time by some cause and that, at some moment in the future, it will disintegrate and perish; (b) others think that the world has been generated and will remain forever indestructible in the future; (c) still others claim that some part of the world is being formed and generated while another part disintegrates and perishes, and this happens eternally; (d) others regard the universe as generated by cause, but ingenerated in time and imperishable and unchangeable thanks to God who has constituted and established it because such a God is always in the same state, never in any respect idle and therefore producing the universe continuously

⁸ *Leg.* 22–4 [I,1]: ἔστι μὲν ὧν οὐδ' εἶναι θεοῦς τὸ παράπαν οἰομένων· τῶν δ', εἶναι μὲν, τῶν δ' ἀνθρωπίνων οὐκ ἂν προνοεῖν πραγμάτων· τῶν δέ, προνοεῖν μὲν θεοῦς τῶν πάντων, τῶν τε ἄλλων καὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων, εἶναι γὰρ μὴ πρὸς τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς τοὺς αὐτοὺς καὶ τῶν κακῶν αἰτίους· τῶν δέ, κακοῦ μὲν οὐδενός, τῶν δέ ἀγαθῶν μόνων αἰτίους τοὺς θεοῦς εἶναι. Καὶ τῶν μὲν παραιτητοῦς οἰομένων εἶναι καὶ ὑπ' ἀνθρώπων παρατρεπτοῦς ἐφ' οἷς καὶ αὐτοὶ κρίναντες μελλήσωσιν ἀποτελεῖν· τῶν δέ ἀπατραπέτους τε πάντη ἡγουμένων καὶ ἀμεταστρέπτους, γνώμη αἰετῆ σφετέρᾳ καθ' εἰμαρμένην χωρούση ἕκαστα ἀποτελοῦντας, ἧ ἂν ἐκ τῶν ἐνότων βέλτιστα ἔξῃν μέλλοι.

⁹ See above, p. 18.

¹⁰ Plato, *Leg.* X 884a–907b, especially 885b; cf. *Resp.* II 365d–e; cf. Webb 1989, p. 217. For Proclus' interest in this passage of Plato's *Laws* see Dillon 2001, pp. 250–54.

and in the same way. At this point Plethon turns from opinions about the divine and the world back to (3) human nature: (a) some people think that it is similar to other mortal natures and to beasts and that there is nothing more noble or divine in it than in them; (b) others are 'by their hope led to the nature that is divine and altogether undefiled'; finally, (c) some suppose that human beings occupy 'now and always (νῦν καὶ αἰεὶ)' the middle place between the immortal (divine) and mortal nature and are a kind of mixture of both (μικτὴ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν).¹¹ Here too, as we shall be able to observe during Plethon's presentation of his *philosophia perennis*, it is the last option with which he himself agrees. Now, however, he just limits himself to a systematic classification of different opinions about the best life and of the nature of the divine, man and the universe.

According to Plethon, all these things are naturally full of confusion and controversy, unless they are examined and until it is determined what can become the firm basis for happiness, which is the chief goal of human life.¹² The problem is obviously how to pursue an examination (σκέψις) of these problems or which 'leaders of reasoning (ἡγεμόνες λόγων)' to choose. The people who often speak about these matters are the poets, the sophists, the lawgivers and the philosophers. However, for Plethon, the poets and the sophists, who are contrasted here with the lawgivers and the philosophers, are not justly considered to be the right 'expounders (ἐξηγηταί)' of these problems. The poets use much flattery (κολακεία) and their chief goal is to gain the favour of others. For this reason they are not concerned with what the truth is and what the best is. The sophists are even worse because they are accustomed to beguiling (γοητεία), they try to increase their reputation by any means, and in this some of them have even higher ambitions than it is appropriate for humans. Unlike the poets, they are not only unconcerned about the truth, but they even often attempt to destroy it. Both of them seek to 'bring down' divine things to the more human form or,

¹¹ *Leg.* 24–6 [I,1]: Ἔτι δὲ τῶν μὲν ἕνα καὶ μόνον νομιζόντων θεόν, ὡς οὐδὲν γε ἄλλο σεμνὸν ὄν ὄλων ἢ τίμιον ἀνθρώποις τῶν δέ, πλείους, καὶ τούτους παραπλησίους γε ἀλλήλοις, καὶ τοὺς αὐτοὺς θεότητι τῶν δ' ἕνα μὲν ἐξαιρέτων τε καὶ μέγιστον, τὸν πρεσβύτατον τῶν ὄλων ἀρχηγέτην, τοὺς δ' ἄλλους τὰ δευτέρᾳ τε καὶ τρίτᾳ φερομένους τῆς θεότητος. Καὶ τῶν μὲν ἔξω ἐνὸς τοῦ πεποικηκότος θεοῦ τὸ ἄλλο τότε πᾶν γενητὸν χρόνῳ, ὡσπερ καὶ τῆ αἰτία, τιθεμένων, καὶ ποτε καὶ ἀπολεῖσθαι λυθησόμενον τῶν δέ, γεγενῆσθαι μὲν, διαμένειν δὲ τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον ἐς αἰεὶ ἀνώλεθρον τῶν δ', ἐν μέρει μὲν συνίστασθαι τε καὶ γίγνεσθαι, ἐν μέρει δ' αὐτὸ λύεσθαι τε καὶ ἀπόλλυσθαι, καὶ τοῦτο οὕτω χωρεῖν αἰεὶ δι' αἰῶνος τῶν δέ, τῆ μὲν αἰτία γενητόν, τῷ δὲ χρόνῳ ἀγένητον τὸ σύμπαν νομιζόντων τότε καὶ ἀνώλεθρον, καὶ πρὸς γε τοῦ καθεστακότος ἀπαράλλακτον, τοῦ ἐφεστῶτος θεοῦ, ἅτε δὴ αἰεὶ τε ὡσαύτως καὶ κατὰ ταῦτ' ἔχοντος, οὐδ' ἂν ἀργοῦ πώποτε οὐδ' ὀπωσιτοῦν διαγεγονότος, αἰεὶ δὲ καὶ κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ ὡσαύτως καὶ τὸ πᾶν τότε παράγοντος.

¹² *Ibid.* 22 [I,1].

in contrast, to raise the human ones to more divine form than it is allowed for human beings, and thus they turn everything upside down and cause harm to those who follow them.¹³

One can rather thus learn something 'healthy' about the problems stated and classified above from the lawgivers and the philosophers. This is because the lawgivers, unlike the poets, propose laws for the common good (τὸ κοινὸν ἀγαθόν) and it is not likely that they have entirely missed it. As for the philosophers, they identify the summit of happiness (κεφάλαιον εὐδαιμονίας) with the truth about being, they seek it rather than money and hence they are those who are the most probable to attain it if anybody. According to Plethon, there are only two dangers. The nature of many people is too weak to acquire knowledge about the highest things and with accuracy. We must therefore be cautious whether even those men, because of the weakness of nature, are not, after all, unable to know what truth is and what the best is. Furthermore, we must not mistake pretenders, who are in fact the sophists and the poets, for the real lawgivers and philosophers.¹⁴

At this point Plethon enumerates those who, according to him, are the right 'leaders of reasoning.' The foremost place belongs again to Zoroaster, the most ancient of the sages and the lawgivers. He was the famous 'expounder of the divine and other good things' for the Medes, the Persians and for many other people in ancient Asia. Then Plethon mentions Eumolpus who in Athens founded the Eleusinian mysteries connected with the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and who already appears in the same context in the *Funeral Oration on Helen*.¹⁵ We are also reminded of Minos, the famous lawgiver of the Cretans,¹⁶ and Lycurgus, the lawgiver of the Spartans. Iphitus, together with Lycurgus, founded the Olympic rites (ἀγιστεῖαι) in honour of Zeus, the highest God, while Numa was the lawgiver of the Romans, who, apart from other things, established the rites celebrating the gods.¹⁷

¹³ Ibid. 26–8 [1,2]: Ἄμφω γὰρ τούτῳ τῷ γένει τὰ μὲν τῶν θεῶν πράγματα καθαίρουντες εἰς τὸ ἀνθρωπινώτερον, τὰ δ' ἀνθρώπινα αἴροντες εἰς τὸ θεϊότερον ἢ κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον μέτρον, πάντα τε ἄνω κάτω κινουῦντες, τὰ μέγιστα τοῖς σφίσι προσέχουσι λυμαίνονται. Cf. Plato, *Leg.* X 885d–e. Plethon seems to take the characterization of the sophists and poets from Plato. The verb γοητεύειν and its derivatives appear in *Soph.* 234e–235a, 241b, *Polit.* 291c, 303c, whereas κολακεύειν in *Gorg.* 464b–e, 465b–c, 503a (in relation to rhetorics), and 502b–d (in relation to poets). Cf. also *Tim.* 19d–e. For a general survey of Plethon's treatments of sophists see Kélessidou 1984.

¹⁴ *Leg.* 28–30 [1,2].

¹⁵ See above, p. 23.

¹⁶ Plato, *Leg.* I 624a–b.

¹⁷ *Leg.* 30 [1,2]. For these ancient lawgivers see Tambrun 2006, pp. 75, 85–6, with the references to the possible ancient sources. Plethon derives the information about

Besides the lawgivers, Plethon also mentions the sages (σοφοί) of the 'barbarians' – the Brahmans of the Indians, whose lawgiver was the legendary Dionysus or Bacchus and the western Iberians.¹⁸ The most important are naturally, however, the Median Magi, who are, according to Plethon, the disciples of Zoroaster and the authors of the *Magian (Chaldaean) Oracles*. In Greece, the Kouretes are 'the most ancient ones to be remembered'.¹⁹ They reintroduced the doctrine of the gods of the second and third order together with the doctrine about the everlastingness of the works of Zeus, 'his children', and the whole universe. According to Plethon, this doctrine was abandoned by the Greeks of that time because of the so-called Giants, who were not mythical creatures, but 'impious men who fought against the gods'. However, the Kouretes defeated them by using irrefutable arguments (λόγων τε ἀνάγκαις ἀναμφιλέκτων) against their beliefs, according to which and in contrast to those of the Kouretes, everything, with the exception of the one 'eldest' creator, is mortal. What is noteworthy in this account is the manner in which Plethon provides a philosophical and rational allegory of the ancient Greek myths of the battle between the gods and the Giants or the Kouretes who protected the infant Zeus by dancing around him.²⁰

Plethon further mentions the priests and interpreters of Zeus in Dodona, the prophet Polyeidis, visited even by Minos because of his wisdom and Teiresias who became the most famous expounder of the doctrine of infinite ascents of our soul 'from here' and its subsequent descents. After Cheiron, who in Greek mythology was a teacher and educator of many famous men,²¹ Plethon turns back

Numa probably from Plutarch's *Life* of this legendary Roman lawgiver whose relation to Pythagoras is discussed there at length, *Numa* 60a–b, 64f–65e, 69c–e, 74d–e. In one passage (62d) Zoroaster is mentioned along with other lawgivers, who, according to Plutarch, are responsible also for religious legislation. In Plutarch's *Aet. Rom.* 268c–d, Numa fixes the beginning of the year according to nature (τῇ φύσει) to the winter solstice, which Plethon accepts in the *Laws*, 58 [III,36]; cf. Anastos 1948, p. 206, Tihon's commentary on *Meth.*, pp. 179–80. For Plethon's general interest in Plutarch see Diller 1954, Mioni 1985, p. 385: *Marc. Gr.* 517 (= 886), fols 67–76v.

¹⁸ *Leg.* 30 [I,2], 254 [III,43: *Epinomis*].

¹⁹ The Brahmans of the Indians, the Magi of the Persians and unidentified Greek sages appear together (in almost identical words) also in Proclus, *In Tim.* I,208.17–20. Plethon could well have drawn upon this passage. It is noteworthy that he does not mention the Chaldaeans who immediately follow. For further references see Tambrun 2006, pp. 86–7, with the notes.

²⁰ Gantz 1996, pp. 147–8, 445–54, Tambrun 2006, p. 87–8. For the Kouretes see also the lost chapter II,9 of Plethon's *Laws*: Περὶ τῆς κατὰ Κούρητας θεοσεβείας. 'On religious belief according to the Kouretes.' *Leg.* 10, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 323.

²¹ Tambrun 2006, pp. 88–9, with the references to the possible ancient sources.

to historical or semi-historical persons. He mentions the seven legendary sages – Chilon of Sparta, Solon of Athens, Bias of Priene, Thales of Miletus, Cleobulus of Lindos, Pittacus of Mitylene and Myson of Chenae. After them, Pythagoras and Plato are named together with other eminent philosophers from their school (οἱ ἄπ' αὐτῶν). According to Plethon, the most glorious of them are Parmenides, Timaeus of Locri, Plutarch, Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus.²²

If we compare this list of famous Greek sages and lawgivers to that in the *Address to Theodore*, only few names appear in both these texts (Lycurgus and the Pythagoreans).²³ This might be explained by the fact that the perspective in the *Address* is political and historical whereas the one here is mythological and philosophical. It is also interesting to note all the persons in the list who are, in some way, followers of Pythagoras. This provides a connection between Zoroastrian Magi and Plato. As is well known and as Plethon certainly could not ignore, the Neoplatonists Porphyry and Iamblichus both admired the ancient sage, and each of them wrote an account of the life of Pythagoras.²⁴ In accordance with ancient tradition, (pseudo-)Timaeus of Locri is also considered by Plethon to be a Pythagorean and a teacher of Plato. He is supposed to share the theory of Forms with him as well as the doctrine of the eternity of the world, not to mention the dialogue of Plato named after him.²⁵ As for Parmenides, he was not only highly esteemed by Plato (who again named one dialogue after him), but he is also connected with Pythagoreanism by Diogenes Laertius.²⁶ As Plethon further says, both the Pythagoreans and Plato lay emphasis on oral teaching, although in less favourable circumstances the use of 'reminders (ὑπομνήματα)' may be also allowed.²⁷ Finally, in the *Reply to Scholarios*, the *Golden Verses* attributed to the Pythagoreans are quoted and, for Plethon, they are without doubt a genuine testimony of ancient Pythagoreanism.²⁸

Plethon claims that all the aforementioned thinkers agreed among themselves about the majority of things and that their doctrines seemed to be the best for 'those who were concerned with what is better'. He himself agrees with them too, without searching for his own innovation in these ancient matters, nor is he going to accept some recent innovations of some sophists. According to him, sages declare that their opinions are always in accord with those who are more ancient

²² *Leg.* 30–32 [I.2].

²³ See above, pp. 12, 18.

²⁴ Porphyry, *Vita Pyth.*, Iamblichus, *Vita Pyth.*

²⁵ *De diff.* X 334.26–32, 336.25–7, *Contra Schol.* X 392.22–394.2, XXII 422.26–430.17.

²⁶ Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* IX.21.

²⁷ *Contra Schol.* V 376.25–378.12; cf. Plato, *Phaedr.* 276d, *Ep.* XII 359c.

²⁸ *Contra Schol.* XXI 422.21–5, there is also an excerpt of this text preserved in Plethon's hand: see Diller 1956, p. 37, Mioni 1985, p. 159; *Marc. Gr.* 406 (= 791), fols 121v–122v.

and, moreover, it is erroneous to suppose that truth can change in the course of time. The sophists, on the contrary, strive to make innovations in many things and are anxious for novelties because the chief goal of their activity is a vain glory.²⁹

In his own work, Plethon thus wants to keep to the best ancient opinions and, unlike the poets and the sophists, he considers reasoning (λογισμός) to be 'the most powerful and divine of our criteria', and alone capable of helping to attain truth.³⁰ However, if he plans to rely on rational argument, he must quite naturally defend it against a possible refutation of the very possibility of any rational argumentation. In his eyes, its main opponents are the sophist Protagoras and the sceptic Pyrrho who are dealt with in chapter 3 of book I entitled: 'On the two doctrines of Protagoras and Pyrrho'.³¹ For Plethon, their doctrines, although mutually opposed, are likewise both vain and presumptuous and as such have to be rejected. In his presentation Protagoras claims that man is the measure of all things and what appears to each individual also exists. Pyrrho, on the contrary, argues that nothing is true and man therefore cannot be a judge of anything and the things themselves are somehow unsure.³²

Plethon does not spend much time on refuting both these doctrines. If somebody claims, as Protagoras does, that everything is true, he must accept also the opposite opinion held by the majority of people, according to which not everything is in fact true. If, on the contrary, someone like Pyrrho argues that nothing is true, he must also concede that this very opinion, too, is not true. Thus both Protagoras and Pyrrho are self-refuted. There are, moreover, further reasons for rejecting both doctrines. Almost everybody thinks that some people are wiser than the rest and those who know less therefore come to them to learn something, while at the same time they refute the ignorant for their false opinions. However, this would not be possible if they thought that either all or nobody knows the truth. Furthermore, nobody would certainly claim that contradictory opinions (τὰ ἀντιφάσκοντα) are true and not true at the same time. All people, for example, consider the opinion that this universe is everlasting (ἄδιον εἶναι τόδε τὸ πᾶν) and the opinion that it is not so, to be in contradiction. This definitely cannot mean that both opinions are at the same time true, or that

²⁹ *Leg.* 32–4 [I,2].

³⁰ *Ibid.* 34–6 [I,2].

³¹ Περὶ τοῖν δυοῖν λόγοιιν τοῦ τε Πρωταγορείου καὶ τοῦ Πυρρωναίου. Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 322 (altered).

³² *Leg.* 36–8 [I,3]: Λόγω δὲ δὴ ἐκείνω, ἀλλήλοιν μὲν ἐναντιωτάτω, ὁμοίως δ' ἀλαζόνε τε καὶ ἀτασθάλω, ἐκποδῶν ποιητέον· οἷω ὁ μὲν πάντα ἀληθῆ εἶναί φησιν, ὡς πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἂν ἄνθρωπον ὄντα, καὶ τὸ δοκοῦν ἐκάστω, τοῦτο καὶ ὄν· ὁ δ' οὐδ' ὅτιοῦν ἂν εἶναι ἀληθές, ὡς ἄνθρωπόν γε οὐκ ἂν ἄξιόν γε ὄντα κριτὴν οὐδ' ὄτουοῦν, ἢ καὶ τὰ πράγματά που αὐτὰ ἄπιστα ὄντα.

both are false, but that one of them is entirely (ὅλως) true, whereas the other is false. When we talk about future events, nobody supposes that everything will happen as he thinks, nor that everything will proceed differently, but that some things will turn out according to the opinion he has conceived beforehand and others contrary to it. The opinions about future events, confronted with what really happens, therefore prove to be true or false.³³

Plethon similarly rejects the claim according to which, in spite of our ability to apprehend the truth about something, it is not appropriate for human beings to inquire into what is divine, because we cannot learn anything clear about the gods, who are higher beings than we are and, moreover, it is not pleasant to the gods themselves. Such a consideration is wrong because the gods would not have made us capable of inquiring into these things, if they had not wanted us to inquire into them, nor would they have provided us with the disposition to learn something clear about these matters. It is equally absurd that we would have no idea about these things and we would have to live as non-rational animals, which are capable only of consenting to what happens to them. In such a state we would not be able to strive after happiness. However, for Plethon, finding truth in these things cannot be just a result of 'some divine chance without reason' since in such a case nobody would ever acquire an opinion about anything in a permanent way. The other reason is that such people would not be perfectly happy because they would be deprived of a rational account of the highest things, no matter whether they were doing well or not. As Plethon claims, to do well does not suffice because even madmen can happen to do well. It is therefore necessary to have a satisfactory knowledge about what it means that someone is doing well, and what is good and bad for man. Furthermore, there is nothing bad in divine things, which excludes that the gods would not want us to know their matters. The divine, by its very nature, is not envious and does not prevent us from benefitting from this knowledge. Although the divine is much higher than we are, this does not mean that it is unknowable for us since our nature is that of rational beings and it is not entirely different from the divine. God has made us able to inquire into his matters so that we do so and benefit greatly from learning something about him.³⁴

At this point, Plethon states the main presupposition of his further procedure:

If we use, as principles, the notions that are given by the gods to all people in common, and the divinations about the divine or at least to the most and better of them, and if

³³ Ibid. 38–40 [I,3].

³⁴ Ibid. 40–42 [I,3].

we establish these [principles] as fixed for us, and if we, under the leadership of sages, proceed at each point by a necessary reasoning, we shall not – with the divine help – miss the best rational account about everything.

After this he dedicates a prayer to the gods of reason (θεοὶ λόγιοι), asking them to enable us to attain truth.³⁵ Placed at the beginning of the exposition of his philosophy, this prayer corresponds to the allocutions and hymns with which the *Laws* ends.³⁶ Plethon's source of inspiration could have been the beginning of Timaeus' speech in Plato's eponymous dialogue where Timaeus prays to the gods and goddesses so that his words may be 'according to their intellect (κατὰ νοῦν ἐκείνοις)'.³⁷

The crucial point here is the introduction of 'the notions that are given by the gods to all people in common'. These 'common notions (κοινὰ ἔννοιαι)',³⁸ a conception taken by Plethon from ancient philosophy,³⁹ are the basis that allows him to claim that the rational knowledge of the divine (and subsequently also of the world) is possible and that it is the same for everybody. The common notions are 'a gift of the gods', because the divine obviously wants us to have knowledge about itself. Hence, this knowledge is attainable through our reason, although at the same time 'divination' is also mentioned. However, this means that if the divine is knowable by reason, it is necessarily intelligible and that its own nature is similarly rational. Thus, because of the gift of reason from the gods, we are, on this point, akin to the rationality of the divine. The 'common notions' seem also to be hinted at in Plethon's commentary on the *Magian Oracle XVII*, which will be discussed later on:

³⁵ Ibid. 42–4 [I,3–4]: Χρῶμενοι γὰρ ἀρχαῖς ταῖς κοινῇ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ὑπὸ θεῶν διδομέναις ἐννοίαις τε καὶ περὶ τοῦ θείου μαντείαις, ἢ καὶ ταῖς τῶν πλείστων καὶ βελτιόνων, καὶ ταύτας ἡμῖν βεβαίαις αὐτοῖς τιθέμενοι, ἔπειτα ἀπὸ τούτων ἂν λογισμοῖς ἕκαστα ἀναγκαίους, ἢ ἂν οἱ σοφοὶ ὕφηγῶνται, μετιόντες, θεῶν ἂν συλλαμβανόντων, τοῦ βελτίστου περὶ ἐκάστων λόγου οὐκ ἀποτευξόμεθα. Cf. 252 [III,43: *Epinomis*].

³⁶ Ibid. 132–240 [III,34–6], *Add.*, below, pp. 311–20.

³⁷ Plato, *Tim.* 27b–d; cf. also *Leg.* X 887c, *Epin.* 980c.

³⁸ Cf. the title of lost chapter II,2: Πρόληψις ἐννοιῶν κοινῶν. 'Preliminary account of common notions.' *Leg.* 8, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 323 (altered), and perhaps also *Ad Bess.* I 459.29–30.

³⁹ Masai 1956, pp. 115–30. Plethon could have learnt about this ancient Stoic conception from Plutarch's *Com. not.* Common notions sometimes appear also in Proclus; however, they do not play such a prominent role there as in Plethon: see Steel 1997. For an overview of the conception of common notions with an emphasis on different Neoplatonists, see Saffrey's and Westerink's commentary on *Theol. Plat.*, vol. 1, pp. 159–61, n.4. Strange 1994, pp. 26–9, and van den Berg 2009.

'The paternal intellect', that is, the immediate creator of the essence of the soul, 'has sown' also 'the symbols into the souls' or the images of the intelligible Forms, from which each soul has always in itself acquired the reasons of things.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ *Or. mag.* XXVII 3.16, 16.6–9 [on XXVII]: 'Ο πατρικός νοῦς, ὁ τῆς τῆς ψυχῆς δηλαδὴ οὐσίας προσεχῆς δημιουργός, οὗτος ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἐνέσπειρε καὶ τὰ σύμβολα, ἦτοι τὰς τῶν νοητῶν εἰδῶν εἰκόνας, ἐξ ὧν τοὺς τῶν ὄντων ψυχὴ ἐκάστη ἐν ἑαυτῇ κέκτηται λόγους. Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 52 (altered).

Chapter 6

Division of Reality

In the metaphysical system of Plethon, reality is divided into three degrees ordered in a hierarchical scale. In the conclusion at the end of his *Explanation of Magian Oracles* he interprets the account of 'the mythology of the Magi' found in Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris* from his own philosophical perspective.¹ One of Plethon's intentions here is certainly to demonstrate his claim about the mutual agreement of the '*Oracles of Zoroaster*' and the philosophy of Plato.² As he says, very many have made their opinions to be in accord with these *Oracles* – in the first place the sages 'around Plato and Pythagoras', which is also confirmed by Plutarch. On the basis of *Isis and Osiris*, Plethon concludes that Zoroaster divided existing things (τὰ ὄντα) into three kinds. The first of them are 'presided over (ἐφιστώη)' by Horomazes (Ὠρομάζης), the last ones by Ahriman (Ἀριμάνης), whereas Mithra (Μίθρας) is in the middle. The mythological account contained in Plutarch may seem dualistic since the god Horomazes is associated there with light whereas the daemon Ahriman with darkness, both being equally powerful and fighting against one another. We are told that each of them has produced six other gods. However, after that Horomazes 'enlarged himself to thrice his former size (τρίς ἑαυτὸν ἀυξήσας), and removed himself as far from the Sun (ἀπέστησε τοῦ ἡλίου) as the Sun is distant (ἀφέστηκε) from the Earth, and adorned the heavens with stars.'³ So Plethon may well have thought that the dualism of the myth is limited to the sensible world only, while Horomazes is placed safely at

¹ *Or. mag.* 19.5–22.

² In Plutarch, *De Is.* 370c, immediately after the account of the myth of the Magi, the Chaldaeans are mentioned and we are told they teach about the planet gods.

³ *Ibid.* 369d–370c, trans. Frank C. Babbitt. This passage (together with some further text of the same treatise) has been excerpted by Plethon in *Marc. Gr.* 517 (= 886), fol. 67r.2–7: "Ὅτι Ζωροάστην Πλούταρχος ιστορεῖσθαι φησι πεντακισχίλιους ἔτεσι τῶν Τρωικῶν πρεσβύτερον γεγονέναι. τοῦτον τρεῖς θεοὺς τριῶν μοιρῶν τῶν ὄντων ἡγεμονικοὺς σέβειν διδάξει, Ὠρομάζην, Μίθρην, Ἀριμάνην. Ὠρομάζην μὲν τὸν κράτιστον τῆς πρεσβυτάτης καὶ καλλίστης τῶν ὄντων μοίρας μάλιστα αἰτίον, Ἀριμάνην δὲ τῆς ἐσχάτης, Μίθρην δὲ τῆς μέσης. Cf. Manfredini 1972, p. 569. For Plethon's general interest in Plutarch see Diller 1954, Mioni 1985, p. 385; *Marc. Gr.* 517 (= 886), fols 67–76v.

the higher level of reality as a more eminent principle. This is suggested also by the immediately preceding context in *Isis and Osiris*.⁴

In his comparison of the Zoroastrian mythology found by Plutarch and of the *Magian Oracles*, Plethon identifies Horomazes with 'the Father (πατήρ)' of the *Oracles*, Mithra with 'the second intellect (δεύτερος νοῦς)' and Ahriman who has no equivalent in the *Oracles*, with the Sun. Horomazes is 'three times greater and further (τριπλάσιον ἑαυτὸν ἀφεστηκέναι)' from the Sun while Mithra who comes after Horomazes, is 'two times greater and further (διπλάσιον)'. As Plethon attempts to show, this structure of the Zoroastrian cosmos is the same as the division of reality in the famous passage of the second letter attributed to Plato (which is today regarded as spurious). Nonetheless, it was considered as genuine by ancient Platonists, including obviously also by Plethon:

Upon the King of all (ὁ πάντων βασιλεύς) do all things turn; he is the end of all things and the cause of all good. Things of the second order turn upon the Second and those of the third order upon the Third.⁵

An analogy of the doctrines found in the myth of Zoroastrians recounted by Plutarch, in the *Magian (Chaldaean) Oracles* and in Plato thus enables Plethon to claim that these three texts represent three expressions, differing only in their particular formulation, of one omnipresent and everlasting *philosophia perennis*, in which reality is divided into three hierarchically ordered kinds.

We must, however, always distinguish three different principles and levels of things corresponding to them. 'The King of all' (or alternatively 'the Father' and 'Horomazes') is the source of being for everything else, but the things on the first and second level of created things are identical with 'the Second' (or 'the second intellect' and 'Mithra') and 'the Third' (or 'the Sun' and 'Ahriman'). Everything that has been caused by some higher principle is thus divided into the things that are eternal (τὰ αἰώνια), those that are in time, but everlasting and never going to perish (τὰ ἔγχρονα μὲν, αἴδια δέ), and finally those that are mortal (τὰ θνητά).

⁴ Plutarch, *De Is.* 369b–d; for an interpretation of Plutarch's dualism as limited to the sensible world see Chlup 2000.

⁵ Plato, *Ep.* II 312e: περί τὸν πάντων βασιλέα πάντ' ἐστὶ καὶ ἐκείνου ἔνεκα πάντα, καὶ ἐκεῖνο αἴτιον ἀπάντων τῶν καλῶν δεύτερον δὲ περί τὰ δεύτερα, καὶ τρίτον περί τὰ τρίτα. Trans. Glenn R. Morrow in Cooper–Hutchinson 1997, p. 1638 (altered). For a history of its interpretation see Saffrey's and Westerink's introduction to Proclus, *Theol. Plat.*, vol. 2, pp. xx–lix ('Histoire des exégèses de la Lettre II de Platon dans la tradition platonicienne'). Plethon belongs to those Platonists who conceive the relation between the three orders of things mentioned by Plato as hierarchical rather than trinitarian. See also Tambrun-Krasker' commentary on *Or. mag.*, pp. 153–5.

This means that while the first principle is the originator of everything else, the things on the second and third level have also further causes – the second and third principle respectively. Only what is ‘closest’ to ‘the King of all’ and has no other cause is eternal. Where the second or even the third principle is implied and it is not just the highest god who is the immediate creator, but the lower, second or the third principles, the things thus generated are ‘in time, but everlasting’ or even ‘mortal’ and perishable.

Further details of this metaphysical system will become clearer in due course. It may nevertheless be already mentioned here that in the *Laws* the first principle is called ‘pre-eternal (προαιώνιος)’ because, being the immediate cause of eternal things, it must be even ‘before the eternity’.⁶ To provide a comparison with Plethon’s own system, the structure of reality in his different sources may be summarized in the following way:

Table 1 The structure of reality according to Plethon’s sources

	I	II	III	IV
	Plato <i>Second Letter</i>	Magi of Zoroaster [Chaldaean] <i>Oracles</i>	Plutarch <i>Zoroastrian myth</i>	Plethon <i>Laws</i>
1	King of all	Father	Horomazes	Zeus
2	The Second	the second intellect	Mithra	gods of 2nd order (supracelestial)
3	The Third	[the Sun]	Ahriman	gods of 3rd order (inside the cosmos)

1 creates the eternal Forms (2)
2 creates the entities within the sensible cosmos which are in time, but everlasting (3)
3 creates mortal beings and things

...

⁶ *Leg.* 96 [III,15].

In chapter 5 of book I of Plethon's *Laws* the analogous degrees of divinity (θειότης) are distinguished. The foremost place belongs to Zeus, the first and ultimate principle of everything else that is not caused by any higher principle. After him Plethon posits the gods located in the second and third place according to their lesser divinity, 'the children and creations and the children of the children and the creations of the creations of Zeus.' The supreme God orders and governs (κατακοσμεῖ) everything 'and especially human affairs' through the second and third gods, each of them with a larger or smaller field to preside over. Owing to their degree of divinity, the gods of the second order are immediately next to Zeus. They are the so-called supracelestial gods (ὑπερουράνιοι θεοί) that are 'completely detached from bodies and matter'. Translated into philosophical terms, they represent Platonic 'pure forms (εἶδη ... εἰλικρινῆ)', which exist 'themselves by themselves (αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά)', and 'immovable intellects (νόες ἀκίνητοι).'⁷ The gods of the third order are located 'inside this cosmos' and they are 'rational and immortal living beings, composed of the infallible souls and of unageing and undefiled bodies.' In other words, they are stars and other heavenly bodies and daemons.⁸ Next, after the gods of the third order, there is the part of the world in which we and other mortal creatures live. As Plethon's account makes clear, the common feature of the gods of all three orders is their perpetual existence, without beginning or end.⁹ Thus in contrast to sensible things, that begin and cease to exist in their due time, everything that is divine, has a permanent existence, regardless of whether it is self-caused, as the first principle, or caused and sustained by some higher cause, as in the case of the second and third gods.

In chapter 15 of book III of the *Laws*, further characteristics of the tripartite world created by the first principle are added to those we have already seen above. The highest part of reality, the realm of the Forms, is wholly and completely eternal (αἰώνιον) and immovable (ἀκίνητον), and since neither the past nor the future exist there, everything is present on this level of reality simultaneously (τὸ σύμπαν ἐνεστηκὸς ἀεί). The second part, the realm of the gods inside the cosmos, exists already in time (ἔγχρονον) and motion, but it is everlasting (ἄϊδιον) and has neither a beginning in time nor will it ever cease to exist. Finally,

⁷ Ibid. 44–6 [I,5]. Gemistos systematically avoids employing the nominative plural of the Greek substantive νοῦς that was usually turned into a rather irregular grammatical form νόες by Proclus and other Neoplatonists. We shall keep to their usage, however un-Plethonic it may be.

⁸ Ibid. 52 [I,5]: ... τοὺς ἐντὸς οὐρανοῦ τοῦδε, ζῶα λογικά τε καὶ ἀθάνατα, ψυχῶν μὲν ἐξ ἀναμαρτήτων, σωμάτων δ' ἀγήρων καὶ ἀκηράτων συνεστῶτας ...

⁹ According to Plethon, the lowest of the gods are daemons, ibid. 176 [III,34], presumably because the ensuing human soul is already connected to the body that is mortal.

the lowest part of the universe exists in time (ἔγχρονον) and is mortal (θνητόν), because there the beginning and the end of life is determined by time.

Plethon infers that because there are three entirely different kinds of essences (οὐσίαι), three principally different types of generations (γενέσεις) must similarly exist. Hence there is an analogy between essence and generation.¹⁰ Therefore, if any of the eternal essences proceeds from Zeus, the first principle, which alone is caused by himself (αὐτὸς δι' αὐτόν) and which is the pre-eternal (προαιώνιος) cause of the eternal Forms, all such essences must be similarly eternal. This is because an eternal substance, being eternal as a whole, cannot be caused partly by a pre-eternal principle and partly by something that is not pre-eternal any more. Thus Zeus, the first pre-eternal principle, generates the eternal essence in its whole. He has subsequently charged (ἐπιτρέποι) its immediate product with the creation of what exists in time, but is everlasting, and similarly, this essence has been further put in charge of the creation of what is temporal and mortal. Thus each kind of essence is created by another, immediately preceding superior essence and, according to its own character, has its appropriate type of causation.¹¹ However, as is evident, the higher level of reality does not cease to be in a certain sense present in the lower ones created by its activity. Although the first principle 'charges' the essence generated immediately by it with the creating of the subsequent ontological level, being the highest cause, it is always present as the first and utmost principle of everything else

Table 2 The levels of reality in Plethon's *philosophia perennis*

1	First principle		pre-eternal
2	Forms (intellects)		eternal
3	sensible cosmos	heavenly bodies, daemons	everlasting
		perishable bodies	mortal

* * *

¹⁰ Ibid. 242 [III,43: *Epinomis*].

¹¹ Ibid. 96 [III,15]; cf. 180 [III,34].

The text of chapter 5 of book I of the *Laws* offers yet another perspective on the division of reality, which has a close parallel in two passages in sections IV and X of the treatise *On the Differences*. The first place is reserved, again, to Zeus, the highest God in the *Laws*, or 'the super-essential (ὑπερούσιον) One of the Platonists' in the *Differences*. In both cases the first principle that is 'supremely one (ἄκρως ἓν)' is so unified that no distinction between its essence (οὐσία), activity or actuality (πρᾶξις/ἐνεργία),¹² and potentiality (δύναμις) can be traced in it. In intellects (νόες) or the Forms (εἶδη) essence is already distinguished from activity–actuality, but it is permanently active or actualized and there is no distinction between it and potentiality.¹³ Intellects and Forms thus 'possess all their attributes (τὰ προσόντα) permanently in the present, not potentially (δυνάμει) but actually (ἐνεργίᾳ)' and they are therefore 'immovable (ἀκίνητα).'¹⁴ For this level of reality the distinction between attributes and the essences is thus asserted whereas the same is not true about the super-essential One.¹⁵ In the soul (ψυχή) essence, activity–actuality and potentiality are distinguished because it is not always active (ἐνεργόν) and often remains in the state of 'pure potentiality (ψιλὴ δύναμις)'.¹⁶ Or alternatively, this is so because 'the soul moves from one thought to another, and the human soul from thinking to not-thinking as well as, in contrast, from not-thinking to thinking, and so it does not always possess knowledge of things, nor possesses it entirely in actuality but rather potentially'.¹⁷ In the body (σῶμα) essence is further divided into form (εἶδος) and matter (ὕλη) that is not only movable (κινητή), but also dissoluble (σκεδαστή), and divisible into infinity (μεριστὴ ἐπ' ἄπειρον).¹⁸ Matter is thus a specific kind of potentiality that, in contrast to the potentiality in the soul, can even cease to exist and may be divided *ad infinitum*. Similarly, in the case of matter and the body that is dissoluble and divisible, this potentiality is passive, that is, able to be acted upon under an impulse of something else, whereas in the soul potentiality, as distinguished from activity, appears rather as active potentiality that is able to cause some outward effect. This reminds us of the Neoplatonic conception of the gradual decrease of potentiality moving down through different levels of reality. It starts from the active potentiality

¹² The term ἐνεργία is used in the *Differences*, πρᾶξις in the *Laws*.

¹³ *Leg.* 54 [I,5], *De diff.* IV 326.31–327.4, X 337.7–26: see Appendix III, 1–2, 4, below, pp. 289–91.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* IV 326.35–7, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 198.

¹⁵ *De diff.* X 337.19–23.

¹⁶ *Leg.* 54 [I,5].

¹⁷ *De diff.* IV 326.37–327.4: see Appendix III, 1, below, p. 289, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 198; cf. *Or. mag.* 18.4–6 [on XXXI].

¹⁸ *Leg.* 54 [I,5].

which is predominant in the higher metaphysical realities, and then shifts to the passive one which is a prominent feature of the lower ontological levels, with the entirely passive sensible matter at the lowest place of everything.¹⁹

In section X of the *Differences* the division described above is supplemented with reflections on unity, multiplicity and infinity. Because the super-essential God (ὁ ὑπερούσιος θεός) is supremely one (ἄκρως ἕν), there is no multiplicity (πλῆθος) within him. Multiplicity appears only on the level of the intelligible order, 'but it is finite and in no way infinite, either potentially or actually'. In the sensible world, infinity appears because of the presence of matter 'to which primarily the infinite is attributed'. Although matter as everything in the sensible world has its cause in 'the other world' of the Forms, 'the cause there', being one of the ideal entities, 'is not itself infinite'.²⁰ As Plethon claims in the *Laws*, the Forms and daemons closer to the first principle, itself 'purely one (εἰλικρινῶς ἕν)', are in lesser number whereas those that are further from it are more numerous.²¹

Plethon thus moves down from the absolute oneness of the first principle across the intelligible Forms and the Soul to infinite and plural matter. The nature of the difference between the first principle or the First God, and the intelligible order of the Forms or the second gods, is clearly delineated. If there is something distinct from the first principle conceived as 'supremely one', it must necessarily be many. (And that there exists something that is distinct from the One is obvious from our experience of the sensible world that is evidently plural.) On the level of the order of the Forms however, this multiplicity is still 'finite', well defined and delimited. In order to explain the nature of this first level of finite multiplicity, Plethon presupposes two distinctions that may be traced inside it – the difference between the essences and attributes of the Forms and the difference between their essences and their activity–actuality. Because essence (οὐσία) appears as an independent principle first on the level of the Forms which are already multiple, this may explain why the first principle, which is the immediate creator of the Forms, is sometimes described as 'super-essential (ὑπερ-ούσιος)'. In other words, the One is placed above being because,

¹⁹ Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* II,4 [12], II,5 [25], Proclus, *El. theol.* LXXVIII–LXXIX 74.8–26; cf. Steel 1996.

²⁰ *De diff.* X 337.7–13: see Appendix III,2, below, p. 289, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 207 (altered).

²¹ *Leg.* 56 [I,5]. A similar account of the progressive differentiation of reality in Plethon's letter to Bessarion, *Ad Bess.* I 459.13–460.5, has been left aside here, since it seems to be to a large extent an interpretation of a philosophical conception of Proclus, being originally inspired by a Proclean question posed by Bessarion, *Ad Gemist.* I 455.5–456.22.

as completely united, it has no distinguishable and independent essence that would determine its nature.

However, from the passages quoted so far, the details of Plethon's conception of essence (οὐσία) and attributes (προσόντα) as well as the precise nature of their distinction are not altogether clear and other texts have to be introduced to make them understandable. When Plethon uses the concept of attribute, he certainly means a permanent quality or a typical feature of some essence as opposed to an accident that is temporal and contingent.²² Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that an attribute is simply identical with its essence even though the close relation of these two is quite natural. In the *Reply to Scholarios* it is thus claimed that the essence as compared to attribute has more being (ὄν), which is, nonetheless, the common genus for both.²³ Regardless of their plurality, in the *Laws* the Forms are said to be indivisible as to their essence (ἀμέριστα τὴν οὐσίαν).²⁴ Similarly in the passage from chapter 5 of book I of the *Laws* already quoted, Plethon further explains that every Form has its essence from Zeus itself, 'the indivisible from the indivisible.' As he claims:

[the essence of each Form] has in itself, beforehand together and individually, every plurality that each [Form] is the cause of in the things under it. With the only exception of Poseidon, the eldest of the Forms, they order and arrange among themselves attributes, from one another, because the king and the Father has established a mutual community of the goods of his children among themselves. This is the greatest thing and the good that he has made for them, after the community with himself.²⁵

To sum up this account, each Form has its proper position in the intelligible order, but at the same time it reflects in itself the rest of the Forms because the intelligible world is constituted by the mutual relations of the Forms among themselves. The alleged distinction between essence and attribute, that is the source of the (finite) multiplicity of the Forms, seems to be analogous to their being one and many at the same time. The Forms have certain common features – they are eternal, changeless entities, being the gods of the second order that are the models and causes of the sensible world. These are the main characteristics

²² For the use of the verb προσεῖναι and its derivatives see *Leg.* 102, 114 [III,15], *De diff.* X 337.12, 32, 338.35, *Contra Schol.* XIX 416.21, XXIII 434.13, XXIX 472.2, XXXI 500.21.

²³ *Ibid.* XXIII 434.13–14.

²⁴ *Add.* 119v.4–5, below, p. 313.

²⁵ *Leg.* 46–8 [I,5]: see Appendix III,3, below, p. 290. Cf. *ibid.* 102 [III,15], *Ad Bess.* I 459.13–19.

of their 'indivisible' essence, thanks to which they are in some way similar to Zeus and which are common to all of them, that is, to the essence of the Forms. Furthermore, the Forms are not equal, but some are 'higher', 'closer to the first principle' and more general, while other 'lower', 'closer to the sensible world' and more specific. Each Form has also its own specific characteristic; it is a general Form of a thing, quality or feature, and this is what should be most probably understood under the attributes proper to the Forms. Because, as has been said, the Forms are the models and causes of the things in our sensible world created by their specific causation, attributes seem thus to be identical with their activity. This is most probably the meaning we should finally give to the ambiguous 'activity–actuality (πρᾶξις/ἐνεργία)', at least on the level of the Forms. In the *Differences* Plethon maintains that they exercise their activity in the sensible world.²⁶ Moreover, as he tells us elsewhere, there is no distinction between potentiality and actuality in them, a specific essence and an attribute of each Form being determined by its position in the intelligible order, not by actualization of a specific potentiality inherent in its essence.²⁷ In this interpretation of Plethon's

²⁶ *De diff.* X 341.39–342.1.

²⁷ Demetracopoulos 2004, pp. 29–38, 2006, pp. 284–94, argues that the distinction between οὐσία and πρᾶξις/ἐνεργία is inspired by the Thomism of Plethon's alleged teacher, Demetrios Kydonos. However, even though there might be some documents (excerpts and notes) proving Plethon has some interest in Thomas Aquinas and, despite all Demetracopoulos' effort to support his claim, it still remains uncertain whether Plethon's philosophy really was influenced by this Latin and Aristotelian philosopher. Furthermore, the distinction in question does not seem to be the same as the one between *essentia* and *esse/actualitas* by Aquinas. Whereas ἐνεργία may be both activity–action and actuality, πρᾶξις can have only the first of these two meanings and the usage of this word is thus irreconcilable with the Thomistic distinction between essence and its being (or actuality). Although Demetracopoulos quotes a number of Thomistic texts, including some alleged excerpts from Plethon, in none of them, however, does πρᾶξις appear, and ἐνεργία is constantly used, 2004, pp. 147, 153–4, n.475, 155–9, 165, with a sole exception of an anti-Palamite text by John Kyparissiotis, *ibid.*, pp. 36–8, 2006, pp. 282–7, in which, however, the author seems to have activity–action and not actuality in mind. It is thus more probable that Plethon let himself be inspired by Neoplatonic tradition in general and possibly by Proclus in particular who similarly distinguishes between essence, activity (ἐνέργεια, not πρᾶξις), and potentiality. See e.g. Proclus, *In Tim.* II,125.11–24, where he makes this distinction in a context of the soul; cf. *De diff.* IV 326.30–327.4, for this distinction by Proclus see Steel 1997, pp. 296–7, Chlup 2012, pp. 76–82, and for further Proclean passages see Segonds' commentary on Proclus, *In Alc.* 84.9–13, pp. 169–70, n.8. See further Plotinus, *Enn.* II,5 [25], VI,8 [39], 4.24–8, 7.46–54. The similarity between Plotinus' *Enn.* II,5 [25], 3.4–8 and Plethon's *De diff.* IV 326.33–327.4 has been noted by Kalligas 1997, p. 288. A similar philosophical conception may be found also in Ficino: see Kristeller 1943, pp. 123–4.

rather partial and mysterious statements, the distinction between essence and attribute distinguishable in the Forms would mean that essence represents the common nature of the Forms, that is, what makes a Form to be the Form, whereas attribute determines specific characteristics of each Form, that is, what this is the Form of or what it is a model and cause for.

In the sensible world a further distinction between potentiality and activity–actuality appears. The Aristotelian concept of potentiality (δύναμις) seems to be double here since it can either mean active potentiality to act or passive potentiality to be acted upon.²⁸ In the case of the soul, we have to do with active potentiality only – the soul is either active or not. In section IV of the *Differences* Plethon even distinguishes several different kinds of souls:

In the soul, however, they [the Platonists] distinguish essence (οὐσία) and potentiality (δύναμις) and activity–actuality (ἐνεργία), because the soul moves from one thought to another, and the human soul from thinking to not-thinking and from not-thinking to thinking, and so does not always possess knowledge of things nor possesses it entirely in actuality (ἐνεργίᾳ) but rather potentially (δυναμίει).²⁹

According to this account, the soul of a higher kind, presumably the world soul or the soul of the gods of the third order, cannot think everything at once, but moves from one thought to another. The human soul, on the contrary, ‘moves’ from the state in which its activity is not exercised, but remains in potentiality, to that in which this potentiality is actualized. On the lowest level of the sensible world, in the body, there exists further distinction between infinitely divisible matter (ὄλη) and form (εἶδος), in other words, between passive potentiality (to be acted upon) that is not actualized and its actualization. Where the bodily principle prevails, actualization can, however, be only the temporal one since the infinity of matter requires that nothing can exist permanently in the same state and everything is necessarily doomed to extinction. The world of bodies is not divine anymore because the main feature of the gods of all the orders is that, being eternal or everlasting, they enjoy existence without a beginning or an end.

²⁸ A similar distinction may be found in *De diff.* IX 334.8–12.

²⁹ *Ibid.* IV 326.37–327.4, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 198 (altered).

Table 3 **The differentiation of the levels of reality from One to material world**

1	First principle	supremely One			
2	Forms (intellects)	essence	activity—actuality		
3	soul	essence	activity—actuality	potentiality	
4	matter	essence	activity—actuality	active potentiality	passive potentiality

Chapter 7

Zeus, the First Principle

Plethon calls the first principle of everything by various traditional names derived from different sources. In the *Laws* he names it Zeus,¹ which is the familiar name of ‘the Father of the gods and men’ in ancient Greek mythology. The designation ‘Father (πατήρ)’ can be found in the original text of the *Magian Oracles*, which Plethon commented upon, but also in Plato’s *Timaeus* and *Sixth Letter*.² The name ‘creator (δημιουργός)’ is apparently also borrowed from the same dialogue,³ whereas the title ‘king (βασιλεύς)’ appears in Plato’s second letter⁴ discussed by Plethon in his commentary on the *Magian Oracles*.

Furthermore, he conceives the first principle to be ‘supremely one (ἄκρως ἓν)’⁵ without any trace of plurality, being the perfect unity of essence, actuality-activity and potentiality. This is similar to his description of Zeus as ‘purely one (εἰλικρινῶς ἓν)’⁶ or ‘the One itself (αὐτόέν)’⁷ that exists in ‘supreme simplicity (ἄκρα ἀπλότης)’⁸ Plethon goes even so far as to claim that the first principle cannot be ‘many and one at the same time’.

[If it were] a kind of unity composed of things that are all similarly uncreated, it would still need something different and higher that would hold it together. Even though [it were one composed of] something uncreated and other things that already proceed from it, they would not yet proceed with a nature akin to the first principle. The latter is itself by itself, whereas those are already by something different and thereby distinguished.⁹

¹ For a detailed discussion of this aspect of Plethon’s philosophy see Zografidis 2003, 2008.

² *Or. mag.* V 1.10, VII 1.14, XII 2.7, XXX 4.1, XXXIII 4.6, XXXIV 4.8, Plato, *Tim.* 28c3, 37c7, 41a7, 42c7, 50d3, 71d5, *Ep.* VI 323d4; cf. Brisson 2003, pp. 114–17.

³ Plato, *Tim.* 28a6, 29a3, 41a7, 42c8, 68e2, 69c3.

⁴ Plato, *Ep.* II 312e1–2.

⁵ Cf. further *Or. mag.* 16.16 [on XXVIIIb].

⁶ *Leg.* 46 [I,5], 170 [III,34].

⁷ *Ibid.* 132, 150, 168, 186 [III,34], 202 [III,35].

⁸ *Ibid.* 100 [III,15].

⁹ *Ibid.* 170 [III,34]: ... καὶ ἔτι εἰλικρινῶς ἓν, οὐ πολλά τε ὁμοῦ ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ ἓν, ἅτε δὴ οὐδ’ ἓν οὐτ’ ἄν ἐξ ὁμοίως τῶν πάντων ἀγενήτων ἓν τι συστήναι, ἐτέρου γὰρ ἂν δέοιτο καὶ

Thus, according to Plethon, the principle which is really the first, that is to say, uncreated by any higher cause, has to be one (ἓν) without any distinguishable individual parts (πολλά). Similarly it cannot be one complex of several first, (seemingly) uncreated entities because in such a case the structure of this composition would be different from its parts, and would be, in fact, a higher cause of them. This is because, for Plethon, a structure is responsible for the unity and therefore the very existence of an entity that is one and many at the same time. The situation is just the same in the second proposed alternative where some parts of the first principle are created by another higher, but similarly intrinsic cause. It is in the very nature of the first principle, which is the utmost cause of everything else, that it has to be 'by itself' and uncreated. The parts in question, being created by something else, thus exist thanks to the One and, for this reason, they cannot be identified with the first principle and must be something different and lower than their cause. To conclude, according to Plethon, the first principle is thus not only one, but also 'most identical with itself (ὁ ὅτι μάλιστα αὐτὸς αὐτῷ)',¹⁰

This absolute unity and identity makes the first principle radically different from everything else that is created by its activity. Because the first principle is absolutely one, being different from the other things that are many, it is called 'super-essential (ὑπερ-ούσιος)' in the *Differences*, as has been already mentioned, in contrast to the things that have their essences (ουσίαι) distinguished and in which there is a difference between essence and activity. The first principle is also called by an hyperbolic expression 'true being that really is (ὄντως ὦν τῷ ὄντι)',¹¹ because it is not just ordinary being, but the 'being itself (αὐτοῶν)',¹² the source of all being. This is what Plethon obviously has in mind when he claims in a letter to Bessarion that being (τὸ ὄν) should be ascribed also to the first cause (τὸ πρῶτον αἴτιον), because it cannot be assigned to anything more appropriately than to what is itself by itself.¹³ By this statement Plethon presumably means that the first principle is the ultimate source of all being and as such it can be also called in a certain sense being. However, there is the insurmountable difference between the One and the Many, grounded in the very fact that the first principle

κρείττονος ἅμα τοῦ συνέξοντος οὐτ' ἂν ἐξ ἑνὸς μὲν ἀγενήτου, τῶν δ' ἄλλων ἀπὸ τούτου ἤδη προϊόντων, οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἔτι συμφυσῆ τῷ αὐτῷ δι' αὐτὸ ὄντι τὰ δι' ἕτερον ἤδη ὄντα, καὶ τοσοῦτῳ διακρινόμενα, προῖοι.

¹⁰ Ibid. 46 [I,5]; cf. *Add.* 119.12–15, below, p. 312.

¹¹ *Leg.* 46 [I,5], 168–70 [III,34].

¹² Ibid. 132, 168 [III,34], 202, 216 [III,35]. For the metrical reasons Plethon sometimes uses a slightly different form αὐτοεῶν.

¹³ *Ad Bess.* I 460.33–461.1.

‘is itself by itself (τὸ αὐτὸ δι’ αὐτοῦ ὄν)’¹⁴ and ‘in every respect and altogether uncreated (ἀγέννητος),’¹⁵ that means, not produced by any higher cause. For these reasons Zeus may be described as ‘transcendent (ἐξάίρετος),’¹⁶ ‘eminent (ἔξοχος),’¹⁷ ‘of incomparable superiority (ἀσύμβλητος ὑπεροχή),’¹⁸ or ‘impossible to be counted (οὐκ ἐνάριθμος) among other gods.’¹⁹ The address ‘you great, really great and more than great’²⁰ also gradually intensifies the insurmountable difference between him and his creation. As it has been mentioned above, Plethon speaks of Zeus as being ‘pre-eternal (προ-αιώνιος),’ that is, even before and beyond the eternity of the most immediate of his creation – the Forms.²¹

Not only these, but also some other expressions quoted above, bring Plethon close to the Platonic tradition of negative theology that attempts to describe the more perfect degrees of reality through indirect means. According to it, the pre-eminence of the One, the first principle, grounded in its absolute unity, identity and self-subsistence, cannot be expressed in the incomplete and partial description of which we are only capable in our imperfect speech and reasoning, which by their nature are always necessarily plural.²² Good examples of such an approach are the *Magian Oracles* XXVIII and XXXIII:

The Father has snatched himself away;
not even shutting off his own fire in his intellectual power (δύναμις νοερά).²³

¹⁴ *Leg.* 56 [I,5], *Or. mag.* 18.16–17 [on XXXIII].

¹⁵ *Leg.* 46 [I,5], 156–8 [III,34], *Zor. Plat.* 262; cf. *Or. mag.* 18.16 [on XXXIII]: τὸ πάμπαν ἀγέννητον, *Ad Bess.* I 459.30: οὐκ αὐτοπαράγωγον.

¹⁶ *Leg.* 24 [I,1], 44 [I,5], 152, 182 [III,34], *Zor. Plat.* 262, *Or. mag.* 18.14 [on XXXIII], *Decl. brev.* 22.8, *Contra Schol.* XII 404.1, XVII 414.3, XXX 486.25; cf. *Or. mag.* 18.17 [on XXXIII]: ἡ αὐτοῦ θεότης τῶν ἄλλων πάντων ἐξήρηται.

¹⁷ *Leg.* 202–6, 214, 218–20 [III,35].

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 170 [III,34].

¹⁹ *Contra Schol.* XII 404.1, XVII 414.3.

²⁰ *Leg.* 132, 182, 200 [III,34]: σὺ μέγας, μέγας τῷ ὄντι καὶ ὑπέρμεγας.

²¹ *Ibid.* 96 [III,15].

²² *Pace* Tambrun–Krasner 2002, pp. 7–9, 147–50, 314–17, 2003, 2006, pp. 173–95, and Siniosoglou 2011, pp. 223–77. According to them, Plethon conceives the first principle in positive way only, but the evidence is less straightforward than they claim. Furthermore, by the very postulation of the One over plurality of the ideal and sensible world Plethon gets close to Plotinus and Proclus who considered necessary to develop both positive and negative theological approaches to it. The perfectly unified first principle thus can be neither known, nor spoken of with ordinary human concepts and words: see Carabine 1995, pp. 103–87. In the *Prayer to the One God* Plethon uses the expressions typical of negative theology, *Ad deum unum* 273; however, this text seems to be exceptional among his writings; cf. p. 44, with n.56.

²³ *Or. mag.* XXXIII 4.6–7, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 53.

According to Plethon's commentary, the latter affirms the absolute difference of the first principle from the things created by it. He describes 'the Father' as 'transcendent (ἐξάιρετος)' and not limited in any way because he is uncreated and itself by itself. He is 'wholly incommunicable to anything other', not because of his envy, but because it is simply impossible.²⁴ There is only an ostensible contrast between this utterance and the *Oracle* XXVIIIb:

There is indeed something intelligible (τι νοητόν), which you must understand by the flower of the intellect (νοεῖν νόου ἄνθει).

This *Oracle* follows immediately after XXVIIIa:

Learn what is intelligible, for it exists outside intellect.²⁵

In the commentary on this *Oracle* Plethon emphasizes the need to acquire actually (ἐνεργεία) the cognition of the intelligible things (τὰ νοητά), whose images (αἱ εἰκόνες) have been sown in us by the creator and exist potentially (δυνάμει) in our soul.²⁶ He obviously means here the acquiring of the knowledge of the intelligible Forms that, according to Platonists, are 'outside' us, as the *Oracle* says, and may be known in a recollection.

In contrast, in the commentary on the *Oracle* XXVIIIb Plethon takes one step further (or higher) and accounts for the cognition of the first principle:

The highest God, being supremely one (ἐν ἄκρως), cannot be known (νοεῖν) in the same manner as the other intelligible things (νοητά), but through the flower of the intellect (τῷ τοῦ νοῦ ἄνθει) or through the highest and unitary [part] (τῷ ἀκροτάτῳ καὶ ἐνιαίῳ) of our intellection (νόησις).²⁷

The 'flower of the intellect' is an influential metaphor introduced by the original *Chaldaean Oracles*²⁸ and commented upon and philosophically systematized by the later Neoplatonists, especially Proclus. According to them, the flower of the intellect is the principle of our unification with the higher realities, sometimes

²⁴ *Or. mag.* 18.14–19 [on XXXIII]; cf. *Decl. brev.* 22.8–9.

²⁵ *Or. mag.* XXVIIIa 3.17: Μάνθανε τὸ νοητόν, ἐπεὶ νόου ἔξω ὑπάρχει. Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 53. See also the *Oracle* XXIV 3.11 and Plethon's commentary on it, *ibid.* 15.10–12.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 16.11–14 [on XXVIIIa].

²⁷ *Ibid.* 16.16–17.2 [on XXVIIIb].

²⁸ *Or. Chald.* I.1, II.2; cf. the commentary on I.3 in Majercik 1989, p. 138.

identified with 'the one in us (τὸ ἓν ἐν ἡμῖν)', the principle of the unification with the One itself, the utmost principle of everything.²⁹ The very same idea seems to be present also in Plethon's commentary on the *Oracle XXVIIIb*. Similarly to the differentiation of the basic levels of reality in the *philosophia perennis*, here too he distinguishes the supremely united One from the intelligible Forms, constituted already as a kind of finite plurality. Whereas the intelligible can be known through intellect, this is not possible in the case of the One that is even above the limited plurality of the realm of the intelligible Forms. It can be only approached 'through the flower of the intellect', that is, 'through the highest and unitary [part] of our intellection (νόησις)'. According to this statement, for Plethon, the flower of the intellect is the most perfect, that means, the most united cognitive act. Like the One, we and our intellect are also in a certain sense a united one, one composition of many parts, and for this reason we may also presuppose the existence of 'the one in us' corresponding to the One, the first principle of all. Despite the absolute transcendence of the One claimed in the *Oracle XXXIII*, the analogy that is between it and 'the one in us' enables us to know in a very specific sense also the One. Such knowledge has to overcome the profound difference between the supreme One and the plurality of its creation, because it must go even beyond the plurality of the intelligible world, to which we have an access through our intellect. It must therefore be a kind of supra-intellective, mystical union with the first principle.³⁰ For this reason Plethon may also claim in his commentary on the *Oracle XXIV* that the 'image ... of God' cannot be seen through eyes' and what appears to those who are being initiated, whether it be 'thunderbolt, fire or something else', are only symbols and 'not a nature of God'.³¹

Thanks to 'the flower of the intellect' we can thus know the main features of the first principle. As a principle (ἀρχή), in the double meaning in which this notion was understood in ancient Greek philosophy, it creates and subsequently orders everything. This first aspect of Zeus fits well with his description as 'the creator (δημιουργός)' and 'the Father (πατήρ)' mentioned above.³² Being absolutely one, he is compared to a father that gives birth to the other gods (that means, the Forms) without any mother because there is nothing that might join him in the creation as a by-cause of the female kind. As Plethon explains, the 'female'

²⁹ Cf. Majercik 1989, pp. 30–45, Rist 1964, Guérard 1987, Dillon 2008, Chlup 2012, pp. 165–6.

³⁰ Pace Tambrun-Krasker' commentary *ad loc.*, *Or. mag.*, p. 134.

³¹ *Or. mag.* 15.10–12 [on XXIV]: Μὴ ζητήσης ἰδεῖν αὐτοπτον ἄγαλμα τῆς φύσεως, δηλαδὴ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ, ἅτε οὐκ ὀφθαλμοῖς ὄν ὁρατόν. Τὰ δὲ τελουμένοις φαινόμενα, κεραυνοὶ καὶ πῦρ καὶ εἴτι ἄλλο, σύμβολα ἄλλως ἐστίν, οὐ θεοῦ τις φύσις.

³² Cf. further *Or. mag.* XXIX 3.19 with Plethon's commentary, *ibid.* 17.4.

is here the principle that supplies matter (ύλη) to things, and for this reason this principle is completely absent when Zeus creates the Forms.³³ Furthermore, because of his supreme simplicity and because he has the potentiality to realize whatever he wills, within him there is no difference between creating through intellectual act, and generating through nature.³⁴ Zeus is therefore similarly called also 'the Father himself (αὐτοπάτωρ)'³⁵ or 'before Father (προπάτωρ)'³⁶. As the creator of everything he is also 'supremely good (ἄκρωσ ἀγαθόν)',³⁷ 'the good itself (αὐτοαγαθός)',³⁸ and 'the exceeding of the good (ἀγαθοῦ ὑπερβολή)'.³⁹ The *Magian Oracle V* thus may assert:

For nothing imperfect rolls from the principle of the Father (πατρικὴ ἀρχή).⁴⁰

In the *Oracle XXXIV* Plethon further claims, that, just because he is himself supremely good, the Father is not the cause of evil for anybody, but, in contrast, being the cause of the good for all, he is loved by everybody.⁴¹ The other aspect of Zeus acting as an ἀρχή is expressed by the aforementioned epithet 'king (βασιλεύς)' who directs everything in such a way that he may be also called 'the highest and most powerful necessity of all'.⁴²

From this account it is furthermore apparent why Plethon must be inevitably critical towards Aristotle's conception of the first principle acting as 'the first unmoved mover'. Indeed, the *Differences* begins with the denial that Aristotle would have ever espoused the conception of God as a productive cause of the world, which is the first and most important argument against his philosophy, being compared here to that of Plato.⁴³ In Plethon's eyes Aristotle's philosophy is

³³ *Leg.* 92 [III,15]: Ζεὺς ... , οὐς ἂν αὐτὸς θεῶν γεννῶ, ἀμήτορας γεννῶ ἄν, οὐδενὸς αὐτῶ δντος τοῦ ἐν θήλεος λόγῳ συναιτίου, ὥνπερ ἂν αὐτὸς αἴτιος εἴη, ἔσομένου

³⁴ *Ibid.* 100 [III,15]: see Appendix IX,2, below, p. 303.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 46 [I,5], 152, 158, 170 [III,34], 200–204 [III,35].

³⁶ *Ibid.* 204 [III,35].

³⁷ *Ibid.* 66 [II,6], 142, 154, 170–72, 180 [III,34], 242 [III,43: *Epinomis*], *Or. mag.* 19.3 [on XXXIV].

³⁸ *Leg.* 132, 150, 168 [III,34].

³⁹ *Ibid.* 242 [III,43: *Epinomis*].

⁴⁰ *Or. mag.* V 1.10, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 51 (altered), see also Plethon's commentary, *ibid.* 6.12–14.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 19.2–4 [on XXXIV]: ... Ἄτε γὰρ ἄκρωσ αὐτὸς ἀγαθὸς ὢν, οὐδ' ἂν κακοῦ αἴτιος εἴη οὐδενί, ὥστ' ἂν καὶ φοβερὸς εἶναι, ἀγαθῶν δ' αἰεὶ πᾶσιν αἴτιος ὢν, κὰν ἀγαπῶτο ὑπὸ πάντων.

⁴² *Leg.* 66 [II,6]: ... τὴν μεγίστην πασῶν ἀνάγκην καὶ κρατίστην

⁴³ *De diff.* I 321.23–7: Πρῶτον μὲν οὖν τὸν πάντων βασιλέα θεὸν Πλάτων δημιουργὸν τῆς νοητῆς τε καὶ χωριστῆς πάντη οὐσίας, καὶ δι' αὐτῆς τοῦ παντὸς τοῦδε οὐρανοῦ τίθεται Ἀριστοτέλης δὲ δημιουργὸν μὲν οὐδενὸς οὐδαμοῦ αὐτὸν φησιν εἶναι, ἀλλὰ μόνον τοῦ οὐρανοῦ

fallacious in two respects. First, it does not presuppose the existence of the creator God as an eternally operating productive cause of the world, but conceives him only as the final cause. It thus means that the world, which, according to Aristotle, is eternal, has no proper cause of its origin. Second, Aristotle's philosophical astronomy, by postulating a series of planetary spheres and their corresponding intellects that act as their movers, clearly implies that God as the first mover is on the same ontological level as the rest of moving intellects, and for this reason lacks the transcendence that is one of the most important features claimed for the first principle by Plethon.⁴¹

τουδε κινητικόν. 'First, then, Plato's view is that God, the supreme king, is the creator of every kind of intelligible and separate essence, and hence of our entire universe. On the other hand, Aristotle never calls God the creator of anything whatever, but only the motive force of all this heaven.' Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 192 (altered).

⁴¹ *De diff.* I 322.4–323.4; cf. *Contra Schol.* VII–VIII 384.14–392.9, X–XX 392.18–419.18.

Chapter 8

Supracelestial Gods, the Forms

Defence of Platonic Forms

After the first principle of all, Plethon, following Plato, postulates the world of the intelligible Forms, that is the model of our sensible world. The One is thus not an immediate creator of the cosmos – that is, the ideal model, in which plurality already exists. As Plethon says:

the proponents of the Forms do not suppose that God who is supremely good is the immediate creator of this universe, but rather of another prior nature and essence, more akin to himself, eternal and being always in the same state, and that he created the universe not by himself but through that essence.¹

The reason for postulating such a model might be our experience of plurality within the world of the Forms in intellection, in which our different intellectual acts correspond to different Forms with distinguished essences and attributes, in contrast to the first principle that is absolutely one and simple. Furthermore, Plato's works and the *Magian Oracles*, discerning between the first, higher God and creator and the second, lower one,² must have also had a strong influence on Plethon in this point. In his commentary on the latter work Plethon identifies the Forms as 'bonds (ἵυγγες)', the name taken from the original *Chaldaean Oracles*.³ They are characterized as 'inflexible intellectual upholders (νοεροὶ ἀνοχεῖς ἀκαμπεῖς)' because they maintain the incorruptible part of the sensible world in being.⁴ According to Plethon, the name 'bonds' indicates that

¹ *De diff.* X 336.20–25: Οὐ τοῦδε τοῦ οὐρανοῦ δημιουργὸν προσεχῆ τὸν ἄκρως ἀγαθὸν θεὸν οἱ τὰ εἶδη τιθέμενοι ἀξιούσιν εἶναι, ἀλλ' ἑτέρας πρότερον φύσεώς τε καὶ οὐσίας, ἑαυτῷ τὲ συγγενεστέρας καὶ αἰωνίας, αἰετὲ καὶ κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ ὡσαύτως ἐχούσης. Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 207 (altered).

² This distinction is apparent most clearly from *Or. mag.* XXX 4.1–2.

³ See Tambrun-Krasker's commentary on *Or. mag.*, p. 143.

⁴ *Ibid.* XXXII 4.5, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 53; cf. 18.10–12 [on XXXII], *Decl. brev.* 21.7–8.

'the things here attach to them because of their desire for them'.⁵ They are therefore both the generative source of our world as well as the goal to which the things, created and sustained by them, return.

Similarly to his discussion of the first principle, Plethon must defend his conception against Aristotelian criticism. For the purpose of our exposition we may skip the details of the refutation of Aristotle's arguments against the Platonic Forms and concentrate just on the way the theory of the Forms is presented and developed by Plethon. In section III of the *Differences* he rejects the priority of the particular to the universal or, more precisely, Aristotle's distinction found in the *Categories* between the first and the most principal essences of particulars and the species and genera that are the essences of the second and lower kind only.⁶ For Plethon, this is clearly unacceptable.⁷ As he says, while Aristotle argues for the priority of the particular, Plato claims that God orders particular men for the sake of the whole human nature and the latter, in turn, for the sake of the whole rational nature. According to Plethon, the part is generally made by God for the sake of the whole, and not vice versa. Similarly 'the knowledge of the universal' is superior to that of the particular, as Aristotle also argues, and 'nor could it be superior unless its subject were superior because possessing a greater degree of being'.⁸

Plethon goes on in his argument against Aristotle to explain that a species exists in every respect 'more' in the whole than in the parts and that the universal is more in actuality than the particular. The difference between the universal and the particular consists in the fact that the universal is taken from all things universally and hence, it is itself in actuality and, at the same time, it comprehends

⁵ Ibid. 21.8–10: ἵγγρας δ' αὐτὰ καλεῖ, τῷ ἐρωτικῶς εἰς ἑαυτὰ τὰ τῆδε ἀναρτᾶν τῷ τῆς ἵγγρας ὀνόματι τοῦτο ἐμφαίνοντα.

⁶ *De diff.* III 324.29–31: ... τὸ τὸ ἀπλῶς καθόλου ἔλαττοῦν τοῦ κατὰ μέρος, οὐσίας μὲν πρῶτας καὶ κυριώτατας τὰς καθ' ἕκαστα λέγοντα, τὰ δ' εἶδη τὲ καὶ γένη αὐτῶν δεύτερας τὲ οὐσίας κάκεινων μείους. Cf. Aristotle, *Cat.* V 2a11–19.

⁷ Plethon proposes a linguistic and logical analysis here according to which there is no difference between 'every man (ὁ πᾶς ἄνθρωπος)' and 'all men (οἱ πάντες ἄνθρωποι)'. Furthermore, the latter expression is different from 'all particular men (οἱ καθ' ἕκαστον πάντες ἄνθρωποι)' just because, in the first case, humans are taken together (ὁμοῦ) while, in the other, separately (χωρὶς). From this perspective it thus makes no sense to consider particular men (οἱ καθ' ἕκαστον ἄνθρωποι) to be more principal than every man (ὁ πᾶς ἄνθρωπος). *De diff.* III 325.2–10.

⁸ Ibid. III 325.11–20: ... τὸν θεόν, οὐ τοῦ τινὸς ἕνεκα ἀνθρώπου τὴν ὅλην ἀνθρωπείαν φύσιν, ἀλλὰ τῆς ὅλης ἀνθρωπείας φύσεως ἕνεκα τοὺς καθ' ἕκαστον ἀνθρώπους διατιθέντα, αὐτὴν τε τὴν ἀνθρωπείαν φύσιν τῆς ὅλης λογικῆς ἕνεκα φύσεως, καὶ ὅλων μέρος ἕνεκα ὅλου ... οὐχ ὅλον μέρους ἕνεκα ἀπεργαζόμενον. Ἴσμεν δὲ καὶ τὴν τοῦ καθόλου ἐπιστήμην τῆς τοῦ κατὰ μέρος βελτίω οὐσαν ... εἰ μὴ μᾶλλον τὲ ὄντος καὶ διὰ τοῦτο βελτίονος ἦν. Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 196 (altered).

actually all the particulars. By contrast, the particular is itself also in actuality, but it has not in itself the universal universally, 'but only so much [of the universal] as properly belongs to it'. In other words, the universal is accomplished, the particular unaccomplished.⁹ Thus in his refutation of Aristotle, unconvincing as it may be, Plethon explains his own perspective, which stands at the background of his version of the theory of Forms. The universal is not just an 'emptier' abstraction from particulars and their complex sensible existence. For Plethon, the universal is a sum of all the particulars subsumed under it and for this reason has more being than they do.

The main passage where Plethon deals with the Forms is, nevertheless, the final and by far the largest part of the *Differences*, section X, in which he argues against Aristotle's criticism of Plato's theory of Forms in chapter 9 of book I of the *Metaphysics*.¹⁰ At the beginning of Plethon's argument the main views about the Forms held by the Platonists are first explained.

To start with, the relation of the intelligible model to particulars created by it is that of a specific kind of homonymy, not synonymy, as Aristotle would claim.¹¹ In his *Categories* the latter distinguishes between the things that are homonymous because they have only a name in common, and those that are synonymous sharing the same definition.¹² Furthermore, according to Plethon, Aristotle claims that if particulars share their Forms, there must be another different Form for both because otherwise there would be no commonality between them and they would be just homonymous.¹³ As Plethon argues, some things that are homonymous have indeed nothing in common, while others have. There is absolutely no reason to suppose that there is no similarity among them, for instance, such as between Lysander or Heracles and their statues. At the same time, it is evident that a model and its image are something radically different and cannot be therefore considered as synonymous.¹⁴

⁹ *De diff.* III 325.27–34: τὸ δ' εἶδος πανταχῆ ἐν τῷ ὅλῳ μᾶλλον ἢ ἐν τοῖς μέρεσι, καὶ ἐνεργίᾳ δὲ μᾶλλον τὸ καθόλου ἐστὶν ἢ τὸ κατὰ μέρος. Τὸ μὲν γὰρ καθόλου, καθόλου ἐπ' αὐτῶν τῶν πραγμάτων λαμβανόμενον, αὐτὸ τε ἐνεργίᾳ ἐστὶ καὶ τὰ κατὰ μέρος ἅπαντα ἐνεργίᾳ περιέχει· τὸ δὲ κατὰ μέρος αὐτὸ μὲν ἐνεργίᾳ ἐστὶ, τὸ δὲ καθόλου ἐν ἑαυτῷ οὐ καθόλου ἔχει, ἀλλ' ὅσον μόνον κάκεινου ἑαυτῷ προσήκει. Καὶ τέλειον μὲν τι τὸ καθόλου, ἀτελές δὲ τὸ κατὰ μέρος. Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 197.

¹⁰ See below, p. 257.

¹¹ *De diff.* X 334.33–335.15. For the problem of homonymy in Plethon's philosophy see Tavardon 1977.

¹² Aristotle, *Cat.* I 1a1–12.

¹³ Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* I,9 991a2–8.

¹⁴ *De diff.* X 335.12–18, 339.16–28.

In his main argument against Aristotle's conception of homonymy in section II of the *Differences* Plethon already claims that 'if all things proceed from one, and the supremely one, numerous and innumerable though they be, it is still impossible that they all have not some one thing mutually in common'. However, such a shared thing can be only being ($\tau\acute{o}$ $\acute{o}\nu$) and if it were homonymous in the sense required by Aristotle, it would not be any longer one.¹⁵ Unlike in the latter's philosophy in which there is no ultimate creator, everything is thus subsumed here under the one common genus according to the principle, taken from Aristotle's philosophy, namely, 'one is a cause of one ($\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$ $\alpha\iota\tau\iota\omicron\nu$)'. In this case, nonetheless, the 'indivisible one ($\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ $\acute{\alpha}\mu\epsilon\rho\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$)' or, alternatively, 'the one without parts' is not a cause of anything that is similarly indivisible, but of the divisible one ($\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ $\mu\epsilon\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\nu$), that means, the one which has parts.¹⁶

According to the Plethon's second point in section X of the *Differences*, the Platonists postulate an independent and separate world of the Forms in order to solve the problem of the cognition of the rational structures ($\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\iota$) in sensible things. The soul comprehends them in itself in a more precise and perfect way than they exist in sensible objects. Plethon seems to mean here that in a cognitive act we conceive some general and hence also eternal and invariable Form. However, this must be squared with the fact that the process of cognition begins from a particular that is prone to changes and variations, being just one of many instances of the general principle and less perfect compared to it. According to Plethon, it is impossible that the soul derives such a perfected universal directly from a particular, which is an imperfect instance of it. Nor is it possible that the soul makes the universal up by itself – it cannot conceive something that does not exist in reality since the false beliefs emerge just from a wrong combination of the existing things. The only possibility which remains is that such cognition comes from outside the soul, from some higher and more perfect nature ($\varphi\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\iota\varsigma$); in other words, from the realm of the separated and intelligible Forms.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid. II 324.19–23: εἰ γὰρ ἀφ' ἐνός ἅπαντα πρόεισι, καὶ ἄκρως ἐνός, κἄν πολλά τε ἦ καὶ παμπληθῆ, ἀμήχανον ὅμως μὴ οὐ καὶ ἓν τι ἔχειν καὶ κοινὸν ἅπαντα ἀλλήλοις. Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 195 (largely altered); cf. *Contra Schol.* XXIII 432.14–21, *Ad Bess.* I 460.31–461.5. See also above, pp. 74–5.

¹⁶ *Contra Schol.* XXIII 432.1–9.

¹⁷ *De diff.* X 335.25–36. Plethon rejects Aristotle's conception of formal cause inherent 'in each sensible thing ($\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ $\tau\acute{\omega}\nu$ $\alpha\iota\sigma\theta\eta\tau\acute{\omega}\nu$ $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\acute{\alpha}\sigma\tau\omega$)' since this is not a cause ($\alpha\iota\tau\iota\omicron\nu$), but a product ($\acute{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\omicron\nu$) and effect ($\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\sigma\mu\alpha$) of some other cause, similarly as the matter in a singular thing is an offshoot ($\acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{o}\kappa\rho\iota\mu\alpha$) and effect ($\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\sigma\mu\alpha$) of the matter of the whole heaven (η $\tau\omicron\upsilon$ $\pi\alpha\nu\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$ $\omicron\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\acute{o}\upsilon$ $\acute{\upsilon}\lambda\eta$). The real formal causes are thus to be placed in the separate intelligible Forms. Ibid. X 342.10–17, 20–24.

Finally, according to the proponents of the Forms, if many things have 'something one and identical' in common, this cannot just happen spontaneously, simply because the things cannot be ordered spontaneously. If therefore the things have 'something one and identical' in common, 'by itself' and not as an accident, there must 'stand some transcendent one over them' that bestows the identity on the many.¹⁸ An accident or a coincidental event appears as a result not of one cause, but of a meeting of several causes, 'each of which can be referred to the other world', and thus they can be also rationally known thanks to the formal causes that are interconnected in a particular case.¹⁹ For this reason there are necessarily not only the Forms of substances, but also accidents can be deduced from the intelligible model as conjunctions of several causes.²⁰

By analogy, what a Form is the representation and cause of is not a part of its nature. Hence, the Form of the non-rational is not itself non-rational and the Form of moving things does not itself move.²¹ According to the interpretation proposed above, the nature or essence of the Forms seems to be just their being Forms, and not their attribute, that is, the specific action by which they 'form' the sensible world.²² Plethon further claims that in the world of the Forms, apart from essences (οὐσίαι) and attributes (προσόντα), there are also relations (σχέσεις) because 'even in the other world things must be related to each other, so that relations in this world must be images of relations in the other'. Similarly, the Forms must have attributes.²³ Thus because of the distinction between their essence and attributes, the Forms serving as the intelligible model of our world are not only diverse and plural, but they are also mutually interconnected.

The example of statues of Lysander and Heracles already mentioned helps us, again, to understand the nature of the Forms and their relation to particulars. According to Plethon, Plato postulates an analogy (ἀνάλογον ... τιθείς) between

¹⁸ Ibid. X 336.3–9: Οὐχ οἶον ἅ τ' εἶναι φασὶν οἱ τὰ εἶδη τιθέμενοι, πολλοῖς ἔν τι καὶ ταῦτόν ἔχουσι, τὸ ταῦτόν τοῦτο αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου εἶναι· οὐ γὰρ ἂν οἶον ἅ τ' εἶναι τετάχθαι ἅττα ὡσαύτως, ἤτοι ἀεί, ἢ καὶ ὡς τὰ πολλὰ, ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου. Δέοι ἂν ἄρα ἐκάστοις, ἔν τι καὶ ταῦτόν καθ' αὐτὸ ἔχουσι καὶ οὐ κατὰ συμβεβηκός, ἔν τι ἐξαιρέτον ἐφεστάναι, τὸ τοῖς πολλοῖς τὸ ταῦτόν παρέξον.

¹⁹ Ibid. X 336.40–337.3, 338.10–14, trans. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 207, 209.

²⁰ *De diff.* X 338.31–339.16.

²¹ In his letters to Bessarion Plethon describes the relation of the separated Forms to sensible things as 'participation according to the cause only (μετοχή ἢ κατὰ μόνην τὴν αἰτίαν)' so that the producer transmits something of its characteristic to the product even if it remains separated, itself by itself (... τῶν αὐτοῦ τινος τῷ παραγομένῳ μεταδιδόν, καὶ ἂν εἰ χωρὶς αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ μένοι τὸ παράγον). *Ad Bess.* I 460.9–11, 14, II 465.27–466.3. See also below, p. 140, n.13.

²² See above, pp. 68–70.

²³ *De diff.* X 337.15–19, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 208.

the intelligible model and its particular realizations, which is similar to the relation of images in the water and shadows of sensible things to sensible things themselves.²⁴ A spatial object can naturally produce several plane reflections (εἶδωλα) on the water or several shadows at the same time that reflect partially its original complexity. In the similar way, the Forms are more general, and therefore ontologically more complex or higher entities than the things which they are the models of and which are thus somehow 'comprehended' in them. Aristotle thus must be wrong if, in his polemic against Plato, he infers from the theory of Forms that there must be as many intelligible models as there are sensible things we have the knowledge of.²⁵

An analogous relation must be, however, applied also to the ideal world. Plethon touches briefly upon the problem when answering Aristotle's arguments, according to which the Forms are both models and images as it is apparent in the case of genus and species. For Plethon, the solution is, however, again simple – nothing prevents a species from being an image of a genus and at the same time a model for sensible things, 'just as a painter might paint an image of a statue which is itself an image, and a reflection (εἶδωλον) of it again might be reflected on water'.²⁶ The more specific Forms – species – are therefore comprehended in the more general and complex Forms – genera.

There is a hierarchy among the Forms created by the first principle. Each genus is indeed by definition participated in by its species in the same way. In reality, however, the rational animal 'is more' because the rational life is more than the non-rational one, the latter being an imitation of the former. Similarly, immortal essence is more than the mortal one, which imitates it in the perpetual succession of the mortal creatures that are always different, and an essence is more than its attribute, both having being as the common genus. In general, each genus is always divided into some more perfect and some less perfect species, and, in reality only – not by definition – is participated in more by the more perfect ones.²⁷

²⁴ Ibid. X 338.3–6.

²⁵ Ibid. X 335.37–39.

²⁶ Ibid. X 340.28–37, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 211 (altered).

²⁷ *Contra Schol.* XXIII 432.27–434.14: ... ἅπαν γένος λόγῳ μὲν ἐπίσης ὑπὸ τῶν εἰδῶν μετέχεται τῶν αὐτοῦ, τῷ δὲ πράγματι οὐκ ἐπίσης. Τὸ γοῦν ζῶον ὑπὸ τοῦ λογικοῦ τε καὶ ἀλόγου λόγῳ μὲν ἐπίσης μετέχεται τῷ γε κατὰ παντὸς καὶ ἑκατέρου αὐτοῖν κατηγορεῖσθαι, οὐ μέντοι καὶ τῷ πράγματι ἐπίσης μᾶλλον γὰρ ζῶον τὸ λογικόν, ἐπεὶ καὶ μᾶλλον ζωὴ ἢ γε λογικὴ, ἢ δ' ἄλογος μίμημά τι ζωῆς τῆς λογικῆς. Καὶ ἡ οὐσία δὲ λόγῳ μὲν ἐπίσης ὑπὸ τε τῆς ἀθανάτου μετέχεται καὶ τῆς θνητῆς τῷ κατὰ πάσης καὶ ἑκατέρας αὐτοῖν κατηγορεῖσθαι, τῷ γε μὴν πράγματι ἢ ἀθάνατος μᾶλλον οὐσία τῆς θνητῆς μίμημα γάρ τι ἡ θνητὴ τῆς ἀθανάτου, ἧς καὶ τὴν ἀθανασίαν ταῖς αἰετέρων διαδοχαῖς μιμεῖται. Ὅλων τὲ ἅπαν γένος ἐς τελεωτέρον τέ τι αἰεὶ καὶ ἀτελέστερον εἶδος διαιρούμενον, ἀμύχανον μὴ οὐ καὶ μᾶλλον ὑπὸ τοῦ τελεωτέρου μετέχεσθαι τῷ γε πράγματι, οὐ

There are some further, more particular points considered by Plethon in the *Differences*. The vexed question of whether the human artefacts have their corresponding ideal Forms or not is solved by Plethon by the localization of artefacts into the Form of man where they are 'comprehended in the manner of unity' and wherefrom they are received by the thought of individual craftsmen.²⁸ There are not only the Forms of species (εἶδη), but also the Forms of infinite things, such as numbers or magnitudes. These are (potentially) infinite in our world, but have only one Form as their intelligible model because the Forms are not in any way infinite, but limitedly and finitely plural.²⁹

Plethon further replies to Aristotle's argument positing 'one over many' which implies that if everything has its ideal model, then we have to postulate also the Forms of negations (ἀποφάσεις),³⁰ by claiming that there are no Forms of such things:

The privations and failures and whatever falls away into non-being' cannot be, strictly speaking, caused by the intelligible Forms, being rather produced by the absence of a cause. The same must be inferred also about the negations produced by the absence of a cause which is thus responsible for contrary affirmations.³¹

The Forms therefore operate as the causes on which the general character or qualities of things depend. This effect, however, may only be positive and the absence of formal causality is responsible for the existence of negative entities and imperfections present in our world. Thus even if we are able to think of

τῷ λόγῳ, καὶ οὐδὲν κωλύσθαι ὑπὸ τοιοῦτου μὴ οὐ καὶ ταῦτὸ γένος τοῦ τε τελεωτέρου καὶ τοῦ ἀτελεστέρου εἶναι. Οὐκ οὐκ οὐδ' εἰ ἡ οὐσία τοῦ προσόντος μᾶλλον ὄν, κωλύσει τι τὸ ὄν μὴ οὐ καὶ γένος αὐτοῖν εἶναι ἀμφοῖν. Cf. *Ad Bess.* I 461.5–14.

²⁸ *De diff.* X 338.6–10; see Appendix IV,1, below, p. 291. Cf. X 340.38–341.11. An interesting parallel may be found in the *Laws*, 114 [III,15], where artefacts are said to be present in Pluto or, in other words, in the Form of the human soul, see also below, p. 107. In section VII of the *Differences*, 332.19–22, Plethon distinguishes two kinds of art (τέχνη), the divine and the human one, which 'both use intellect (νῶ ἄμφω χρωμένω)': The human produces artefacts (τὸ σκευαστὸν πᾶν), the divine the things originated by nature (τὰ φύσει πάντα γιγνόμενα).

²⁹ *Ibid.* X 337.3–7, 337.34–338.6; cf. 338.27–30; cf. the parallel in the *Laws* where the mathematical objects subsist 'in a kind of unity (καθ' ἓν τι)' in Hera, *Leg.* 114 [III,15].

³⁰ *De diff.* X 335.21, 336.2–3, 9–16.

³¹ *Ibid.* X 336.36–40: Στερήσεις δὲ καὶ ἀποτεύγματα, καὶ ὅ τι ἂν πρὸς τὸ μὴ ὄν ἤδη ἀποπίπτοι, οὐδ' αἰτίου δεῖσθαι ἀλλ' αἰτίου μᾶλλον ἀπολείψει τοιαῦτα ἀποβαίνειν. Οὐδὲ δὴ τὰς ἀποφάσεις τῷ γὰρ τοῦ τῶν καταφάσεων τῶν γε ἀντικειμένων αἰτίου καὶ ταύτας ἀπολείπεσθαι, ἀποφάσεις ἀποβαίνειν. Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 207 (altered); cf. *De diff.* X 338.15–20, *Contra Schol.* XXIII 434.18–21, *Ad Bess.* I 461.14–15.

something that has ceased to exist, this does not mean that there are the Forms of the perished things.³² For the Platonists, particulars, either already perished or not yet existing, correspond always just to one Form from which the soul can derive its knowledge even about the thing that exists no longer.³³

The Forms in Plethon's Laws

In Plethon's *Laws* the Platonic Forms are addressed in more depth than in the writings we have just seen. At the same time the world of the Forms is described with the help of a peculiar pagan theology. Zeus is thus the highest God and, accordingly, the highest principle. In contrast to his absolute unity, the Forms, or the gods of the second order, represent the multiplicity that is, nevertheless, finite and well delimited. Also, whereas Zeus, being their immediate cause, is pre-eternal (προαιώνιος),³⁴ we are told at the beginning of the *Laws* (I,5) that the second level of intelligible reality, which exists continuously, is eternal (αἰώνιοι) and the distinction between the past (οἰχόμενον) and the future (μέλλον) or the state that is before (πρότερον) and after (ὑστερον) does not apply to it.³⁵ Furthermore, the eternal Forms cannot be determined by a place or a position in space. According to Plethon, the things determined by a position in space are connected with bodies, whereas the Forms 'have the essence without bodies.' Their proper position is determined by the order of intelligible reality where 'each has obtained the middle place between the higher and lower ones.'³⁶ This is because they have been created by Zeus without any use of the female principle, and for this reason they are completely devoid of matter.³⁷ Through 'the establishment of Zeus', the hierarchy of the Forms-gods is produced, together forming 'a kind of huge and holy unity, intelligible, complete and supracelestial ... order, that is always and that is full of all goods.' Within it the second gods constitute a self-sufficient number, to which nothing needs to be added.³⁸

³² *De diff.* X 335.39–336.1.

³³ *Ibid.* X 338.20–24.

³⁴ *Leg.* 96 [III,15].

³⁵ *Ibid.* 48 [I,5]; cf. 54 [I,5].

³⁶ *Ibid.* 48 [I,5]: Οὐτ' ἂν τόπω θέσιν ἔχοντι περιληπτούς εἶναι σωμαίων τε γὰρ καὶ περὶ σώματα τὸν τοιοῦτον εἶναι τόπον· τοὺς δὲ σωμαίων τε χωρὶς ἔχειν τὴν οὐσίαν, καὶ τόπον οἰκεῖον ἂν σφίσι αὐτοῖς τὴν τάξιν κεκτηῖσθαι, ἢ τῶν τε προυχόντων ἂν καὶ ὑποδεεστέρων μέσος τις εἴληπται ἕκαστος.

³⁷ Cf. *ibid.* 92 [III,15].

³⁸ *Ibid.* 50 [I,5]: ... ἐν τι μέγα καὶ ἅγιον, τὸν νοητὸν τε σύμπαντα καὶ ὑπερουράνιον τῷ βασιλεῖ Διὶ κατεσκευάσθαι διάκοσμον, αἰεὶ τε ὄντα καὶ πάντων καλῶν πλέον, δευτέρων δὲ

However, although the Forms are self-sufficient, they are not absolutely separated from one another, but they together form a complex whole. Plethon explains that they all form a kind of unity because they proceed from one principle and they return to the same end. This is the first principle or Zeus, the Father and creator of everything, who is 'supremely one'. There is thus a similarity between the perfect unity of the first principle and the overall unity of the intelligible order established across the plurality of the individual Forms. Because Zeus is their principle and goal, all the second gods are willingly subordinated to him, they have familiar and friendly relations among themselves and they think the same. Thus some gods, according to their rank, lead the 'younger' or the lower gods and, in turn, they themselves follow the 'elder' or the higher gods, so that, as Plethon concludes, everything in the world of the Forms is in the state of perfect order and arrangement.³⁹

In chapter 15 of book III of the *Laws* Plethon explains in more detail how the Forms are created by the First principle and the character of their mutual relations. Zeus makes use of the gods that previously originated from him for the creation of the others, proceeding from one another. During this the previously originated gods serve as an model. Zeus has thus generated Poseidon, who is the highest of the gods of the intelligible order, using himself as an immediate model. The rest of the second gods originate as an image, one god of another, of those previously generated by him. This creation is compared by Plethon, inaccurately, as he himself emphasizes, to the creating of images through several mirrors. If a body, which, in this comparison, represents the first principle, is seen in this way, it produces one immediate reflection of itself, but other reflections are produced already from one another.⁴⁰

τινων τούτων θεῶν ἐς ἄριθμόν τινα αὐτάρκη συνεστῶτων, καὶ οὐδ' ἂν ἐνός ὧν ἂν ἐγγενέσθαι ἐχρῆν ἐπιδεᾶ ...

³⁹ Ibid. 50 [I,5]: Οὕτω γὰρ ἂν ἅμα ἕκαστοί τε αὐτῶν καὶ τὸ ἐξ ἀπάντων ἔν τι ἔσσεσθαι ἔμελλον, ἅτε δὴ ἕκ τε μιᾶς προϊόντες ἀρχῆς, καὶ ἐς ταῦτόν αὐ τέλος τὸν σφέτερον πατέρα τε καὶ δημιουργὸν Δία τὸν μέγαν ἐπιστρεφόμενοι, ἄκρωσ τε ἕνα ὄντα καὶ ὅτι μάλιστα κράτιστον. Ὅτι καὶ πάντα μὲν ἄλλα ὑπήκοά τε εἶναι καὶ φίλια, καὶ οὐδ' ἂν ἔν πολέμιον οὐδ' ἀνθεστηκός οὔτε δύσουν· μάλιστα δὲ θεοὺς τούτους ἐκεῖνω τε ὑπηκόους σύμπαντας σὺν εὐνοίᾳ, καὶ ἀλλήλοις συνῆθεις τε εἶναι καὶ φίλους καὶ ταῦτόν φρονούοντας, τὰ μὲν τῶν τῆν ἀξίαν σφῶν ἂν αὐτῶν νεωτέρων ἡγουμένους, τὰ δὲ τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις ἂν ἐπομένους. Ἄπαντα γὰρ ἂν εὐνομίας τε ἄκρας καὶ εὐκοσμίας μεστὰ εἶναι τάκεϊ.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 92–4 [III,15]: Εἰ γάρ τι καὶ τοῖς ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ Ζεὺς ἄλλω ἐς ἄλλου γένεσιν συγχρῶτο, ἀλλ' ἔν παραδείγματος, οὐκ ἔν θήλεος λόγῳ συγχρῶτο ἂν. Ἔνα μὲν οὖν θεῶν τὸν κράτιστον, ὃν δὴ Ποσειδῶ καλοῦμεν, ἑαυτῷ ἀμέσῳ παραδείγματι χρώμενος γεννῶ ἂν τοὺς δ' ἄλλους πάντας ἄλλον ἄλλου θεοῦ τῶν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ γεννῶ ἂν εἰκῶ, ὡς πάμμεγα τῆν τοιαύτην γένεσιν φευλοτάτῳ πράγματι εἰκάσαι, τῆ δια πλειόνων ἐνόπτρων εἰδωλοποιίῃ· καὶ γὰρ κἀνταῦθα τὸ

Plethon, however, claims that the comparison with a mirror is inaccurate, because we need several mirrors to produce the images, and so he uses a comparison with number. If we think of a unit, representing the first principle that is supremely one, it will successively generate every other number by adding the previous ones into the composition of the number that is being created and thus no other by-cause is needed. However, this comparison is also inaccurate and does not describe satisfactorily all the aspects of the process of the creation of the Forms because the addition of numbers may potentially proceed to infinity, whereas the intelligible order is both, actually and potentially, a limited multitude:

Zeus, in fact, does not add a previously created Form, but he divides it and unfolds what is inside it together and in the manner of unity, taking one thing off, leaving another.

Plethon further explains that Zeus makes this division according to the contradictions, which means, first, that he leaves no middle between the parts originated through the division and, second, that these divisions cannot proceed to infinity and must stop at some point. Thus 'the limited multitude of the Forms is generated', and they together constitute one system composed of all the diverse Forms.⁴¹

σῶμα τὸ ὀρώμενον, ἔν τι ἄμεσον ἑαυτοῦ εἰδῶλον συστήσάν πως, τὰ ἄλλα ἤδη πάντα ἄλλο ἀπ' ἄλλου συνίστησιν εἰδῶλου.

⁴¹ Ibid. 94 [III,15]: Εἰ δὲ τούτοις ἄλλων τε δεῖ καὶ πλειόνων τῶν ἐνόπτρων πρὸς τὴν τοιαύτην εἰδωλοποιῖαν, τὴν μονάδα ἐνοώμεν, ὡς τὸν ἀριθμὸν σύμπαντα αὕτη ἄλλον ἐς ἄλλου σύστασιν προσλαμβάνουσα γεννᾷ, συναίτιου ἑτέρου οὐδοτουοῦν προοδομένη. Ἀλλὰ καὶ αὕτη ἢ γένεσις ἄλλη τε τῇ τῶν θεῶν τῶν ὑπερουρανίων ἐκ Διὸς γενέσκει ἀπειοίκοι ἂν, καὶ ἡ ἐς ἄπειρον αὕτη πρόεισι τῇ δυνάμει, ἐκείνης καὶ ἔργῳ καὶ δυνάμει ἐς ὠρισμένον τι περαινούσης πληθος. Τὴν μὲν γὰρ μονάδα, προσλαμβάνουσαν ἂν τὸν αἰεὶ γιγνόμενον ἀριθμὸν, ἕτερον γεννᾷ, ὡστ' εἰκότως καὶ ἐπ' ἄπειρον ἂν αὐτῇ τὴν τῶν ἀριθμῶν γένεσιν προιέναι, αἰεὶ τὸν γιγνόμενον ἂν καὶ προσλαμβάνειν δυναμένη. Τὸν δὲ Δία τὸ ἤδη γεγονὸς εἶδος οὐ προσλαμβάνοντα, διαιροῦντα δέ, καὶ τὰ αὐτῷ συλλήβδην τε καὶ καθ' ἓν ἐνόντα ἀναπτύσσοντα, καὶ τὸ μὲν ἀφαιροῦντα, τὸ δὲ λείποντα, οὕτω τὴν τῶν ἄλλων αὐτῷ γένεσιν ἀπεργάζεσθαι εἰδῶν. Ἄτ' οὖν κατὰ ἀντιφάσεις διαιροῦντα, καὶ οὐτε μέσον ἂν λείποντα οὐδένων οὐδέν, οὐτ' ἐπ' ἄπειρον ἂν ἐνὸν τὰς τοιαύτας προχωρεῖν διαιρέσεις, παύεσθαι ποτε διαιρέσεως τῆς τοιαύτης, ὠρισμένον τέ τι γεγεννηκότα εἰδῶν πληθος, καὶ ἐς ἓν τι αὐτὸ σύστημα πάντων τε καὶ παντοίων εἰδῶν πληρες συστήσασμενον.

In the *Laws* I,5, too, Plethon uses a comparison with number. A certain number of the Forms (evidently larger than one) is a finite plurality and at the same time a united sum. Plethon develops this paradoxical character of the world of the Forms further. The intelligible order is 'divided according to each of them in the best way by the most precise division so that each of them is, as much as it is possible, perfect and self-sufficient' (... διακεκριμένον μὲν καθ' ἑκάστους αὐτῶν ὡς κάλλιστα ἀκριβεστάτη διακρίσει, ἴνα δὴ ὡς τελεωτάτος τις καὶ ἕκαστος ἡ

The passage we have just gone through is apparently very important for the understanding of Plethon's conception of the intelligible order. Again, the more abstract Forms are not 'emptier' than the less abstract ones, but, on the contrary, the higher or the more general a Form is, the more being it has. For Plethon, the lower and less general Forms are comprehended, united or implicated in the higher ones and they must be 'unfolded' by the division into more specific ideal entities. Plethon's theory of Forms also presupposes that the higher Forms contain in themselves simultaneously otherwise mutually exclusive contradictions, differentiated only in their 'division' into the more specific ones. Also the first principle must implicitly contain in its supreme oneness everything that is produced in the creation of both, the Forms of the intelligible order and the things within the sensible world. As for the Forms, if they are not just abstractions from sensible particulars, somehow devoid of the complexity of sensible things, they must comprehend simultaneously in their immovable eternity everything that originates in the sensible world and gradually evolves in time. Thus the richness of various features, appearing across changes of the sensible world that might be even sometimes mutually exclusive, is simultaneously present in the corresponding Form in the similar way as the mutual contradictions among some Forms are co-present in the higher ones.

Plethon continues in this passage of the *Laws* (III,15) by arguing that each level of reality, distinguished by its specific ontological character (unmoved eternal, moving everlasting and temporal mortal essence), must have its corresponding superior cause.⁴² If all the Forms had exactly the same essence, they were mutually equal, and none of them were superior or inferior to the rest, it would mean that it is exclusively Zeus who produces the whole intelligible order. But, as Plethon claims, 'first, because of the perfection of all parts, it was necessary that this essence was generated as full of all the diverse Forms'. Second, each Form is 'one and only begotten', the composition of the Forms being 'a kind of whole made up of all Forms and one through their communion', so that it is, both in its parts and in whole, as similar as possible to its generator.⁴³ In order to

αὐτῶν καὶ αὐτάρκης κατὰ δύναμιν ...), *ibid.* 50 [I,5]. Thus not only the world of the Forms is self-sufficient in the sense that it is enclosed and so perfect that nothing else from outside may or should be added to it, but also each of its components, existing in its specific conditions (κατὰ δύναμιν), is a perfect entity.

⁴² *Ibid.* 94–6 [III,15].

⁴³ *Ibid.* 96–8 [III,15]: Εἰ μὲν οὖν ἅπαντα τὰ κατὰ ταύτην τὴν οὐσίαν εἶδη καὶ ἀλλήλοισι ἴσα ἦν, προὔχον δ' ἦν ἐν αὐτοῖς οὐδ' ὀτιοῦν, οὐδὲ λειπόμενον ἄλλο ἄλλου, κἂν ἐκ Διὸς μόνως ἅπασα αὕτη ἡ οὐσία ἦν. Ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸ μὲν τοιοῦτον οὐτ' ἔδει οὔτε γέγονεν (ἔδει δὲ πρῶτον μὲν πάντων τε καὶ παντοίων εἰδῶν ταύτην γενέσθαι τὴν οὐσίαν πλήρη, τῆς παμμεροῦς ἕνεκα τελειότητος· ἔπειτα τῶν τε ἐν αὐτῇ ἕκαστον ἐν τε καὶ μονογενές, τό τε αὐτὸ σύστημα τό

be as similar as possible to the first principle, the intelligible order thus must not be homogeneous, but paradoxically diverse in order to express the richness of the perfection of its supremely united creator on its lower ontological level by the plurality of diverse Forms. Each of them is 'only begotten', that is, unique since, as it is said elsewhere, the first principle does not create anything 'superfluous (περίεργον)'.⁴⁴ Because the Forms must be distinguished among themselves, this means that there must exist also a difference depending on the ontological perfection of the Forms, which is in fact determined by the place of a Form in the intelligible order and by its distance from the first principle. There cannot be two Forms that possess the same perfection because in the relations within the intelligible order it would mean that they are in the same place and in the same position within it, which for Plethon is obviously impossible.

He thus explains that Zeus first generates one entity that is made as an image of himself only and that is also the highest Form of the intelligible order. The next Form is made again as an image of the first one and subsequently all the Forms are made as an image of one another. Among the Forms, created in this way, each is then necessarily gradually less perfect than the previous one in the very same way as in the case of images where a copy is deficient in comparison with its original.⁴⁵ All Forms together constitute a whole united as much as possible. However, among the plurality of individual Forms there cannot be other unity than that of a commonality. The Forms are thus mutually different, but at the same time connected together through a commonality based on the relation between a model and an image. Furthermore, species are images not only of genera, but also of those (higher) species that have originated by mutual division out of this genus. As they are always divided into those that are more perfect and those that are less perfect, the less perfect are images of the more perfect ones. Hence, what exists in time is an image of that what is eternal, the mortal of the immortal and the non-rational of the rational and so forth.⁴⁶ In this commonality the lower realities receive, as much as it is appropriate

ἐξ ἀπάντων ὄλον τέ τι καὶ ἐν τῇ κοινωνίᾳ, ἵνα δὴ κατὰ τε μέρη καὶ ὄλον ἅμα αὐτοενὶ ὄντι τῷ γεννῶντι ὡς οἰκειότατα αὕτη ἢ οὐσία ἔχοι). For the reading αὐτοενὶ instead of αὐτογενεὶ in Alexandre's edition see below, p. 320.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 100 [III,15].

⁴⁵ Ibid. 98 [III,15]: ἐπεὶ ταῦτα οὕτως ἔδει, πρῶτον μὲν ἐν γέ τι ἑαυτοῦ μόνως εἰκῶ πεποιημένος γεννᾷ, καὶ τοῦτο μὲν κράτιστον οὐσίας συμπάσης τῆς γε δὴ γενητῆς ἀποτελεῖ, ἔπειθ' ἕτερον τούτου αὐ εἰκῶ, καὶ τᾶλλα ἤδη ἄλλο ἄλλου εἰκῶ, λειπόμενα δὲ ἕκαστα ἐκάστων, ὥσπερ καὶ εἰκόνες εἰσίν. Plethon then continues by comparing the generation of the intelligible order by Zeus with human generation and the gradually increasing distance in the similarity among the children begotten by a father, *ibid.* 98–100 [III,15].

⁴⁶ Cf. *Contra Schol.* XXIII 432.25–434.12.

for them, their attributes from the higher ones so that they are lower, but not entirely different.⁴⁷

Zeus as the first principle produces the essence of each eternal Form; nevertheless, because of their mutual commonality he uses the previously created Forms when producing the later ones as their model only. The images are always present in the models and the models in the images according to their similarity. However, in the intelligible order difference is also present, 'because a different is always the cause of a different'. Zeus himself is thus the cause of one Form only, and then, using it as a model, he creates a different one and so forth 'till the completion of all and the whole system'. Zeus thus himself produces the essences of all Forms because he only can create the intelligible order of the Forms, 'the highest realities that together form this whole eternal essence'. The further ordering of attributes is then entrusted to a different principle, that is, to the Forms themselves, the higher ones ordering the lower ones. There is a limit in the communion of the second gods who 'all together compose a kind of single system and single order, the most beautiful possible'.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *Leg.* 100–102 [III,15]: ... τὸ ἐξ ἀπάντων αὐτῶν τε τι καὶ ἓν, ἢ ἐνεχώρει. Ἐνεχώρει δ' οὐκ ἄλλη, ἢ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ· κοινωνία δ' οὐδεμία ἄλλη ἢν μᾶλλον ἔπρεπεν αὐτοῖς, ἢ εἰ ἄλλο ἄλλου εἰκῶν ἐγένετο· οὕτω γὰρ ἢν ἅμα τε ἕτερον ἕκαστον γίνοιτο εἶδος, καὶ κοινωνία τις εἶη εἰκόνι τε καὶ παραδείγματι. Καὶ οὐ μόνον τῶν γενῶν τὰ εἶδη εἰκόνες εἶεν ἄν, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτῶν τῶν γε ἀπὸ ταύτου τινας γένους ἀντιδιαιρουμένων ἀλλήλοισι εἰδῶν, ἅτε ἐς τελεωτέρᾳ τε ἅττα αἰεὶ καὶ ἀτελεέστερα διαιρουμένων, θάτερα τὰ ἀτελεέστερα τῶν τελεωτέρων εἰκόνες εἶεν, τὸ ἕγχερον εἶδος τοῦ γε αἰωνίου, τοῦ τε ἀθανάτου τὸ θνητόν, καὶ λογικοῦ αὐτὸ ἄλογον, τὰ τ' ἄλλα ἅπαντα ταύτῃ ἅμα δ' ἐν τῇ κοινωνίᾳ τῇ τοιαύτῃ καὶ τὰ ὑποδεέστερα εἰκότως παρὰ τῶν προυχόντων ἑαυτῶν τὰ προσόντα σφίσι ἴσχοι, ὥστε καὶ ἐτι ἢν μᾶλλον ἀλλήλοισι κοινωνεῖν, ἅτε πρὸς τῷ ὑποδεέστερα εἶναι, καὶ ἅμα οἰκείως ἢν ἔχοντα τοῖς προύχουσιν, ἢ δὴ δεῖ ἔχειν τὰ ὀτιοῦν παρ' ἐτέρων ληψόμενα. Ὑποδεέστερά τε γὰρ καὶ ἅμα οὐκ ἀλλότρια εἶναι ἐκείνοις δεῖ, παρ' ὧν τι λήψεται.

This statement is only seemingly contradicted by another and quite isolated passage, *ibid.* 94 [III,15], in which Plethon claims that Zeus does not 'use' any second god during the generation of the others (ὁ Ζεὺς τὸ τῶν ὑπερουρανίων τούτων θεῶν πληθος γεννᾷ, καὶ οὔτε ἄλλω <ἐς> τὴν ἄλλου γένεσιν συγχρώμενος ...). However, in the passage in question we are just told that it is Zeus himself who is responsible for the creation of the essence of each Form. It is only then when he uses the previously generated Forms as tools for the creation of the subsequent ones.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 102 [III,15]: Τὸν οὖν Δία οὐσίαν μὲν ἕκαστοις τῶν γε αἰωνίων τούτων αὐτὸν παράγειν, παραδείγμασι μόνον τοῖς ἦδη οἱ προγεγεννημένοις ἄλλοις ἐπ' ἄλλων γένεσιν συγχρώμενον, τῆς τε ἀλλήλων αὐτῶν κοινωνίας ἔνεκα, εἰκόνων τε αἰεὶ ἐν παραδείγμασι καὶ παραδείγματων ἐν εἰκόσι κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα ὄντων, καὶ ἅμα ἐτερότητος, τῷ ἕτερον ἐτέρου αἰεὶ ταύτῃ αἴτιον, ἢ που καὶ δεῖ, γίνεσθαι, <πάντων δὲ> τὸν Δία, καθ' αὐτὸν μὲν τοῦδ' ἐνός δὴ, σὺν δὲ τῷδε τῷ παραδείγματι ἐτέρου αὐτοῦδε, καὶ σὺν ἄλλω ἄλλου αἰεὶ, ἄχρι τῆς τοῦ παντός τε καὶ ὅλου συστήματος πληρώσεως. Παράγοντα δ' οὕτω αὐτὸν τὰς οὐσίας ἕκαστοις αὐτῶν (αὐτῶν

In a letter to Bessarion Plethon further explains that each separated intellect, that is, Form, being already a kind of unity that is plural, was produced by the first principle. Its highest part, however, immediately produces the rest of the separated intellect, producing it already through itself. Thus each intellect is produced by the first cause, but at the same time it is also 'self-produced (αὐτοπαράγωγον)'; producing by one part its remaining part.⁴⁹ Although it is not explicitly stated whether 'the highest part' of each Form is one and by this it is similar to its producer, it seems very probable. If it were so, the highest part would be thus responsible for establishing the unity in the plurality which is already present in each intellect and which consists in the distinction between essence and attribute or activity.

The passage from the *Laus* we have just gone through thus treats in more depth the crucial problem of the constitution of the (limited) plurality out of the absolute unity of the first principle. First, Plethon's statement, according to which 'the different is always the cause of the different', implies, that everything what is caused by a superior principle must be different from it and so more plural. Every product of a cause, which is always necessarily inferior to it, thus, as we move down in the hierarchy of the levels of reality, gradually decreases from the primary unity into plurality. However, although the intelligible order is already plural by its very nature, its unity is established by the fact that it proceeds from one source absolutely united within itself, the first principle, whose image it is and whose nature it shares. The mutual unity of the Forms, which are many, each of them being different from the rest and self-sufficient, is due to their commonality based on the manner in which they are created. While the essence of each Form or its 'higher part', including the essence of the whole intelligible order, must be 'produced' by the first principle alone (because otherwise they would not be all eternal), their attributes are 'ordered' by Zeus who makes use of the higher or more general Forms as the models for the lower ones which are images of them, related to their models by mutual similarity. Zeus thus generates Poseidon as the first and highest Form and then by using

γὰρ καὶ προσήκειν ἂν τὴν τῶν κρατίστων γένεσιν, οἷα δὴ ἡ αἰώνιος αὐτῆ σύμπασα οὐσία ἐστὶ), τὴν τῶν προσόντων αὐ ἐκάστοις ἐπικόσμησιν ἄλλοις ἤδη ἐπιτρέπειν, <τῶν> προυχόντων ἀεὶ τὰ ὑποδεέστερα κοσμησόντων. Καὶ πέρασ δὴ τοῦτο τοῖς θεοῖς τούτοις τὴν κοινωνίαν λαμβάνειν, καθ' ἣν ἐς ἓν τι ἅπαντες σύστημα καὶ κόσμον ἕνα τὸν κάλλιστον ἐκ τῶν ἐνότων συνεσταῖσι.

⁴⁹ *Ad Bess.* I 459.13–19: καὶ πρῶτον περὶ τῶν χωριστῶν νῶν· τούτων γὰρ ἕκαστον ἐξ ἴσου τῷ πρῶτῳ αἰτίῳ ἐν εἶναι οὐκ ἂν δὴ ἀξιώσειαν οἱ οὕτω λέγοντες, ἀλλ' ἤδη πεπληθυσμένον τι ἐν. τὸν οὖν παράγοντα ἕκαστον αὐτῶν θεόν, τὸ κράτιστον ἐκάστον πεπληθυσμένον ὄντος ἀμέσως παράγοντα τὸ λοιπὸν πᾶν, δι' αὐτοῦ ἤδη τοῦ κρατίστου αὐτοῦ παράγειν, καὶ οὕτως ἕκαστον αὐτῶν ὑπὸ τε τοῦ πρῶτου αἰτίου παράγεσθαι, καὶ αὐτοπαράγωγον εἶναι μέρει τὸ λοιπὸν ἑαυτοῦ μέρος παράγοντα ...

him as a model or, from another point of view, by dividing him he produces the lower Forms. These are present together in Poseidon, but differentiated among themselves according to the mutual contradictions contained implicitly already in the highest Form. This is most probably what Plethon means by the ordering of attributes that is not due to Zeus but to the Forms themselves and their mutual relations and hierarchical structure. However, Zeus is naturally involved in both these aspects of the creation of the intelligible order, in the first one directly, in the second one indirectly and through the mediation of the higher Forms. Elsewhere Plethon claims that the highest part of the Form, produced directly by Zeus, subsequently produces the rest of itself. This supplements the conception presented in the *Laws*. A Form is self-produced although, from a different point of view, also determined by its relations to the other Forms and therefore ordered within the overall structure of the intelligible order.

The unity of the eternal intelligible order is thus established by the mutual relations of similarity among the Forms as well as by their common source in the pre-eternal first principle. However, equally important is mutual intellection of the Forms among themselves. The Forms are not only intelligible models (εἶδη) of sensible things, but they are themselves also intellects (νόες).⁵⁰ Similarly in the *Magian Oracles*, immediately after the Father, who is the first principle here, 'the second god' is placed, called 'the paternal intellect (πατρικὸς νοῦς)'⁵¹ or 'the second intellect (δεύτερος νοῦς)' by the *Oracles*.⁵² This 'second intellect' is apparently Poseidon, the highest Form of the *Laws* created by Zeus or the first principle.⁵³ It is obvious that the Forms cannot know the sensible world, which they have no means of perceiving, but, being intellects, their cognition necessarily must be directed towards the intelligible order, that is, towards the other Forms. Each Form thus contemplates the others (and itself) thanks to its capacity of intellection through which the whole intelligible order is in a certain sense present in it. Such interpretation is supported also by a statement from the *Laws*, according to which the supracestrial gods are the Forms or 'immovable intellects' that are 'always and in every respect active by one simultaneous

⁵⁰ *De diff.* IV 326.33, X 336.27–30, 337.21–22, *Contra Schol.* XXV 440.15, XXX 486.14–16, *Or. mag.* 10.7–9 [on XIV], 17.15–18.3 [on XXXI], *Leg.* 46 [I,5], 120 [III,31].

⁵¹ *Or. mag.* VI 1.11; cf. also 7.2–3 [on VI], 9.12–14 [on XII], 16.6 [on XXVII], *Decl. brev.* 21.5–7.

⁵² *Or. mag.* XXX 4.1–2, 17.6–8 [on XXX], *Decl. brev.* 21.5–7.

⁵³ The designation 'the second intellect' is to be, however, understood as the intellect that has been placed at the second ontological level of reality, not as the second intellect with an implication that it follows after some first one – as we know, the First principle is not an intellect in the sense the Forms are.

intellective act in which they mutually conceive themselves.’⁵⁴ Such an intellective act, through which each Form knows and in a certain way contains in itself the other ones, helps, once more, to establish the intelligible order, in which the whole and each part of it is reflected in all the parts alike. Its unity is thus, first, due to the way it is created – by its generation from one principle, which creates it in such a way that the Forms are produced both directly from it as well as from one another while at the same time sharing the similarity common to them all. Second, the unity of the intelligible Forms, which are also intellects, is established by their mutual cognition through the act of intellection.

To summarize, in his account of the Forms Plethon distinguishes two types of similarity. First, the one between the higher and lower levels of reality, because the world generated in time is made in an image of the intelligible order, which is again produced as an image of the first principle. Second, the relations among the Forms are based also on the similarity between the model and image. Plethon thinks that the lower Forms are implicitly comprehended in the higher ones and they are created by the ‘dividing’ of genera into species. This is just a different perspective on the mutual similarity among the hierarchically ordered Forms and their reciprocal model-image relations. The limited plurality of the intelligible order is due to the difference between the essence and the attribute (and the activity) of the Forms. The account of their constitution seems to further support the earlier suggestion that by the essences of the Forms created directly by Zeus Plethon means their common nature of eternal entities serving as models for the world generated in time. Attributes thus represent the ‘specific nature’ of the Forms that makes each Form different from the rest of the Forms, in other words, what a certain Form is a model of.⁵⁵ All the attributes are implicitly present already in the first Form, but unfolded only in the lower ones by Zeus who uses the first Form as a model when creating the others. The main goal of the producing and ordering of the intelligible model, which is necessarily many, is, however, to create a plurality that is the most perfect and united possible. This means that the number of unchangeable Forms is limited and their composition is completed in such a way that nothing else can be added and they together constitute the perfect whole of the intelligible order.

⁵⁴ *Leg.* 46 [I,5]: see Appendix III,3, below, p. 290. Cf. *Add.* 119v.5–7, below, p. 313.

⁵⁵ See above, pp. 68–70.

Chapter 9

The Forms as the Gods

In spite of their mutual similarity, the Forms are not the same but gradually more and more deficient in their being. In the *Laws* each of the gods of the second order is said 'to preside over a different, larger or smaller, part of this universe'.¹ The Forms are thus divided into the 'greater' ones that are ordered by a smaller number of the Forms higher than themselves and that exercise greater effects and cause more 'in this universe', and those Forms that are 'lesser' and capable of having fewer effects and cause less are ordered by a greater number of the higher Forms. Forms are thus divided into two principal groups according to their generality: those that are higher and those that are lower. The first are the legitimate genus of the Olympian gods of the second order. They have more being and, in the sensible world, they are therefore able to produce primarily the things that are everlasting, that is, the gods of the third order. The other group is generated in the same manner, but it is much inferior in its rank and potentiality. These Forms are able to produce only the things that are mortal and that are not everlasting. Plethon calls this other group the illegitimate genus of Titans, dwelling in Tartarus.²

Olympians

In his commentaries on the *Magian Oracles* Plethon calls the highest Form, which was produced by Zeus as the first Form, presiding over all the other supracelestial gods,³ 'the second god (δεύτερος θεός)', 'the power of the Father

¹ *Leg.* 46 [I,5]: ... ἄλλον μὲν ἄλλω μείζονι ἢ μείονι τοῦ παντός τοῦδε μέρει ἐπιστήσαντα ὑπαρχον ...

² *Ibid.* 48–50 [I,5]: τῶν δ' ἄλλων μείζους μὲν εἶναι τοὺς ὑπὸ μὲν ἐλαττόνων ἂν κοσμουμένους, αὐτοὺς δὲ πλείω τε ἂν δρώντας ἐν τῷ παντὶ τῷδε καὶ μείζω μείους δὲ τοὺς ἐλάττω μὲν καὶ μείω δρώντας, αὐτοὺς δ' ἂν ὑπὸ πλειόνων κοσμουμένους. Ἄλλη τε οὖν διενηνοχένη αὐτὸ αὐτοῦ σύμπαν τοῦτο τὸ γένος τῶν θεῶν, μάλιστα δὲ καὶ τῶν διακρίσεων τῆς μεγίστης διακεκρίσθαι διχῆ, ἢ τὸ μὲν γνήσιόν τι θεῶν γένος ὁ γεγεννηκώς πατὴρ ἀπέφηνεν, ὅποσον δὲ αἰδίων καὶ αὐτὸ ἐτι γόνιμον ἀπετέλεσεν· ὅποσον δὲ θνητῶν ἤδη καὶ οὐκέτι αἰδίων, Τιτάνων τι γένος νόθον Cf. *ibid.* 52–4 [I,5], 172–4 [III,34].

³ Cf. *Or. mag.* 17.7–8 [on XXX], *Decl. brev.* 21.6–7.

(πατὴρ δύναμις), 'the intellective power of the Father (δύναμις πατὴρ νοερά)', 'the paternal intellect (νοῦς πατρικός)'.⁴ This first Form is the immediate creator of the soul.⁵ This is why, according to Plethon, people tend to call him the First God instead of the second one, considering him to be the utmost creator of the universe and not knowing that there is even a higher god than he.⁶

In the *Laws* Plethon compares the generation of the Forms by Zeus to human procreation. Despite the differences among diverse human laws and customs, the intercourse (μίξις) between parents and their children is unanimously prohibited by all peoples. Similarly, the first principle cannot mingle with the lower ontological level of the Forms and hence, during the creation of the Forms it makes use of those created previously, employing them not as a female principle, together with which he would beget the rest of the Forms, but as a model (παράδειγμα). The same is true of the distinction between the Forms and the things of the sensible world – they can never join together to produce something else.⁷ However, human generation naturally differs from divine generation because children exist on the same ontological level as their parents whereas the result of the creation of Zeus as well as of the gods of the second order (the Forms) is always located one step lower on the scale of being than their principle. Plethon uses the comparison with human generation throughout his whole explication of the constitution of the intelligible order as described in the *Laws*.

In the *Laws*, unlike in the *Magian Oracles*, the highest Form, which is the supreme god of the second order of the Olympian gods, is called Poseidon by Plethon. The reason why Plethon reserves this function in the ideal world for the ancient Greek god of the sea is neither immediately evident nor based on any ancient tradition.⁸ In Plethon's philosophical mythology Poseidon is the second highest god after Zeus, the 'eldest (πρεσβύτατος)' of them all, generated 'without mother (ἀμήτωρ)', 'charged with their leadership (ἡγεμονίαν ἐπιτρέπεις)'

⁴ *Or. mag.* VI 1.11, XII 2.7, XXVII 3.16, XXX 4.1–2, XXXIII 4.6–7, 7.2 [on VI], 9.12–13 [on XII], 16.6 [on XXVII], 17.7–8 [on XXX], 18.10 [on XXXII], 18.14–15 [on XXXIII], *Decl. brev.* 21.5–6.

⁵ *Or. mag.* 7.2–3 [on VI], 9.15–16 [on XII], 16.6–7 [on XXVII].

⁶ *Ibid.* 17.10–13 [on XXX].

⁷ *Leg.* 86–8 [III,14], 92, 118 [III,15]. The biological comparison of generation of the Forms with human generation is apparent also from the title of the whole chapter III,15 dedicated to the description of the individual gods of the second order, p. 92: Περὶ θεῶν γενέσεως διὰ μέσης τῆς περὶ γονέων ἐκγόνοις οὐ μίξεως ὑποθέσεως. 'On the generation of the gods, based upon the postulate of a prohibition of sexual intercourse between parents and children.' Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 324.

⁸ Cf. Gantz 1996, pp. 62–3. François Masai tentatively suggests that the name Ποσειδῶν might be etymologically analysed as Πόσις εἰδῶν, 'the master of the Forms', Masai 1956, pp. 279–80, see also Masai's later remarks in *Néoplatonisme* 1971, p. 394.

of the second gods.⁹ Having been generated as the first of all, Poseidon is an image (εἰκών) of Zeus, similar to him as much as it is possible.¹⁰ Poseidon is thus 'ordered (κοσμούμενος)' by Zeus alone and then himself 'orders' the whole intelligible order, namely, attributes that are distributed throughout the hierarchical structure of the second gods in accord with their mutual relations.¹¹

Since, according to Plethon, the lower Forms are implicitly contained in the higher ones, Poseidon, the highest of them all, is the Form *par excellence*. He is not any specific Form of this and that, but 'the genus itself of the Form-species that contains in the manner of unity and together all the Forms'. He is thus, after Zeus, the most important actual cause of every form in our world and in the *Laws* he is connected with the male principle that provides generated things with form.¹²

Furthermore, Poseidon is described as 'Form itself (αὐτοεἶδος)', 'limit itself (αὐτοπέρας)' or 'beauty itself (αὐτοκαλόν)'.¹³ He is called 'the limit of the perfection of all generation of things',¹⁴ which implies a conception according to which a Form defines the limits of each thing and determines its perfection and its most beautiful shape. Beauty is thus – in a very much traditional way – made dependent on a perfect form and limit, just as the Latin word *formosus* (beautiful) is derived from the word *forma*. As the highest ideal producer of the sensible world, Poseidon is called also 'the father of this heaven (οὐρανοῦ δὲ τοῦδε πατήρ)' and 'the second creator (δημιουργὸς δευτερός)',¹⁵ that is, the second after Zeus, the first principle and the highest cause of all. Despite minor divergences (for instance, the identification with 'the intellectual power of the Father'), Poseidon's status in the *Laws* thus corresponds well to the position of the second god in the *Magian Oracles*.

In contrast, Hera, the Form that follows immediately after Poseidon, is the Form of matter. Here, again, Plethon is close to the Neoplatonic conception of the gradual shift from the active potentiality to the passive one, moving down through different levels of reality. Hera thus follows after Poseidon, the Form

⁹ *Leg.* 46, 56 [I,5], 134, 156–8, 174 [III,34], 204 [III,35]; cf. *Add.* 119.17 ff., below, p. 312, *Zor. Plat.* 262.

¹⁰ *Leg.* 174 [III,34]; cf. *Add.* 119.17–19, below, p. 312.

¹¹ *Leg.* 48 [I,5].

¹² *Ibid.* 104 [III,15]: Τὸν μὲν γὰρ πρεσβύτατον τῶν Διὸς παίδων Ποσειδῶ, εἶδος γε ὄντα, οὐ τότε δὴ τι, οὐδὲ τότε, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τὸ σύμπαντα εἶδη καθ' ἑν τε καὶ συλλήβδην περιεληφὸς γένος εἰδῶν, καὶ τοῦ τῆδε ἔργου εἶδους παντὸς αὐτὸν εἶναι μετὰ Δία τὸν αἰτιώτατον. Δι' ἃ δὴ καὶ ἄρρενωπότατον τοῦτον εἶναι θεῶν· τὴν γὰρ ἄρρενα εἶναι φύσιν τὴν τοῖς γεννωμένοις τὸ εἶδος ἐπιφέρουσαν.

¹³ *Ibid.* 158 [III,34].

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 174 [III,34]: ... πέρας τῆς τῶν ὄντων συμπάσης γενέσεως τελειότητος.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 134 [III,34].

of form, and hence she is a more passive principle than he is, being the Form of matter. Similarly to Poseidon, Hera is called 'the mother without mother (ἀμήτωρ μήτηρ)',¹⁶ which means that she is generated without a contribution of a material principle. We have just seen that Poseidon contains in himself actually all the Forms and at the same time he is also the actual cause of every form in our world. Like him, Hera, too, contains in herself other Forms. Nonetheless, they are not present in her potentially, but actually, because as Plethon claims, there is no matter or potentiality in the intelligible order. However, unlike Poseidon, Hera is not the actual cause of any form in the sensible world. She is just the cause of the 'eldest', that is, primary matter that contains all forms (again, those originating in the sensible world are meant) potentially and not actually.¹⁷ She is responsible for the production of the body (σῶμα) of all things created in the sensible world.¹⁸

While Poseidon is the male principle, Hera is the female one. As mentioned above, Plethon uses the image of a male providing a form and a female providing matter to their common offspring, which – however misleading and inaccurate it may be – is intended to demonstrate the roles that the two highest Forms play in the creation of the world. (This also seems to be one of the reasons why Plethon uses the polytheistic imagery of ancient Greek mythology with the divinities divided into gods and the goddesses.) Thus in the highest divine couple of the gods of the second order, Poseidon, as the (second) father, is the Form of form, whereas Hera, as the mother, is the Form of matter, and their common offspring is the sensible world created on the lower, third level of reality. Because they are both Olympians, that is, the higher gods among those of the second order, by their intercourse, they produce primarily the everlasting things in the sensible world.¹⁹

In the case of Hera it is also not immediately clear why Plethon chose this mythological name for the second highest Form. In ancient Greek religion Hera indeed represents the highest female goddess, but she is usually the spouse

¹⁶ Ibid. 154 [III,34].

¹⁷ Ibid. 104–6 [III,15]: Τὸν μὲν [sc. Ποσειδῶνα] γὰρ ἔργῳ ἔν γε ἑαυτῷ ἅπαντα ἔχοντα εἶδη, καὶ τοῦ τῆδε ἔργου εἶδους παντὸς αὐτὸν γίνεσθαι αἰτιον· τὴν δὲ [sc. Ἥραν] ἔργῳ αὐ καὶ αὐτὴν ἅπαντα κεκμημένην εἶδη, οὐκέτι καὶ τοῖς τῆδε ἔργῳ οὐδοτουοῦν εἶδους αἰτίαν γίνεσθαι· ἀλλ' ὕλης μάλιστα τῆς πρεσβυτάτης, ἣ αὐ ἅπαντα εἶδη δυνάμει, οὐκ ἔργῳ, ἐστίν· ἔργῳ γὰρ οὐ μόνον οὐχ ἅπαντα, ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὅτιοῦν ἐστίν αὐτῶν. Ταύτη τοι καὶ θήλειαν ταύτην τὴν θεόν, θηλειῶν τε τὴν πρεσβυτάτην γεγενῆσθαι. Τὴν γὰρ θήλειάν που εἶναι φύσιν, τὴν τὴν τε ὕλην καὶ τροφήν τῶν γεννωμένων ἐκάστοις παρεχομένην. Cf. *Zor. Plat.* 262.

¹⁸ Ibid. 136 [III,34].

¹⁹ *Leg.* 134 [III,34]; cf. 174 [III,34].

of Zeus, and not of Poseidon.²⁰ For Plethon, the position of the first principle, who is supremely one, is so exceptional and elevated that it simply cannot enter into a contact with anything else. However, on the lower level of the Forms, where the plurality is already present, Poseidon as the second father, creator and immediate representative of Zeus, may substitute as the husband of Hera.

Hera is also the principle of mathematics. As Plethon claims, 'mathematical number and mathematical magnitudes are both present, in a kind of unity, as attributes in the goddess Hera.' This should not be surprising because, according to Plethon, by its very nature number may be extended to infinity that is connected with matter. Whereas mathematical objects are present in Hera 'in the manner of unity' as in their principle, 'the soul receives them already extended, being like shadows and reflections of divine things that are, nevertheless, suitable for leading people up to the precise knowledge of them.'²¹ This sentence is a summary of Plethon's philosophy of mathematics. Mathematical objects are in fact present 'in the manner of unity', that is, undeveloped in Hera that is their principle, being the Form of matter. They cannot be placed into Poseidon, the higher Form of form, because, by their very nature, numbers and magnitudes expand and develop to infinity. At the same time, they are highly abstract and more perfect than the sensible world where our soul belongs to. That means the cognition of them must be based on an ideal principle which is thus necessarily represented by the goddess of matter. They therefore occupy an intermediate position between the sensible and intelligible world, in a certain sense similar to their position in Plato's *Republic*.²²

In Plethon's hymn dedicated to Hera, she is called 'the seat for forms here (ἔδρη τοῖς τῆδ' εἰδεσῖν)', which is a designation that appears already in Plato's *Timaeus* in connection with the space (χώρα) that is the primordial background for the generation of our sensible world.²³ However, here it is not an ideal principle, but on the contrary something that is altogether different from the intelligible world and subsists as a principle independent on it.²⁴ In contrast, Hera is an ideal model and the source of matter in our world derived directly

²⁰ Cf. Gantz 1996, pp. 61–2.

²¹ Ibid. 114 [III,15]: see Appendix IV,3, below, p. 293. A similar account of mathematics may be found in the *Differences* X 337.37–338.6, in both passages in connection with the problem of human artefacts.

²² Cf. the position of the mathematical objects in Plato's analogy of the divided line, *Resp.* VI 509d–511e.

²³ *Leg.* 206 [III,35]; cf. Plato, *Tim.* 52a8–b1: ... ἔδραν δὲ παρέχον ὅσα ἔχει γένεσιν πᾶσιν.

²⁴ Ibid. 47c–53c.

from her.²⁵ This is a rather peculiar doctrine of Plethon's, which is, however, as we shall see, crucial for his philosophical system.

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We are told much less about the other gods of the second order. Apart from the division between Olympians and Titans, the higher and the lower gods mentioned above, there is another distinction among them that helps to differentiate their proper functions. In Plethon's comparison, which should be again considered as 'a mere image (εἰκὼν τις μόνος)' only because it is true just in the sensible world in the proper sense, all the second gods are either males (ἄρρενες) or females (θήλειαι) – gods or goddesses. As in the case of the two highest Forms, Poseidon and Hera, in the sensible world the 'male' Forms are responsible for form and activity (δραστικόν) while the 'female' ones for matter and passivity (παθητικόν).²⁶ This distinction is kept continuously throughout the whole *Laus*, although in a few cases it is not entirely clear why certain Forms are connected with 'male' gods and vice versa.²⁷

As Plethon also claims, each god has a different nature, higher or lower, more or less general, and each of them administers its own appropriate part of our world.²⁸ The third highest god is Apollo who, in the metaphysical system of the *Laus*, is the bestower of identity (ταυτότης) in our sensible world. According to Plethon's hymn dedicated to him, he introduces unity into the things that are mutually different and, moreover, he establishes 'one harmony' in the universe with many parts. Similarly, in the souls he produces concord, from which prudence and justice originate. For bodies, he is the source of health and beauty.²⁹

If Apollo is the Form of identity, his twin sister Artemis must naturally be the patron of difference (ἐτερότης). In Plethon's hymn dedicated to her she contains everything in the manner of unity and then 'she distinguishes it entirely' into the

²⁵ Tambrun-Krasker 2002, pp. 320–28, Karamanolis 2002, pp. 75–6.

²⁶ *Leg.* 116–18 [III,15].

²⁷ The most important examples, where Plethon's motivation is far from being clear, is the female Dione, the Form of fixed stars, in comparison to the males Tithonus and Atlas, the Forms of the planets and stars in general, or the male Pan, the Form of non-rational animals in comparison to the female Demeter, the Form of plants.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 158 [III,34]: ... ἄλλος [sc. θεός] ἄλλην ἐσχηκότες φύσιν, ὁ μὲν τις κρείττω, ὁ δ' αἰεὶ ὑποδεεστέραν, καὶ τῆς ἑαυτῷ προσηκούσης ἐν τῷδε τῷ παντὶ ἕκαστος μοίρας προστατεῖν ...

²⁹ *Ibid.* 208 [III,35]: ... ὅς ἄλλα τε ἀλλήλοισιν / εἰς ἓν ἄγεις, καὶ δὴ τὸ πᾶν αὐτό, τὸ πουλυμερές περ / πουλύκρεκόν τε ἑόν, μὴ ἄρμονιῃ ὑποτάσσεις / Σὺ τοι ἕκ γ' ὁμοιοῖς καὶ ψυχῆσι φρόνησιν / ἠδὲ δίκην παρέχεις, τὰ τε δὴ κάλλιστα εἰῶν, / καὶ ῥ' ὑγίειαν σώμασι, κάλλος τ' ἄρ καὶ τοῖσιν.

plurality of forms, up to each individual Form. She thus proceeds from wholes to parts and limbs. Because she also separates the souls from their attachment 'to the worse', that is, to the body, Artemis is entreated to bestow on bodies power and temperance, strength and soundness (ἀρτεμίνη).³⁰ From this last of her gifts Plethon obviously derives the etymology of her name.

After the first two divine couples, Zeus and Hera, Apollo and Artemis, three gods follow who together form an independent group. Hephaestus is the patron of rest (στάσις) and 'remaining in the same (ἡ ἐν ταυτῷ μονή)'. He provides everything with 'space (χώρη)', 'seat (ἔδρη)' and 'everlastingness (αἰδιότης)'.³¹ Dionysus, or alternatively Bacchus, is the giver of 'self-motion (αὐτοκινησία)' and 'pulling towards, leading up towards more perfect'. Furthermore, in Plethon's hymn dedicated to him, he is called 'the creator of all the rational souls', the celestial, daemonic and human. He is the cause of 'the motion which pulls because of the desire for the good'.³² Finally, Athena is 'the motion and pushing caused by different things' and 'the separation of what is superfluous'. In Plethon's hymn dedicated to her she is said to administer and to create 'form that is not in any respect separated from matter'.³³

Plethon thus distinguishes rest, associated with remaining (μονή), self-motion, associated with pullings towards (ὀλκή), and motion from other things associated with pushing (ῶσις). These three motions may be equated also with three constitutive moments of Neoplatonic metaphysics – apart from remaining (μονή), pushing with procession (πρόοδος) and pulling back with return (ἐπιστροφή). The most important point here, although only hinted at, is the joining together of the soul and self-motion under the patronage of Dionysus. In contrast, there are 'the forms not separated from matter', that is, the bodies connected with the motion caused by the different things under the patronage of Athena. These are the two kinds of motions we can encounter in the sensible cosmos. Similarly to Plato's conception,³⁴ here too, the soul is self-moving, its

³⁰ *Leg.* 160 [III,34], 208 [III,35]: παρεληφύια γὰρ ἔν τε τὸ σὺμπαν, / εἴτ' ἐς τοῦσχατον ἄλλη καὶ ἄλλη διακρίνεις / ἐς μὲν πλείω εἶδεα, ἐς δὲ θ' ἕκαστ' ἐξ εἰδέων, / ἐκ τε ὅλων αὐ ἐς μέρε' ἄρθρα τε· σὺ καὶ ψυχαῖς / ἕκ τῆς πρὸς τὸ χερείον σφων διακρίσιος ἀλκήν / σωφροσύνην τε διδοῖς, ἰσχύν τ' αὐ ἀρτεμίνην τε / σώμασιν.

³¹ *Ibid.* 160 [III,34], 212–14 [III,35].

³² *Ibid.* 160 [III,34]: ... Διόνυσος δὲ αὐτοκινησίας τε καὶ ὀλκῆς, τῆς τε ἐς τὸ τελεώτερον ἀναγωγῆς ... *Ibid.* 210–12 [III,35]: Βάκχε πάτερ, ψυχῶν λογικῶν γενέτορ πασάων, / ὅσσαι οὐράνιαι, ὅσσαι τ' αὐ δαιμόνιαι γε, / ὅσσαι θ' ἡμέτεραι ... / ὅστε κινήσιος ἐσθλοῦ ἐλκομένης γε ἔρωτι.

³³ *Ibid.* 160 [III,34]: ... Ἀθηνᾶ δὲ τῆς ὑφ' ἐτέρων κινήσεώς τε καὶ ῶσεως, τοῦ τε περιέργου ἀποκρίσεως. *Ibid.* 210 [III,35]: Ἀθήνη ἄνασσα, ἡ εἶδος οὐδαμᾶ ὕλης / χωριστοῖο προστατεύεις ...

³⁴ Plato, *Leg.* X 893b–899d, *Phaedr.* 245c–246a.

motion is caused by the soul itself and it is motivated – under the leadership of Dionysus – by its yearning for the good. For this reason it is more perfect than the motion of bodies that are moved ‘by something different’, either from inside, by the soul, or by other bodies in the sensible world. Although, as Plethon says, motion ‘from something different’ is not able to move towards the good, it is still capable of separating what is ‘superfluous’, that is, presumably bad. Above these two types of motion Plethon places rest under the patronage of Hephaestus who bestows the proper place and everlastingness to things.

The seven highest gods of Plethon’s *Laws* seem to correspond to, at least, some of the most general ontological distinctions, ‘the greatest genera (μέγιστα τῶν γενῶν)’ borrowed from Plato’s *Sophist* (identity, difference, motion and rest) and also from the *Philebus* (the limited, the unlimited).³⁵ The latter dialogue may well have been the inspiration of Plethon’s basic differentiation of being into Poseidon and Hera since the distinction is made there between the limited (τὸ πέρας), which is the principle of unity, and the unlimited (τὸ ἄπειρον), which is the principle of multiplication. The third aspect is a result of uniting these two kinds together into ‘the mixture of both these [kinds]’. It is in this manner that things are generated ‘into being’ or, more precisely, ‘mixed and generated being’. Furthermore, Plato adds the fourth ‘genus’ which is ‘the cause of mixing these [principles] together.’³⁶ Later in the dialogue when these four concepts are again evoked, he claims that ‘in the nature of Zeus ... there is the soul of a king, as well as king’s reason, in virtue of this potentiality displayed by the cause, while paying tribute for other fine qualities in the other divinities ...’³⁷ It is likely that Plethon connected the cause of the *Philebus* with Zeus, which is the utmost cause in his Platonism. The cause in this key passage of the *Philebus* (‘the fourth genus’) creates everything that comes into being (‘the third’) by using the two other principles (‘the first and second kind’) of the limited, which is form, and the unlimited, which is matter. Similarly, according to Plethon Zeus creates the sensible world, including matter, with a help of Poseidon and Hera.

³⁵ Tambrun 2006, pp. 158–9, 162.

³⁶ Plato, *Philb.* 23c–27c, especially 23c–24a, 26d–27c: Τούτω δὴ τῶν εἰδῶν τὰ δύο τιθώμεθα, τὸ δὲ τρίτον ἐξ ἀμφοῖν τούτοις ἐν τι συμμιγόμενον. ... Τῆς συμμειζεύσεως τούτων πρὸς ἄλληλα τὴν αἰτίαν ὄρα, καὶ τίθει μοι πρὸς τρισὶν ἐκείνοις τέταρτον τοῦτο. ... ἀλλὰ τρίτον φάθι με λέγειν, ἐν τούτῳ τιθέντα τὸ τούτων ἔκγονον ἅπαν, γένεσιν εἰς οὐσίαν ἐκ τῶν μετὰ τοῦ πέρατος ἀπειρασμένων μέτρων. ... Πρῶτον μὲν τοῖνον ἄπειρον λέγω, δεῦτερον δὲ πέρας, ἔπειτ’ ἐκ τούτων τρίτον μεικτὴν καὶ γεγεννημένην οὐσίαν· τὴν δὲ τῆς μείξεως αἰτίαν καὶ γενέσεως τετάρτην λέγων ἄρα μὴ πλημμελοῖην ἄν τι;

³⁷ Ibid. 30a–31a, especially 30d: Οὐκοῦν ἐν μὲν τῇ τοῦ Διὸς ἐρεῖς φύσει βασιλικὴν μὲν ψυχὴν, βασιλικὸν δὲ νοῦν ἐγγίγνεσθαι διὰ τὴν τῆς αἰτίας δύναμιν, ἐν δ’ ἄλλοις ἄλλα κατὰ καθ’ ὅτι φίλον ἐκάστοις λέγεσθαι. Trans. Dorothea Frede in Cooper–Hutchinson 1997, p. 418 (altered).

In Platonic tradition such a solution is quite unusual although one might object that Proclus, too, derives matter from the First Unlimitedness.³⁸

As for motion, differentiated here into two kinds under the patronage of Dionysus and Athena, together with rest and the previous twin gods representing identity and difference, they seem to correspond to four out of the five 'greatest genera (μέγιστα τῶν γενῶν)' from Plato's *Sophist*. In this dialogue Plato first distinguishes 'being (τὸ ὄν)', which, in another passage, is said to be 'being itself (τὸ ὄν αὐτό)', 'rest (στάσις)' and 'motion (κίνησις)'. He claims that rest and motion cannot be combined together, in contrast to being which is present in the remaining genera since they must participate in it in order to exist. For this reason Plato then introduces other two genera, namely, 'identity (τὸ ταυτόν)' and 'difference (τὸ θάτερον)' that also participate in being.³⁹ The four genera from this list, that is, identity, difference, rest and motion, have their obvious correspondents among Plethon's Forms, the only one remaining apart is 'being'. We may observe that in Plato's account all the remaining genera have share in being, whereas identity and difference, rest and motion are mutually exclusive. Plethon, too, places them into the opposing categories of male and female gods. As in the *Philebus*, being can be identified with Zeus, the first principle of everything, which is said to be 'being itself' in the sense of being the source of all other being. This all may thus help to understand why among the first seven Platonic Forms Plethon situates the Forms of form, matter, identity, difference, rest and motion.

What remains to be explained is the distinction between the two types of motion Plethon introduces, namely, self-motion and motion by different things. Plethon could draw here on book X of Plato's *Laws* where it is claimed that 'some things move' whereas 'other are at rest'. Then several types of motion are distinguished out of which the first and highest one is claimed to move itself while the second highest motion is 'always moving and changing from something other'. The first motion is said to be 'the beginning of all the motions, the first one originated among the standing things, and the first one among the moving ones'. Such a motion is then identified with the soul which is the source of the motion of everything.⁴⁰ In Plethon's *Laws* a similar thing is claimed about Dionysus who presides over self-motion and who is the creator of the rational

³⁸ Proclus, *In Tim.* I,384.22–385.17; cf. Chlup 2012, pp. 76–82.

³⁹ Plato, *Soph.* 248e–259b, especially 254d–255e, 259a–b.

⁴⁰ Plato, *Leg.* X 893b–896c, especially 893b–c, 895a–b, 895e–896b: Τὰ μὲν κινεῖταιί που, φήσω, τὰ δὲ μένει. ... τὴν αὐτὴν ἑαυτὴν δήπου κινουῖσαν ὑπ' ἄλλου γὰρ οὐ μήποτε ἔμπροσθεν μεταπέσει, μηδεμιᾶς γε ἐν αὐτοῖς οὐσῆς ἔμπροσθεν μεταπτώσεως. ἀρχὴν ἄρα κινήσεων πασῶν καὶ πρώτῃν ἔν τε ἐστῶσιν γενομένην καὶ ἐν κινουμένοις οὐσαν τὴν αὐτὴν κινουσαν φήσομεν ἀναγκαίως εἶναι πρᾶσβυτάτην καὶ κρατίστην μεταβολὴν πασῶν, τὴν δὲ ἀλλοιουμένην ὑφ' ἑτέρου, κινουσαν δὲ ἕτερα δευτέραν. Cf. also *Phaedr.* 245c–246a.

souls. The first seven highest Forms posited by Plethon thus could well have been derived from Plato's *Philebus*, *Sophist* and book X of his *Laws*.

Plethon's hymn to the Olympians: '... you, seven gods, who are higher / than the others, following only after the eminent [Zeus], ruling on high. / The others who dwell in Olympus ...'⁴¹ along with the title of lost chapter 10 of book II: 'On the seven eldest gods and the other supracelestial gods'⁴² suggest that the seven highest gods of the second order together form an enclosed system that is somehow distinguished from the other Forms. In the visible cosmos there may be also an analogy between these seven highest Forms and the seven planets.⁴³

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The differences among the Olympian gods may thus reflect the difference between the highest genera that are the principles of the most general features of sensible things, and the lower level and more specific Forms that are also capable of producing everlasting sensible entities. The other Olympian gods mentioned by Plethon are indeed, in the first place, the source of the celestial gods of the third order that are located inside the cosmos. The first of them is Atlas who administers stars in general (κοινῆ), after him Plethon places Tithonus, who is, more specifically (ιδίᾳ), charged with the planets,⁴⁴ and Dione, who produces the fixed stars. Then Hermes is mentioned, who is the creator of the terrestrial daemons and 'the whole lowest and servant divine kin', and, finally, Pluto who is the originator of the immortal, principal part of our nature, that is, of the human soul.⁴⁵ According to Plethon's hymn dedicated to him, Pluto 'possesses in the manner of unity everything that would happen / or occur to us divided'. This means not only all the possible variations and differences of the human kind, but also the fate of all people, which is hinted at in the verses: 'do administer well also us / in all respects here, and ever when you lead us up from here'. Quite

⁴¹ *Leg.* 206 [III,35]: ... ἐπὶ θεοὶ τοὶ κρέσσονές εἰστε / τῶν ἄλλων πάντων μετ' ἄρ' ἔξοχον ὑψιμέδοντα / ἄλλοι θ', οἳ ῥα Ὀλυμπον ναίετε

⁴² *Ibid.* 10: Περὶ θεῶν τῶν τε ἐπὶ πρεσβυτάτων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὑπερουρανίων. Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 323 (altered).

⁴³ Cf. the title of lost chapter II,14 which follows closely after II,10: Περὶ τῶν τῶν ἐπὶ ἀστέρων δυνάμεων. 'On the potentialities of the seven planets.' *Leg.* 10, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 323 (altered).

⁴⁴ In another passage of the *Laws*, 178 [III,34], each planet is said to have its appropriate Form (... ἄλλο πρὸς ἄλλο εἶδος τῶν αἰωνίων ἰδιόν τε καὶ προσεχές ...), Plethon perhaps just did not feel a need to enumerate all the planets here.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 160 [III,34]: δαιμόνων δὲ τῶν χθονίων, καὶ σύμπαντος τοῦ θείου ἐσχάτου τε καὶ ὑπηρετικοῦ φύλου, Ἑρμῆς ἡμῶν δὲ τοῦ ἀθανάτου, τῆς ἡμετέρας φύσεως κυριωτέρου μέρους, Πλούτων.

naturally, around Pluto heroes are gathered who are said to be 'the nature that surpasses us,' and 'the good and virtuous friends of ours.'⁴⁶ For Plethon, Pluto is the ruler of the place where all souls return after death. Nonetheless, in the *Laws* he is no longer the dark lord of Hades and his position among the Olympian gods suggests that his role has been transformed primarily to that of the patron of the human souls who is responsible for both their creation and their fate after the death of the mortal bodies they have been assigned to. Similarly to Hera, there is another specific function in his competence. Having been put in charge of everything that is connected with man, he also contains in himself, as is claimed in the *Differences*, all the Forms of human artefacts. That is because 'he possesses all the human things present in himself in a kind of unity'. If somebody is to make a thing, he thus 'receives by his thought' what is present in Pluto 'in a kind of unity' as 'already separate and each of them [receives] something different'. Artefacts thus do not exist in themselves separated from each other, but must be derived from the Form of man, or, more precisely, of the human soul.⁴⁷

The lowest Olympian gods are the gods of the elements. These are naturally close to the passive matter and hence they are represented by goddesses. However, the elemental masses as a whole are neither generated nor ever perish, but they undergo perpetual change. For this reason they have to be connected with the Olympians. In general (κοινῇ) they are represented by Rhea. More specifically (ἰδίᾳ) Leto creates aether that is warm (θερμόν) and separating (διακριτικόν), Hecate air that is cold (ψυχρόν) and connecting (συνεκτικόν), Tethys the water that is wet (ύγρόν) and dissolving (διάρρυστον), and, finally, Hestia earth that is dry (ξηρόν) and fixing (πηκτόν).⁴⁸ From Plethon's text it seems that this list of legitimate children of Zeus is complete and no other god may be added.⁴⁹ At any rate the Forms he enumerates as the Olympian gods describe adequately everything in the sensible world that is immortal and divine, that is, existing in time but everlasting.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 220 [III,35]: ... πάντα καθ' ἓν, τὰ κεν ἄμμι διακριδὸν ἐγγίγνοιτο / ἠδὲ ἐνεΐη, ἔχων, εὖ προστατέεν καὶ ἡμέων / πάμπαν τ' ἐνθάδε, ἠδ' ἐνθένδ' ἀνάγων αὐ αἰέν· / ὄν περι ἥρων, φύσις ἡμέων γ' ἢ προέχουσα, / ἠδ' ἄλλοι φίλοι ἡμείων καλοὶ ἀγαθοὶ τε.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 114 [III,15]: see Appendix IV,3, below, p. 293. Cf. *De diff.* X 338.6–10.

⁴⁸ *Leg.* 160 [III,34]; cf. *De diff.* VI 331.2–12, *Contra Schol.* XXIX 472.6–12.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Leg.* 160 [III,34]: Οὗτοι πάντες Διὸς βασιλέως γνήσιοί τε καὶ κράτιστοι γεγονότες παῖδες ...

Titans (Tartarus)

After the Olympian gods Plethon places Titans, the illegitimate children of Zeus who are the lower Forms that are so distant from the first principle that they are not capable of producing anything immortal and are therefore only the source of being subject to generation and corruption. The two highest gods among them are Cronus and Aphrodite, who have roles analogous to those of Poseidon and Hera among the Olympians. Cronus is the highest god in Tartarus and, as Poseidon among the Olympians, he is the 'eldest' of all the Titans and charged with leadership. Together with the Sun, the highest god of the sensible world, he is responsible for 'the creation of all mortal nature'. Cronus and Aphrodite together create mortal things in a similar way as Poseidon and Hera create the everlasting ones. Cronus bestows form on them, Aphrodite matter. As Plethon explains, what is meant here is not 'the eldest and indestructible' matter, but that which is 'separated from the eldest bodies and other elements' and which receives 'the forms subsisting in whole bodies', obviously the bodies composed of matter and form. For this reason these forms are mortal and the matter connected with Aphrodite is 'the most proper matter each time given to the mortal bodies'.⁵⁰

In Plethon's philosophy two kinds of matter are thus to be distinguished. The first one is produced by Hera and, more specifically, by the Olympian gods who are the patrons of the elements (Rhea, Leto, Hecate, Tethys and Hestia). The first kind of matter is everlasting, because it can never cease to exist, being the Aristotelian first ('the eldest') matter, which undergoes changes during the creation of sensible things composed of it.⁵¹ The other kind of matter is the one that is mortal and that is administered by Aphrodite. It is present in the bodies composed of forms and matter and it is no longer the indeterminate first matter, being specified by the body in which it is present. However, this concrete composition of form and specified matter is always unstable and ceases to exist with the destruction of the body which is constituted by the actual composition. To sum up, mortal matter is produced, or literally 'separated

⁵⁰ Ibid. 108 [III,15]: ... Κρόνον τε και Ἀφροδίτην, παραπλησίως και αὐτῷ, ἐν τῶν γε θεῶν τοῖς Ταρταρίοις, πρὸς ἀλλήλω ἔχοντε, ἧ δὴ μάλιστα και Ποσειδῶν Ἥρα τε ἐν θεῶν ἔχεται τοῖς Ὀλυμπίοις, τὰ τῆδε θνητὰ και αὐτῷ παραπλησίως ἀπογεννᾶν, Κρόνον μὲν τὸ εἶδος τὸ τοιοῦτον δήπου ἐκάστοις παρεχόμενον, Ἀφροδίτην δέ, τὴν ὕλην· οὐ τὴν γε πρεσβυτάτην τε και ἀνώλεθρον ἅμα και αὐτήν, ἀλλ' ὅση τις, σωματῶν τῶν γε πρεσβυτάτων και τῶν ἄλλων στοιχείων γιγνομένων ἀποκρινόμενη, ἐπιφερομένη τε, ὡς κάκεῖνα, τὰ εἶδη, ἃ γε ἐν τοῖς ὄλοις ὑπάρχοντα σώμασι ἐτύχανεν, ὅθεν περ και ἀποκέρκται, θνητὰ δ' ἤδη αὐτὰ ἐπιφερομένη, οἰκειότητι αὐτῆ ὕλη σώμασι τοῖς γε θνητοῖς γίγνεται ἐκάστοτε. Ibid. 164 [III,34]: ... τὴν συμπάσης τῆς θνητῆς φύσεως δημιουργίαν ἐπιτέτραφθον. Cf. ibid. 212 [III,35].

⁵¹ Cf. *Ad quæes.* 67–88.

(ἀποκρινομένη)', from the indefinite first matter – which allows only the primary determination into the four elements through its connection with a form. It is precisely this specific composition that later disintegrates again into the primary undefined matter that is presided over by Aphrodite. Plethon describes this goddess also as the 'patron of everlastingness by succession in mortal things'.⁵² He obviously means her role in securing the succession of forms from one individual to another across series of generations. As we shall see later on, in this manner humankind has its share in the everlasting being. Perhaps this is also the reason why, for Plethon, this Form is associated with Aphrodite, the ancient goddess of love. We may only speculate what role is assigned to the world soul in forming the elementary masses.

Other Titans play a role in the *Laws* after the highest couple, Cronus and Aphrodite. In contrast with his treatment of the Olympians, Plethon did not enumerate all the Titans who create sensible things.⁵³ The reason was because the Olympians were fewer in number, being closer to Zeus, as opposed to the more numerous lower gods who were further from the first principle that is purely one (εἰλικρινῶς ἔν).⁵⁴ It would be indeed tedious or perhaps even impossible to go through all the Forms of species, attributes, qualities and so forth, which appear in the sensible world. Each of the Titans was responsible for his appropriate part of the 'mortal nature'. Nonetheless, Cronus and other 'co-creators' of this world still belong, along with the Olympians, among the supracaelestial gods of the second order, whose essence is eternal.⁵⁵ Of the Titans Plethon mentions only Pan, who is the patron of the Form of non-rational animals, Demeter, who is the same for plants, and then the unspecified rest of the Titans who were put in charge of the higher or lower mortal things. One of them was Kore, the patron of our mortal part. When mentioning her, Plethon alludes to the ancient myth in which Kore (or Persephone) is abducted by Pluto, who otherwise belongs to the Olympians. Their union – 'concluded under the commands of Father Zeus' – thus establishes a connection between the Olympus and Tartarus.⁵⁶ The unique connection of

⁵² *Leg.* 164 [III,34].

⁵³ Cf. *ibid.*: ... ἄλλοι τε σύμπαντες οἱ κατὰ μέρη, οἱ μὲν μείζω, οἱ δὲ μείω, τῶν θνητῶν ἕκαστα διειληφότες.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 56 [I,5].

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 134–6 [III,34]: Καὶ μετὰ τοῦτον σὺν τε τούτῳ, καὶ ὑμεῖς, ὧς λοιποὶ Τιτᾶνες πάντες Ταρτάριοι, τῆς αὐτῆς θνητῆς φύσεως ἄλλος ἄλλου μέρους τῷ ὑμετέρῳ δὴ τούτῳ ἡγεμόνι τε καὶ ἀδελφῷ πρεσβυτάτῳ Κρόνῳ, ἐν αἰωνίῳ τέως τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ οὐσίᾳ, συνδημιουργοί.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 164 [III,34]: Πᾶν μὲν τῆς τῶν ζώων τῶν ἀλόγων προεσθηκῆς ἰδέας, Δημήτηρ δὲ τῆς τῶν φυτῶν, ἄλλοι τε σύμπαντες οἱ κατὰ μέρη, οἱ μὲν μείζω, οἱ δὲ μείω, τῶν θνητῶν ἕκαστα διειληφότες. Ἐν οἷς καὶ Κόρη, ἡ τοῦ ἡμετέρου θνητοῦ προστάτις θεός, ἦν δὴ Πλούτων,

these two different parts of the ideal world, profoundly determines the position of man in the cosmos as described in Plethon's philosophy. The human being is thus conceived as a connection of the soul and the body that is at the same time a boundary between the immortal and mortal part of the sensible world.

Table of the Gods of the First and Second Order

The structure of the intelligible order or the second gods or Forms, as described by Plethon in his *Laws*, may be summarized in the following table:

Table 4 The gods of the first and second order

Position	Males	Females
0	Zeus	
Olympians		
1	Poseidon – form	
2		Hera – matter
3	Apollo – identity	
4		Artemis – difference
5	Hephaestus – rest	
6	Dionysus – self-motion	
7		Athena – motion by other things
8	Atlas – stars in general	
9	Tithonus – planets	
10		Dione – fixed stars
11	Hermes – daemons	
12	Pluto – the human soul	

ὁ τοῦ ἡμῶν αὐθανάτου ἀρχῶν, ἡρακῶς, ἔχει τε καὶ σύνεστι, θεὸς Ὀλύμπιος θεοῦ Ταρταρίας ἐρασθείς, κοινωνίαν τε Ταρτάρῳ πρὸς Ὀλυμπον τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς Διὸς θεσμοῖς μηχανώμενος. Cf. *ibid.* 212, 220 [III,35].

13		Rhea – elements in general
14		Leto – aether
15		Hecate – air
16		Tethys – water
17		Hestia – earth
Titans (Tartarus)		
18	Cronus – mortal form	
19		Aphrodite – mortal matter
20	Pan – non-rational animals	
21		Demeter – plants
22		Kore – the human body*

* The order of the last three gods (20–22) as well as the definite number of the Titans (the lower Forms) seems to be neither certain nor complete. Kore, the patron of human body, mentioned by Plethon in the last place, *Leg.* 164 [III,34], could be probably placed above non-rational animals and plants because of the more complex constitution and higher status of humans. On the other hand, as we can observe for instance in the case of (8) Atlas and (13) Rhea, Plethon tends to place the more general Forms above the more specific one. This might help to explain why in his account (22) Kore, the specific Form of human body, follows after the more general Forms of (20) non-rational animals and (21) plants, although these are obviously less perfect in their nature.

Sources of Plethon's Mythology

The mythological account Plethon gives is in many ways unfamiliar in the context of ancient religious thought, including that of the Neoplatonists. We may therefore ask what were his reasons for the identification of the first principle and the Forms with specific gods. First of all, we must keep in mind that, as we observed when going through the programmatic introduction to his *Laws*, for Plethon, the poets who in the Greek tradition tell the mythological stories are not a reliable source of information about the gods. In the introduction too we were able to observe the amount of rationalizing explanation and demythologization Plethon uses, although implicitly, when thinking about ancient myths and stories. For instance, the mythological figures of the Kouretes and Giants became supporters and adversaries of the metaphysical principles of Plethon's

philosophia perennis.⁵⁷ Given its internal logical coherence and the fact that Plethon's account of the Platonic Forms is probably based on several of Plato's dialogues, it seems right to presuppose that it grew out of systematic philosophical consideration rather than from an attempt to reveal the real rational nature of traditional Greek pantheon hidden in a poetical veil, as the Neoplatonists believed. This is supported also by the fact that in Plethon's times the ancient Greek pantheon was no longer any part of living religious experience and must have been derived from the texts written by ancient authors. These circumstances may help us explain why in his system Plethon distorts the functions of some gods in comparison with ancient Greek mythology.⁵⁸

To start with,⁵⁹ the identification of Zeus, acting apart from the other gods as the supreme creator and sovereign, with the first principle is obvious. Behind the distinction between the legitimate Olympians creating the entities which are immortal, and the illegitimate Titans, dwelling in Tartarus and creating only what is mortal, there seems to be the traditional account by Hesiod of the fight between the Olympian gods and the Titans who after their defeat were thrown into Tartarus.⁶⁰ The Titans are also located in Tartarus by Homer.⁶¹ However, in Plethon's version of Platonism, the underworld gods are placed among the Platonic Forms which shows clearly that, similarly to daemons, they are not the evil or chthonic gods, but just a lower level of divinity. From Hesiod, too, we know the story of the three generations of gods which constitutes the leading thread of his narrative: Gaia (Earth) first generated and gave the rule to (I) Uranus (Heaven), who was overthrown by (II) Cronus, the ruler of the Titans. Then (III) the Olympians fought against them and when victorious Zeus was chosen as the supreme sovereign. It is possible that Plethon has this sequence of divine generations in mind when he distinguishes different levels of divinity. The gods of the third order, that is, the Sun, planets and stars, are a part of (I) Heaven (οὐρανός), whereas, seen from below, the gods of the second order are divided into (II) the Titans living in Tartarus under the leadership of Cronus and (III) the Olympian gods. Zeus is placed apart above them, holding the supreme power as he has become the supreme leader over the other Olympians. It thus seems that Plethon, following the mythological story of three generations of the

⁵⁷ See above, p. 55.

⁵⁸ Similarly, the identical philosophical explanation of the gods from Homer's *Iliad* undertaken by Plethon in the treatise *On Homer* is most probably a projection of his metaphysical principles into the ancient poet and not vice versa.

⁵⁹ For an alternative explanation of Plethon's sources than is the one which follows see Tambrun 2006, pp. 143–53.

⁶⁰ Hesiod, *Theog.* 629–745.

⁶¹ Homer, *Il.* VIII.477–81.

gods, proceeds from the sensible world through the two levels of the Forms to the first principle. We can compare this approach with *Magian Oracle XXX*:

For the Father (πατήρ) perfected everything and committed it
to the second intellect (νοῦς δεύτερος), which the races of men call the first.⁶²

Here the divinity known earlier to humankind (the highest of the Forms) is at the lower level and closer to humans. Behind Plethon's identification of three successive generations of the gods with the different degrees of divinity thus lurks an idea of progressive human exploration of the divine world starting from the sensible heaven, then continuing up to the Forms or creators of perishable things (the Titans), to the Forms of the eternal ones (the Olympians) and, finally, as it is stated in the *Oracle*, to the utmost principle of everything.

As we have seen, what is the most puzzling aspect in the second order of the gods is the position of Poseidon who is identified with the Form of all the forms in the sensible world and made a husband of Hera, the Form of all matter. In Greek mythology, the husband of Hera is always Zeus⁶³ and, furthermore, it is difficult to say why the second highest god after Zeus should be Poseidon. In Greek mythology, Zeus, Poseidon and Hades were three brothers (according to Hesiod, Zeus was the youngest of them,⁶⁴ according to Homer, he was the eldest one)⁶⁵ and, as Homer tells us, when they drew lots to divide the power among them, Zeus got the Heavens, Poseidon the sea and Hades the underworld.⁶⁶ For Plethon, it may have been also significant that Plato mentions this Homeric passage in his *Gorgias*,⁶⁷ although the passage is erased in his own copy of the dialogue.⁶⁸ Examining the structure of Plethon's gods, we may observe that Zeus occupies the highest position as the supreme leader of all, but Poseidon is the highest one among the Olympians, being the gods of the second order, whereas Pluto holds the position of the lowest male god among them, that is, the god who is the producer of form, in this case he is the form of the human soul. Below him are located only the goddesses of the elements, after whom the Titans follow. Pluto is the producer of the human soul which is the lowest everlasting entity

⁶² *Or. mag.* XXX 4.1–2, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 53.

⁶³ Gantz 1996, pp. 61–2.

⁶⁴ Hesiod, *Theog.* 453–80.

⁶⁵ Homer, *Il.* XIII.345–57, XV.187–8.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* XV.187–93.

⁶⁷ Plato, *Gorg.* 523a, similarly to Plethon the name Pluto and not Homeric Hades is being used here.

⁶⁸ Pagani 2009, pp. 176–7; similarly in Plethon's *On Homer* Poseidon is said to be μετὰ Δία ἰσχυρωτάτου [sc. τοῦ θεοῦ] πάντων θεῶν.

and this is why, unlike the other ones, it is connected with the mortal entity, the human body. So there really seems to be an intention behind Plethon's locating of Poseidon in second position preceded only by Zeus.⁶⁹

Furthermore, in Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Cratylus* there is an interesting explanation given in the connection with the Homeric passage telling the story about the drawing of lots which certainly deserves to be quoted in full:

The primal Zeus, because he is Demiurge of the whole universe, is King at the first, middle and last order. It is of him that Socrates was just saying [in the *Cratylus*⁷⁰] that he is both Ruler and King of all and that through him there is life and salvation for all. For what stands at the head of everything refers to the Zeus before the three. But Zeus who is ruling principle and a coordinate member of the three sons of Cronus administers the third part of the whole universe, according to the principle [introduced in Homer's *Iliad*] that 'all things are distributed three ways'.⁷¹ He is the highest of the three, synonymous with the fontal Zeus, unified with him and called by the single name of Zeus; the second is given two titles, 'Zeus of the sea' and 'Poseidon'; and the third has three titles, 'Zeus of the underworld', 'Pluto' and 'Hades'. The first preserves, creates and engenders life the highest things (τὰ ἀκρότατα); the second performs the second things (δευτέρα); and the third the third things (τρίτα). This is why the third is said to abduct Kore, in order to animate (ψυχώσει) with her the lower limits of the universe.⁷²

Plethon certainly did not base all the details of his account on Proclus' complex metaphysics and allegory. However, there are some undeniable parallels with what he claims. Notable is the mentioning of Kore, who was abducted by Pluto, Proclus explained, 'in order to animate (ψυχώσει) with her the lower limits of the universe.' Plethon says very much the same thing and Proclus' explanation of this ancient myth is close to his own conception of Pluto, who is the bestower of the human soul upon the human body, which, in turn, is presided over by Kore. However, the most remarkable detail is the division of one higher Zeus into three other Zeus's corresponding to three different orders of reality, the first one being Zeus himself, the second Zeus–Poseidon, the third Zeus–Pluto. This may help us comprehend why it is Poseidon who according to Plethon is the highest, and Pluto who is the lowest male god of the Olympians. Plethon connects the two highest gods of the second order with the Forms of form and matter, identifying them with Poseidon and Hera respectively. If he really knows

⁶⁹ Masai 1956, pp. 279–80.

⁷⁰ Plato, *Crat.* 396a–b.

⁷¹ Homer, *Il.* XV.189.

⁷² Proclus, *In Crat.* 148.10–25, trans. Brian Duvick (altered); cf. *ibid.* 150.

from Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Cratylus* that Poseidon is in fact 'the second Zeus', this source may once again help to understand why in spite of ancient tradition Plethon can make him the husband of Hera. Needless to say that the association of Hera with Poseidon is possible because in Greek mythological tradition the latter has no defined spouse.⁷³

In Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Cratylus*, there is another passage where Hera (3) is posited at a lower level than Zeus and connected with Poseidon:

But Zeus is separate and transcendent over the encosmic realm as a whole. For this reason, even the most universal and lordly of the other gods, though they seem in a sense to be equally worthy as Zeus because of their procession from the same causes, call him Father. For both Poseidon and Hera address him by this honorific title. Yet, Hera justifies herself to him on the grounds that she is on the same rank as he ... And Poseidon, too, claims [this] ...⁷⁴ Yet both nevertheless address Zeus as Father. The reason is that he anticipates the one and undivided Cause of all creation he is prior to the Cronian triad and connector of the three Fathers and encompasses from all sides the life-producing function (ζωογονία) of Hera. For this reason, while she ensouls the universe, he institutes, along with everything else, the souls as well. It is therefore reasonable for us to claim that the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* is the supreme Zeus. For it is he that introduces both the encosmic intellects and the souls.⁷⁵

Plethon could have reinterpreted this passage according to his own views also because in Proclus' account Hera's relation to Zeus is rather complex:

And though in one way she is separate from the Demiurge, in another she is unified with him for in the *Philebus*⁷⁶ Zeus is said to have 'a regal intellect', because Hera too is joined with him or is encompassed by him ... For Zeus uniformly contains the paternal as well as the maternal cause of the cosmos, and the spring of the souls is said to reside in Zeus, just as again the intellection (νόησις) of Zeus is said to be participated in first by Hera.⁷⁷

However, nowhere in this work of Proclus is it explicitly stated that Hera is connected with matter, although we find some formulations which are close

⁷³ Gantz 1996, pp. 62–3.

⁷⁴ Homer's *Iliad* IV.58–9 and XV.187, is quoted.

⁷⁵ Proclus, *In Crat.* 99.44–64, trans. Brian Duvick.

⁷⁶ Plato, *Philb.* 30d.

⁷⁷ Proclus, *In Crat.* 169.13–22, trans. Brian Duvick (altered).

to it.⁷⁸ In Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Republic* Hera is connected with the First Unlimitedness from which matter in the world is derived, whereas Zeus is connected with Limit which is the forming principle.⁷⁹

In Origen's *Against Celsus* there is, nonetheless, an interesting passage which may help to shed more light on this problem. The context is not foreign to Plethon's reasoning since ancient Greek myths are criticized there:

Why need I enumerate outrageous stories of the Greeks about the gods who are obviously shameful even if they are to be interpreted allegorically? At any rate, in one place Chrysippus of Soli ... expounds the meaning of a picture at Samos, in which Hera is portrayed as performing unmentionable obscenities with Zeus. This honourable philosopher says in his treatise that matter receives the generative principles (σπερματικοὶ λόγοι) from God, and contains them in itself for the ordering of the universe (εἰς κατακόσμησιν τῶν ὄλων). For in the picture at Samos Hera is matter and Zeus is God.⁸⁰

This passage gives what seems a most clear presentation of an ancient Stoic tradition of allegorical exegesis, which is hinted at also in Diogenes Laertius⁸¹ and which identifies Zeus with the formative cause while bestowing 'generative principles (σπερματικοὶ λόγοι)' on Hera, who symbolizes matter.

The identification of (3) Apollo with identity and (4) Artemis with difference is probably derived from Plato's *Cratylus* since there, too, Apollo is said to be 'simple (ἀπλοῦς)'⁸² and, similarly to Plethon, the name Artemis is there derived from the 'soundness (τὸ ἀρτεμές)' of the virgin goddess.⁸³

In the same passage of Plato's *Cratylus*, just after Apollo and Artemis, the names of Dionysus, Athena and Hephaestus are also treated.⁸⁴ However, on the basis of the *Cratylus* or Proclus's *Commentary* on this dialogue, Plethon's association of (5) Hephaestus with rest is difficult to explain. It seems to be

⁷⁸ Cf. 'Hera provides procession (πρόοδος) and multiplication (πολλαπλασιασμός) into lower levels of being, and is the life-creating spring (ζωοποιὸς πηγή) of the reason-principles and mother of the generative powers. This is why she is also said to cooperate with the demiurgic Zeus, since through their association she bears maternally what Zeus engenders paternally' Ibid. 139.4–9, trans. Brian Duvick.

⁷⁹ Proclus, *In Remp.* I, 133.19–134.22.

⁸⁰ Origen, *Contra Cels.* IV, 48.15–24 = *SVF* II, 1074.

⁸¹ Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* VII, 187.8–188.6 = *SVF* II, 1071; cf. *SVF* II, 1072–1077.

⁸² Plato, *Crat.* 405c; however, a similar identification is carried out more fully in Proclus, *In Crat.* 174.15–19, 176.27–37, or Plutarch, *De Is.* 381f, *De E* 388f, 393b–c.

⁸³ Plato, *Crat.* 406b.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 406b–407c.

derived from the mythological stories in which he immobilizes his mother Hera⁸⁵ or catches his wife Aphrodite *in flagrante* with her lover Ares.⁸⁶

Concerning (7) Athena, in Plato's *Cratylus* her epithet Pallas is connected with dancing and is explained as 'to make to sway (πάλλειν)' or 'to be swayed (πάλλεσθαι)'⁸⁷ which is in accord with Plethon's identification of her with the motion by different things. The name Athena is then explained by Plato as 'the intellection of God (θεοῦ νόησις)'.⁸⁸ The remaining two gods, Dionysus and Hephaestus, are both connected with Athena in Proclus' hymn to this goddess, which Plethon certainly studied.⁸⁹ Athena is invoked here as 'you, who guarded the unconquerable girdle of your virginity / by fleeing the desire of the amorous Hephaestus'.⁹⁰ This is an allusion to the famous mythological scene when Athena pushed away a sexually aroused Hephaestus,⁹¹ which may help to explain why, in Plethon's *Laws*, she is associated with pushing (ῶσις).

As for (6) Dionysus, Plethon identifies him with self-motion. In the *Cratylus*, Plato claims that he is 'the giver of wine (ὁ δίδους τὸν οἶνον)' 'making many drinkers think to possess intellect although they do not'.⁹² Proclus explains this passage in his *Commentary on Plato's Cratylus* as follows:

In the same way he [Socrates] glorifies the limits of Dionysus and Aphrodite which produce spiritual delight, as he everywhere purifies our conceptions of the gods and prepares us to think that all things, of whatever sort they may be, look toward the best end ... Now referring to that, Socrates calls the god 'Didoinysoś', deriving the name from wine (οἶνος), which, as we have stated, reveals all the powers of God, just as in the *Phaedrus* he calls the great Eros indiscriminately both divine and a lover of the body. So wine, as commonly used in the vernacular, provides us with the property of the particular intellect (νοῦς) ... Thus wine operates analogously at the various levels of being – in the body it operates like an image through belief and false imagination, while in the intellectual realm

⁸⁵ Plato, *Resp.* II 378d, Pausanias, *Graec. Descript.* I,20,3, Gantz 1996, pp. 75–6.

⁸⁶ Homer, *Od.* VIII.266–366.

⁸⁷ Plato, *Crat.* 406d–407a.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 407a–c.

⁸⁹ van den Berg 2001, pp. 5–8.

⁹⁰ Proclus, *Hymni* VII.9–10, trans. Robbert M. van den Berg. Plethon, nonetheless, omits these two verses in his edition of Proclus' *Hymns*; cf. Vogt's editorial commentary on Proclus, *Hymni*, p. 10. The reason might be his overall strategy of avoiding scandalous stories about the ancient Greek gods, something already criticized by Plato, and so in his eyes the two deities could be still considered as connected.

⁹¹ Gantz 1996, p. 77.

⁹² Plato, *Crat.* 406c.

activity and creation take place intellectually; which is why, when the Titans tore Dionysus apart, only his heart is said to have remained undivided, that is, the indivisible essence of his intellect.⁹³

Such an explanation is at least reconcilable with Plethon's description of Dionysus who is supposed to pull things towards the good. Furthermore, in his *Hymn to Athena*, just after mentioning the incident with Hephaestus, Proclus exploits the ancient Orphic story of Dionysus being torn apart by the Titans and says that it was Athena who saved his heart 'as yet unchopped'.⁹⁴ We have seen above, that in the passage of book X of his *Laws*, which seems to be the source of Plethon's distinction of these two kinds of motion, Plato claims that the higher self-motion is in fact the source of all other motion. That means, it is passed over to the second, lower kind of motion which is caused by different things. Similarly, Plethon could have made Athena (motion by different things) to receive the motion from above, that is, from Dionysus (self-motion).

(8) Atlas who is supposed to be the Form of stars in general, is said by Hesiod 'to hold the broad heaven ... by his head and tireless hands'.⁹⁵ The god who sustains the celestial vault is thus a natural candidate for the Form of the heavens. (9) Tithonus, who, according to Plethon, is the Form of the planets, is in Greek mythology a mortal who had been abducted by Eos, the goddess of dawn. The goddess managed to obtain immortality for him, but she failed to get also for him eternal youth.⁹⁶ Plethon may have had Plato's *Timaeus* in mind here, where we are told about the creation of the planets, including the Moon, the Sun, 'the star of Hermes' (Mercury) and the Morning star (ἑωσφόρος) by the Demiurge, who promised them that, even though they are connected to bodies and existing in time, they would never perish since he had decided so. Furthermore, they are supposed to help him in creating other mortal creatures.⁹⁷ Similarly in Plethon's philosophy, the planets are not eternal, but everlasting and, furthermore, their participation in the creation of mortal beings is also similar to what Plato says about this problem. Plethon thus could have thought that the mortal Tithonus, the Form of the planets, is immortalized by Eos, the goddess of dawn who is naturally connected with the regular alternation of day and night. The identification of (10) Dione with the Form of fixed stars is really puzzling. Dione is the mother of the Common Aphrodite.⁹⁸ Could it thus be that she is

⁹³ Proclus, *In Crat.* 181.14–17, 182.11–17, 32–7, trans. Brian Duvick.

⁹⁴ Proclus, *Hymni* VII.11–15, trans. Robbert M. van den Berg.

⁹⁵ Hesiod, *Theog.* 517–20.

⁹⁶ Gantz 1996, pp. 36–7; cf. Hesiod, *Theog.* 984–5.

⁹⁷ Plato, *Tim.* 38b–40d, 41a–d; cf. Tambrun 2006, p. 148. See below p. 131–2.

⁹⁸ Plato, *Symp.* 180d–e; cf. Homer, *Il.* V.370–71, Gantz 1996, p. 12.

identified with the higher, Celestial (Οὐρανία) Aphrodite here? In his own copy of the Platonic text, Plethon nonetheless erased just this information about the mother of Aphrodite.⁹⁹

It is quite easy to understand why (11) Hermes, the messenger of the gods in Greek mythology, is associated here with daemons. According to the famous statement of Plato in the *Symposium*, daemons are intermediary beings between the gods and mortal beings.¹⁰⁰ As for (12) Pluto, we have seen above the role he is given in Plethon's mythology and the possible reasons for it, Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* being the probable source.¹⁰¹

It is convenient to treat the following five goddesses together. These are (13) Rhea, who is the Platonic Form of the elements in general, Leto presiding over aether, Hecate over air, Tethys over water and Hestia over earth. In Plato's *Cratylus* Hestia, Tethys and Rhea appear together in one passage. The name Rhea is connected there with the Heraclitean flux (ῥεῖν) of all things. In the very same passages the name of Tethys is also explained by using a similar idea – Plethon characterizes her as 'dissolving (διάρρητον)'.¹⁰² This corresponds very well with the nature of the elements which, according to Plethon, although everlasting as elementary masses, continuously change. What is perhaps confusing is the fact that, according to Hesiod, Rhea is not an Olympian goddess, but one of the Titans and the spouse of Cronus.¹⁰³ But, after all, in Plethon's mythological account she, too, is close to Cronus, being – together with the other four goddesses of the elements – the lowest of the Olympians. Furthermore, the elements are transitional entities which are both everlasting and constantly changing at the same time.

It is more difficult to explain the presence of the two remaining goddesses of the elements. (14) Leto is associated with the Form of aether. Proclus in his *Commentary on Plato's Cratylus* interprets her in the following way:

This goddess sends forth all life-bearing light, illuminating both the intellectual essences of the gods and the orders of souls, and ultimately lights around the cosmos, and established its cause in her children, Apollo and Artemis, and flashes like lightning her intellectual and life-bearing light into all things.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Pagani 2009, p. 178.

¹⁰⁰ Plato, *Symp.* 202d–e.

¹⁰¹ Proclus, *In Crat.* 152.

¹⁰² Plato, *Crat.* 401b–402d.

¹⁰³ Hesiod, *Theog.* 453–62, Gantz 1996, p. 41.

¹⁰⁴ Proclus, *In Crat.* 178.4–9, trans. Brian Duvick (altered).

Light naturally corresponds well with aether. As for (15) Hecate, associated with air, it is interesting to note that according to Hesiod she and Leto are relatives. The latter is a daughter of Phoebe, 'the bright one', and Coeus.¹⁰⁵ Her sister is Asteria, 'the starry one', who gave birth to Hecate, who has a share in the earth, sea and heaven.¹⁰⁶ In Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Cratylus* Hecate is made a daughter of Leto on the basis of an Orphic fragment.¹⁰⁷ The reason why Hecate is connected with air thus may be due to her family relationship with her aunt Leto after whom she immediately follows.

In contrast, the association of (16) Tethys with the Form of water is much more obvious since she is the spouse of Oceanus, giving birth primarily to rivers.¹⁰⁸ We may note that in Plethon's thought water cannot be associated with Oceanus or Poseidon because due to its nature as an element it is closer to matter than to a form presided over by male gods. In contrast to Tethys, who is said to be 'dissolving', Plethon describes (17) Hestia, the Form of earth, as 'fixing'. In Plato's *Phaedrus* she is the only Olympian goddess who remains 'in the house of the gods' when the others travel above the celestial vault. In the *Cratylus* she is also the goddess associated with stability, namely, essence (οὐσία).¹⁰⁹

We now arrive at the Titans. The lead position of (18) Cronus is certainly no surprise, nor is the fact that Cronus, by analogy with Poseidon, is supposed to be the Platonic Form of form, but being a Titan, only the mortal one. Plethon may also be using a traditional allegorical explanation of Cronus as time (χρόνος) since everything created by Cronus is temporal, that is, it originates and perishes in time. Such an allegory of Cronus may be found for instance in Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris*,¹¹⁰ a treatise Plethon certainly knew, or, alternatively, in Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Cratylus*.¹¹¹ (19) Aphrodite, who is supposed to be the spouse of Cronus, is logically made the Form of mortal matter by Plethon. In Greek mythology such a connection is very unusual since the spouse of Cronus is traditionally Rhea, who is one of the lowest Olympians in Plethon's scheme. However, in Hesiod Aphrodite is somehow associated with Cronus, who is indirectly responsible for her birth by castrating Uranus.¹¹² Furthermore, Plethon could have drawn similar information from the same treatise of Plutarch where we learn that according to Theopompus people living in the West call

¹⁰⁵ Hesiod, *Theog.* 404–8.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 409–20.

¹⁰⁷ Proclus, *In Crat.* 179.37–44, Orpheus, *Fr.* 188 Kern = 317 F Bernabé.

¹⁰⁸ Hesiod, *Theog.* 337–70.

¹⁰⁹ Plato, *Phaedr.* 247a–247b, *Crat.* 401c–d.

¹¹⁰ Plutarch, *De Is.* 363d.

¹¹¹ Proclus, *In Crat.* 109.

¹¹² Hesiod, *Theog.* 188–200.

winter Cronus and summer Aphrodite, while Persephone is identified with spring, and they think that ‘from Cronus and Aphrodite everything is born.’¹¹³ We may note that in Plethon’s conception of the Forms, Kore (or Persephone) is also placed among the Titans as the Form of the human body. In a famous passage of Plato’s *Symposium* two Aphrodites are distinguished, the first being elder and born without a mother as a daughter of Uranus and for this reason is called Celestial (Οὐρανία). In contrast, the younger one is born from Zeus and Dione and is called the Common (Πάνδημος). This Common Aphrodite is said to be oriented more toward bodies than toward the souls.¹¹⁴ We know that Plethon was interested in this passage since in his own copy of the Platonic text he erased the information about the parents of the two Aphrodites (‘a daughter of Uranus, without a mother’, Zeus and Dione).¹¹⁵ However, he kept the distinction between the Celestial and Common Aphrodite. It is thus possible that Plethon may have had the second, the Common Aphrodite, in mind here. According to Proclus’ *Commentary on Plato’s Cratylus* the Common Aphrodite, born from Dione, ‘administers all the coordinations in the Uranian cosmos and earth, binds them to one another, and perfects their generative processions with a common intelligible conjunction.’¹¹⁶

(20) Pan and (21) Demeter are the best and most understandable candidates for the Forms of non-rational animals and plants respectively.¹¹⁷ Finally, the reasons why (22) Kore is the Form of the human body is clear from the story of her abduction by Pluto found in Proclus’ *Commentary on Plato’s Cratylus*, as we have been able to see above.

To conclude, we see that out of the traditional Greek Olympian gods, Plethon managed to locate almost all of them (Zeus, Poseidon, Hera, Apollo, Artemis, Hephaestus, Dionysus, Athena, Dione, Hermes, Pluto, Leto, Dione, Hestia, Aphrodite, Demeter, Kore) into his philosophical pantheon. The most obvious exception is Ares, the god of war. This seems to be because in Plethon’s version of Platonism there is no room for any antagonistic principle, with all the gods acting in harmony.¹¹⁸ We have seen that in his account there are some surprising alterations in comparison with ancient Greek mythology, the most notable ones being his making Poseidon the husband of Hera, grouping together Atlas, Tithonus, and Dione, as well as Leto and Hecate, and placing Demeter, Aphrodite, and Kore in Tartarus. Among Plethon’s sources there

¹¹³ Plutarch, *De Is.* 378e–f; cf. Tambrun 2006, p. 151.

¹¹⁴ Plato, *Symp.* 180d–181c; cf. Homer, *Il.* V.370–71.

¹¹⁵ Pagani 2009, p. 178.

¹¹⁶ Proclus, *In Crat.* 183.43–6, trans. Brian Duvick.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Gantz 1996, pp. 62–70, 110–11.

¹¹⁸ Tambrun 2006, p. 148; Ares, however, appears in Plethon’s *On Homer*.

were naturally the traditional accounts of Greek religion found in Homer and Hesiod. But in his eyes the poets, who are the source of the traditional Greek mythology, are mistaken when telling some of their myths since nothing evil may come from the gods. Thus even more important inspiration is for him Plato and especially his dialogue *Cratylus*. The most unusual features of Plethon's pantheon make better sense, however, when collated with Plutarch's *On Isis and Osiris*, Proclus' *Hymns*, which Plethon certainly knew, and most importantly, Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Cratylus*, whose presence seems to be so massive that one may conclude that Plethon used it when studying Plato's *Cratylus*. Even if this assumption is true, it is, nonetheless, obvious that Plethon did not follow this commentary slavishly and did not take into account all the details contained in it and especially the whole complex structure of Proclus' metaphysics. Rather, he focused on details he considered to be important for his work.

Chapter 10

Sensible Cosmos

Gods of the Third Order

As previously discussed the sensible cosmos was created as an image of the intelligible order of the Forms under the leadership of Poseidon. Imitating the first principle and forming this heaven, Poseidon made the cosmos that is as beautiful as possible 'for Zeus'. He has thus produced the gods of 'the third nature' and placed them inside the heaven.¹ Having been created by the Forms that are themselves, in turn, created by the first principle, the heavenly bodies are called 'the children of the children of Zeus (οἱ δὲ παίδων τε παῖδες)' and 'the works of his works (ἔργα ἔργων)'.² These gods of the third, who 'by observing closely [the heaven] sustain and at the same time order it'. They are 'already composed of body and soul'.³ Because of the adjoining bodies these gods are determined by place and position.⁴ Nevertheless, in another passage Plethon further distinguishes the intellect (νοῦς) inside the soul of the Sun and he apparently applies this distinction to all souls in general. The soul is said to have been created by Zeus and transmitted down to the highest star with the help of Poseidon, who is himself the creator of the soul of the Sun, whereas Hera is the producer of its body. We have apparently to do here with an idea that intellect must have been created by the same principle (Zeus) as were the Forms, that are not only intelligible entities, but themselves also intellects. Poseidon next subordinated the solar body to the soul and the soul to intellect.

Because of its double nature the Sun thus serves as the common boundary (ὄρος or, alternatively, πέρας) as well as a bond (σύνδεσμος) between the Forms and the sensible world. Its position is thus similar to a certain extent to that of Poseidon, who is the first in the intelligible order, the ruler (ἡγεμών) of the

¹ *Leg.* 174 [III,34]: Οὗτός [sc. Ποσειδῶν] σοι [sc. Διί] τόνδε τεκταινόμενος τὸν οὐρανόν, σέ τε μιμούμενος, καὶ μηχανώμενος, ὅπως σοι ὡς κάλλιστα αὐτὸν ἔξοντα ἀπεργάσαιτο, καὶ τρίτην ἔτι θεῶν τινα φύσιν γεγεννηκώς αὐτῷ ἐγκαθίστησι ...

² *Ibid.* 46 [I,5]; cf. Plato, *Tim.* 40b–41d.

³ *Leg.* 174 [III,34]: ... ψυχῇ ἤδη καὶ σώματι συμπεπηγότων, ἵνα δὴ ἐγγύθεν αὐτὸν σώζοιεν τε συνόντες, καὶ ἅμα κοσμοῖεν.

⁴ *Ibid.* 56 [I,5]: Καὶ τόπω δ' ἤδη θεῶν ἔχοντι τοὺς θεοὺς τούτους περιληπτούς διὰ τὰ συνόντα σφίσι γεγονέναι σώματα.

whole heaven, and the creator of all the mortal nature contained in it.⁵ As we shall see later on, the intellect of the Sun is no more separated from the sensible world than are the intelligible Forms, which are, for Plethon, at the same time also intellects, but participated (*μεθεκτός*) by the Sun. The difference between these two types of intellect consists in the fact that the participated one cannot act upon something different without the mediation of a body.⁶ As it seems, the same is true also for the other intellects participated by the souls in the sensible world, including the human intellect.

If the Sun is such a bond between these two levels of reality, it must naturally be corporeal, in a way similar to the other gods of the third order. As the gods, however, the latter differ from other sensible things by their permanent existence. In order to create the heaven of the sensible cosmos, Poseidon, the Form itself, 'uses' himself together with the rest of the intelligible essence, which is 'in every respect and altogether separated from matter', as a model for sensible things. Inside heaven he thus creates the forms of sensible things and composes heaven from them. However, these forms are not entirely separated, but grounded in matter. They are images of the Forms contained in the intelligible order and made to resemble to them. The matter is provided by the Olympian Hera, the source of the matter for everlasting things and the Titan Aphrodite, the Form of the matter for the perishable ones. Two kinds of sensible things are thus produced. The lower one is entirely inseparable and tied to matter and equal to all the non-rational species. The higher one is 'not any more' tied to matter, but, on the contrary, 'it has matter tied to itself'. Although it is not actually separated, it is separated and can exist 'as itself' potentially. For this reason it is also more akin to the essence that exists by itself, that is, to the essence of the supracaelestial Forms. In contrast to non-rational beings, all these properties belong to the rational soul.⁷

⁵ *Ibid.* 136, 164–6, 178 [III,34], *Add.* 120.1–4, below, p. 313. Plethon probably derives his conception of the middle position of the Sun from Julian, *Or. Sol.* 132d–133a, 135c, 138c–142b; cf. Lacombrade's introduction, pp. 84–7.

⁶ *Leg.* 110 [III,15]; cf. 178 [III,34], *De diff.* X 341.30–32.

⁷ *Leg.* 174–6 [III,34]: Αὐτὸς [sc. Ποσειδῶν] γὰρ ἑαυτῷ τε καὶ συμπάσῃ τῇ καθ' ἑαυτὸν οὐσίᾳ, τῇ ὕλης πάντῃ τε καὶ πάντως χωριστῇ, παραδειγματὶ χρώμενος, εἶδη μὲν καὶ τῶδε ἐνεποίει τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ συντείθει ἐξ εἰδῶν αὐτόν, οὐκέτι μέντοι πάντα χωριστῶν τινῶν, ἀλλ' ἐφ' ὕλης, ἥσπερ Ἥρα αὐτῷ ἀδελφῇ τε δὴ ἅμα καὶ δάμαρ χορηγὸς ἦν, βεβηκότων, ἐκείνων γε μὴν εἰκόνων, καὶ πρὸς ἐκεῖνα ἀφωμοιωμένων. Ὡν διττὸν τὸ γένος ἀπεργαζόμενος, τὸ μὲν πάντῃ ἀχώριστόν τι τῆς ὕλης ἐποίει καὶ ταύτης ἐξημμένον, τὸ ἄλογον δὲ εἶδος σύμπαν, τὸ δ' οὐκέτι αὐτῆς ἐξημμένον, ἀλλὰ τούναντίον αὐτὸ ἔχον αὐτὴν ἐξημμένην, καὶ ἔργῳ μὲν οὐ χωριστόν, τῇ δὲ δυνάμει χωριστόν τε τι καὶ αὐτὸ ὄν, καὶ τῇ καθ' ἑαυτὸν οὐσίᾳ τῇ ὑπερουρανίῳ ταύτῃ συγγενέστερον, τὴν ψυχὴν δὴ τὴν λογικὴν. Cf. Proclus' distinction between two series

Beings possessing a rational soul are further divided into three kinds according to the precision of their knowledge.⁸ The first one has the proper knowledge of everything and this is the legitimate celestial genus of stars. The second kind has the right opinion about everything while 'not being able to attain the proper knowledge of it', and this is the illegitimate and terrestrial genus of daemons. It represents the lowest genus of the gods, which serves to the higher ones according to their needs. Finally, in the third and lowest place, immediately after daemons, is placed the fallible kind, being not a 'proper offspring' of Zeus; this is our human soul.⁹ This hierarchy is further strengthened by the fact that human souls are ordered by the superior, divine ones, proceeding, nonetheless, from the same source and sharing with them an everlasting essence.¹⁰

Table 5 The degrees of knowledge of rational souls

1	stars	proper knowledge
2	daemons	right opinion
3	human soul	fallible

The genus of non-rational beings (ἄλογον εἶδος) is constituted out of the four 'eldest' kinds of bodies, that is, out of the four elements, fire, air, water and earth, that together form the whole 'body' of the visible world.¹¹ In section VI of the *Differences* Plethon argues against Aristotle and in support of the Platonists, claiming that there exist only the four elements and not five (the fifth one is supposed to be aether). Fire and earth are located at extreme opposite places, fire being the lightest because of the tenuousness of its texture, and thus rising up. Earth, in contrast, is the heaviest because of its density and therefore sinking down. Air and water are in the middle of these two, because their tenuousness

of the created substances, 'complete in themselves (αὐτοτελεῖς)' and 'incomplete (ἀτελεῖς)'; *El. theol.* LXIV 60.20–62.12, with Dodds' commentary, pp. 234–5.

⁸ See the title of lost chapter II,12: Κοινή τις ἀπόδειξις τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς τριῶν εἰδῶν. 'General proof of the three kinds of the soul.' *Leg.* 10, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 323 (altered).

⁹ *Ibid.* 176 [III,34]: see Appendix XI,2, below, p. 307. Cf. 52 [I,5]. Cf. similar three types of the soul as described by Proclus, *El. theol.* CLXXXIV–CLXXXVI 160.21–162.23, with Dodds' commentary, pp. 294–6.

¹⁰ *Leg.* 104 [III,15]: Δῆλαι δ' εἰσι καὶ ψυχαὶ αἷ γε ἡμέτεραι ὑπὸ ψυχῶν τῶν ἑαυτῶν προουχουσῶν θεῶν κοσμούμεναι, οὐκ ἂν καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν παραγόμεναι, ἀλλ' ἐκείθεν, ὅθεν περ κάκειναι, εἷ γε δὴ καὶ τῆς αὐτῆς αὐταῖς οὐσίας αἰδίου καὶ αὐταὶ εἰσιν.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 176 [III,34].

and density is middling in comparison with them. A similar disposition holds true for their motion, locomotion and rest. Being at the opposite extremes, earth is thus immovable, whereas fire is in perpetual motion. Water is even more movable than earth and air more than water, but less than fire. However, because of its perpetual motion, it can move only in a circle, since everything that moves straight must necessarily sometimes stop. Aether is thus made of this element, as is everything that is the upper body and that is properly called heaven.¹² Plethon then rejects Aristotle's possible objection, according to which fire can move only in a straight line (similarly to the otherwise motionless earth). As he argues, it may happen solely when it is moving back to its proper place (οικεῖος τόπος).¹³

In the same passage of the *Differences* Plethon also claims (once again to refute an argument found in Aristotle) that, because the elements are destructible in their parts, the Platonists deny that there is any body, even that of stars, which is by itself indestructible, since every body is divisible, dispersible and dissoluble. However, there are bodies considered to be indestructible even by the Platonists. They are not, nevertheless, indestructible by themselves, but because of the presence of the soul, by which they are 'immortalized'.¹⁴ We may wonder why the elements have their Forms placed among the Olympians who produce only the

¹² *De diff.* VI 330.7–25: Τέτταρα τὰ πρεσβύτατα τῶν ἐν τῷδε τῷ οὐρανῷ σωμαίων οἷ τε ἄνωθεν πάντες σοφοὶ καὶ οἱ περὶ Πλάτωνα φασί, πῦρ ἀέρα ὕδωρ γῆν. Τούτων πῦρ μὲν καὶ γῆν ἐναντιώτατα ἔχειν πρὸς ἀλλήλῳ, πῦρ μὲν κουφότατόν τε ὄν διὰ μανότητα καὶ πᾶσιν ἐπιπολάζον, γῆν δὲ βαρυτάτην τὴν διὰ πυκνότητα καὶ πᾶσιν ὑφισταμένην· ἀέρα δὲ καὶ ὕδωρ ἐν μέσῳ τούτοις διὰ τὸ καὶ μανότητός τε καὶ πυκνότητος μέσως ἔχειν αὐτοῖν. Ταύτη δὴ καὶ περὶ κινήσιν τε τὴν κατὰ τὴν φοράν καὶ στάσιν, πῦρ μὲν αὐτὸ καὶ γῆν πρὸς ἀλλήλῳ ἐναντιώτατα ἔχειν, ἀέρα δὲ καὶ ὕδωρ ἐν μέσῳ τούτοις· εἰ δὴ ἡ γῆ ἀκίνητος, τὸ πῦρ ἂν εἴη ἀεικίνητον, καὶ ἔτι εἰ ἡ μὲν γῆ ἀκίνητος, τὸ δ' ὕδωρ κινήτον μὲν, τοῦ δ' ἀέρος πολὺ τῆ κινήσει λειπόμενον, ἀὴρ δ' ὕδατος πολλῶν τῶν κινεῖσθαι ὑπερβάλλων, κἂν πῦρ ἀέρος τὴν ὑπερβάλλῃ πολλῶν ἔτι μᾶλλον τῶν κινεῖσθαι, καὶ ἀεικίνητον εἴη· εἰ δ' ἀεικίνητον, κἂν κύκλῳ κινεῖτο. Ἐπ' εὐθὺς γὰρ κινούμενον οὐχ οἶόν τε οὐδὲν ἀεικίνητον εἶναι· παύσασθαι γάρ ποτε ἀνάγκη τὸ ἐπ' εὐθὺς κινούμενον. Τούτου τοῦ σώματος εἶναι τὸν τε αἰθέρα καὶ πᾶν τὸ ἀνωτάτω σῶμα, οὐρανόν τε ἰδίως καλούμενον. The summary of the passage is based partly on the translation in Woodhouse 1986, p. 201. Cf. Aristotle, *De caelo* I,2 269a9–14, II,4 287a29 (the reference is taken from Woodhouse 1986, p. 201, n.50, based on Lagarde 1976).

¹³ *De diff.* VI 330.25–331.2; cf. *Contra Schol.* XXIX 472.1–4.

¹⁴ *De diff.* VI 331.2–11: Ἀλλὰ τῶν τεττάρων, φησὶ [sc. Ἀριστοτέλης], τούτων σωμαίων ἀπάντων κατὰ μέρος φθειρομένων, καὶ οὐδ' ὅτουσιν αὐτῶν πάντῃ ἀφθάρτου ὄντος, ἀνάγκη εἶναι τι καὶ πάντῃ ἀφθαρτὸν σῶμα, καὶ τοῦτ' εἶναι τὸν οὐρανόν. Τοῦτ' οὐκ ἔτι Ἀριστοτέλει οἱ περὶ Πλάτωνα συγχωροῦσιν· εἶναι γὰρ δὴ οὐ φασὶν καθ' αὐτὸ οὐδὲν ἀφθαρτὸν σῶμα. Πῶς γὰρ ἂν καὶ οἶον τ' εἴη ἀφθαρτὸν καθ' αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ μεριστόν τε καὶ σκεδαστόν, καὶ ὅσα τῆ ἑαυτοῦ φύσει διαλυτόν; Τὰ δ' ἀφθάρτα κάκεινοις δοκοῦντα τῶν σωμαίων οὐ καθ' αὐτὰ ἀφθάρτα εἶναι, ἀλλὰ διὰ ψυχῆς παρουσίαν, ὑπ' αὐτῆς ἐκείνης ἀπαθανατίζεσθαι.

things that are everlasting and not subject to destruction. The elemental masses are indeed 'indestructible as a whole', their number and character being fixed for ever. However, they change as the things composed of them are generated and perish, and for this reason they are 'destructible in parts'. Providing matter for sensible things, they are administered by the goddesses who are the patrons of matter and passivity.¹⁵

Because, despite their everlasting being, the gods of the third order (stars and daemons) as well as the human soul belong to the sensible cosmos, they have to be placed in an appropriate body. Their souls are thus put into 'the vehicles (τὰ ὀχήματα)',¹⁶ made of the element that is the most beautiful and 'contains the tiniest matter in the biggest mass', that is, fire. Stars are thus made of the fire which is bright and fiery, whereas the 'vehicles' of daemons and the human souls are constituted of the one that is invisible and aethereal.¹⁷ We are told that 'the vehicles' of the stars are ontologically higher and bright because of the amount of active potentiality in them.¹⁸ This theory helps to explain how bodies are connected to the souls of 'the three genera of immortal and rational things', the 'eldest' ones of those created. Their bodies are also called 'unageing (ἀγήρεα)

¹⁵ In the *Reply to Scholarios* Plethon also admits that the elements as a whole are indestructible (τῷ μὲν ὅλῳ ἀνώλεθρον), although destructible in their parts (τοῖς δὲ μέρεσι φθαρτόν). At the same time, however, he claims that even if stars are virtually indestructible, this is not because of their peculiar fiery matter, but because their bodies are entirely 'immortalized' 'by the Forms that are much more divine than the form of fire', apparently those immanent in them, *Contra Schol.* XXIX 472.6–12. The Forms that are meant here are obviously the five lowest Olympians from the *Laws* – Rhea (responsible for the elements in general), Leto, Hecate, Tethys and Hestia (responsible for aether, air, water and earth respectively), *Leg.* 160 [III,34]. There is thus no special matter out of which the everlasting part of the world would be formed and even in stars matter circulates, flowing in and out, *Contra Schol.* XXIX 472.12–474.20, *Ad quaes.* 58–88. It is not also entirely clear why in the former passage the soul is the cause of the indestructibility of stars, whereas in the latter it is their immanent form. Plethon may have just wanted to emphasize a different aspect of the same problem – stars are 'immortalized' by their souls, whose immortality is in turn secured by the corresponding Form. Cf. *Contra Schol.* XXIX 474.25–30, and the discussion below.

¹⁶ For the origin and later usage of the so-called astral body see Dodds 1933, Sorabji 2005, pp. 221–9, Chlup 2012, pp. 104–5; for Plethon's variant of this traditional Neoplatonic doctrine see Nikolaou 1982.

¹⁷ *Leg.* 176 [III,34]: ὢν τοῦ καλλίστου τε καὶ ἐλαχίστην ἐν μεγίστῳ ὄγκῳ κεκτημένου ὕλην, τοῦ πυρός, καὶ ταῖς γε ψυχαῖς τὰ ὀχήματα ἀπολαμβάνων ὑπεζεύγνυ, τοῦ μὲν λαμπροῦ τε αὐτῶν καὶ φλογώδους, τῶν ἄστρων, τοῦ δ' ἀοράτου καὶ αἰθερίου, τῶν τε δαιμόνων καὶ ψυχῶν τῶν ἡμετέρων.

¹⁸ *Or. mag.* 11.14–16 [on XIV]: τὰς δὲ τῶν ἄστρων πολὺ ἔτι καὶ αὐτῶν τῶν γε δαιμονίων κρείττους οὐσας, κρείττους καὶ ὀχήμασι χρῆσθαι, τοῖς οὕτω διὰ μέγεθος δραστηκῆς δυνάμεως λαμπροῖς τούτοις σώμασι.

and ‘undefiled (ἀκήρατα),’¹⁹ the second characteristic being obviously derived from the fact that they are made of the pure fire. What is remarkable is the claim (required by the need to explain the obvious phenomena) that the matter in stars, being of the higher quality than that of daemons and the human souls, is in fact more visible. Perhaps it is so because, for Plethon, the fire of stars is both bright and warm, whereas that of daemons and humans is just warm (as it is, for instance, evident in the case of breath) and it is not visible any more. However, as we shall observe later on, the case of the human souls is still more complicated, since, unlike the gods of the third order, they cannot fully profit from the pure existence. We may notice that the doctrine of vehicles contained in Plethon’s commentaries on the *Magian Oracles* was taken over by Marsilio Ficino.²⁰

Such is a basic outline of the sensible cosmos as presented by Plethon in the main text of the *Laws*. In the appendix to the book, the ensuing *Epinomis*, Plethon supplies few other important features. The cosmos must be, first, ‘everlasting together with Zeus.’²¹ Second, it is the most beautiful possible, that is, it remains forever in the same state and it cannot change the shape that has been once assigned to it. This is because it is impossible that the god who is the best either does not produce his work at some moment or does not create anything well. For Plethon, something that is itself the best must always, as much as possible, give a share of its own good to other things. This is the traditional Platonic concept of *bonum diffusivum sui*, according to which the supreme good, because of its goodness, cannot refrain from creating something different and yet similar to itself.²²

Plethon develops this train of thought further. If it is really so that God ‘creates and produces well,’ it means that he can never create something with a limited potentiality. Nor can he originate such a work that is worse than the best possible. Given this, if Zeus makes a change among things established by him, he would thus, sooner or later, make also the whole universe worse. Even if only a particle of the cosmos changes, it is impossible that the whole shape of the universe does not change together with this particle.²³ Further on, Plethon goes

¹⁹ *Leg.* 52 [I,5].

²⁰ Tambrun-Krasker 1999, 2006, pp. 241–59.

²¹ In the *Differences* as well as in the *Reply to Scholarios*, while criticising Aristotle, Plethon distinguishes between creation in time (τῷ χρόνῳ) and creation by cause (τῇ αἰτίᾳ). The universe is claimed to be created by a higher cause, even though it is everlasting and did not originate at a particular moment of time, *De diff.* I 322.8–19, *Contra Schol.* VII–VIII 386.15–392.9, X 392.18–398.15.

²² Cf. already Plato, *Tim.* 29d7–30a2.

²³ *Leg.* 242–4 [III,43: *Epinomis*]: ... ἄλλα τε ἡμῖν τῶν καλῶς ἐχόντων δογμάτων ἀποδείκνυται, καὶ ὡς τὸ πᾶν ἅμα μὲν αἴδιον τῷ Διὶ γέγονεν, ἅμα δὲ καὶ ὅτι δὴ κάλλιστον ἐκ τῶν

even as far as to claim that in the eternal cosmos similar periods as well as 'lives' and 'actions' repeat again and again, and that nothing new can happen.²⁴

For Plethon, it is thus impossible to keep the universe whole if all its particles do not remain in the same state.²⁵ This naturally does not mean that change is completely excluded from his universe. In his argument against the possibility of a change of the world to a worse state than before the key term is apparently the word 'usual (εἰωθός)': The universe may change, but as far as we presuppose that its producer is good, it cannot happen in the way that is not 'usual'. That means – it cannot divert from the natural laws determining the regular processes in it just because of pure chance. This idea opens the way for Plethon's doctrine of fate, which ensures that, despite its apparent changes, the sensible world remains always in the state that is the best possible. In contrast to the 'inner' transformations of the cosmos, including generation and corruption of things, the cosmos as the whole as well as the human soul, cannot have either a beginning or an end. According to Plethon, it has no beginning in time (χρόνω τε ἡργμένος) because to be everlasting (ἄδιον) and to extend into both directions is simply 'much more perfect and beautiful'.²⁶ For the same reason it can also never perish. As has been said above, the universe, together with the soul, must thus be co-eternal with the principle by which they both have been created.

Stars and Daemons

In Plethon's philosophy the Sun together with the Moon form a pair analogous to Poseidon and Hera among the Olympians, and Cronus and Aphrodite among the Titans.²⁷ The Sun has an eminent position among stars and sensible things in general because it is the boundary and bond between the sensible and the

ἐνότων γεγονός, ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ μένει ἐς τὸν πάντα αἰῶνα καταστάσει, ἐκ γε δὴ τοῦ καθάπαξ αὐτῷ ἀποδεδειγμένου σχήματος ἀπαρκίνητον. Οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐγχωροίη, ὃ τι περ βέλτιστον ὄντα τὸν θεὸν ἢ μὴ παράγειν ποτὲ τοῦργον τὸ αὐτοῦ, μηδ' εὖ ποιεῖν μηδοτιοῦν (δέοι γὰρ ἂν τὸ αὐτὸ βέλτιστον καὶ ἄλλοις τοῦ οἰκείου ἀγαθοῦ ἐς ὅσον τε ἐγχωρεῖ καὶ αἰεὶ μεταδίδοναι), ἢ εὖ τε ποιοῦντα καὶ παράγοντα, ἐνδεέστερόν ποτε τῆς δυνάμεως εὖ ποιῆσαι, καὶ χειρόν ποτε ἔξον τὸ αὐτοῦ ἔργον ἀποδοῦναι, ἢ οἷον ἂν γεγονός ὃ τι δὴ κάλλιστον εἶη. Δῆλα γὰρ δὴ ὡς τῶν καθεστηκότων εἶ τι Ζεὺς παρακινήσειε, καὶ τὸ πᾶν, εἴτ' ἔτι, εἴθ' ὕστερον, χειρόν γε ἔξον ἀποδοίη. Ἐπεὶ κἂν μόριόν τι αὐτοῦ μεταβάλλῃ, ἦτοι οὐ πρότερον μεταβάλλειν εἰωθός, ἢ οὐκ ἐς τὸ εἰωθὸς μεταβαλόν, ἀμήχανον μὴ οὐ καὶ ὅλον αὐτῷ συμμεταβαλεῖν τὸ σχῆμα.

²⁴ Ibid. 254–6 [III,43: *Epinomis*].

²⁵ Ibid. 244 [III,43: *Epinomis*]: Τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ σχῆμα, μὴ οὐκὶ πάντων ὡσαύτως μενόντων τῶν μορίων, οὐχ οἷόν τε σώζεσθαι.

²⁶ Ibid. 258–60 [III,43: *Epinomis*]; cf. *Zor. Plat.* 266.

²⁷ *Leg.* 106–8 [III,15].

intelligible world. As such it has an important role in the creation of the sensible world to which it also belongs. Together with Cronus and the other Titans or Forms, which are less general and capable of producing perishable things only, the Sun creates the whole mortal part of the sensible cosmos.²⁸

Plethon argues at length against the opinion²⁹ that the Forms of mortal things are to be placed into the intellect of the Sun and that they do not subsist anywhere by themselves. In this conception the Sun would produce every mortal thing in the same manner as craftsmen have the forms of artefacts in their minds.³⁰ However, according to Plethon, this comparison in fact clearly shows that such a solution of the problem of the Forms is simply impossible. This is because artefacts, as we may observe, proceed towards their perfection only when craftsmen are present and work on them. If, on the contrary, they are left half-finished, they are not getting perfected, 'because the craftsmen have carried away from them not only their hands, but also their models.'³¹ Artefacts are thus perfected according to the amount of work exerted each time upon them by craftsmen. In contrast, we do not observe that the things produced by nature are either perfected or living in dependence on the approaches and the retreats of the Sun. If this were so, everything would be either daily or annual, by which Plethon apparently means the influence of the motion of the Sun during the day or during the year. Furthermore, nothing would come to perfection during night. This obviously cannot be true because at night some plants and fruits often ripen, that is to say are perfected too. Similarly, Plethon rejects a possibility that just the intellect of the Sun, without its body, produces such an effect. He argues that, in contrast to the separated Forms, the intellects that are participated by the body, as is the case of the intellect of the Sun, cannot act upon other bodies in any way in the absence of the body connected to them. The bodies that are to have an effect on the other bodies must be in a certain position towards the things that are being affected.³²

Another possibility considered by Plethon is that the things which are being perfected might be perfected by their own selves. He finally rejects this solution too because no potentiality may pass over to actuality if it is not propelled by some other actuality preceding the former. In other words, nothing that is perfect

²⁸ Ibid. 164–6, 178 [III,34], 244–6 [III,43: *Epinomis*], *Add.* 120.4–9, below, p. 313.

²⁹ In the *Differences*, X 341.11 ff., he connects this idea with Aristotle who 'clearly makes the Sun the cause of generation of whatever comes into existence', trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 212 (altered); cf. Aristotle, *Met.* XII,5 1071a15, *De gener. et corr.* II,10 336b17–19.

³⁰ *Leg.* 108 [III,15]: see Appendix IV,3, below, p. 292. Cf. *De diff.* X 341.11–19.

³¹ This sentence is supplied from *De diff.* X 341.24–5: see Appendix IV,2, below, p. 292.

³² *Leg.* 108–10 [III,15]: see Appendix IV,3, below, pp. 292–3. Cf. *ibid.* 178 [III,34]: 'Ἡλιον ... νῆ τῶν μεθεκτῶν τούτων τῷ κρατίστῳ [sc. Ποσειδῶνι] ὑπελευχώς.

only potentially might ever also become such actually if it is not propelled to a perfection by something that is already actually perfect. The last possibility, that Plethon rejects, is a theory that the principle responsible for the perfection of things is the heat received from the Sun or that some other affection absorbed by all mortal things might be the cause of such perfection each time that the Sun retreats. According to Plethon, the perfecting principle must precede the thing that is being perfected, but no affection may precede form or essence in general. In other words, what is further added or what happens may not precede that to which it is added or that in which it happens.³³ The last argument apparently presupposes a distinction between an essence (οὐσία) and affections (παθήματα) that modify it without changing radically its specific character. Such affections are, however, entirely dependent on the essence 'in which' they are. If we take again Plethon's example of the Sun shining on a fruit, heat modifies the essence of the fruit only at the moment when this is happening. For this reason it is impossible that the Sun produces an effect that is independent of the essence in which it is produced and that persists separately in the fruit and gradually modifies its essence later, when the Sun is absent.

From these considerations Plethon concludes that there must be some Forms subsisting by themselves in the supracelestial space, that is, outside the sensible world, because the forms contained in the intellects participated by the bodies cannot act upon anything when the bodies are absent. Such Forms, however, are not always capable of producing the things 'here' by their mutual cooperation alone. Only those that are 'elder' are able to do so, producing the Sun, Moon and other immortal things in our world. Others, that is, the lower Forms, need the contribution of the Sun, the Moon and 'the gods around it' to be able to produce the sensible world.³⁴ Similarly to the two other divine pairs on the higher level of the intelligible Forms, the Sun is said to bring to a mortal thing a form from 'the Forms and the gods of Tartarus', while the Moon provides them with matter. They are thus the highest male and female gods in our heaven.³⁵

³³ Ibid. 110–12 [III,15]: see Appendix IV,3, below, pp. 292–3. Cf. *De diff.* X 341.15–39.

³⁴ *Leg.* 112 [III,15]: Λείπεται δὴ, εἶδη ἅτα καθ' ἑαυτὰ ὑφεστηκότα, ἐν τῷ ὑπερουρανίῳ ὄντα χώρῳ, ταῦτα μετὰ μὲν ἀλλήλων μόνων οὐκέτι οἶά τε εἶναι παράγειν, ἅττ' ἂν παράγοι τῆδε, ὡσπερ που τὰ πρεσβύτερα αὐτῶν, ἃ δὴ Ἥλιόν τε καὶ Σελήνην, τὰ τ' ἄλλα ἀθάνατα τῶν τῆδε παράγει· ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς Ἥλιου τε καὶ θεῶν τῶν περὶ Ἥλιον, ἐπὶ τὸ παράγειν, ἅττ' ἂν καὶ αὐτὰ παράγειν δέοι, κοινωνίας δεῖσθαι. Cf. *De diff.* X 341.39–342.5.

³⁵ *Leg.* 106–8 [III,15]: ... Ἥλιον μὲν τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς εἶδος ἕκ τε εἰδῶν καὶ θεῶν τῶν Ταρταρίων ἐπιφέροντα, Σελήνην δὲ τῆς ὕλης μάλιστα ἡγουμένην ἐκάστοις. In the *Differences* Plethon further claims that the Sun connects (προσάξων) matter with the Forms, whereas the Moon is not mentioned at all, *De diff.* X 342.5–7.

The role of the heavenly bodies is thus that of the transmitters that bring forms from the supracelestial order down to sensible things, which are under their direct influence. The Sun does this in the case of those things that are rather active and 'formal' while the Moon in the case of those that are passive and 'material'. When something that is produced in such a way already acquires certain constitution, at this moment the lower Forms of mortal things, 'themselves by themselves', are able to perfect and preserve it for some time. The more perfect Forms are more able to do this, the less perfect less. Plethon then concludes that for the reasons given it is not necessary to suppose that mortal things are perfected and preserved according to a degree the Sun approaches to the Earth or retreats.³⁶ In another passage he further specifies that Cronus and the other Forms, which preside over the creation of sensible things, 'take over everything' from the Sun, 'which is the beginning of their generation and life.'³⁷

What is important here is the difference among the Forms, that is, between the Olympian gods and Titans we know from the *Laws*. Plethon uses this division in order to explain the difference which he situates between the everlasting and the mortal part of the sensible world. The higher part of the world is thus generated by the higher part of the intelligible order without a contribution of any other principle, whereas the lower part is produced by the lower Forms with the necessary assistance of the Sun and the planets. The latter are, according to Plethon, 'the brothers (ἀδελφοί)' or 'attendants (ὄπαδοί)' of the Sun in the creation of mortal things. They administer the world jointly, and each has assigned to it a patronage and leadership over certain segment of terrestrial daemons (δαίμονες οἱ χθόνιοι) and human souls. They also have the same tripartite nature as daemons and humans, being composed of intellect (νοῦς), soul (ψυχή) and body (σῶμα), thus ensuring a communion (κοινωνία) or a bond (σύνδεσμος) between the supracelestial order and heaven.³⁸ Apart from the Sun, Plethon also names the Moon (Σελήνη), Venus ('Εωσφόρος or Φωσφόρος), Mercury (Στίλβων), Saturn (Φαίνων), Jupiter (Φαέθων) and Mars

³⁶ *Leg.* 112–14 [III,15]: ἐπειδὴν μέντοι τι ταύτη παραχθῆ, καὶ σύστασίν τινα ἤδη λάβη, τότε δὴ καὶ αὐτὰ οἶά τ' εἶναι ἤδη δι' αὐτῶν αὐτὸ ἐπὶ τινα χρόνον τελειοῦν τε καὶ σώζειν· καὶ τὰ μὲν καὶ αὐτῶν τελεώτερα, καὶ μᾶλλον ἂν αὐτὸ δύνασθαι· τὰ δ' ἀτελέστερα, ἦττον. Διὰ τοιαῦτα, οὐ πρὸς τὸν αὐτὸν ἅπαντα λόγον τῶν τε προσόδων καὶ ἀποχωρήσεων τῶν τοῦ Ἥλιου τελειοῦσθαι τὰ θνητά, οὐδέ γε σώζεσθαι. Plethon uses the example of a projectile that moves forward by itself because of the effect described in the Aristotelian physics as ἀντιπερίστασις, *ibid.* 112 [III,15].

³⁷ *Ibid.* 120 [III,31]: ... ἔτι δὲ Κρόνου τε καὶ ἄλλων τῶν ἄλλων προεστηκότων χωριστῶν, οἱ παρὰ τοῦ Ἥλιου παραλαμβάνοντες ἕκαστα, τῆς τε γενέσεως καὶ τοῦ βίου κατάρχοντος αὐτοῖς ...

³⁸ *Ibid.* 136–8, 154, 166, 178 [III,34].

(Πυρόεις).³⁹ The wandering stars, the planets, and especially the Sun and the Moon, play an active part in producing the world and they exert (astrological) influence upon the human life. In contrast, the only thing that we are told about the fixed stars, which circulate regularly, is that they were created in order to 'contemplate what (really) exists (ἐπί τε θεωρίαν τὴν τῶν ὄντων)', most probably the intelligible Forms, and to praise their creator ([ἐφ'] ὕμνον τὸν σόν).⁴⁰ This is in some way similar to Plato's *Timaeus* where the planets create the mortal beings and humans are supposed to contemplate the motions of stars.⁴¹

In contrast to stars, daemons are the terrestrial genus (χθόνιον γένος δαιμόνων) of the gods of the third order and the lowest of all the gods.⁴² Contrary to the wide-spread Christian conception according to which they are malicious beings, Plethon does not regard them as evil powers. This is expressly claimed by the *Magian Oracle* XIX:

Nature persuades that daemons are pure
and that the fruits even of evil matter are worthy and good.⁴³

³⁹ Ibid. 166 [III,34], 210 [III,35]; cf. *Meth.* 52, 56–8. For the 'Chaldaean' names of the planets used by Plethon both in the *Laws* and his astronomical treatise (however, not in the annexed tables, *ibid.* 98–116, and only partly in proto-Plethon, *ibid.* 144, 148) see Cumont 1935. According to Tambrun 2006, pp. 152–3, Plethon wants to avoid here a confusion of the names of the planets with the names of the gods of the first and second order, see also below, pp. 264–5.

⁴⁰ *Leg.* 176–8 [III,34]. Astrological influence seems to be hinted at in Plethon's commentary on *Oracle* II: Μηδὲ κάτω νεύσης, κρημνὸς κατὰ γῆς ὑπόκειται, / ἐπταπόρου σύρων κατὰ βαθμίδος, ἣν ὕπο δεινῆς / ἀνάγκης θρόνος ἐστί. 'Incline not downwards: below the earth lies a precipice / that drags down beneath the sevenfold steps, below which / is the throne of dread Necessity.' *Or. mag.* II 1.5–7, trans. Woodhouse (1986), p. 51. According to Plethon, 'the sevenfold steps' are fate determined by the planets (ἡ ἐκ τῶν πλανήτων εἰμαρμένη). *Or. mag.* 5.17–19 [on II]. Cf. also the title of lost chapter II,14: Περὶ τῶν τῶν ἐπὶ ἀστέρων δυνάμεων. 'On the potentialities of the seven planets.' *Leg.* 10, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 323 (altered).

⁴¹ Plato, *Tim.* 41a–d, 90a–d.

⁴² *Leg.* 52 [I,5], cf. 138, 166 [III,35], 214 [III,35]. Plethon derives his conception of daemons possibly from Plato, *Symp.* 202d–e, *Epin.* 984d–e. We know that he was interested in the latter passage since he made some erasures and alterations in it, cf. Pagani 2009, pp. 181–2.

⁴³ *Or. mag.* XIX 3.1–2: Ἡ φύσις πείθει εἶναι τοὺς δαίμονας ἀγνοῦς, / καὶ τὰ κακῆς ὕλης βλαστήματα χρηστὰ καὶ ἐσθλά. Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 52 (altered). Cf. also the titles of two lost chapters of the *Laws*, II,19: Ὡς οὐ πονηροὶ οἱ δαίμονες εἰσιν. 'That daemons are not evil.' 20: Ἐλεγχοὶ τῶν κατὰ δαιμόνων διαβολῶν. 'Refutation of the calumnies against daemons.' *Leg.* 10, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 324 (altered).

In the commentary on this *Oracle* Plethon explains that this is so because everything that has proceeded from God, which is the good itself, must be also good, including matter. This must therefore be even more true of daemons who surpass the matter from which the world is made, by the rational part of their nature, that is, by their intellect which does not mingle with mortal nature.⁴⁴ Furthermore, their aethereal bodies are nobler than the human ones and their souls are 'unmingled with mortal nature.'⁴⁵ In his letter to Bessarion Plethon claims that:

[whereas] Proclus derives matter from the first cause, Plotinus [derives] from the second intelligible essence, following after the first [cause], the doctrine that there are the evil daemons.

However, as Plethon claims in the same letter, Plato, Pythagoras and others did not accept this doctrine of Egyptian origin.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the same doctrine of the good daemons is expressed in the *Oracle* XIX, which he also quotes there.⁴⁷

In the *Laws* daemons are further described as creatures that are at the service of the higher gods and are adjoining to our nature. They are infallible and have no experience of evil.⁴⁸ This is probably to be understood in the sense that daemons, although unable to acquire proper knowledge, have, nonetheless, the right opinion

⁴⁴ *Or. mag.* 14.2–11 [on XIX]: ... ἀπλῶς πάντα τὰ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ αὐτοαγαθοῦ ὄντος προεληλυθότα χρηστά εἶναι, καὶ αὐτὰ τὰ κακῆς ὕλης βλαστήματα, ἤτοι τὰ τῆς ὕλης ἐξημμένα εἶδη. ... πολλῶ μᾶλλον οἱ δαίμονες, οἱ καὶ τοσοῦτον αὐτῆς ὑπερανέχοντες, τῷ τε λογικῷ τῆς φύσεως, καὶ τῷ πρὸς τὴν θνητὴν φύσιν ἀμίκτῳ.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 11.11–14 [on XIV]: τὰς γε μὴν δαιμονίας ψυχὰς τῇ μὲν ἄλλῃ οὐ πολλῶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων διαφέρειν, γενναιοτέρας δὲ ὅμως οὐσας αὐτάς τε καὶ γενναιοτέροις ὀχίμασι χρωμένας, ἀμίκτους τῇ γε θνητῇ εἶναι φύσει.

⁴⁶ It is not, however, entirely clear why the doctrine of the evil daemons should have originated in Egypt, perhaps because Plotinus came from there, as well as Min who according to Plethon, was not in fact a real sage, in contrast to Zoroaster. See below, p. 174.

⁴⁷ *Ad Bess.* I 459.4–11: ἔτι τὴν ὕλην Πρόκλος μὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου αἰτίου παράγει· Πλωτῖνος δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον [sc. αἴτιον] δευτέρας καὶ νοητῆς οὐσίας τὴν περὶ δαιμόνων πονηρῶν δόξαν. οἱ μὲν αὐτῶν δηλοὶ εἰσιν οὐ παραδεχόμενοι, ὡπερ οὐδὲ Πλάτων· οἱ δὲ τιθέμενοι τῇ δόξῃ παρ' Αἰγυπτίων εἰς τοῦτο προηγμένοι· οὐ γὰρ τὰ γε μαγικὰ λόγια τῶν ἀπὸ Ζωροάστρου μάγων, οἷς καὶ Πυθαγόρας τε ἔσπετο, καὶ Πλάτων αὐτὸς ταύτην φαίνεται προσιεμένος τὴν δόξαν, ἐν οἷς φησιν· ἡ φύσις {οὐ} πείθει εἶναι τοὺς δαίμονας ἀγνοῦς. The negation οὐ, put in the curly brackets here, seems to be added by a mistake in the textual tradition, cf. the same text in *Or. mag.* XIX 3.1–2.

⁴⁸ *Leg.* 138 [III,34]: Μεθ' ἃ μακάριοι καὶ ὑμεῖς, ὧ χθόνιοι δαίμονες, ἡ ἐσχάτη μὲν θεῶν μοῖρα, καὶ θεοῖς τοῖς ἄλλοις ὑπηρετική, τῇ τε ζωῇ τῇ ἡμετέρα ἦδη καὶ φύσει προσεχῆς, ἀναμάρτητος γε μὴν καὶ αὐτὴ ἔτι, καὶ κακῶν τις ἀπαθῆς. Cf. *ibid.* 166, 188, 198–200 [III,34], 214 [III,35].

of everything. Furthermore, they are in fact good, and for this reason, being a kind of the higher creatures that are closest to us, they are also the source of all our good. In the hymn dedicated to them Plethon enumerates all their functions. Some of them are responsible for the purification of humans, others 'lead them up, guard or preserve them', and still others are able to 'make their intellect right'.⁴⁹ In another passage of the *Laws*, apart from the purification, another function of daemons is 'to cure (θεραπευτικῶς)' humans.⁵⁰ This is perhaps to be understood as making them 'good and beautiful (καλοὶ κάγαθοί)'⁵¹ since as Plethon makes clear in his commentary on the *Magian Oracle XX*, the correcting or punishing daemons divert humans from vice and bind them to virtue.⁵²

⁴⁹ Ibid. 214 [III,35]: Ἔνθεν τοι καὶ ἡμέας, οἱ μὲν καθαίροντες, / οἱ δ' ἀνάγοντες, τοὶ δὲ φρουρεῦντες, σώζουσιν, / ρεῖα μάλ' ὀρθοῦντες νόον.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 188 [III,34].

⁵¹ Ibid. 200 [III,34].

⁵² *Or. mag.* 14.13–14 [on XX]: ... αἱ κολαστικαὶ δαίμονες ... συνεκτικαὶ τῷ ἀπάγειν τῆς κακίας αὐτούς, τῇ ἀρετῇ ἐγκαταδοῦσαι.

Chapter 11

Nature Mortal and Human

The Soul and the Human Situation

Daemons are the lowest reality that do not perish and have everlasting being, which is Plethon's definition of divinity. On the contrary, because of their mortal body, humans do not belong among the gods, even those of the third order, who are the lowest of all. However, for Plethon man is also partly a divine creature since his nature is in fact twofold, composed of body and immortal soul. In the *Epinomis*, to prove his claim, he uses an axiom he had stated before, namely, that actions must be analogous to essences and essences to actions.¹ This is because man is apparently capable of actions that are animal, but also of actions that are close to the divine ones, namely, to contemplate being and even to acquire a notion of Zeus. Man is thus composed of two kinds, one animal and mortal and another immortal and akin to the gods.² Plethon conceives the human nature as 'not undefiled', that means, as necessarily attached to the mortal body, but still immortal. Its attachment to mortal nature is required for 'the completion of the universe' and its 'union'. In order that the descending ontological structure of Plethon's universe be complete, there must be some 'boundary (μεθόριον)' and 'bond (σύνδεσμος)' between the immortal and unmingled nature of the gods and perishable and mortal nature.³ The universe cannot be divided or torn asunder. It must form one composition. Similar to the things that differ significantly among themselves, but at the same time are, as much as it is possible, connected together by some boundaries, mortal things are bound to the immortal ones

¹ *Leg.* 242 [III,43: *Epinomis*]: see Appendix VI,6, below, p. 297.

² *Ibid.* 246 [III,43: *Epinomis*]: see Appendix VI,6, below, pp. 297–8. Cf. *ibid.* 248 [III,43: *Epinomis*], *Zor. Plat.* 266, *Or. mag.* 9.2–5 [on XI], 9.16–18 [on XII], *Ad quaes.* 91–132. Cf. also Benakis' introduction to *Ad quaes.*, pp. 340–43.

³ *Leg.* 138–40 [III,34]: Καὶ δὴ διδοῖτε καὶ ἡμῖν, οὐκ οὐκ ἀκράτων μὲν, ἀθάνατον δ' ὅμως εἰληχότας φύσιν, καὶ τῷ θνητῷ τέως τῷδε ἐνδεδήκατε, τῆς τοῦ παντὸς πληρώσεως ἕνεκα καὶ ἅμα εὐαρμοστίας, ἵνα ἢ τι καὶ τοῖνδε αὐτῶν μοίρῃν ἀμφοῖν μεθόριόν τε καὶ σύνδεσμος, τῆς θ' ὑμετέρας τῆς ἀθανάτου τε ταύτης καὶ πάμπαν ἀκράτου, καὶ αὐτῆς ἐπικήρου τε τῆσδε καὶ θνητῆς, μὴ οὐ πάνυ τοι ὑπὸ τοῦ θνητοῦ τούτου κρατεῖσθαι. Cf. 142–6, 182–4, 194–6 [III,34], 250 [III,43: *Epinomis*], *Zor. Plat.* 266, *Or. mag.* 9.5–10 [on XI], *Decl. brev.* 21.15–18, *Ad quaes.* 128–32, *Contra Schol.* XXVII 456.24–458.8. Cf. also Matula 2003, Tambrun 2006, pp. 221–40.

by the boundary located in man. Plethon then argues that if they were united permanently the mortal part of the human being would be immortalized because of the continuous contact with its immortal part and man would no longer play the role of the common boundary, necessary for the completion of the universe. Furthermore, both these natures cannot be connected just once and then released for the rest of time. This is because the boundary between immortal and mortal things would thus exist only at one moment and not forever. It would not unite these two parts of the universe permanently, which is necessary for its perfection. The union would cease with the death of the body. According to Plethon, we have to conclude that the immortal nature is in part connected to the mortal one, and in part, when the mortal body is destroyed, exists by itself and lives apart. This happens forever in infinite time.⁴

As is also apparent from the vocabulary employed by Plethon, the position of man is similar to that of the Sun, which is also a boundary (ὄρος) and bond (σύνδεσμος) of the intelligible order and the sensible world. In an important passage from the *Epinomis* Plethon discusses the problem of the duration of the soul in connection with the duration of the whole cosmos, which is, according to him, everlasting and has no beginning in time. The soul, having the specific function of the boundary between the mortal and immortal part of the cosmos, must be, first, also everlasting and, second, it must undergo successive reincarnations in order not to remain either permanently connected to the body or altogether disconnected from it. This is exactly how the human soul contributes to the unity and harmony of the whole cosmos.⁵

Plethon explains in more detail in his commentary on the *Magian Oracle* XIV how such a union of mortal and immortal nature is possible. According

⁴ Leg. 250–52 [III,43: *Epinomis*]: “Ἴνα μὲν γὰρ πληρές τε ἦ τὸ πᾶν καὶ παντελές, ἕκ τε ἀθανάτου καὶ θνητοῦ αὐτὸ ἔδει συνεστάναι, ἵνα μὴ διεστήκη αὐτὸ αὐτοῦ, μηδὲ διεσπασμένον ἦ, ἀλλ’ ἐς ἔν τι τῷ ὄντι σύστημα συνεστήκη. Ὡς γὰρ ἔστιν ἅτα τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ οὐ σμικρῷ ἀλλήλοις διαφόρων μεθορίοι τισὶν ἐκ τῶν ἐνόνητων συνηρμόσθη, οὕτω καὶ ἀθανάτοις τὰ θνητὰ τῷ κατὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον τοῦτον μεθορίῳ συνεδέθη. Εἰ μὲν οὖν τῷ αὐτοῦ ἀθανάτῳ τὸ θνητὸν αἰεὶ συνην, κἂν αὐτὸ ἀθάνατον ἀπέβαιεν, ἐκ τῆς πρὸς τὸ ἀθάνατον αἰεὶ συνουσίας ἀπαθανατιζόμενον, καὶ οὐκέτ’ ἂν ἀθανάτου τε μοίρας μεθόριον καὶ θνητῆς, ὅπερ ἔδει, ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἦν, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἀθανάτοις ἂν ὄλως συνετέτακτο. Εἴτε καὶ ἅπαξ τὸ ἀθάνατον τῷ θνητῷ ὠμίληκός, τὸν λοιπὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον ἀπήλλακτο αὐτοῦ, ὥχετ’ ἂν καὶ οὕτω τὸ ἀθανάτων τε καὶ θνητῶν μεθόριον ἅπαξ γεγονός, οὐκ αἰεὶ μὲν ὄν μεθόριον, οὐδ’ αἰεὶ θνητὰ ἀθανάτοις συναρμόττον, ἀλλὰ ἅπαξ γε συνηρμόκος, καὶ ἔπειτα σὺν τῇ αὐτοῦ τοῦ θνητοῦ ἀπαλλαγῇ καὶ ταύτην ἂν τὴν ἁρμονίαν λευκός. Κατελείπετο ἄρα παρὰ μέρος μὲν τῷ θνητῷ τὸ ἀθάνατον κοινωεῖν, παρὰ δὲ μέρος, τοῦτου γε ἀπολλυμένου, καθ’ αὐτὸ τε ἐκάστοτε γίνεσθαι, καὶ ζῆν χωρὶς, καὶ τοῦτο οὕτω τὸν αἰεὶ χρεῖν καὶ ἄπειρον χρόνον. Cf. *Zor. Plat.* 266.

⁵ Leg. 258–60 [III,43: *Epinomis*]; cf. *Zor. Plat.* 266, *Contra Schol.* XXV 442.20–444.27. Cf. also Bargeliotēs 1979.

to him, the Pythagoreans and the Platonists believe that the human soul is neither an essence entirely separated from all body nor entirely unseparated, but partly separated and partly unseparated. This means that the soul is potentially separated from the body, but actually always unseparated. Plethon now describes briefly the basic division on which his metaphysics is based. The Pythagoreans and Platonists distinguish three kinds of being: the first is entirely separated from matter and identical with the supracelestial intellects. The second is entirely unseparated because it does not have the essence that subsists by itself, but is dependent on matter and therefore disperses and perishes together with it. In contrast to intellects, this kind is non-rational. Finally, the third kind is located between the previous two; it is the rational soul. Its intermediate position is due to its specific nature. It differs from the supracelestial intellects by its permanent connection with matter and from the non-rational kind by the fact that it is not dependent on it, but in this case matter is permanently dependent on the soul.⁶

Plethon next claims that the soul subsists potentially by itself and, like the supracelestial intellects, it is 'indivisible (ἀμερής)', that is, without parts. At the same time it is akin to supracelestial intellects because it is also capable of attaining 'the knowledge and contemplation of being', up to the highest God himself and for this reason we may assume that it is indestructible.⁷ It is thus said to be the immediate (προσεχής) creature of the highest Form of the intelligible order.⁸ The common feature of both the soul and the supracelestial order is naturally intellect that enables us to know the Forms and, as participated (μεθεκτός), it is present in the souls. As we know from the discussion of *Magian Oracle XXVIII*, the knowledge of the highest god, who is supremely and perfectly one, is possible thanks to the flower of the intellect, the most supreme and united part of us.⁹

⁶ *Or. mag.* 10.4–15 [on XIV]: Οἱ περί τε Πυθαγόραν καὶ Πλάτωνα σοφοὶ τὴν ψυχὴν οὐ πάντα τινὰ χωριστὴν οὐσίαν παντὸς σώματος νομίζουσιν, οὐ μὲν δὴ, οὐ δ' αὖ πάντα ἀχώριστον, ἀλλὰ τῇ μὲν χωριστὴν, τῇ δ' ἀχώριστον· τῇ μὲν δυνάμει δῆπου χωριστὴν, τῷ δ' ἔργῳ αἰεὶ ἀχώριστον τιθέμενοι. Τριττὸν γὰρ οὖν τὸ σύμπαν εἰδῶν τίθενται γένος, τὸ μὲν πάντα χωριστὸν ὕλης, τοὺς νοῦς δὴ τοὺς ὑπερουρανοῦς τὸ δ' ἀχώριστον πάντα, οὐ τὴν γε οὐσίαν καθ' ἑαυτὴν ὑφρασηκυῖαν ἔχον, ἀλλὰ τῆς ὕλης δὴ ἐξημμένην, κάκεινῃ τῷ τῆς φύσεως σκεδαστῷ λυομένη ποτὲ συσκεδαννύμενον τε καὶ ἀπολλύμενον, καὶ τοῦτ' εἶναι τὸ ἄλογον δὴ εἶδος σύμπαν. Τρίτον δὲ μεταξύ τούτων εἶδος, τὴν ψυχὴν τίθενται τὴν λογικὴν τῶν μὲν νῶν τῶν ὑπερουρανοῦν διαφέρουσαν τῷ αἰεὶ ὕλην συνεῖναι· τοῦ δ' ἀλόγου εἶδους, τῷ μὴ αὐτὴν τῆς ὕλης ἐξῆφθαι, ἀλλὰ τούναντίον, τὴν ὕλην ἑαυτῆς αἰεὶ ἔχειν ἐξημμένην, οὐσίαν.

⁷ *Ibid.* 10.15–20 [on XIV]: αὐτὴν ἰδίαν ἑαυτῆς καὶ καθ' αὐτὴν τῇ γε δυνάμει ἔχουσαν ὑφρασηκυῖαν, ἀμερῆ τε καὶ αὐτὴν κατὰ τοὺς νοῦς τοὺς ὑπερουρανοῦς, οἷς καὶ συγγενῆ πῶς τὰ ἔργα ἀποδίδωσι, τῶν αὐτῶν, ὡν περ κάκεινοι, ἐφαπτομένη καὶ αὐτῇ, τῆς τῶν ὄντων δὴ γνώσεως καὶ θεωρίας, ἄχρι καὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἀνωτάτω θεοῦ, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἀνώλεθρον.

⁸ *Ibid.* 9.2–4 [on XI], 9.14–18 [ad XII].

⁹ See above, pp. 76–7.

As we have already mentioned, the soul thus conceived is permanently connected with the aethereal body as to its vehicle.¹⁰ This is a doctrine elaborated in various forms by the Neoplatonists.¹¹ According to Plethon, the soul immortalizes the aethereal body through immediate contact. The vehicle itself is without soul, but is ensouled by another, non-rational, kind of the soul. The Pythagoreans and Platonists call this kind of soul an image of the rational soul, which is 'adorned' with imagination and perception. This kind of soul thus 'sees and hears altogether as a whole', being responsible for every perception. Other non-rational faculties that are related to these two are also located in it. Plethon, however, claims that because imagination is the most eminent capacity of the aethereal body, it is through it that the non-rational soul is permanently connected to the whole aethereal body. At a certain moment the human soul is connected through this body also to mortal nature. It happens during conception when the aethereal body as a whole is connected to the whole life spirit of the embryo. They might be interwoven because of their mutual kinship, which consists in fact that the aethereal body is also a kind of spirit (πνεῦμα).¹² According to Plethon's *Reply to Scholarios*, the human soul uses 'the fiery spirit (πνεῦμα πυρῶδες)' of the aethereal body as a middle (τὸ μέσον) connecting it to the body.¹³

To sum up, the human soul is divided into two parts, the rational and non-rational one. The non-rational one is called the image (εἶδωλον) of the rational soul and whereas the latter is responsible for thinking, the former is charged with imagination, perception and other non-rational faculties. However, in

¹⁰ See above, p. 127.

¹¹ Cf. Dodds 1933, Sorabji 2005, pp. 221–9, and Chlup 2012, pp. 104–5.

¹² *Or. mag.* 10.20–11.11 [on XIV]: τοιοῦτον οὖν εἶδος οὖσαν τὴν ψυχὴν, σώματι αἰεὶ συνεῖναι αἰθερίῳ, οἷον ὀχήματι ἑαυτῆς, συναπαθανατίζουσαν καὶ αὐτὸ τῇ προσεχει ἔπαφῃ, εἶναι δ' οὐδὲ τὸ τοιοῦτον αὐτῆς ὄχημα, ἄψυχον καθ' αὐτό, ἀλλ' ἐμψυχῶσθαι καὶ αὐτό, τῷ ἐτέρῳ τε καὶ ἀλόγῳ ψυχῆς εἶδει, ὃ δὴ ψυχῆς λογικῆς εἶδωλον οἱ σοφοὶ καλοῦσι, φαντασία τε δὴ κεκοσμημένον καὶ αἰσθήσει, ὅλω δι' ὅλου ὀρῶντι τε καὶ ἀκούοντι, καὶ πᾶσαν αἴσθησιν αἰσθανομένῳ, καὶ ταῖς ἄλλαις ταῖς ταύταις ἐπομέναις ψυχῆς δυνάμεσιν ἀλόγοις διὰ μὲν οὖν τῆς κρατίστης τοῦ τοιοῦτου σώματος δυνάμεως φαντασίας, τὴν ψυχὴν τὴν λογικὴν ὅλω τῷ τοιοῦτῳ αἰεὶ συνεῖναι σώματι· διὰ δὲ τοῦ τοιοῦτου σώματος τῷδέ ποτε τῷ θνητῷ τὴν γὰρ ἀνθρωπίνην συγγίγνεσθαι, ὅλου ὅλω τῷ τοῦ ἐμβρύου ζωτικῷ πνεύματι, διὰ συγγείναιαν τινα ἐπιπλεκόμενου, ἅτε πνευματὸς τινος καὶ αὐτοῦ ὄντος. Cf. *Decl. brev.* 21.18–21, *Leg.* 186 [III,34], *Contra Schol.* XXV 440.15–17.

¹³ *Ibid.* XXIX 474.25–30. We may also note that, as he claims in his letters to Bessarion, the relation of the soul to the body is for Plethon an example of 'the participation according to attachment (μετοχή ἢ κατὰ πρόσληψιν)' or 'according to entanglement (κατ' ἐπιπλοκὴν μέθεξις)', in which a producer, a mover or generally a principle attaches to itself the thing that is ordered by it (... καθ' ἣν τὸ παράγον ἢ κινοῦν ἢ ὅλωσ ἄρχον προσλαμβάνον ἑαυτῷ τὸ ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ διατιθέμενον). *Ad Bess.* I 460.11–15, II 466.1–3. See also p. 85, n.21.

order to be able to receive the stimuli coming from the sensible world outside and to manipulate spatial images in imagination, the non-rational soul must be naturally connected to the body. It is not, however, connected to the body directly, but through 'the vehicle of the soul' or 'the aethereal body', made, as we know from the *Laws*, from the finest matter, that is, fire which is bright and fiery in the case of stars, but invisible in the case of daemons and humans. Being at the same time also a spirit (πνεῦμα), the human soul is connected with the life spirit we have received at the moment of our birth.¹⁴ Plethon's solution of the long-lasting discussion among Neoplatonists concerning the immortality of the aethereal body is clearly stated:¹⁵ the soul never puts away its aethereal body, which is thus also everlasting.

Table 6 The connection of human soul and body

	Soul	Body
1	rational soul	
2	non-rational soul	aethereal body (vehicle)
3		lower body

We are unfortunately not told whether, in the division of the soul in Plethon's commentary on the *Magian Oracles*, the rational soul is identical with the participated intellect (μεθεκτός νοῦς), which is, according to the *Laws*, present in stars, daemons and humans. We may, nevertheless, assume this on the basis of Plethon's commentary on the *Magian Oracle XVII*, which has been already mentioned above in connection with 'common notions':

¹⁴ Plethon's theory of the relation of the soul to the body is summarized in his commentary on *Magian Oracle XVa*: Εἶδωλον ψυχῆς καλεῖ [sc. τὸ λόγιον], τὸ ἐχόμενον τοῦ λογικοῦ ἄλογον, ὃ τοῦ ὀχήματος αὐτῆς ἐξήπται. Λέγει οὖν, ὡς ἔστι καὶ τῷ τοιοῦτῳ εἰδῶλι μέρει εἰς τὸν ἀμφιφαῆ χώρον· οὐ γὰρ ἀποτίθεσθαι ποτε ψυχὴν τὸ ἑαυτῆς προσεχές ὄχημα. '[The Oracle] calls the image of the soul the non-rational part that is dependent on the rational and that is attached to the vehicle. It says that "even this image has its portion in the entirely light place", because the soul never puts away its adjoining vehicle.' *Or. mag. XVa* 2.12, 12.8–11 [on XVa], trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 53 (altered).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*; cf. Dodds 1933, pp. 319–20, Sorabji 2005, pp. 227–8, Tambrun-Krasker 1999, p. 43.

'The paternal intellect', that is, the immediate creator of the essence of the soul, 'has sown' also 'the symbols in the souls', or the images of the intelligible Forms, from which each soul always possesses the reasons of things.¹⁶

The 'symbols in the souls,' mentioned by the *Oracle* are thus interpreted by Plethon as the 'images of the intelligible Forms.'¹⁷ Thanks to the intellect participated by it, the human soul is therefore capable of knowing the Forms, or, as Plethon puts it, of 'possessing the reasons of things', in other words, of finding out the rational reasons that explain the nature of the world. These are also most probably the 'common notions (κοινὰ ἔννοια)' from the beginning of the *Laws*.¹⁸

As we have just seen, man is endowed with a rational soul serving as the boundary between the immortal and the mortal nature. In the *Laws* Plethon deals at length with the question of whether there are other mortal creatures that are also rational. If they really existed, it would obviously create a difficulty for him because there would be more boundaries similar to the one in humans. He claims that in the case of animals acting according to reason, for instance, 'the government of the bees, the economy of ants or the skilful hunting of spiders', we must inquire whether they act thus using their own thought (διάνοια) or some thoughts higher than the human one or lower or similar. If they used some higher thought, it would be higher in all or more aspects than that of humans. Nevertheless, this does not seem to be true. If they relied on a thought that is worse, they would not always attach themselves exclusively to one activity, accomplishing it in the best possible manner, which is appropriate to the perfect thought and higher than the human one. If it were similar to human thought it would neither attach itself just to one activity nor would it be worse in most things than the human thought. For Plethon, it is clear that animals do not 'use' their proper thought, but that of 'the soul governing this heaven (ἡ τοῦδε οὐρανοῦ ἡγουμένη ψυχή)' and of the separated intellects (νόες χωριστοί) which preside over them from outside. The world soul 'attaches to everything here'. The activity of the world soul is thus responsible not only for the actions of animals but also of the things lacking perception, such as, for instance, the tendrils of a vine and a pumpkin or a magnet and the reactions of certain metals, in other words, the sympathetic relations within the cosmos.¹⁹

¹⁶ *Or. mag.* XXVII 3.16, 16.6–9 [on XXVII]: 'Ο πατρικός νοῦς, ὁ τῆς τῆς ψυχῆς δηλαδὴ οὐσίας προσεχῆς δημιουργός, οὗτος ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἐνέσπειρε καὶ τὰ σύμβολα, ἦτοι τὰς τῶν νοητῶν εἰδῶν εἰκόνας, ἐξ ὧν τοὺς τῶν ὄντων ψυχὴ ἐκάστη ἐν ἑαυτῇ αἰεὶ κέκτηται λόγους. Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 52 (altered).

¹⁷ Cf. Tambrun-Krasker's commentary *ad loc.*, p. 132.

¹⁸ *Leg.* 42 [I,3], see also above, p. 59.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 80–82 [II,26]; cf. 122 [III,31], *Contra Schol.* XXX 482.7–15.

Plethon is obviously talking here about the relation of particular things that are without intellect – in contrast to stars, daemons and humans – to their corresponding separated intellects that are identical with the Forms. This relation is mediated through the world soul, which is therefore responsible for the actions of beings lacking their own proper intellect and soul. In another passage from the *Laws* Plethon places the ‘soul governing this heaven’ in the Sun, which, together with Cronus and other separated intellects, presides over sensible things and is the leader of the things that are devoid of intellect. The actions that are united in these Forms become distinguished in the things governed by them. Being led by the separated intellects and by the world soul, animals cannot do anything in vain. For this reason their actions are more correct than those of humans who use their own fallacious thought and opinion.²⁰ However, according to Plethon’s conception of civil virtue (πολιτεία) expounded in *On Virtues*, animals are limited in their relation to what is common and to the whole. Plants and all nature that lacks perception as well as a soul thus exist without a mutual relation among themselves, whereas animals already have a kind of social existence, the more perfect animals being those living in herds. Man differs from all the animals by his life in community, whereas the ‘higher genera’ – presumably daemons, stars and Forms – live probably in even ‘a more common way’ than he. This is why man should, as much as possible, assimilate himself to them.²¹

Another function of the world soul is the measurement and differentiation of the time of the universe. According to Plethon, in contrast to the higher eternal levels of reality, ‘time begins from the soul that governs this universe’. Time is ‘primarily the entity which is always moving and which measures the action [of the soul]’. ‘It already goes through all the soul and the bodily nature’ and it is defined by Plethon in Platonic terms as ‘an image of eternity (εἰκὼν αἰῶνος)’.²² The main character of its nature is that ‘it has always passed and it is not any more and at the same time it will be and it is not yet’. It is thus ‘always in the present moment and now, which, however, by becoming always different and different, divides time into that which passed and that which is to be’.²³ In another passage Plethon defines time in a rather Aristotelian way as

²⁰ *Leg.* 120 [III,31].

²¹ *De virt.* B,11 12.1–23.

²² Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 37d.

²³ *Leg.* 56 [I,5]: Χρόνον γὰρ ἄρχεσθαι μὲν ἀπὸ ψυχῆς τῆς τοῦδε ἂν ἡγουμένης τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, πρῶτον τὸ αἰεὶ κινητὸν αὐτῇ μετροῦντα τῆς πράξεως χωρεῖν δ’ ἤδη διὰ πάσης ψυχῆς τε καὶ σωμάτων φύσεως, εἰκόνα αἰῶνος γεγονότα, οὐ τὸ μὲν αἰεὶ οἰχεται τε καὶ οὐκέτι ἐστί, τὸ δὲ μέλλει τε ἔτι καὶ οὐπω ἐστίν, ἐστί δ’ ἐν ἀκαρεῖ αἰεὶ τε καὶ νῦν, ὃ δὴ, ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο αἰεὶ γιγνόμενον, τόν τε οἰχόμενον καὶ μέλλοντα διορίζει χρόνον. Cf. *Add.* 119v.18–22, below, p. 313.

'the measure of the motion (κινήσεως ... μέτρον);'²⁴ but this only completes the aforementioned definition. Time is thus the motion derived from the world soul and, permeating the whole universe, it is, similarly to it, also without beginning and end, being differentiated by periodical motions of the heavenly bodies.²⁵

Fate and Freedom

The philosophy of Plethon is notoriously famous for its determinism.²⁶ In section VIII of his *Differences*, two axioms are stated, which are said to be presupposed by those who think that everything is determined and 'occurs necessarily'. According to the first one, 'whatever occurs must necessarily do so from some cause' and, according to the second, 'every cause must produce whatever effect it may have in both a necessary and determinate way'. Plethon claims that in order to avoid the consequences that follow from these two axioms and that lead to the assumption of the universal determinism, Aristotle decided not to accept the first axiom, because he needed the second one 'when speaking about the everlasting motion'. According to Aristotle, there are things that occur without any cause. His rejection of the first axiom is contrary to what is otherwise accepted by 'all wise men and laymen'. In Plethon's eyes this rejection clearly leads to atheism, since 'in accepting this [first] axiom, men are adopting the first and readiest of all beliefs in the deity'. This is because they attempt to explain everything that has no visible cause by the existence of the divine. Plethon also tries to show that the denial of the first axiom contradicts what Aristotle says elsewhere.²⁷

A similar conception of determinism is presented in the *Laws*. Plethon says at its beginning that the book comprises ethics according to the Stoics,²⁸ having

²⁴ *Leg.* 48 [1,5]; Aristotle, *Phys.* IV,11–12 220a24–26, 220b32–221a1.

²⁵ *Add.* 120.9–23, below, pp. 313–14.

²⁶ See Masai 1956, pp. 186–200, Bargeliotes 1975, Arabatzis 2005.

²⁷ *De diff.* VIII 332.24–334.4: ... τῶν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἅπαντα τιθεμένων γίνεσθαι ἐκ δουσιν αὐτὸ ἀξιωματοῖν δεικνύναι πειρωμένων, ἐνὸς μὲν τοῦ ἅπαν τὸ γιγνόμενον ὑπ' αἰτίου τινὸς ἀναγκαῖον ἂν εἶναι γίνεσθαι, ἐτέρου δὲ τοῦ ἅπαν αἴτιον ὅ τι ἂν δρῶν ἀνάγκη τὲ καὶ ὠρισμένως αὐτὸ δρᾶν, Ἀριστοτέλης συνορῶν τὴν ἀνάγκην τοῦ τούτοις κειμένον ἅπαντα ἐξ ἀνάγκης γίνεσθαι συμπεραίνεσθαι, ἵνα μὴ τούτῳ συγχωρήσῃ, θάτερον τῆς ἀντιφάσεως μόριον λαμβάνων ὡς δὴ ἔμπεδον, καὶ τιθεὶς εἶναι ἔστιν ἅ τῶν γιγνομένων καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἀνάγκης γιγνόμενα, κατὰ θατέρου τοῖν ἀξιωματοῖν χωρεῖ, καὶ τὸ μὲν ἅπαν αἴτιον ὅ τι ἂν δρῶν ἀνάγκη τὲ καὶ ὠρισμένως αὐτὸ δρᾶν, οὐκ ἀναιρεῖ. Ἦδη γὰρ αὐτῷ φθάσας αὐτὸς κατακέχρηται ἐν τοῖς περὶ αἰδίου κινήσεως λόγοις. Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 203 (altered); cf. *Contra Schol.* XXX 488.10–16, XXXI 492.10–498.25. For the references to the respective writings by Aristotle see Woodhouse 1986, pp. 203–4, nn.62–9, based on Lagarde 1976.

²⁸ *Leg.* 2; cf. *Ad Bess.* I 462.11–13, 23–7.

evidently the famous Stoic doctrine of fate in mind. The main exposition of this doctrine, which is in fact a natural outcome of the refutation of the third type of atheism mentioned at its beginning, is to be found in chapter 6 of book II entitled 'On Fate (Περί εἰμαρμένης)', a text that very probably circulated separately and was by far the most copied part of the *Laws*.²⁹

Plethon provides here a series of arguments in support of determinism, beginning with the question of whether all future events are determined and fixed by fate, or whether there are some that are not determined and proceed indeterminately and randomly by chance. Plethon's answer is that everything must be determined because of the two reasons that are basically the same as the two axioms he proposes in the *Differences*. If something were not determined, it would be either without a cause or its effect would not be produced by a cause in a determinate and necessary way, both of which are impossible. It would be even more impossible if somebody claimed that the gods can change their decision about future events and would accomplish something different than they previously intended either because they have been moved by human prayers or gifts, or because they have been affected in some other way. This is naturally the third type of atheism described at the beginning of the *Laws*. Furthermore, as in the *Differences*, Plethon claims that rejection of the two reasons on which the determinism is based leads to atheism. Those who refuse to accept necessity and fate in future events risk two things. They are either forced to deny entirely that the gods exert providence on 'things here' or to admit that the gods are the cause of the things that are worse and not the best possible. This is because the things decided by them later are worse than those decided earlier.³⁰

Plethon considers these two ways of denying fate impossible for many reasons. In his theology all future events are eternally fixed by fate and ordered as much as possible, 'being ordered and determined under Zeus, the one king of everything'.

²⁹ See Alexandre 1858, pp. xc–xci, with n.3, Masai 1956, p. 396, n.1, Woodhouse 1986, p. 318.

³⁰ *Leg.* 64–6 [II.6]: Πότερα δὲ ὠρισταί τε καὶ εἴμαρται ἅπαντα τὰ μέλλοντα, ἢ ἔστιν ἄ οὐδ' ὠρισταί αὐτῶν, ἀλλ' ἀορίστως τε δὴ καὶ ἀτάκτως χωρεῖ, καὶ οὕτως ὅπως ἂν τύχοι; Δηλαδή ὅτι ὠρισταί ἅπαντα. Εἰ γὰρ ὅτιοῦν οὐχ ὠρισμένως γίνοιτο τῶν γιγνομένων, ἦτοι ἄνευ τοῦ αἰτίου γερονός ἔσται, καὶ τι ἔσται τῶν γιγνομένων τὴν γένεσιν ἄνευ αἰτίου ἐσχηκός ἢ οὐχ ὠρισμένως αὐτό, οὐδὲ σὺν ἀνάγκῃ τὸ αἴτιον ἀπεργάσεται, καὶ τι ἔσται τῶν αἰτίων, οὐκ ἀνάγκη, οὐδ' ὠρισμένως δεδρακός τι ὧν ἂν δρώη οἷν οὐδέτερα δυνατά. Πολὺ δ' ἔτι μᾶλλον ἀδύνατον, εἰ τοὺς θεοῦς τις λέγοι μεταβάλλεσθαι τε περὶ τὰ σφίσις ὑπὲρ τῶν μελλόντων ἐγνωσμένα, καὶ ἕτερ' ἄττα, παρ' ἃ ἐμέλλησαν ἀποτελεῖν, εἴτε ὑπ' ἀνθρώπων λιταῖς ἢ τισι δώροις παραπειθομένους, εἴτε δὴ καὶ ἄλλως γέ πως αὐτὸ πάσχοντας. Κινδυνεύουσι γὰρ οἱ τὴν περὶ τῶν ἐσομένων ἀνάγκην τε καὶ εἰμαρμένην ἀναιροῦντες, ἢ καὶ τῆς προνοίας ὄλως τῶν τῆδε ἐκβάλλειν τοὺς θεοῦς, ἢ καὶ τὴν τῶν χειρόνων αὐτοῖς αἰτίαν ἀντὶ τῶν ἐκ τῶν δυνατῶν βελτίστων περιάπτειν, ἀμύχανον ὄν, μὴ οὐ θάτερα αἰεῖ, ἦτοι τὰ πρότερον ἢ ὕστερον αὐτοῖς ἐγνωσμένα, χεῖρω τῶν ἐτέρων εἶναι.

Zeus is the only one who is not determined by anything else since everything that is determined is determined by its own cause and there is not any higher cause than he. Zeus, being the first principle of all, is thus greater than anything else and remains always in the same state. As the first principle, Zeus is identical with the 'the highest necessity' that is itself by itself and 'by nothing else'. This is because necessity is better than non-necessity and for this reason the greatest necessity must be attributed to the one, who is the supremely good. 'This same thing', that is most probably the necessity, is then communicated secondarily to the things that follow immediately after Zeus, and thus everything, without any exception, is determined by the first principle which is the cause of all.³¹

Another reason why future events must be determined is that otherwise they could not be known in advance, not only by humans, but also by any god, because there cannot be knowledge of anything which is entirely indeterminate and about which it is not possible to determine truly whether it is to be or not. In fact, the gods know future events because they determine them and they are always present in them as their cause, even before they happen. They are therefore not only the causes of future events, but have also perfect knowledge of them, determining them fully in advance. Plethon further comments that the gods reveal the future to some humans, who then sometimes try to avoid their fate, but the gods, knowing and ordering all, foresee even this so that human attempts to avoid one's lot only support the universal necessity.³²

Plethon's universal determinism is possible because of his conception of the generation of matter in the sensible world. Matter is not an independent or semi-independent principle but is derived directly from its intelligible Form, Hera. In this type of metaphysics, causality, descending from the first principle down to the lower levels of being, establishes a universal determinism in which everything has its specific cause hence, the supremely good creator is thus not hindered by anything else in producing a world that is the best possible.³³

³¹ Ibid. 66–8 [II,6]: 'Ἄλλὰ τούτοις γε ἑκάτερα πολλαχῆ ἀδύνατα, καὶ τὰ μέλλοντα ἅπαντα εἴμαρται τε ἐξ αἰῶνος καὶ τέτακται, ὡς δυνατόν αὐτοῖς, ὕφ' ἐνὶ τῶν πάντων βασιλεῖ Διὶ παττόμενά τε καὶ ὀριζόμενα. Ὅς εἰ καὶ μὴ ὥρισται μόνος τῶν πάντων, οὐκέτ' ὄντος τοῦ καὶ τούτου ὀριοῦντος (ὑπὸ γὰρ τῶν ἑαυτῶν αἰτίων ἅπαντ' ἂν ὀρίζεσθαι τὰ ὀριζόμενα), ὅμως κρείττων ὦν ἢ ὥστε ὠρίσθαι, μένει τε αἰεὶ καὶ κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ ὡσαύτως, καὶ τὴν μεγίστην πασῶν ἀνάγκην καὶ κρατίστην, αὐτὴν δι' αὐτὴν οὖσαν ἀνάγκην, οὐ δι' οὐδὲν ἕτερον, αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ κεκτημένος, ὡς τὴν τε ἀνάγκην τῆς οὐκ ἀνάγκης ἀμείνω οὖσαν, καὶ αὐτῷ τὴν μεγίστην ἀναγκῶν, ἄκρω ἀγαθῷ ὄντι, μᾶλλον τοι προσήκουσαν. Καὶ τοῖς γε προσεχῶς προῖοῦσιν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ταῦτο τοῦτο δευτέρως μεθ' ἑαυτὸν παρέχεται· οἰκεία γὰρ ἂν ἑαυτῷ τὰ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ παράγοι καὶ ταῦτα τε ἅμα καὶ τᾶλλα δι' αὐτὸν πάντα ὀρίζει.

³² Ibid. 68–70 [II,6]; cf. *Ad Bess.* I 463.3–19.

³³ Cf. Masai 1956, pp. 226–44, Bargeliotes 1976, pp. 120–25, Tambrun-Krasker 2002, pp. 320–28; see above, pp. 99–102.

This, however, provokes a further question discussed at length by Plethon in the same chapter of the *Laws*. One may ask, given the assumption of universal determinism, whether human freedom as well as divine justice are not undermined because the gods cannot punish the unjust, if these are such 'by necessity'. A more specific objection then could be raised, namely, that, despite the general determination of everything, humans are their own masters because there is 'the prudent part (τὸ φρονοῦν)' in them, which rules over 'the major part' of them and which, being by its nature their best part, is also the governing part. However, Plethon claims that it is impossible to deny that even our prudent part may be determined by something else.³⁴ In his letter to Bessarion, he treats this problem, which he connects, once more, with Aristotle's attempt to deny fate, in more detail. First, he considers the possibility that our ability to decide between two alternatives depends on our will (βούλησις). However, regarding will, there are two possibilities. It may 'move' without any apparent cause and altogether randomly, which is unacceptable for Plethon. Or, alternatively, our will is moved by some good, even if it is just an apparent one; but in such a case it will be in fact determined by some necessity. As Plethon concludes, our will thus cannot be self-moved, even if it seems to be always moved either by our prudent part or by the good.³⁵ Like the intellects, which are 'self-produced', our soul, too, as a whole, is self-moved, moving by one of its part our remaining parts.³⁶

³⁴ *Leg.* 70–72 [II,6]: 'Ἄλλ' εἰ πάντα ὤρισταί, φαίη ἄν τις, καὶ οὐδὲν ὅ τι μὴ ἀνάγκης μετείληψε τῶν ὄντων τε καὶ γιγνομένων, ἕκ τε τῶν ἀνθρώπων οἰχοίτ' ἂν ἡ ἐλευθερία καὶ ἡ δίκη ἐκ τῶν θεῶν, τῶν μὲν ἀνθρώπων ἀνάγκη, ἄττ' ἂν πράττειεν, πραττόντων, καὶ οὐκέτι οὐτ' ἂν κρίζην ἑαυτῶν ὄντων, οὐτ' ἂν ἐλευθέρων, τῶν δὲ θεῶν ἦτοι τοπαράπαν ἀφεστώτων ἂν τοῦ κολάζειν τοὺς κακοὺς, ἢ οὐκ ἂν ἐν δίκῃ κολαζόντων, εἴ γε δὴ ἀνάγκη οἱ κακοὶ κακοί. Ἄλλὰ τοὺς μὲν ἀνθρώπους κυρίουσιν ἂν ἑαυτῶν εἶναι, οὐ τῷ μὴ ὑπ' οὐδενός ἂν τοπαράπαν ἄρχεσθαι, μήτε του ἄλλου, μήτ' ἂν αὐτῶν τῶν θεῶν, ἀλλὰ τῷ ἔχειν μὲν τι ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἄρχον, τὸ φρονοῦν, τὸ δὲ πολὺ ἀρχόμενον· καὶ τοῦ πολλοῦ τούτου ἔν, τὸ φρονοῦν τε καὶ φύσει βέλτιστον τῶν ἡμετέρων, κύριον ἂν εἶναι. Αὐτὸ δὲ δὴ τὸ φρονοῦν ὡς οὐκέτ' ἂν ἄρχοιτο ὑπ' οὐδενός, οὐκ ἂν εἴη εἰπεῖν.

³⁵ *Ad Bess.* I 461.28–36: ἴδωμεν δὲ καὶ ὅπου τὸ ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρω τοῦτο ἐνδεχόμενον καὶ ἀμφίρροπον οἱ Ἀριστοτέλει οὗτοι συνηγοροῦντες ἀξιοῦσιν εἶναι. εἰ γὰρ ἐν τῇ βουλήσει ἡμῶν αὐτὸ ἀξιοῦσιν εἶναι, ὅπου καὶ δοκοῦσιν αὐτὸ τίθεσθαι, ἢ φάντων ὑπὸ μηδενός ἂν αἰτίου τὴν βούλησιν ἡμῶν κινεῖσθαι, ἀλλ' εἰκῆ μάτην, ἵνα δὴ καὶ τοῦτο τὸ σεμνὸν τῆ ψυχῆ ἡμῶν περιπίψωσι ματαιότητα αὐτῇ περιθέντες ἢ ἦν ὑπ' ἀγαθοῦ ὄντος ἢ καὶ φαινομένου τὴν βούλησιν ἡμῶν συγχωρήσωσι κινεῖσθαι, ὥσπερ που καὶ φαίνεται κινουμένη, ἀνάγκη συγχωρεῖν κινεῖσθαι. τὴν μὲν οὖν βούλησιν ἡμῶν οὐκ ἂν εἶναι αὐτοκίνητον, εἴγε ὑπὸ τοῦ φρονοῦντος ἡμῶν καὶ τάγαθου φαίνεται κινουμένη.

³⁶ *Ibid.* I 459.18–22: ... καὶ αὐτοπαράγωγον εἶναι μέρει τὸ λοιπὸν ἑαυτοῦ μέρος παράγοντα, ὥσπερ που τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοκίνητο εἶναι, μέρει τὸ λοιπὸν ἑαυτῆς κινούσαν. σαφέστατα γὰρ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ καταφαίνεται ἢ τε βούλησις αὐτῆς καὶ ἡ ὁρμὴ ὑπὸ τοῦ φρονοῦντος αὐτῆς κινούμενα. *Ibid.* I 461.36–462.2: τὴν δ' ὅλην ἡμῶν ψυχὴν αὐτοκίνητον εἶναι, τῷ μέρει ἑαυτῆς τὸ λοιπὸν

According to Plethon's supplementary claim in the *Laws*, our prudent part is not an independent principle of action since it seems to 'follow external things', that is, it is apparently influenced by the stimuli coming from outside.³⁷ In the letter to Bessarion he further explains that 'the moving part in us' is in fact moved by 'external things that surround us'. Moreover, 'whenever it becomes capable of divine interpretation', it is also not without the contact with the divine, which thus also exercises an influence upon it. This is all because our prudent part, influenced by the opinions received from outside, moves the rest of the soul, namely, will, desire and the passions that are connected with both of the latter. Other emotions enumerated by Plethon as submitting to the influence of the prudent part in us are joy, 'the inner one, and not that coming through perception', 'a similar kind of irritation', hope, fear, appetite, spirit and imagination. According to Plethon, these faculties are said to be 'upon us (ἐφ' ἡμῖν)' since they depend upon the prudent part, the highest of our parts. The prudent part itself depends neither upon another part of us nor upon itself.³⁸

Let us now turn to the other reason why, according to Plethon's *Laws*, our prudent part is as determined as everything else in the world. 'Even if it is not affected by the same things in the same way in all the people, it is not correct to assume that it does not follow from things necessarily', namely, that it is not, after all, determined by necessity. The prudent part is in fact always affected according to its individual nature and, moreover, according to its training. The same impulse thus provokes different affections in different people according to the nature of their prudent part. However, this action depends in fact on the gods. As for training, it is dependent on the opinion that the training in virtue is a desirable thing. Such opinion must be present in us in advance, which means, that here, too, the contribution of a god is necessary since without it nobody would in fact be capable of acquiring it. Plethon thus concludes that people are their own masters insofar as their prudent part is able to rule over themselves. However, they are also

αὐτῆς κινεῖν, ἢ που καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης ἀξιοῖ συνίστασθαι τὸ αὐτοκίνητον. For the self-produced intellects see above, p. 94.

³⁷ *Leg.* 72 [II,6]: Αὐτὸ δὲ δὴ τὸ φρονοῦν ὡς οὐκ ἐτ' ἂν ἄρχοιτο ὑπ' οὐδενός, οὐκ ἂν εἶη εἰπεῖν. Ὁ πρῶτον μὲν τοῖς ἔξω πράγμασι φαίνοιτ' ἂν ἐπόμενον.

³⁸ *Ad Bess.* I 462.3–13: κινεῖσθαι μέντοι καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν κινεῖται ὑπὸ τε τῶν ἔξωθεν ἤδη περισταμένων ἡμᾶς πραγμάτων. καὶ δὴ καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἐπειδὴν οἶόν τε γίγνηται τῆς θείας ἐξηγήσεως, μὴ ἀπολείπεσθαι, καὶ τοῦτ' εἶναι τὸ φρονοῦν ἡμῶν, δόγμασι τοῖς ἑαυτῶ ἔξωθεν ἐγγιγνομένοις τὸ λοιπὸν τῆς ψυχῆς κινεῖται, τὴν τε βούλησιν καὶ ὁρμὴν καὶ τὰ τούτοις αὐτῶν ἐπόμενα πάθη, χαρὰν τε δὴ τὴν ἔνδον, οὐ τὴν δι' αἰσθήσεως, καὶ ἀγανάκτησιν ὡσαύτως καὶ ἐλπίδα καὶ δέος καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν καὶ θυμὸν καὶ δὴ παρὰ ταῦτα καὶ τὴν φαντασίαν. ταῦτα γὰρ ἐστὶν ἃ τὸ φρονοῦν ἡμῶν κινεῖ, καὶ ὥνπερ ἄρχει ἔξωθεν αὐτοκινούμενον. ταῦτα καὶ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἐκάλεσαν οἱ Στωϊκοὶ ἅτε ἐπὶ τῶν κυριωτάτῳ ἡμῶν ὄντα τῶν φρονούντων. αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ φρονοῦν ἡμῶν οὐκ ἔτι οὐτ' ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν ἡμετέρων, οὐτ' αὐτὸ ἐφ' ἑαυτῶ ἐστὶν.

ruled by the gods, who determine the preconditions of their prudent behaviour. In other words, people are free and at the same time they are not.³⁹

At this moment Plethon feels the need to specify precisely what he considers to be freedom in these conditions. According to him, it is wrong to define freedom as opposed to necessity, since necessity cannot be slavery, which always presupposes domination. In fact it makes no sense to distinguish between slavery and domination when we speak of the 'eldest' necessity, which is identical with Zeus, who, being the principle of everything else, is the only necessity that is of itself. If slavery really were equivalent with being ruled over and freedom with not being determined by anything from outside, nobody would then be free, not only humans, but also the gods, with the sole exception of Zeus who alone rules and orders everything else. But if this is really so, such slavery is nothing dreadful, since serving the good, which is ultimately identical with Zeus, is profitable and pleasant even for a slave. A servant of the good does not experience anything else than the good. Plethon thus rejects the definition of slavery and freedom which defines the terms as identical with hindering or not hindering somebody from living as he wishes. Plethon then restates the whole problem. For him, everybody in fact wishes in the first place to do well and to be happy, and therefore the one who is doing well, is also free, whether ruled over or not, because he lives as he wishes. In contrast, the one who is not doing well does not live as he wishes, and consequently is not free. The people who do not do well are in fact in such a state because they have become unjust. For this reason nobody wishes to become unjust since it also means not to do well. The unjust become such only because they behave in an unjust manner unwillingly. The only person who is free therefore is one who is just.⁴⁰

In another letter to Bessarion, while commenting on some Platonic passages, Plethon claims that Plato connects fate and necessity with 'the most prudent soul'. However, the imprudent one, too, is not exempt from necessity since, as Plato constantly shows, no one is willingly unjust; the unjust become

³⁹ *Leg.* 72–4 [II,6]: "Ἐπειτα εἰ καὶ μὴ ὡσαύτως ἅσασιν ἀνθρώποις τὸ φρονοῦν τοῦτο ὑπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν πραγμάτων φαίνεται διατιθέμενον, οὐκ ἂν ὀρθῶς τις οἰηθεῖ μηδ' ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἂν ἔπεσθαι αὐτὸ τοῖς πράγμασιν. Δῆλον γάρ ἐστι τοῦτο συμβαῖνον παρά τε τὴν ἰδίαν αὐτοῦ τοῦ φρονοῦντος ἐκάστοτε φύσιν, παρά τε τὴν ἄσκησιν. Ταῦτο γὰρ ὅτιοῦν πλείοσι μὲν, διαφέρουσι δέ πη ἀλλήλων προσπίπτον, ὡς τι δρᾶσον, διαφέροντά τοι καὶ τὰ παθήματα ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀπεργάσεται. Διαφέρειν γὰρ ἂν τὸ φρονοῦν τοῦτο ἐκάστοις καὶ τὴν φύσιν καὶ τὴν ἄσκησιν καὶ τῆς μὲν φύσεως τοὺς θεοὺς ἂν κυρίου εἶναι, τῆς δ' ἄσκήσεως τὴν τοῦ <ἀσκοῦντος> εἶναι δόξαν, προτέραν αὐτῷ ἐγγενομένην, ἢν ἂν ἀμήχανον ἂν εἶναι ἐγγενέσθαι ὀτῶουν, μὴ οὐ θεοῦ παραστήσαντος. Κυρίου μὲν οὖν ἑαυτῶν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους εἶναι καθ' ὅσον που ἄρχουσι αὐτῶν, κἂν ἀρχόμενοι ἄρχωσιν· ἐλευθέρους δὲ εἶναι τέ πως καὶ μὴ εἶναι. Cf. *Ad Bess.* I 462.13–21, 462.21–463.3.

⁴⁰ *Leg.* 74–6 [II,6].

such because they err. If they err unwillingly, this must be then caused by some necessity. Plethon then distinguishes between two senses in which the necessity may be understood. In the first, it means 'everything that cannot be otherwise'; in the second, more specific sense, it designates force. It would, nonetheless, be wrong to deny 'the liberation' of the soul from the latter type of necessity as well as from 'more divine' one, which is in our own willing and intellect. Rather 'much prior good, with necessity which it directs, directs also the soul', being the highest and most active of all causes. According to Plethon, those who reject all necessity do not see that they make the good feeble and have the soul behave randomly, since they think that when the soul senses good which seems better than other things, 'it will choose everything else' rather than what seems better.⁴¹ Plethon thus argues that the soul always decides for the alternative that appears to be the best or the most profitable for it and for this reason necessity is always implied in the human conduct. This necessity is, nonetheless, ultimately determined by the good itself so that the decisions made by humans prove, in the end, to be always the best and most profitable for them. Those who err in their moral conduct are unjust because, according to Plethon, they are 'not doing well'. This may well be understood in the sense that they have turned away from the good under the influence of some other cause that is only seemingly good.

In the remaining part of this chapter of the *Laws*, Plethon explains that if the gods punish some people, they only want to correct their errors. However, man is unable not to err because he is composed of a divine and a perishable nature. Sometimes he is led by the divine part in him to assimilation with what he is akin, in which case he does well and is blessed. In contrast, at some other times, he is pulled down by the mortal part and does not do well any more. The gods attempt to help such a person by correcting him, sometimes even by punishments. Plethon compares this punishment to a bitter medicine that is applied during an illness of the body since, here too, the main aim is to make people to do better and 'to participate in freedom instead of slavery'. This is done for the person's good.⁴² We have seen that those who are responsible for correcting people are daemons.⁴³ However, Plethon never excludes the possibility that just punishment arises from the very circumstances determined by fate and directed by the gods.

⁴¹ *Ad Bess.* II 466.8–467.3.

⁴² *Leg.* 76–8 [II,6].

⁴³ See above, pp. 133–5.

Ethics, Cult and Politics

The problems just described are naturally closely related to ethics. Plethon developed his moral philosophy most systematically in a short separate treatise *On Virtues*.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, its content is close to the theories appearing as a part of the *philosophia perennis* in the *Laws* and other treatises of Plethon's. At the beginning of *On Virtues* virtue is defined as 'the disposition according to which we are good'. However, as Plethon immediately adds, in reality the only one who is good is God and people become good only by following him as much as it is possible for human being. Plethon then proceeds to classify virtues according to their main functions in human life. Man may be conceived, first, as existing himself by himself and as such he is defined as a rational animal, whose main characteristic is prudence. Second, in the relation 'to the other', that is, 'to the different things', his behaviour is regulated by justice. Over what belongs to man himself – which is not what we are by ourselves, but 'the worse part of us' – Plethon assigns a third virtue, courage, which he associates with 'violent affections'. The fourth virtue, temperance, he associates with 'the voluntary affections'.⁴⁵

Plethon next explains the origin as well as the character of individual virtues and orders them from the least to the most perfect. The lowest virtue (IV) is temperance. God does not in fact lack anything, being the most perfect and, as much as it is possible, self-sufficient. Although for man it is impossible to attain the perfect state, when he lacks and desires only few things, he becomes the most similar to God and 'most belongs to himself'. Temperance is thus 'the self-sufficient disposition of the soul' which attempts to meet the demand to assimilate oneself to God.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ For a detailed interpretation of this treatise see Tambrun-Krasker's commentary on *Or. mag.* For a discussion of Plethon's ethics see also Masai 1956, pp. 245–63, Arabatzis 2003, Tambrun-Krasker 2005.

⁴⁵ *De virt.* A.1 1.3–16: Ἀρετὴ ἐστὶν ἕξις καθ' ἣν ἀγαθοὶ ἐσμεν. Ἀγαθὸς μὲν δὴ τῶ ὄντι ὁ θεός, ἄνθρωποι δὲ ἀγαθοὶ γινόμεθα ἐπόμειοι θεῶ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν ἀνθρώπῳ. Ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος τὸ μὲν αὐτός τις καθ' αὐτόν, τὸ δὲ πρὸς ἕτερον, τοῦτο δ' ἦτοί πρὸς ἄλλ' ὅτιοῦν τῶν ὄντων, ἢ πρὸς τι τῶν αὐτοῦ, λέγω δὴ τὸ χεῖρον τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν, καὶ τοῦτ' αὐ εἶτε περὶ βίαι' ἅττα παθήματα ἔχον, ἢ περὶ ἐκούσια. Ἦ μὲν καθ' αὐτόν τις ἐστὶν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἐστὶ δὲ που λογικόν τι ζῶον, φρόνησις αὐτῷ παραγίνεται ἀρετὴ, τὸ τῇ τοιαύτῃ δυνάμει οἰκειότατον ἀποδιδούσα ἔργον. Ἦ δὲ πρὸς ἕτερόν τις ἐστὶ, πρὸς μὲν ἄλλ' ὅτιοῦν τῶν ὄντων, δικαιοσύνη τὸ προσήκον αὐτῷ ἐκάστῳ ἡμῶν ὅπερ ἐσμεν πρὸς ἕκαστον ἀποδιδούσα, πρὸς δὲ τι τῶν αὐτοῦ, περὶ μὲν τὰ βίαια τῶν παθημάτων ἔχον ἀνδρεία, περὶ δὲ τὰ ἐκούσια σωφροσύνη, σώζων τε ἐκατέρω τούτων τὴν τοῦ ἀμείνονος τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς πρὸς τὸ χεῖρον ἐκάστοτε ἀξίαν.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* A.2 1.17–2.13: Ῥητέον δὲ αὐθις δι' ἀκριβείας μᾶλλον περὶ αὐτῶν, ἀρξαμένοι ἀπὸ τῆς ἀτελεστάτης, ἐπὶ δὲ τὴν τελεωτάτην κατὰ φύσιν ἰοῦσι τῷ λόγῳ. Ὁ μὲν οὖν θεὸς τῶ

Moreover, God is also immovable, a quality that is, again, impossible for humans to attain in its perfect form. The next virtue (III), courage, is therefore 'the disposition of the soul to be immovable by violent passions of life' and that protects humans from being 'moved' by evil things.⁴⁷

Furthermore, each of us is first of all the work of God and is not much different, but in a sense relative and akin to the creator. At the same time Plethon claims that we are only a particle of some other parts that are larger than us and that constitute this universal whole, which is composed as one from many and in which each place is filled in such a way to be profitable for both, the particle and the whole. For this reason we may not leave the place assigned to us by God and must remain in it, as much as it is possible. From these considerations Plethon derives also his claim that each particle must be in an agreement with what it is the particle of, and not in disagreement, in order to behave according to nature and do well. And because everybody is a member of a family, community, city, nation or a part of this universe in general, he must give what is due to his neighbours and to God as well. The next virtue (II), justice, is thus 'the disposition of soul, which maintains what is due to each of us, according to what we are, in relation to everybody'.⁴⁸

Finally, because man is by himself 'a reasonable animal', one of his main tasks is to contemplate each existing thing and the mutual relations among things. Thus the most perfect virtue (I) is prudence, the disposition by which the soul contemplates how real being exists,⁴⁹ presumably the intelligible Forms or, as it is

ὄντι ἀνεπιδήεις, τελεώτατός τε ὦν καὶ ὡς οἶόν τε μάλιστα αὐτάρκης, ἄνθρωπον δὲ ἀνεπιδεῖα μὲν γενέσθαι παντάσῃσι ἀμήχανον, ἐλαττόνων μέντοι καὶ πλεόνων δεόμενον δι' ἀρετὴν τε καὶ κακίαν ἔστιν εὐρεῖν, ἐλαχίστων μὲν οὖν δεόμενος, θεῶ τε ὁμοιότατα ἴσχει, καὶ κράτιστα αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ, πλεόνων δὲ γινόμενος ἐπιδήεις, θεῶ τε ἀνομοιότατα καὶ χειρίστα ἴσχει. Καὶ ἔστι σωφροσύνη τοῦτο δὴ τὸ μόνιον ἀρετῆς, ἕξις ψυχῆς αὐτάρκης ἐπ' ἐλαχίστοις τοῖς πρὸς τὸν βίον ἀναγκαίαις ...

⁴⁷ Ibid. A,2 2.14–22: Ἀλλὰ δὴ καὶ ἀκίνητος ὁ θεός. Ἄνθρωπον δὲ πρὸς μὲν πάντα ἀκινήτως ἔχειν, οὐθ' οἶόν τε οὔτε ἀγαθόν, οὐδὲ γὰρ που καὶ πρὸς τὰ καλὰ οὕτω δεῖ ἔχειν ἀκινήτως. Ἀπὸ μέντοι τῶν κακῶν ἀκινήτων τε εἶναι ...

⁴⁸ Ibid. A,2 3.1–21: Ἐπεὶ δ' ἡμῶν ἕκαστος γέγονε πρῶτον μὲν θεοῦ τι ἔργον, οὐ πάνυ τοι ἀλλότριον, ἀλλὰ πη οἰκειόν τε καὶ συγγενές, ἔπειτα μόνιον ἄλλων τε ἡμῶν μεζόνων μερῶν τοῦδε τοῦ παντός ὄλου τε καὶ ἐνός ἐκ πολλῶν ὄντος, χώραν ἠντινοῦν ἀποπληρώσων ἕκασταχού, ὡς ἂν ὅτι μάλιστα αὐτῶ τε καὶ τῷ ὄλῳ ἐμελλε συνοίσειν, δεῖ δὴπου μὴδὲ ταύτην ἕκαστην ἀπολείπειν τὴν χώραν, ἐν ἧ ὁ θεὸς ἔταξεν, ἀλλ' ἐμμένειν κατὰ δύναμιν τὸ τῆς χώρας προσήκον ἀποδίδοντα, μόνιον δὲ ἅπαν ὁμολογοῦν τε ἐκείνῳ οὐπὲρ ἂν μόνιον εἶη, καὶ μὴ διαφωνοῦν, κατὰ φύσιν τε καὶ εὖ μάλιστα' ἂν πράττοι. Καὶ ἐπεὶ ἔστιν ἡμῶν ἕκαστος μέρος τι τοῦτο μὲν οἰκείας, τοῦτο δ' ἔταιρειάς τινός, πόλεως, ἔθνους, ὄλως τοῦδε τοῦ παντός, ἀποδιδούς τὰ προσήκοντα ἕκαστοις ... Εἴη τε ἂν δικαιοσύνη τοῦτο τὸ μόνιον ἀρετῆς, ἕξις ψυχῆς σώζουσα τὸ προσήκον αὐτῷ ἕκαστῷ ἡμῶν ὅπερ ἐσμέν, πρὸς ἕκαστον.

⁴⁹ Ibid. A,2 3.22–4.5: Ἐπεὶ δὲ καθ' αὐτὸν ἄνθρωπος γέγονεν οὐκ ἄλλο τι μάλιστα ἢ λογικόν τι ζῶον, δῆλον δὴ ὅτι ὡς θεωρός τις οἶόνπερ ἐν πανηγύρει τῷδε τῷ παντὶ εἰσῆκται,

claimed in the *Reply to Scholarios*, the highest God.⁵⁰ It is noteworthy that we can find a parallel for such a classification of virtues in Plato's *Laws*.⁵¹ As for Plethon, these four virtues are general, each of them being further divided into three specific ones. The resulting system of virtues, all rationally deduced according to the principles presented above, may be systematized in the following way:

Table 7 The system of Plethon's virtues

Virtue (ἀρετή)			
general virtues (γενικαὶ ἀρεταὶ)			
I. prudence (φρόνησις)	II. justice (δικαιοσύνη)	III. courage (ἀνδρεία)	IV. temperance (σωφροσύνη)
specific virtues (ειδικαὶ ἀρεταὶ)			
1. religiousness (θεοσέβεια)	2. piety (ὀσιότης)	7. mildness (πραότης)	8. liberality (ἐλευθεριότης)
4. understanding of nature (φυσική)	3. civil virtue (πολιτεία)	10. high spirit (εὐψυχία)	9. moderation (μετριότης)
5. good counsel (εὐβουλία)	6. honesty (χρηστότης)	11. nobleness (γενναιότητα)	12. propriety (κοσμιότητα)

The excellence of specific virtues rises up from below in the following order: (12) propriety, (11) nobleness, (10) high spirit, (9) moderation, (8) liberality, (7) mildness, (6) honesty, (5) good counsel, (4) understanding of nature, (3) civil virtue, (2) piety and (1) religiousness.⁵² Similar to what is claimed in the *Laws*

ἐπισκεψόμενος εἰς δύναμιν, καὶ θεωρήσων τί τέ ἐστι τῶν ὄντων ἕκαστον, καὶ πῆ ποτε πρὸς ἄλληλα ἔχει, καὶ διὰ τί ἕκαστα γίνονται τῶν γιγνομένων, εἴη τε ἂν καὶ τοῦτο φρόνησις, τὸ λοιπὸν καὶ τελεώτατον μόνιον ἀρετῆς, ἕξις ψυχῆς θεωρητικῆ τῶν ὄντων, ἥπερ ἐστὶν ἕκαστα.

⁵⁰ *Contra Schol.* XXVIII 466.5–11: ... τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀνωτάτου θεωρίαν τε καὶ νόησιν

⁵¹ Plato, *Leg.* I 631c–650b, XII 963a–964b, *pace* Demetracopoulos 2004, pp. 41–3, 2006, p. 296, who claims that the hierarchy of the four 'cardinal virtues' is derived from Thomas Aquinas.

⁵² *De virt.* B,14 14.16–15.10; for the definition of individual virtues see B,1–13 5.14–13.26.

in the discussion of fate, for Plethon, the right nature and a divine contribution is necessary in order to acquire virtue, because without them it is impossible to achieve anything good. Also required are understanding and knowledge, as well as practice and training. Plethon's ethics is in fact highly intellectual. If we lack some goodness, we are imperfect. In order to acquire it, we must, first, have an understanding of each virtue, that is, what is good for man, in which sense and how. After having gained such understanding and knowledge, we shall become even more perfect through practice and training. And if we make a habit of mingling the pleasant with the best, we may consider all three, the pleasant, the best and the blessed, to be the same. The most important thing is to avoid vice in every way.⁵³ Thus, as Plethon argues against Aristotle and Scholarios, the final goal of ethics is the good which is altogether independent of the pleasure that may accompany it.⁵⁴

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It was said at the beginning of this chapter that the general principles of the ethics presented in *On Virtues* are in accordance with the moral principles that we find in perennial philosophy. The chief and common desire that all the people are said to share is thus to live happily (εὐδαιμόνως ζῆν) even though they do not pursue it in the same way.⁵⁵ The main ethical precept of human behaviour as stated by Plethon in the *Laws* is the assimilation (ἀφομοίωσις) with or the imitation (μίμησις) of the divine world and its goodness.⁵⁶ He goes even so far, following in this Plato's *Laws*,⁵⁷ as to claim that humans imitate the eternal divine world by procreation of children, thus ensuring succession of human generations in the mortal world and attaining in a certain sense immortality. Moreover, the gods gave us the generative power and the capacity to cause something similar, two characteristics proper to the gods, whom we

⁵³ Ibid. B,14 14.1–15: 'Επί δὲ τὴν τῆς ἀρετῆς κτῆσιν, πρῶτον μὲν φύσεως δεῖ καὶ θείας μοίρας, ἧς χωρὶς οὐδὲ ἀγαθοῦ τινος ἔστι τυχεῖν, ἔπειτα λόγου τε καὶ ἐπιστήμης, εἶτα μελέτης τε καὶ ἀσκήσεως. 'Ότου δ' ἂν αὐτῶν τις ἀπολειφθῆ, ταύτη τε καὶ κατὰ τοσοῦτον καθ' ὅσον ἂν ἀπολειφθῆ, ἀτελής μάλιστα ἔσται ... Λόγου δὲ καὶ ἐπιστήμης μετασχών, τελεώτερος αὐ πάντως ἔσται, μελέτην τε καὶ ἀσκησιν προσλαβών, καὶ τὸ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἔθους ἡδὺ τῷ ἀρίστῳ ἐγκαταμίξας, ταῦτόν ἡδὺ τε καὶ ἄριστον καὶ μακάριον ἀποφύνας. 'Όμως μὲν γε παντὶ τρόπῳ φευκτέον μὲν κακίαν ... Cf. *De diff.* V 328.5–329.8.

⁵⁴ Ibid. V 329.9–330.6; cf. *Contra Schol.* XXVIII 460.4–466.23. Cf. also *Leg.* 148 [III,34].

⁵⁵ Ibid. 242 [III,43: *Epinomis*].

⁵⁶ Ibid. 76 [II,6], 144 [III,34].

⁵⁷ Plato, *Leg.* IV 721b–c; cf. Webb 1989, p. 217. Cf. also Plato, *Symp.* 206c–207a.

thus imitate through our procreation of children. The only difference is that immortal gods produce immortal creations, whereas mortal beings produce, of course, only mortals. For Plethon, therefore marriage and sexual love are not shameful, but, on the contrary proper and venerable. As he claims, whether an activity is shameful or not depends in fact on whether it is accomplished well or not.⁵⁸ (This certainly is the reason why, as we have seen in the *Address to Manuel*, Gemistos was particularly hostile to monks who lived in celibacy and, according to him, did not contribute anything to the common welfare.⁵⁹) On the basis of these considerations Plethon also argues for a prohibition of intercourse between parents and their children. This is because human procreation imitates the divine generation of the lower degrees of reality by the higher ones and, just as is the case in the three successive orders of the gods, successive human generations must also not mingle together.⁶⁰

The most eminent activity by which humans can get close to the gods is contemplation of what (really) exists, presumably the intelligible Forms. Plethon identifies the peak of contemplation with acquiring the notion of Zeus, who is the extreme boundary that even the gods themselves can reach. It is also apparently because of this contemplative ability that human beings are, at least in a part, like the gods and share in immortality. Furthermore, human happiness consists in this capacity.⁶¹ An understanding of the nature of things certainly leads to the acceptance of one's destiny allotted by the gods. Those who have acquired this understanding neither blame the gods for anything nor wish their lot were different.⁶² As Plethon states in brief in the *Summary of the Doctrines of Zoroaster and Plato*, the human souls are akin to the gods, and because of this kinship the good is also the proper goal of our life, our happiness being located in our immortal part.⁶³ In his commentary on the *Magian Oracle X*, Plethon further claims that the potentiality of virtue always remains impassible and

⁵⁸ *Leg.* 86–90 [III,14].

⁵⁹ See above, p. 19.

⁶⁰ Cf. chapter III,15 of Plethon's *Laws*, 92–118: *Περὶ θεῶν γενέσεως διὰ μέσης τῆς περὶ γονέων ἐκγόνοις οὐ μίξεως ὑποθέσεως*. 'On the generation of the gods, based upon the postulate of a prohibition of sexual intercourse between parents and children.' Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 324; for the prohibition of the acts against the nature and the punishments for them see *ibid.* 86 [III,14], 124 [III,31].

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 246–8 [III,43: *Epinomis*]; see Appendix VI,6, below, pp. 297–8. Cf. *ibid.* 144 [III,34].

⁶² *Ibid.* 146 [III,34].

⁶³ *Zor. Plat.* 266–8: ... θεοῖς ἡ ψυχὴ ἡμῶν οὐσα συγγενῆς ἀθανάτος τε μένει ἐν οὐρανῷ τῶδε τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον καὶ αἶδιος. ... εἶθ' ὡς τὸ καλὸν ἡμῖν, οἰκείως τῇ πρὸς θεοὺς συγγενείᾳ, τὸ προσήκον τοῦ βίου τέλος. Ἐπὶ δὲ πᾶσιν, ὡς καὶ τὸ εὐδαίμων ἡμῖν, ἐν τῷ ἀθανάτῳ ἡμῶν ... Cf. *Leg.* 144 [III,34], *Contra Schol.* XXVII 456.24–6.

und detachable in us, even when its activity ceases.⁶⁴ The stability of virtue is thus established in the immortal soul.

However, in the same treatise we are told that we should not neglect our body and should take care of it.⁶⁵ The matter of which it is composed is good, just like everything else created by God, who is goodness itself. If the body seems to be bad, it is not because of its essence, but because it holds the last place among all the essences and therefore participates the least in the good of them all.⁶⁶ We are told more in Plethon's commentary on *Oracle II*:

Incline not downwards: below the earth lies a precipice
that drags down beneath the sevenfold steps, below which
is the throne of dread Necessity.⁶⁷

Plethon interprets 'the earth' as the mortal body. 'The sevenfold steps' are, according to him, fate determined by the planets, that is to say, the seven planets that exert (astrological) influence upon the human life. We are told that 'under this fate, a dreadful and unchangeable necessity is established'. Plethon warns against following such a necessity because it is wholly connected with matter. Human beings, who are situated on the boundary of the purely material and psychological worlds, should always behave according to intellect, that is, according to their higher part. At the same time we are also invited not to neglect our lower part, the mortal body.⁶⁸ However, just as is true in the *Laws* and the *Differences*,

⁶⁴ *Or. mag.* 8.14–15 [on X]: ἀπαθῆ γὰρ καὶ ἀναπόβλητον ἐν ἡμῖν τὴν τῆς ἀρετῆς αἰεὶ δύναμιν ὑπάρχειν, κἂν ἡ ἐνέργεια αὐτῆς ἀποβλητῆ ᾖ. Cf. *Decl. brev.* 21.11–15.

⁶⁵ *Or. mag.* 12.13–16 [on XVb], *Decl. brev.* 21.23–2.1, cf. *Or. mag.* 12.4–6 [on XIV], *Leg.* 246–52 [III,43: *Epinomis*].

⁶⁶ *Or. mag.* 14.2–8 [on XIX]: ... ἀπλῶς πάντα τὰ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ αὐτοαγαθοῦ ὄντος προεληλυθότα χρηστὰ εἶναι, καὶ αὐτὰ τὰ κακῆς ὕλης βλαστήματα, ἧτοι τὰ τῆς ὕλης ἐξημμένα εἶδη. Κακὴν δὲ τὴν ὕλην φησὶν, οὐ τῆ οὐσία, πῶς γὰρ ἂν καὶ εἴη τῆ οὐσία κακῆ, ἥς τὰ βλαστήματα χρηστὰ καὶ ἐσθλά; ἀλλ' ὡς ἐσχάτην ἐν ταῖς οὐσίαις τεταγμένην καὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἐπ' ἐλάχιστον μετέχουσαν ... Cf. *Decl. brev.* 22.4–6.

⁶⁷ *Or. mag.* II 1.5–7: Μηδὲ κάτω νεύσης, κρημνὸς κατὰ γῆς ὑπόκειται, / ἑπταπόρου σῦρων κατὰ βαθμίδος, ἣν ὑπο δεινῆς / ἀνάγκης θρόνος ἐστί. Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 51.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 5.15–6.4 [on II]: ... γῆν δὲ τὸ γεῶδες καὶ θνητὸν σῶμα· γῆ μὲν γὰρ καὶ χθονί, τὴν θνητὴν φύσιν ... τὰ λόγια ταῦτα ὡς τὰ πολλὰ σημαίνει. Ἐπτάπορον δὲ βαθμίδα φησὶ τὴν ἐκ τῶν πλανήτων εἰμαρμένην, ὑφ' ἣν καὶ δεινὴν τινα ἰδρῶσθαι καὶ ἀπαράτρεπτον ἀνάγκην. Λέγει οὖν τὸ λόγιον, μὴ κάτω πρὸς τὸ θνητὸν δὴ σῶμα ἀποκλίνης, ὃ τῆ ἀπὸ τῶν πλανήτων μόνη ὡς τὰ πολλὰ ὑποπίπτειν εἰμαρμένη, τῶν οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν μᾶλλον ἐστὶ κακοδαιμονήσεις γάρ, ἣν πρὸς τοῦτο ὄλος ἀποκλίνης, ἀτυχῶν, καὶ τῆς βουλήσεως ὑπὸ τῆς ἐς αὐτὸ πεπρωμένης ἀνάγκης ἐκάστοτε ἐκπίπτων. Cf. also the title of lost chapter II, 14: Περὶ τῶν τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀστέρων δυνάμεων. 'On the potentialities of the seven planets.' *Leg.* 10, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 322 (altered).

Oracle IV plainly states that humans are not capable of changing their individual fate.⁶⁹ Rather than denying his conception of universal determinism, Plethon emphasizes here, once more, the importance of the rational life in contrast to one that is too influenced by the body.

In the commentary on *Oracle* I Plethon describes the journey of the soul between life and death. Being immortal, it descends from 'above,' and then, connected with matter, 'it serves for some time the mortal body by making it alive and by ordering it as much as it is possible.' Afterwards, when it departs again from 'here to there,' the soul can go to one of several places – either to an entirely bright place or to an entirely dark place or to some place in between, partly light and partly dark. If the soul has come from the entirely bright place and serves well during its stay on earth, it will return to the same place. If it has not served well, it will come to a place that is worse. Plethon further explains that according to the *Oracles*, in addition to the sacred speech about religiousness, initiation is also needed to lead the soul upward.⁷⁰ In the *Oracles*, the task of initiation is said to be to bring the soul closer to the divine, symbolized by light, fire or thunderbolts. However, Plethon talks about initiation in a very abstract way, saying that it is practised by the intellect which the soul has received from 'the entirely bright place.'⁷¹ At the same time we are told that to those who are being 'initiated' phantoms appear, 'apparitions without any substance, not conveying any truth' since they originate in our mortal body and non-rational passions, not yet sufficiently ordered by reason.⁷² As we know from elsewhere, the soul should

⁶⁹ *Or. mag.* IV 1.9 with Plethon's commentary, 6.9–10.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 4.11–5.13 [on I]: Οἱ ἀπὸ Ζωροάστρου μάγοι νομίζουσιν, ὥσπερ καὶ ἄλλοι συχνοί, τὴν ψυχὴν τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην, ἀθάνατον οὖσαν, ἄνωθεν τε κατιέναι, τῷ θνητῷ τῷδε σώματι θητεύουσιν, ἥτοι ἐπὶ τινα χρόνον ἐργασομένην αὐτῷ, καὶ ζωώσουσάν τε καὶ κοσμήσουσιν ἐκ τῶν δυνατῶν, καὶ αὐθις ἐνθένδε ἐκείσε ἀποχωρεῖν, πλειόνων δ' ἐκεῖ ὄντων τῇ ψυχῇ χώρων, καὶ τοῦ μὲν ἀμφιφαοῦς, τοῦ δ' ἀμφικνεφοῦς, τῶν δὲ τινων μεταξύ τούτων, ἑτεροφῶν τε δὴ καὶ ἑτεροκεφῶν ἀπὸ γε τοῦ ἀμφιφαοῦς ποτὲ ἐς τὸδε τὸ σῶμα κατερρηκυῖαν τὴν ψυχὴν, καλῶς μὲν θητεύσασαν, ἐς τὸν αὐτὸν χώρον αὐθις ἀνατρέχειν· μὴ καλῶς δέ, ἐς τοὺς τούτου χείρους ἐνθένδε ἀποχωρεῖν, κατὰ λόγον τῶν αὐτῇ βεβιωμένων. ... Ἱερὸν μὲν οὖν λόγον τὸν περὶ τῆς θεοσεβείας φησίν, ἔργον δὲ τὴν τελετὴν. Λέγει οὖν τὸ λόγιον, ὅτι πρὸς τῷ περὶ τῆς θεοσεβείας λόγῳ, καὶ τῇ τελετῇ χρῶν, πρὸς τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτῆν ἀναγωγὴν. Cf. *ibid.* 7.9–11 [on VII], 8.2–6 [on VIII], *Decl. brev.* 21.10–11.

⁷¹ *Or. mag.* 7.9–11 [on VII], 13.5–7 [on XVII], 15.5–8 [on XXIII], 15.14–16 [on XXIV]; cf. 5.17 [on II], 9.16 [on XII], 17.4 [on XXIX], 18.16 [on XXXIII].

⁷² *Ibid.* 13.9–15 [on XVIII]: Εἶωθε τοῖς πολλοῖς τῶν τελουμένων φαίνεσθαι κατὰ τὰς τελετὰς κυνώδη τινὰ καὶ ἄλλως ἀλλόκοτα τὰς μορφὰς φάσματα. Ταῦτ' οὖν φησι τὸ λόγιον, ἐκ τῶν τῆς γῆς ὀρμαῖσθαι κόλπων, δηλαδὴ τοῦ γεώδους τοῦδε καὶ θνητοῦ σώματος, καὶ τῶν τούτῳ συμφύτων παθῶν ἀλόγων, οὕτω ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου ἰκανῶς κατακεκοσμημένων, εἰδῶλα

not let itself be dominated by the body,⁷³ and so 'initiation' seems to mean a liberation of the soul from the domination of its body and a turning towards the divine with the help of reason rather than some magical or theurgical ritual.

Plethon's ethics is thus connected closely not only with his metaphysics but also with his eschatology, the latter being already very much present in the original *Chaldaean Oracles*. It is noteworthy that the terminus of this eschatology is assimilation with the divine, either in human (ethical) action or in the contemplation of reality up to the highest god. The nature of Plethon's ethics is intellectual, as a rational understanding of the virtues is needed even for acquiring them. Also the initiation of the *Magian Oracles*, as interpreted by Plethon, is intellectual in its character. The double nature of man, however, brings a specific problem. If our happiness and virtue are to be placed in our reason, it is the rational soul that should determine our action, and not the body, through which the passions and stimuli from the sensible world come to us. This means that there is a certain ambivalence as regards our body in Plethon's philosophy. Since everything created by the first principle is good, we should care for our body. At the same time, the body is composed of matter, which is the lowest of all creation, and, being less perfect than our rational part, it may sometimes lead us astray and thus disturb our acting according to rational ethics and, consequently, our relation with the divine.

The rituals that are described by Plethon at the end of *Laws* are also related to the problems just discussed and for our purposes may be summarized briefly here.⁷⁴ The core of his cult consists in reciting or singing somewhat artificial allocutions and hymns to the gods that, especially in the case of the allocutions, contain a rational theology rather than a poetical exaltation of the divine.⁷⁵ Moreover, Plethon gives detailed instructions on when and how to perform the hymns composed in metre as well as the allocutions written in prose, which resemble in form Julian's *Oration to the Sun King* or perhaps also Plato's *Timaeus*. There is one allocution to be recited in the morning, three in the afternoon and

τῶν τοιούτων τῆς τοῦ τελομένου ψυχῆς παθῶν, φαινόμενα ἀνυπόστατα, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐδ' ἀληθῆς σημαίνοντα οὐδέν. Cf. *Decl. brev.* 22.2–4.

⁷³ *Or. mag.* 5.19–6.4 [on IV], 12.4–6 [on XIV].

⁷⁴ For a thorough treatment with a discussion of Plethon's possible sources see Anastos 1948, pp. 252–69.

⁷⁵ *Leg.* 132–228 [III,34–5], one more allocution missing in the modern edition of the *Laws* and some more text may be found in *Add.* 101.1–7, 108v.1–3, 114.2–7, 118v.21–123.17, below, pp. 311–18.

one in the evening. The proper place of the ritual as well as the proper gestures and utterances of a herald (ἱεροκῆρυξ) leading the ritual are specified as well. The allocutions are followed by hymns to various gods. These differ according to whether they are performed daily, monthly or annually. Their usage at the proper time of day is also specified by Plethon.⁷⁶

A very interesting part of Plethon's ritual prescription is the calendar, which he proposes with his usual emphasis on rationality and regularity.⁷⁷ The months and years should be fixed 'according to nature (κατὰ φύσιν)', that is, in relation to the motion of the Moon and Sun respectively. The beginning of the year should be located in the winter solstice,⁷⁸ the beginning of the month to the New Moon. Plethon then develops a calendar based on a year consisting of 12 months to which sometimes a thirteenth, intercalary month must be added. The months may have either 30 or 29 days, being called 'full (πλήρεις)' or 'hollow (κοῖλοι)' respectively. Remarkable is the fact that the months do not bear traditional names, neither the ancient Greek names nor Byzantine, but are just numbered.⁷⁹ The days of the month are also numbered according to the five or six sacred days which fall on: (1) the first day (the new moon), (2) the eighth day, (3) the fifteenth (the full moon), (4) the twenty-second, (5) the twenty-ninth and, in the full month, (6) the thirtieth day of the month. Thus, the month is also divided into four seven-day weeks.⁸⁰ Plethon associates these sacred days with the gods: (1) The first of them is thus dedicated to Zeus, (2) the following one to Poseidon and the Olympians, (3) the next one to 'all the gods after Zeus of the second rank.' (4) The fourth sacred day is dedicated to the Sun, Cronus and 'all the gods after the Olympians', that is, to the Titans and the gods of the sensible order, (5) the following day to Pluto, 'specifically out of other gods' and at the same time to remembrance of heroes and

⁷⁶ *Leg.* 228–40 [III,36], the rest of the chapter may be found in *Add.* 132.5–133.4, below, pp. 318–19.

⁷⁷ *Leg.* 58–60 [III,36], some more text, missing in the modern edition of the *Laws*, may be found in *Add.* 133.4, 133v.7–134.4, below, pp. 319–20. In the edition of the *Laws* this chapter is classified wrongly as I,21, see Masai 1956, p. 395, n.2. Theodore Gazes had to have the supplementary text in *Add.* at his disposal as is apparent from some of his reports of Plethon's calendar in Gazes, *De mens.* 1168B–C, 1193D, 1197D, 1200D, 1201A–B, 1208A–C, 1209C, 1213B–C, the last two passages being obviously based on the text absent from the edition, but contained in *Add.*; cf. Alexandre 1858, pp. xcii–xciii.

⁷⁸ Plethon was probably influenced in this point by Plutarch, *Aet. Rom.* 268c–d, who attributes such a localization of winter solstice to Numa; cf. Anastos 1948, p. 206, Tihon's commentary on *Meth.*, pp. 179–80.

⁷⁹ Gazes criticizes Plethon for this, *De mens.* 1168B–C.

⁸⁰ *Leg.* 58–60 [III,36], for a detailed reconstruction with a discussion of Plethon's possible sources see Anastos 1948, pp. 188–252, and also Tihon's and Mercier's commentary on *Meth.*, pp. 178–83, 235–6, 275.

'other deceased friends and relatives of ours'. (6) Finally, the sixth sacred day should be devoted to the self-examination and correction of our errors, deficiencies and faults. In the 'hollow months' the two last sacred days are celebrated together. In the first month of the year the second day is further dedicated to Hera and the third one to Poseidon, whereas at the end of the year there are also some other feasts – the third day before the end of the year is dedicated again to Pluto and the remembrance of the deceased.⁸¹

We can observe in Plethon's calendar and its sacred days the rational and regular form as well as the artificiality present in the cult proposed by the *Laws*. The most important day of each month is the first one, that is, (1) the day of the new moon, which is dedicated to Zeus, the first principle and the highest cause of all. Other sacred days, according to their importance, are (3) the day of the full moon that is dedicated to the gods of the second order, (2) the eighth day of the month, when the feast of the Olympians gods is celebrated, and (4) the twenty-second day dedicated to the Titans and the gods of the third order. At the end of the monthly and annual cycle Pluto is quite understandably worshiped and the deceased remembered, whereas at the beginning of the year the two highest gods of the second order, Hera and Poseidon, each has its own sacred day, following the day dedicated to Zeus.

Table 8 The religious calendar in Plethon's *Laws*

	Day		Dedication to
1	1st	new moon	Zeus
2	8th		Poseidon and Olympians
3	15th	full moon	all the gods of the second order
4	22th		Sun, Cronus, Titans and the gods of the third order
5	29th		Pluto, heroes and deceased
6	30th		self-examination and correction

Note: 6 appears in the full month only, otherwise is celebrated together with 5.

⁸¹ *Add.* 133v.7–134.4; cf. 121.9–18, below, pp. 319–20, 315.

This disposition has obviously more to do with mathematical and astronomical calculations than with a religious tradition in which the sacred days may have originated from accidental events or customs that have nothing to do with a rational conception of the world. Moreover, in devising his religious calendar Plethon was evidently influenced by the *Laws* of Plato, an issue we shall discuss later on.⁸²

In Plethon's writings on perennial philosophy only a little space is reserved for political philosophy, that is, to the question of the right constitution or concrete political organization of a society. This theme was not a matter he discussed either in his writings on Plato, *Chaldaean Oracles* or, more surprisingly, in his *Laws*. The introductory notice of the *Laws* advertises that the book contains:

Politics on the Spartan system, but with the elimination of the excessive rigour which is generally unacceptable, and with the addition of philosophy to be practised principally among the rulers (οἱ ἄρχοντες), this being the supreme merit of the Platonic politics (Πλατωνικά πολιτεύματα).⁸³

Since, as it is well known, Sparta was a kind of oligarchy with two nominal kings, it is clear that here, too, not a monarch, but a larger class of rulers is presupposed who should occupy themselves with philosophy. This, as we mentioned above when discussing the *Address to Theodore*, is naturally very close to Plato's *Republic* or *Laws*, which seems to be the main source of inspiration here.⁸⁴

Lost chapters 20 of book I and 6 of book III bear the titles 'On constitution' and 'On the form of constitution'⁸⁵ respectively. They are otherwise the only references to political issues in the list of the topics treated in the *Laws*. The book itself starts with the programmatic statement:

This text has been written about the laws and the best constitution by which men's minds should be guided; and by following and practising which, both privately and publicly, men may live the best and most excellent lives open to them, and also the happiest lives to the greatest possible degree.⁸⁶

⁸² Plato, *Leg.* VIII 828a–d; cf. Webb 1989, p. 217, see below pp. 276–8.

⁸³ *Leg.* 2, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 322 (altered).

⁸⁴ Plato, *Resp.* II 369b–376d, III–IV 412b–427c; cf. O'Meara 2003, pp. 101–5.

⁸⁵ *Leg.* 8: Περὶ πολιτείας, 12: Περὶ τῆς πολιτείας σχήματος.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 16 [I,1]: Τάδε συγγέγραπται περὶ νόμων τε καὶ πολιτείας τῆς ἀρίστης, ἥ ἂν διανοοῦμενοι ἄνθρωποι καὶ ἄτ' ἂν καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ κοινῇ μετιόντες τε καὶ ἐπιτηδεύοντες, ὡς

Plethon uses the word 'law', however, in a broad sense, meaning apparently the right ideas about the gods and the world as well as religious and social customs.⁸⁷ These 'laws' have been given to humans by the gods themselves through famous lawgivers, who are said to be interpreters of the divine realities down here on earth.⁸⁸ This is naturally quite far from the politics and the character of legislation as conceived today, but once again close to Plato.⁸⁹

Another remarkable feature of Plethon's *Laws* is the apparent absence of political functions or functionaries in the text. None is mentioned in the list of topics in the chapters that follow. Hard upon the lost chapter on constitution (I,20) one chapter (I,22) has the title 'On priests (ιερείς) and their way of life.'⁹⁰ These priests are supposed to preside over the rituals described in the *Laws*.⁹¹ According to Plethon's legislation there should be three different burial places clearly divided from one another. The first one should be reserved for priests, the second for the rest of citizens, whereas in the last the sophists who subvert the beliefs presented in the *Laws* should be burnt and buried. In the same 'burial place of the impure' should be buried those who have committed sexual crimes or a murder.⁹² Leaving aside the surprising cruelty of the punishments proposed by Plethon – contrasting with both his public *Addresses* –, one may notice that in the *Laws* priests obviously have a privileged position. Their place of burial contrasts with that assigned to the sophists and impure, whose position in the society, as projected by Plethon, similarly contrasts with that of the priests. For this reason the priests are obviously supposed to be just and holy men. We may also assume that they are 'the rulers' who should occupy themselves with philosophy', as mentioned at the beginning of the *Laws*.⁹³ Once more, we can find analogies in Plato's *Laws*.⁹⁴

δυνατόν, ἀνθρώπων κάλλιστα τε καὶ ἄριστα βιώειν, καὶ ἐξ ὅσων οἴοντε, εὐδαιμονέστατα. Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 325 (altered).

⁸⁷ *Leg.* 18 [I,1], 28 [I,2], 86 [III,14], 140, 152 [III,34], 202, 206 [III,35], *Add.* 132.22, 132v.3, 17, below, pp. 318–19.

⁸⁸ *Leg.* 30–32 [I,2], 252 [III,43: *Epinomis*].

⁸⁹ For similar problems in the context of Plato's political philosophy as interpreted by the Neoplatonists see O'Meara 2003; Plethon is briefly touched upon at pp. 203–4.

⁹⁰ *Leg.* 8, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 323.

⁹¹ *Leg.* 230–32 [III,36].

⁹² *Ibid.* 124–8 [III,31].

⁹³ The 'rules (ἄρχοντες)' are mentioned also at the end of the chapter in question, *ibid.* 130 [III,31].

⁹⁴ On the priests and the legislation on burials in Plato's *Law* see VI 759a–760a, X 909d–e, XII 958c–960b.

Chapter 12

Conclusion to Part II: Plethon's Platonism

Now we may gather up and connect together the diverse parts of Plethon's 'perennial philosophy' and provide a global overview of it. Plethon begins his philosophical quest with the question of human happiness, which is, however, impossible to achieve without the knowledge of the nature of man and of the universe of which he is necessarily a part. Plethon systematically distinguishes and classifies diverse possible solutions, and by refuting the Protagoreans and Pyrrhonian sceptics he concludes that it is possible to decide by means of reason among the conflicting opinions on the world, man and the right ethics. The only true wisdom is 'the perennial philosophy' advocated throughout the ages by various lawgivers and philosophers (as opposed to the poets and the sophists). It may be acquired through rational 'common notions' that provide access to the truth about reality and, through the grace of the gods, universally accessible to all the people. Plethon bases his version of *philosophia perennis* on the 'Magian' (Chaldaean) Oracles and Plato's philosophy, which, according to him, mutually agree with each other and contain the same truth because the structure of the world described by them is the same.

In the perennial philosophy reality is thus divided into the 'pre-eternal' first principle, the eternal intelligible order of the Platonic Forms, which are themselves at the same time also intellects, and the sensible world. Within the lowest, ontological level there is a further division between a higher, everlasting part, and a lower part that is mortal and created by the partial contribution of the everlasting heaven. Everything that is immortal and possessing permanent existence is conceived by Plethon as divine and at the same time as a principle for something else. The higher principle is always the cause and the source of being for everything lower, acting either directly or through other, lower entities which are caused by it and which are thus akin to auxiliary principles for the higher ones. We thus get a structure of reality in which 'the gods of three orders' are distinguished, namely, the first principle, the Forms and the heavenly bodies taken together with daemons. They serve as principles for the corresponding three different levels of reality: the first principle produces everything else and is directly involved in the creation of the Platonic intelligible Forms. These Forms, in turn, cause the existence of the sensible world, whose higher, everlasting part is responsible, along with the lower Forms, for the generation of its lower, mortal

part. The division within the sensible world between heaven and a lower part has its model in the intelligible order, where the Forms are correspondingly divided into higher Forms capable of producing the higher part of the sensible world and lower Forms, which generate the lower part of the sensible world.

When elaborating this metaphysical system that is divided into three or, from another point of view, four levels, Plethon faced the problem of how to account for the differentiation of complex reality from one source since he had conceived the first principle as supremely one, so united that within it no distinction can be distinguished. The intelligible order of the Forms thus became the limited plurality that is unchangeable, in contrast to the sensible world that changes, or in other words, it is differentiated not only by the inner relations among the entities contained in it, but also by processes and developments in time. Furthermore, the lower, mortal part of the sensible world is not only attached to matter, but entirely dependent on it. Since, for Plethon, matter is the source of infinity, the plurality of the lower part of the world is not limited, but undetermined, which is also the reason for the perpetual and incessant generation and corruption of the things within it. Plethon attempted to explain the degressive differentiation and pluralization of reality by a multiplication of the main ontological distinctions on each level of it. There is no plurality in the first principle, whereas in the Forms there is already a difference between their essence, common to them all, and their diverse attributes, which correspond to the diverse activities of the Forms, that is, their various abilities to act upon or to create something else outside them. An essence thus constitutes a Form as Form, that is to say, as one of the intelligible entities that are models of the things in our sensible world. The Form's attribute determines what a Form is a Form of. In the soul located in the higher part of the sensible world and closely connected with time, there is a further distinction between the (active) potentiality to act and the activity itself. In contrast to the Forms, the activity of the soul is not eternal but it starts at a certain moment of time and ceases at another. Finally, in the body the distinction between the active potentiality to act and the passive potentiality to be acted upon appears. This distinction stems from matter, which is potentially divisible into infinity and therefore is the source of unlimited plurality. For this reason it also causes the things constituted of it to be mortal because being ontologically 'unstable' it cannot provide them with permanent existence and they thus necessarily begin and cease to exist.

The first principle named in the *Laws* is Zeus who both creates and sustains everything else. The first principle is described by Plethon as supremely one, perfectly united, simple and identical with itself. As such it also transcends everything else and is fundamentally different from it. However, according to Plethon, humans can know it and unite with it through 'the flower' of the

intellect by which one can transcend rational knowledge, which, based in the realm of the differentiated intelligible Forms, is necessarily plural.

The main presupposition necessary for the correct understanding of Plethon's conception of the intelligible Forms is the notion that what is more general and universal is not 'emptier' in its content but, on the contrary, comprehends in itself 'in the manner of unity' everything of which it is cause and principle. For this reason one must postulate the world of the Platonic Forms parallel to the sensible world because otherwise it would not be possible to explain how the rational knowledge that we are capable of attaining and that is always general and universal could have been derived from singular sensible particulars. This principle must be applied not only to the relation of particulars to their corresponding Form, but also to the Forms themselves, among which the more general contain in themselves the more specific ones. While the Forms are differentiated by their mutual distinctions, they also constitute a united whole located outside space and time. This is due to their origin since the first principle created them by 'dividing' the highest of them. This is the Form of Form, acting in accord with the differences contained 'implicitly' in it. Thus the whole intelligible order is established, in which each Form has its proper place and which is 'enclosed' because it is so perfect that no other intelligible entity may be added to it. The lower Forms are images of the higher ones in the same way that sensible particulars are images of them. Viewed in terms of the distinction between their essence and attributes, all Forms are created by Zeus and receive their essence from him. But during creation they distribute among themselves their various attributes; that means, they mutually differentiate among themselves according to what they are models of and what is their proper identity. The intelligible order is thus a kind of whole in which each part or each Form reflects all the others in itself. This unity is further strengthened by the fact that each of the Forms is not only an intelligible entity, but also an intellect that conceives other Forms in an intellectual act.

There are two main ways by which the Forms may be further distinguished. The first is the division between the higher ones that are models of the main ontological characteristics of the sensible world (such as form, matter, identity, difference, rest, self-motion, motion by different things) and everything that is everlasting, and the lower ones that are capable of producing only mortal things. Plethon identifies the former Forms with the Olympian gods and the latter with the Titans, the god of Tartarus. Another division that permeates both parts of the intelligible order, the higher as well as the lower one, is the polarization into 'male' and 'female' Forms. The former provide the things with an attribute that is a kind of active and determined form; the latter, in contrast, are connected with undetermined and passive matter. We may also surmise that this is the reason

why Plethon, when expounding his philosophy, uses ancient Greek polytheistic mythology, in which male and female principles join together in order to generate something else. In this case their common offspring is identical with our world created at a lower ontological level than the Forms.

The gods of the third order, namely, the Sun and the Moon along with other stars and planets as well as daemons, are situated in the higher, everlasting part of our world. Each of these divinities has an independent soul for which a participated intellect is provided directly by the first principle. The matter of which they consist depends on this rational soul and not vice versa and therefore cannot be the cause of their dissolution. The Sun is a boundary between the Forms and the sensible world and, in its lower part, in conjunction with other stars, it is responsible for the creation of mortal things, providing them with matter. The lower Forms (Titans) are unable to produce mortal creatures by themselves. On the other hand, nor can the Sun itself cannot produce mortal creatures by itself. Thus the contribution of the immaterial Forms is always necessary. Daemons are good, just like the whole cosmos, which is the best possible, and they are charged, besides other tasks, with correcting people. The cosmos has not been created in time and is thus everlasting 'in both directions', which means that it has existed for an infinite time and will continue to exist for an infinite time. The mortal part of the cosmos is constituted of the four elements, each of which is permanent as a whole. Within the cosmos the world soul is active. Its motions establish time, and, as is true for every other soul, it is also everlasting. The main structure of the body of the cosmos is thus also everlasting, with only the parts and particles within this permanent structure, that is, the individual things dependent on the body, beginning and ceasing to exist because they have not a proper individual soul that would maintain them in existence when their bodies dissolve.

At the point of contact of the higher and lower part of the universe Plethon places human nature, which is the necessary boundary and bond required by his whole metaphysical system. For this reason there are two Forms that are the models for human beings: Kore, a lower, Titanic god, who supplies the body, and Pluto, a higher, Olympian god, who provides the soul. Unlike the stars, possessing the proper knowledge, and daemons, possessing right opinion, the human soul is already located so low on the scale of being that it is fallible. It is connected to the body through the higher part of the latter, the so-called astral body that mingles together with the lower, non-rational part of the soul. Unlike the higher souls of the gods of the third order, the human body is not wholly dependent on the human soul, that, being at the boundary of two radically different natures, cannot make the human body eternal. Nevertheless, like the other souls, the human soul also has a 'participated' intellect and is co-eternal with the cosmos. Its intermediate position between mortal and immortal nature

forces it to undergo periodic reincarnations, a process required also by the fact that there can only be a limited number of immortal souls which thus have to return again and again to make bodies alive.

According to Plethon, the sensible world in its entirety is derived from the intelligible Forms that are the cause of everything in it, including even matter. Matter also has its corresponding Form (in fact two, one of matter in general and one of mortal matter). It is therefore not a principle that would be independent of the world of Forms. Necessarily, therefore, everything has its cause in the intelligible order. Furthermore, everything is wholly determined by the intelligible order. For Plethon, only the first principle is thus free and for this reason there is no room for man's free will. He claims, however, that human freedom consists in being in accord with the world, created as the best possible, and even though our potentiality to act virtuously is also dependent on whether we are given this ability by the gods or not, this does not mean that we should not be in agreement with their will if we are able to know it. When Plethon deduces and classifies rationally human virtues, the highest good for him is the imitation of the divine order (including a rather peculiar idea of imitating the Forms through procreation of children) and the contemplation of it with the first principle at its summit; upon this good the fate of an individual man after death depends. The knowledge of the structure of reality, along with the rational ethics based on it (including the proper rituals), thus enables Plethon to decide between the alternatives which he proposed at the beginning of the *Laws* and with which his quest for the human happiness began.¹

It is apparent that Plethon's philosophy presupposes a very concise metaphysical system that, despite its peculiar theology, is rational in its general character and cannot be treated as mere religious or mythological thought in the traditional sense. Paul Oskar Kristeller came to the same conclusion:

We may note in Plethon's Platonism a strongly rationalistic character and the apparent absence of that mystical or spiritualistic element that is so prominent and central in the thought of the ancient Neoplatonists and of many Renaissance Platonists.²

¹ See above, pp. 49–53.

² Kristeller 1972, p. 98.

It is often claimed – including by Kristeller in the same passage – that Plethon was heavily influenced by Proclus.³ This suggestion was already made by Scholarios, who accused Plethon of deliberately not mentioning this main inspirer of his philosophy in the list of great philosophers at the beginning of the *Laws* (that is, the Seven Sages, Pythagoras, Parmenides, Timaeus of Locri, Plato, Plutarch, Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus). For Scholarios the situation is clear: it is Proclus from whom Plethon derived his own doctrine of the plurality of the gods and ‘the generations, orders, differences and activities in this universe, of the human souls ... and stars ...’. According to Scholarios, Plethon tried to conceal this source of his philosophy, but it is nevertheless easy to detect it.⁴ This claim of Scholarios is simply absurd. Plethon’s *Laws* was not apparently a book that was written for a wide public and there is no sense in trying to conceal something in a text that is itself esoteric. Furthermore, the polytheism contained in it was in itself enough or even more likely to raise the suspicion of a Byzantine reader than a marginal mention of Proclus. However, this Neoplatonic philosopher had a very bad reputation in Byzantium and it is obvious that by mentioning him Scholarios attempts to discredit the author of the *Laws*.⁵ Although he might have been really convinced that this was the real source of the teaching contained in the philosophy of Plethon’s book, we should not rely on him, being as he was Plethon’s main philosophical opponent, and someone who obviously did not study his philosophy in depth and did not know it thoroughly. In contrast, there is no apparent reason why we should not take the list of the philosophers at the beginning of the *Laws* seriously.

In fact, even though it is possible to observe some similarities between the philosophy of Proclus and Plethon’s perennial philosophy, the divergences are more significant. There are thus apparent differences as regards concrete doctrines – for instance, that of the vehicle of the soul⁶ or the origin of matter.⁷ Plethon, following Plato, is critical of the ancient Greek poets and their depiction

³ Alexandre 1858, pp. lxxx–lxxxi, n.2, Anastos 1948, pp. 289–99, Kristeller 1972, p. 97, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 72–7, Hankins 1991, p. 200.

⁴ Scholarios, *Ad Jos.* 153.22–34: ... τίς ἀγνοεῖ τὰς Πρόκλου πραγματείας, ἐξ ὧν αὐτὸς τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐσπερμολόγησεν; καίτοι εἰς μὲν Πλωτῖνον καὶ Πορφύριον καὶ Ἰάμβλιχον ἀναφέρει τὴν συγγραφὴν, ἀφ’ ὧν ὀλίγα ἢ οὐδὲν προσειλήφει, Πρόκλον δὲ τὸν αἰτιώτατον αὐτῷ τῆς τοιαύτης φρονήσεως σιωπᾶ, οὐδ’ ἀνέχεται δεικνύσαι, ὅτι ἐκ τῶν ἐκείνου βιβλίων μᾶλλον πάντα συνήγαγεν, οἷς οὐδὲν ἐστὶν ἄλλο προθέσις ἢ περὶ πλήθους θεῶν καὶ γενέσεως καὶ τάξεως καὶ διαφορᾶς καὶ ἐνεργείας ἐν τῷ παντὶ τῷδε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων ψυχῶν ... καὶ ἄστρον ...

⁵ For the general Byzantine opinion of Proclus see Parry 2006.

⁶ See Nikolaou 1982.

⁷ See Tambrun-Krasker 2002, pp. 320–28; for the comparison of Proclus’ and Plethon’s philosophy see *ibid.*, pp. 310–30, and 2006, pp. 153–68.

of the gods, whereas Proclus, defending the traditional polytheism, attempts to reconcile Plato's philosophy with Homer, Hesiod and other poets who are criticized in the *Republic*.⁸ For Plethon, the poetic account of the gods, including even Plato's own myths, is not in any way a higher revelation, but, on the contrary, an imprecise or false conception of the divine that must be corrected by rational thought. He also does not seem to have the slightest interest in theurgy although he commented on the *Chaldaean Oracles*, which are the main source of Proclus' theurgical practice.⁹ Plethon's explanation of the *Oracles* is always philosophical rather than mystical, religious or theurgical. Although we know that Plethon was interested in some of Proclus' works, there are only few similarities between those and the ones he composed; again their main purpose was not theurgy, but simply the exaltation of the divine.¹⁰ It may be also argued that Plethon was inspired by Proclus in his attempt to identify the gods of the ancient Greek religion with metaphysical principles. However, Proclus identifies the ancient gods primarily with the henads, not with the Forms as Plethon does, although one might object that in Proclus, too, the gods are secondarily identified with the lesser aspects of reality, including the Forms. Proclus also does not call the first principle after any of the ancient gods, whereas, for Plethon, it is Zeus. Thus despite certain similarities and a common attempt to construe a systematic rational theology in which principal aspects of reality are identified with different gods, their pantheons are, after all, also different.¹¹

Finally, the structure of reality in Plethon's philosophy is far less diversified than in Proclus¹² who, by postulating subtle distinctions between the multiple levels of his hierarchical metaphysics, became a kind of forerunner of medieval scholasticism. Furthermore, a more complex metaphysics than that of Plethon may be found also in Plotinus. A conscious reservation towards the metaphysical systems of both these great Neoplatonists is clearly apparent from the discussion which took place between Plethon and his pupil Bessarion. Bessarion asks his teacher for an explanation of some problems provoked by his study of the Platonic tradition and in the first place apparently relies on Proclus, to whom he

⁸ Proclus, *In Remp.*; cf. Chlup 2012, pp. 185–200.

⁹ See des Places' introduction to *Or. Chald.*, pp. 41–6, Lewy 1978, and Chlup 2012, pp. 169–84.

¹⁰ See van den Berg 2001, pp. 86–111.

¹¹ See Dodds' commentary on Proclus, *El. theol.*, pp. 257–60, 278–9, 282–3, Saffrey's and Westerink's introduction to Proclus, *Theol. Plat.*, vol. 3, pp. ix–lxxvii, Brisson 1996, pp. 121–45, 168–70, van den Berg 2001, pp. 38–40, Chlup 2012, pp. 112–36.

¹² For the overview of Proclus's metaphysical system see Dodds' commentary on Proclus, *El. theol.*, p. 282, Wallis 1972, pp. 138–58, and Chlup 2012.

frequently refers, along with numerous other late Neoplatonic thinkers.¹³ In his reply Plethon first claims that as concerns the creator of the heavens,¹⁴ one should not think that the philosophers mentioned by Bessarion agree (συμφωνεῖν) on everything. Although they are in accord (συνάδειν) on the things that are 'greater and more important (τὰ μείζω καὶ κυριώτερα)', nevertheless, there are also things on which they disagree (διαφωνεῖν).

Plethon then shows the differences between the Platonists on the problem of the creator of the world situated by Plato immediately next to this heaven. Proclus, 'adapting Plato's doctrines to be in accordance with the myths of Orpheus', 'posits the Demiurge as the fourth principle [beginning] from the first cause'. Plotinus, 'with regard to many poets', claims that the creator is third principle; according to Julian (the Apostate), 'following probably Maximus [of Ephesus]', he is the second.¹⁵ This seems to be also the position of Plato, who says in his account of the creation of the soul in the *Timaeus* that 'the soul was generated as the best of generated things by the best of the intelligible and eternal realities.'¹⁶ Plethon claims that Proclus distorts the sense of this sentence since he constructs it in a wrong way. Moreover, according to him, Proclus derives matter from the first cause. Furthermore, 'Plotinus deduces from the second intelligible essence, following the first [cause], the doctrine of the evil daemons.' Some of the Platonists have not clearly accepted this doctrine, nor had Plato, but 'those who adhere to the doctrine of the Egyptians are led to such a conclusion.' As Plethon says, on this point the *Magian Oracles* also disagree. *Oracle XIX* is quoted here to sustain this claim. There are also different opinions concerning fate; 'some of these people' reject this doctrine, some accept it.¹⁷ Proclus also thinks that the first principle is only

¹³ Bessarion, *Ad Gemist.* I; cf. Hankins 1991, pp. 441–4, and Monfasani 2012a, pp. 472–3.

¹⁴ The beginning of Plethon's letter Περὶ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ 'On the creator of the heavens' should not be taken as the heading of the whole letter since all its remaining sections in which Plethon attempts to answer Bessarion's questions bear similar titles, beginning with the same περί which is perhaps best translated 'as concerns ...'. See *Ad Bess.* I 458.20, 459.13, 460.6, 16, 461.17.

¹⁵ For Maximus as a teacher of Julian the Apostate see Eunapius, *Vitae soph.* VII.

¹⁶ Plato, *Tim.* 37a1–2: ... ψυχῆ, τῶν νοητῶν αἰεὶ τε ὄντων ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀρίστου ἀρίστη γενομένη τῶν γεννηθέντων.

¹⁷ *Ad Bess.* I 458.20–459.12: ... Αὐτίκα ὃν Πλάτων προσεχῆ τοῦδε τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τίθεται δημιουργόν, Πρόκλος μὲν τὰ Πλάτωνος δόγματα ἐς τοὺς Ὀρφείως ἔλκων μύθους τέταρτον ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου τίθεται αἰτίου Πλωτίνος δὲ τρίτον, ἐς τοὺς γε πολλοὺς οὗτος ἀποβλέψας τῶν ποιητῶν Ἰουλιανὸς δὲ δεύτερον, παρὰ Μαξίμου ἴσως οὕτω τοῦτο δεδιδαγμένος. δοκεῖ δὲ καὶ Πλάτων οὕτω μᾶλλον ἀξιούειν καὶ οὐχ, ἢ Πρόκλος ἢ καὶ Πλωτίνος ἀξιούειν, ἐξ ὧν ἐν τῇ ψυχογονίᾳ τὴν ψυχὴν φησι τῶν νοητῶν αἰεὶ τε ὄντων ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀρίστου ἀρίστην γεγενῆσθαι τῶν γεννηθέντων. Πρόκλος δὲ καὶ τοῦτο διαστρέφει τὸ τῶν νοητῶν αἰεὶ τε ὄντων τῷ ἀνωτέρω

one and good, whereas Julian also attributes being to it. According to Plethon, the second option is the correct one, since, as he asks, 'to what else the [attribute] of being belongs more than to what is itself by itself?'¹⁸

Plethon's claim that Proclus reads wrongly the *Timaeus* passage: 'the soul was generated as the best of generated things by the best of the intelligible and eternal realities' can only mean that Plethon knew Proclus' discussion and peculiar solution of the problem in the *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*.¹⁹ Plethon himself adopts a reading refuted by Proclus, but accepted by the modern commentators as well as by Plutarch, in his *On the Generation of the Soul in the Timaeus*, where Plethon could find a support for his own claim.²⁰ Without plunging into the complex details of the whole problem, the key reason why Proclus tries to avoid the standard construction of the sentence is that in such a case the creator of the world would be placed among the Platonic Forms. In contrast, this is precisely what Plethon wants to claim, supporting his case by the *Timaeus* quotation. If constructed in the standard manner, Plethon can rely on this text and claim the creator of the soul is 'the best of the intelligible and eternal realities', just as the soul is the best of temporal things (γεννηθέντα). At the same time, this reading means that temporal things as well as the soul are at the same level of reality, thus enabling Plethon to conclude that the creator in question is not only the producer of the soul, but also identical with the 'creator of the heavens'. Such a doctrine is naturally in perfect accord with the position of Poseidon in Plethon's *Laws*, who is the eldest of the gods of the second order, that is, the highest Form and yet the immediate creator of the sensible world. Furthermore, according to Plethon's interpretation, the same doctrine is contained in the *Magian Oracles*,

κῶλω οὐδὲν τοιαύτης προσθήκης δεομένω συνάπτων, τὸ δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀρίστου ἐπιδεῆς λείπων τοῦ τινων ἀρίστου. ἔτι τὴν ὕλην Πρόκλος μὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου αἰτίου παράγει· Πλωτίνος δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον δευτέρας καὶ νοητῆς οὐσίας τὴν περὶ δαιμόνων πονηρῶν δόξαν. οἱ μὲν αὐτῶν δηλοῖ εἶναι οὐ παραδεχόμενοι, ὥσπερ οὐδὲ Πλάτων· οἱ δὲ τιθέμενοι τῇ δόξῃ παρ' Αἰγυπτίων εἰς τοῦτο προηγμένοι· οὐ γὰρ τὰ γε μαγικά λόγια τῶν ἀπὸ Ζωροάστρου μάγων, οἷς καὶ Πυθαγόρας τε ἔσπετο, καὶ Πλάτων αὐτὸς ταύτην φαίνεται προσιέμενος τὴν δόξαν, ἐν οἷς φησιν· ἡ φύσις {οὐ} πείθει εἶναι τοὺς δαίμονας ἀγνοῦς. ὡς δὲ καὶ τὸν τῆς εἰμαρμένης λόγον οἱ μὲν τούτων τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἀναίρουσιν, οἱ δὲ συνιστῶσιν. The οὐ in Mohler's edition, put in the curly brackets here, should be omitted as a mistake of the textual tradition, cf. the same text in *Or. mag.* XIX 3.1.

¹⁸ *Ad Bess.* I 460.34–461.1: ἦν μὴ τὸ ἐν μόνον καὶ ἀγαθὸν κατὰ Πρόκλον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ὄν κατ' Ἰουλιανὸν ἐκείνω ἀνατεθῆ· καὶ τίτι γὰρ ἄλλω μᾶλλον προσήκει τὸ ὄν ἢ τῷ αὐτὸ δι' αὐτὸ ὄντι.

¹⁹ Proclus, *In Tim.* II,292.30–295.25, for another passage where Plethon seems to draw upon Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* see above, p. 55, n.19, p. 69, n.27.

²⁰ Plutarch, *De an.* 1016b–c.

where the second god is said to be the immediate creator of the soul as well as of the sensible world.²¹

As Plethon claims, Proclus and Plotinus place the creator of the heavens in the fourth or third position respectively from the highest principle, which means that they postulate other independent ontological levels of reality between the creator of the world and the first cause of everything. Indeed, in the *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* Proclus explains that the soul is in the same relation to temporal things as is, by analogy, the creator to the Forms, which means that they are posterior entities (μετ' αὐτόν).²² In other words, we get the following hierarchy: the Demiurge, the Forms, the soul, and temporal things.

Plethon claims that Proclus locates the immediate creator of the heavens at the fourth level of reality, which in fact corresponds well with the basic structure of Proclus' whole metaphysical system. Roughly speaking, in the *Elements of Theology*, which Plethon certainly knew since he quotes it few lines later in his letter to Bessarion,²³ Proclus distinguishes five levels of reality: (1) the One, (2) Being, (3) Intellect, (4) the Soul and (5) the Body.²⁴ For Proclus, it is the hypostasis of the Soul which creates perishable things. This also explains Plethon's comparison of Julian who conflates the unity, goodness and being in the first principle and Proclus who distinguishes being from unity and goodness, or, in other words, divides Julian' first hypostasis into two. Even Plethon's assertion that Proclus derives matter in our world from the first cause is true.²⁵ Plethon obviously disagrees with such a claim since in his own metaphysical system matter is derived from the second highest Form, located at the second level of reality. One might argue that Proclus, too, derives matter from both the One and the First Unlimitedness, which is somehow equal to Plethon's Form of matter, whereas in Plethon this Form is similarly derived from the first

²¹ *Or. mag.* 7.2–3 [on VI], 9.2–4 [on XI], 9.13–16 [on XII], 16.6–7 [on XXVII], 17.6–13 [on XXX].

²² Proclus, *In Tim.* II, 294.5–9.

²³ *Ad Bess.* I 460.1–3: δεῖν γάρ φησιν ὁ Πρόκλος τῶν τε ἀκινήτων καὶ ἑτεροκινήτων τὸ αὐτοκίνητον μέσον εἶναι, καὶ τοῦτ' εἶναι τὸ τοῖς ἀκινήτοις τὰ ἑτεροκίνητα συνάπτον, ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰ κινεῖ ἢ παράγει τι τᾶλλα ..., cf. Proclus, *El. theol.* XIV 16.23–5: λείπεται ἄρα τὸ αὐτοκίνητον εἶναι τὸ πρῶτως κινούμενον· ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ τῷ ἀκινήτῳ τὰ ἑτεροκίνητα συνάπτον, μέσον πως ὄν, κινοῦν τε ἅμα καὶ κινούμενον ...

²⁴ Cf. Dodds' commentary on Proclus, *El. theol.*, p. 282, and Wallis 1972, pp. 138–58, Chlup 2012, pp. 47–111.

²⁵ Cf. Proclus, *El. theol.* LVII–LIX 54.23–58.2, LXXII 68.17–29, with Dodds' commentary *ad loc.*, pp. 232–3, 239, *In Tim.* I.384.22–385.17, Chlup 2012, pp. 88–91.

principle.²⁶ There, however, is at least a different emphasis in both conceptions, a difference proclaimed by Plethon himself.

Plethon's explanation why Proclus multiplied the number of the levels of reality is also interesting since we are told that in fact he 'adapted Plato's doctrines to be in accordance with the myths of Orpheus'. As we know already, Plethon did not think much of the poets. In the *Laws* he says that they only seek to please their listeners and 'bring down divine things into a more human form';²⁷ whereas in the *Reply to Scholarios* he claims that the ancient Greeks treated their poets with indulgence if they said something unsuitable about the gods since they knew they were speaking in an allegorical way.²⁸ If we are to point at the most probable target of Plethon's criticism of Proclus, it seems that it is the extremely complicated succession of divine generations described in Orphic poems and identified by Proclus in an immense allegorizing enterprise with correspondingly complex structure of reality divided into numerous levels.²⁹ Moreover, we should not forget that in the famous passage of his *Republic* Plato is critical towards the followers of Orpheus.³⁰ Reminiscent of how Homer and Hesiod were criticized by Plato, this mythical poet does not appear in the line of the wise men at the beginning of Plethon's *Laws*, and so it is clear that Plethon tended to see Orpheus' influence on Proclus in a negative light.

Plethon says something similar about Plotinus, who also diverges from the simple structure of reality as conceived by the original Plato since 'he takes into account many poets'. More important according to Plethon is the fact that the immediate creator of this heaven is placed by Plotinus in the third position after the first principle. As in his treatment of Proclus, Plethon must have in mind here the basic division of Plotinus' metaphysics into three hypostases: (1) the One, (2) Intellect and (3) the Soul.³¹ Similarly, Proclus locates the soul above the sensible world as an independent entity and not inside it as Plethon does in his own system, finding a support in the *Timaeus* passage quoted above.

It is more difficult to understand Plethon's claim that 'Plotinus deduces from the second intelligible essence the doctrine of the evil daemons (δαίμονες πονηροί)' accompanied by an explanation that 'those who adhere to the doctrine

²⁶ For a comparison of the conception of matter in Plethon, Proclus and Plotinus see Tambrun-Krasker 2002, pp. 320–27; see also Chlup 2012, pp. 76–82.

²⁷ *Leg.* 28 [I,2]: ... τὰ μὲν τῶν θεῶν πράγματα καθαιρούντες εἰς τὸ ἀνθρωπινώτερον

²⁸ *Contra Schol.* XXI 420.11–13: Οἱ δὲ Ἕλληνες ποιηταῖς μὲν, εἴ τί που ἀπηχῆς ἦδετο ἐς τοὺς θεοὺς ... , συγγῶμην ἔνεμον ἐς τὰς ὑπονοίας καταδυομένοις τοῖς δὲ σοφοῖς ποιουμένοις εἶναι καὶ σφόδρα ἐχαλέπαινον. Cf. Plato, *Resp.* II 378d.

²⁹ Cf. Brisson 1987, Chlup 2012, pp. 125–7.

³⁰ Plato, *Resp.* II 363c–365a.

³¹ For a basic outline of Plotinus' philosophical system see e.g. Gerson 1996.

of the Egyptians are lead to such a conclusion'. In Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* an event is described known as 'A Séance in the Iseum'. An Egyptian priest proposed to Plotinus that he evoke his companion daemon in the temple of Isis, which, according to the priest, was 'the only pure spot he could find in Rome'. The séance turned out unexpectedly since not a daemon but a god appeared which demonstrated that Plotinus lived at a higher level of reality than the ordinary person. As Porphyrius claims, 'it was a reason of this kind that led him to write the treatise *On Our Allotted Guardian Spirit*, in which he sets out to explain the differences between the spirit-companions'.³² In the treatise in question Plotinus indeed says that before their rebirth the souls get allotted a guardian daemon according to the moral quality of their previous lives. Then he asks: 'But what about the souls which enter into the bodies of brutes? Is their guardian something less than a daemon? It is a daemon, an evil (πονηρός) or stupid one.'³³

In another treatise, named *On Love* and in the traditional order of the *Enneads* following after the one just mentioned, Plotinus claims that, unlike the gods, daemons are subject to 'passions (πάθη)', which is also probably the reason why in the previous passage they were said to be 'evil or stupid'. Whereas the gods are located here in intelligible realm (τὸ νοητόν) of the Forms, daemons operate in the sensible world. They are intermediary beings between the higher and lower realities, some being in contact with matter in order that the universe be complete. However, as Plotinus concludes, given the higher status of daemons, this matter must be 'the intelligible matter (ὑλη νοητή)' in which they participate and because of which they are 'defiled by matter' (which is obviously also the reason they why are subject to passions).³⁴ In Plotinus' metaphysics intelligible matter is a constitutive part of the level of the Platonic Forms.³⁵ Plethon thus most probably build his claim about Plotinus by deriving the doctrine of the evil daemons from 'the intelligible essence' in these particular passages. We may ask why Plethon connects this doctrine of the evil daemons he attributes to Plotinus with the Egyptians. Plotinus originated from Egypt³⁶ and the priest leading the 'séance in the Iseum' was also an Egyptian. The doctrine of the evil daemons appears in the Egyptian context of Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris*, although some Greek authors are also mentioned there.³⁷ Another source of Plethon could be Iamblichus' *On the Egyptians Mysteries*.³⁸

³² Porphyry, *Vita Plot.* 10.15–33, trans. Arthur H. Armstrong.

³³ Plotinus, *Enn.* III,4 [15],6.10–18, trans. Arthur H. Armstrong (altered).

³⁴ *Ibid.* III,5 [50],6.

³⁵ For Plotinus' treatment of the intelligible and sensible matter see *ibid.* II,4 [12].

³⁶ Eunapius, *Vitae soph.* III,1,1.

³⁷ Plutarch, *De Is.* 360d–363a; cf. also *Def. orac.* 415a.

³⁸ Iamblichus, *De myst.* II,7.11–13, III,31.

Finally, according to Plethon, Julian (the Apostate) holds that the immediate creator of the heaven is second after the first cause of everything, that is, there are no other levels of reality located in between. Furthermore, in this he is supposed to be in agreement with Plato himself. It is probable that Plethon derived this claim from Julian's *Oration to the King Sun*. Although this treatise is inspired by Iamblichean Platonism, representing definitely a much more complex structure of reality than Plethon proposes,³⁹ it is a question how much this is apparent from the text, especially if we concentrate on the so-called 'Platonic seal'⁴⁰ of Julian's *Oration*. Here Julian starts (3) from our world in which he distinguishes its celestial part composed by 'the fifth body', whose summit is 'the ray of the Sun'. 'In the second step', as Julian says, we get to (2) the intelligible world. Finally (1), even 'elder', obviously in the sense of ontological causation, is 'the King of all upon which do all things turn'. This is an obvious quotation from the famous passage of Plato's second letter.⁴¹ According to Julian such a principle is even 'above intellect'⁴² and 'the idea of existing things'. Julian names it also 'the intelligible whole', as well as 'the One', 'the Good', 'the simple cause of all', in which subsists 'the primordial essence'.⁴³ This is probably the reason why Plethon claims that, unlike Proclus, Julian identifies the first cause with being.

Julian's mention of Plato's second letter is extremely important since Plethon, too, quotes it at the very end of his commentary on the *Magian (Chaldaean) Oracles*. To cite it in full, it goes as follows:

³⁹ Smith 1995, pp. 145–6. Moreover, Plethon never identifies the higher levels of reality with the Sun as Julian does; see e.g. *Or. Sol.* 133a–134d.

⁴⁰ Smith 1995, p. 146, following Polymnia Athanassiadi-Fowden; cf. p. 265, n.30, for Julian's usage of the image of σφραγίς see *Or. Sol.* 141c–d.

⁴¹ Plato, *Ep.* II 312e.

⁴² Plotinus, *Enn.* V,3 [49],13 and *passim*.

⁴³ *Or. Sol.* 132c–133a: 'Ο θεῖος οὗτος καὶ πάγκαλος κόσμος ἀπ' ἄκρας ἀψίδος οὐρανοῦ μέχρι γῆς ἐσχάτων ὑπὸ τῆς ἀλύτου συνεχόμενος τοῦ θεοῦ προνοίας ἐξ αἰδίου γέγονεν ἀγεννήτως ἕξ τε τὸν ἐπίλοιπον χρόνον αἰδῖος, οὐχ ὑπ' ἄλλου του φρουρούμενος ἢ προσεχῶς μὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ πέμπτου σώματος, οὗ τὸ κεφάλαιόν ἐστιν 'ἀκτίς αἰλίου', βαθμῶ δὲ ὡσπερ δευτέρῳ τοῦ νοητοῦ κόσμου, πρεσβυτέρως δὲ ἔτι διὰ τὸν 'πάντων βασιλέα, περὶ ὃν πάντα ἐστίν'. Οὗτος τοίνυν, εἴτε 'τὸ ἐπέκεινα τοῦ νοῦ' καλεῖν αὐτὸν θέμις εἴτε ἰδέαν τῶν ὄντων, ὃ δὴ φημι τὸ νοητὸν ξύμπαν, εἴτε ἔν, ἐπειδὴ πάντων τὸ ἔν δοκεῖ πως πρεσβύτατον, εἴτε ὁ Πλάτων εἴωθεν ὀνομάζειν τάγαθόν, αὕτη δὴ οὖν ἡ μονοειδῆς τῶν ὄλων αἰτία, πᾶσι τοῖς οὖσιν ἐξηγουμένη κάλλους τε καὶ τελειότητος ἐνώσεώς τε καὶ δυνάμεως ἀμηχάνου, κατὰ τὴν ἑν αὐτῇ μένουσαν πρωτοργὸν οὐσίαν μέσον ἐκ μέσων τῶν νοερῶν καὶ δημιουργικῶν αἰτιῶν Ἥλιον θεὸν μέγιστον ἀνέφηρην ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ πάντα ὁμοῖον {ἐν} ἑαυτῷ.

Upon the King of all do all things turn; he is the end of all things and the cause of all good. Things of the second order turn upon the Second, and those of the third order upon the Third.⁴⁴

We have seen above that Plethon interprets this passage in a way similar to how Julian does here and in a fundamentally different way from how Proclus and other late Platonists or Plotinus did.⁴⁵

To this overview of Plethon's reservations towards his Platonic predecessors we may add that in the *Reply to Scholarios* he acknowledges the divergences among the Platonists concerning the question of whether Plato and Aristotle differ just on the level of words, or whether they really advocate different doctrines. According to him, it was solely Simplicius who attempted to show that there is a general agreement not only between Plato and Aristotle but also among all the other ancient Greek (Hellenic) philosophers, among whom Parmenides is specially mentioned. In point of fact, Simplicius does this in order to attack the Church, showing that all the pagan philosophers are of the same opinion, while the Christians hold many mutually opposing doctrines. However, as Plethon claims, there were many ancient Platonists who argued against Aristotle, for instance, Plotinus and Proclus.⁴⁶

At this stage we can turn once more to the list of the famous sages Plethon mentions at the beginning of his *Laws*. To concentrate on historical persons alone and leave aside the Seven Sages, Pythagoras and Plato are named together in the lead position and only then is the list of other sages given: Parmenides, Timaeus of Locri, Plutarch, Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus.⁴⁷ The only other Neoplatonists mentioned in any other text by Plethon are Proclus and Simplicius (and in a very specific context also John Philoponus, as we shall see).⁴⁸ What is really striking is the absence of the later (Neo-)Platonic tradition from

⁴⁴ Plato, *Ep.* II 312c1–4, trans. Glenn R. Morrow in Cooper–Hutchinson 1997, p. 1638 (altered).

⁴⁵ See above, pp. 62–3; cf. Saffrey's and Westerink's introduction to Proclus, *Theol. Plat.*, vol. 2, pp. xliii–lix.

⁴⁶ *Contra Schol.* II 370.7–23; cf. Proclus, *In Tim.* 1,294.28–296.12. For the problem of the harmony between Plato and Aristotle according to the late Neoplatonists and the development of this idea see Gerson 2005, 2006, Karamanolis 2006, Sorabji 2006.

⁴⁷ *Leg.* 32 [1,2].

⁴⁸ See below, p. 183.

the list, that is, the thinkers from Proclus onwards. But let us concentrate on the individual figures.

First, we must keep in mind that in Byzantium the texts of Plato himself, together with Aristotle and Plutarch,⁴⁹ were studied really widely, in contrast to the works of the Neoplatonists whose circulation was more limited. Of them all, Proclus seems to have been most extensively read.⁵⁰ As for Plethon, judging from the references and quotations found in his works, we definitely know that he had a very good knowledge of Plato, Aristotle and of many works by Plutarch⁵¹ who, as Bessarion says, was considered to be 'most wise (σοφώτατος)' by Plethon.⁵² Furthermore, given the number of quotations in Plethon, all three authors seem to have a prominent position among his sources. In this he was in agreement with the general situation in Byzantium. At the same time it is nonetheless obvious that Plethon also had a good knowledge of other Platonists and their texts. However, if we are to compare him to Bessarion, the latter, as a cardinal of the Catholic Church in Italy, had obviously many more opportunities to acquire precious manuscripts than did his teacher in Constantinople or Mistra. Furthermore, extensive quotations from numerous authors clearly demonstrate Bessarion's greater interest in the late Platonists.⁵³

To start with the philosophers who are absent from the list, in the case of Simplicius Plethon had to know most probably his commentaries on Aristotle's *Physics* (and perhaps also on his *On the Heavens*) because the fragments of Parmenides, whom he mentions in connection with Simplicius, appear mainly there. In the case of Proclus we saw that he certainly knew his *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* and the *Elements of Theology*. However, it is more difficult to say whether he had at hand his *Platonic Theology*. We know that Bessarion, who was very active in collecting different Proclean manuscripts, got one of the most important copies of the *Platonic Theology* from Nicholas of Cusa only when he settled down in Italy.⁵⁴ In contrast, Plethon was certainly interested in Proclus' *Hymns*, which he himself copied and edited, giving them the traditional titles

⁴⁹ Runciman 1970, pp. 31–2, Fryde 2000, pp. 185–96, 241–4.

⁵⁰ Cf. Saffrey's and Westerink's introduction to *Theol. Plat.*, vol. 1, pp. clv–clviii, Lemerle 1971, pp. 210–13, Fryde 2000, pp. 203–10, Parry 2006.

⁵¹ Cf. Flacelière–Irigoin 1987, pp. cclxxx–cclxxxiii, cccxxi, Diller 1954, 1956, pp. 29–30. For the quotations from Plutarch see *Contra Schol.* V 376.19–20 (*De aud.* 14e–f), V 378.17–18 (*De Is.* 396e), XXIX 476.1 (*De Hom.* II, 128, 1), *Or. mag.* 19.8–22 (*De Is.* 369d–370c), 19.13 (*Artax.* 1012a).

⁵² Bessarion, *Ad Gemist.* II 464.15–16.

⁵³ Cf. e.g. Bessarion, *Ad Gemist.* I, II, *In cal.*, Labowsky 1979.

⁵⁴ Cf. Saffrey's and Westerink's introduction to *Theol. Plat.*, vol. 1, p. clviii, vol. 6, pp. lxx–lxxi.

used even today.⁵⁵ Furthermore, we saw above when discussing the sources of Plethon's account of the gods that he may have known Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Cratylus*. Other than in his letters to Bessarion, Plethon mentions Proclus only twice, first in the *Reply to Scholarios* where he says that, unlike Simplicius who claimed that there is a harmony between the opinions of Plato and Aristotle, other Neoplatonists, namely, Plotinus and Proclus, criticized Aristotle with Proclus attacking 'apart from other things mostly his theology'.⁵⁶ At the same time we have seen that Plethon's grounding in Proclus is very good, and this is also obviously the reason why Bessarion consulted him.

Now, among the philosophers present in the list, the eminent position of Plato is to be expected. Pythagoras is conceived of as a connection between the disciples of Zoroaster and Plato. Plethon copied down Pythagorean *Golden Verses* in one of his autographs.⁵⁷ He also quotes from them,⁵⁸ and these verses are what he probably connected most concretely with the legendary sage. The role of the pre-Socratic Parmenides is quite clear, and Plethon could know this thinker from the eponymous dialogue by Plato, as well as from Simplicius and from some general survey like Diogenes Laertius. The same goes for Timaeus of Locri, whom Plethon obviously identifies with the Pythagorean narrator of Plato's dialogue bearing the same name and who is mentioned at the beginning of Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*⁵⁹ and certainly known by Plethon.⁶⁰ We have already seen that Plethon takes many motifs from Plutarch so that his presence in the line of the great philosophers is not surprising. In the case of Plotinus, Plethon pays tribute to him by acknowledging that 'he is a better man than Simplicius',⁶¹ despite having expressed some reservation towards him in the letter to Bessarion. From his detailed discussion of some very particular features of Plotinus' doctrine it is obvious that he was familiar with his thought.

There remain two members of his list not yet mentioned, namely, the Neoplatonists Porphyry and Iamblichus. In the case of the first we have naturally to do with the author of the *Life of Plotinus* and *Life of Pythagoras*, both of which may have well been used as sources by Plethon. Moreover, in a manuscript

⁵⁵ *Marc. Gr.* 406 (= 791), fols 133–135v, written in Plethon's hand, Mioni 1985, p. 159, and *Marc. Gr.* 519 (= 773), fols 154–6, Mioni 1985, p. 389, also from Bessarion's library. See van den Berg 2001, pp. 5–8.

⁵⁶ *Contra Schol.* II 370.7–23: ... κατά τε ἄλλων καὶ μάλιστα τῆς αὐτοῦ θεολογίας.

⁵⁷ *Marc. Gr.* 406 (= 791), fols 121v–122v, Mioni 1985, p. 159.

⁵⁸ *Contra Schol.* XXI 422.23–5.

⁵⁹ Proclus, *In Tim.* I, 1, 8–16.

⁶⁰ This work is contained in *Marc. Gr.* 517 (= 886), fols 4–11v, a manuscript written partly by Gemistos: Mioni 1985, p. 384–5.

⁶¹ *Contra Schol.* II 370.18–19: ... Πλωτῖνος, Σιμπλικίου πολὺ ἀμείνων ἀνὴρ ...

once belonging to Bessarion and containing some writings of Plethon we find Porphyry's *Sentences Leading to the Intelligible Realities*.⁶² There is also a possibility that Plethon knew the celebrated and widely read *Isagoge* by the same Neoplatonic thinker. The case of Iamblichus is more tricky. First, like Porphyry, he is the author of *On the Pythagorean Life*.⁶³ It is probably more important that Julian mentions him with obvious esteem in the *Oration to the King Sun*.⁶⁴ Plethon has seen him as the real inspirer of the doctrines contained in Julian's text. This would also explain why it is Iamblichus and not Julian who is mentioned in his list of the sages. Furthermore, both Neoplatonists are often quoted, although polemically, in Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*. Nonetheless, Plethon may not have known many details of the philosophical positions of Porphyry and Iamblichus. We have seen that he is critical towards Plotinus and Proclus, and we can assume that Porphyry and Iamblichus would not have done much better in his eyes if he had at his disposal some systematic treatise by them.

To conclude, if we take into account Plethon's discussion of the Platonic tradition in his letters to Bessarion, what really seems to be behind his choice of intellectual heroes is a tendency to put aside the development of the Platonic tradition in late antiquity. He rejects Simplicius because of his claim that there is a doctrinal harmony between Plato and Aristotle. He rejects Proclus as well (and partly Plotinus) because their conception of reality was more complex than what Plethon claimed was present in the original Plato. We may ask why Plethon includes Plotinus in the list while ignoring Proclus, but it is perhaps only because despite his criticism in some matters mentioned above that he (justly) recognized Plotinus as closer to his own version of Platonism. Nonetheless, at the same time it is very likely that Plethon both studied Proclus and was influenced by him, including even in his overall rational approach to theology, although he himself proposed a very different religious system than Proclus did. However, Plethon was far from being an uncritical devotee of this great Neoplatonist, as he provides a theory of reality which is in many aspects more simple and straightforward than Proclus.

It is well known that Plethon distinguished sharply between the philosophy of Plato and that of Aristotle, as may best be seen in the *Differences*. This is one of his most original achievements. In this regard he differs from his pupil

⁶² *Marc. Gr.* 519 (= 773), fols 123–133v, Mioni 1985, p. 389.

⁶³ For the preservation of Iamblichus' works see Fryde 2000, p. 204.

⁶⁴ Julian, *Or. Sol.* 146a–b, 157c–d.

Bessarion who was, moreover, more interested in Proclus than his teacher seems to have been.⁶⁵ But Plethon was also able to distinguish among different forms of Platonism, as advocated by diverse Platonists, and similarly able to decide to what extent they are in accordance with the philosophy of Plato as reconstructed by him. He is thus in a certain sense a forerunner of modern scholarship, which attempts to trace the divergences among the individual Platonists and to reconstruct the development of Platonism as a complex movement which comprised many varying opinions concerning different problems. At the same time, however, there is an important difference because Plethon did not share the belief of modern scholarship in historical development. In contrast, he presupposed the existence of a perennial philosophy accessible to everybody across the ages, thanks to the rational reasoning with which certain thinkers are in accord or, on the contrary, they more or less deviate from. Plethon himself thus advocated a form of Platonism that is, in comparison with the later development after Plotinus, relatively simple in its basic structure. This is because he relied much on the literal meaning of Plato's text, among which a key role is played by the pseudo-Platonic second letter that originated most probably in the neo-Pythagorean environment in the first century AD.⁶⁶ Plethon interpreted it with the help of the *Chaldaean Oracles* that themselves contain a version of Platonic philosophy as developed in the second century AD.⁶⁷ And, vice versa, he based his explanation of the *Oracles* on the conceptions he derived from the texts attributed to Plato himself, abandoning to some extent the previous exegetical tradition of this text originated by the Neoplatonists. A good example may be the correspondence between Bessarion and Gemistos where Bessarion quotes a series of Neoplatonists while Gemistos quotes Plato.⁶⁸ From the point of view of the development of Platonism, the structure of Plethon's universe thus could be situated somewhere between Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism,

⁶⁵ For Bessarion's Platonism, which is influenced strongly by Proclus, and his role in the Plato–Aristotle controversy in the fifteenth century Italy see Hankins 1991, pp. 217–63, and also Monfasani 2012a, pp. 472–3. For a reception of Proclus' philosophy in Byzantium and the early Renaissance Italy and Bessarion's role see Saffrey's and Westerink's introduction to Proclus, *Theol. Plat.*, vol. 1, pp. cli, cliv–clx, and vol. 6, pp. xlix–lxxii. It is important to note that their claim about Plethon's importance for the renewal of the interest in Proclus is based here, once again, on Scholarios' testimony, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. clviii–clx. See also Saffrey 1965, pp. 536–47.

⁶⁶ Cf. Saffrey's and Westerink's introduction to Proclus, *Theol. Plat.*, vol. 2, pp. xx–xxxv.

⁶⁷ Cf. des Places' introduction to *Or. Chald.*, pp. 7–18, Hadot 1978, pp. 703–6, Majercik 1989, pp. 1–5.

⁶⁸ *Ad Bess.* I, II, Bessarion, *Ad Gemist.* I, II.

although this might seem a little too bold an assertion. How could he derive a less complicated perspective on reality only from the texts just mentioned?

We have seen that in the important passage from his commentary on the *Magian Oracles* Plethon claims that a similar tripartite structure of reality is detectable in the Zoroastrian myth he discovered in the second Platonic letter,⁶⁹ in Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris*⁷⁰ as well as in the *Oracles* he comments on.⁷¹ It may be useful to quote just the most important Chaldaean fragments from Plethon's edition, which is based exclusively on Psellos. Plethon modifies his text only insignificantly, reordering the quotations, apparently so that they held together better or so that they professed a coherent doctrine. He also disregards to some extent Psellos' commentary and concentrates on the text of the *Oracles* themselves. So, to follow Plethon's numbering:

XXVIIIa: Learn what is intelligible, for it exists outside the intellect.⁷²

XXVIIIb: There is indeed something intelligible, which you must understand by the flower of the intellect.⁷³

XXIX: All things descend from one fire.⁷⁴

XXX: For the Father perfected everything and committed it to the second intellect, which the races of men call the first.⁷⁵

XXXI: *Iynges* [for Plethon, the Platonic Forms⁷⁶] are thought by the Father and think themselves.

They are moved by voiceless wills to have intellectual understanding.⁷⁷

XXXII: Lo! how the world has inflexible intellectual upholders.⁷⁸

⁶⁹ Plato, *Ep.* II 312e.

⁷⁰ Plutarch, *De Is.* 369d–370c.

⁷¹ *Or. mag.* 19.5–22.

⁷² *Or. mag.* XXVIIIa 3.17: Μάνθανε τὸ νοητόν, ἐπεὶ νόου ἔξω ὑπάρχει, *Or. Chald.* 185 = Psellos, 1148d1: Μάθε τὸ νοητόν ...

⁷³ *Or. mag.* XXVIIIb 3.18: Ἔστι δὲ δὴ τι νοητόν, ὃ χρή σε νοεῖν νόου ἄνθει = *Or. Chald.* 181 = Psellos, 1144b6.

⁷⁴ *Or. mag.* XXIX 3.19: Εἰσὶν πάντα πυρὸς ἐνὸς ἐκγεγαῶτα = *Or. Chald.* 182 = Psellos, 1145a4.

⁷⁵ *Or. mag.* XXX 4.1–2: Πάντα γὰρ ἐξετέλεσσε πατὴρ, καὶ νῦν παρέδωκε / δευτέρῳ, ὃν πρῶτον κληῖζεται ἔθνεα ἀνδρῶν, *Or. Chald.* 178 = Psellos, 1140c10–11: ... ὃν πρῶτον κληῖζετε πᾶν γένος ἀνδρῶν.

⁷⁶ Cf. Plethon's explanation in *Or. mag.* 17.15 [on XXXI], *Decl. brev.* 21.7–10.

⁷⁷ *Or. mag.* XXXI 4.3–4: Νοούμεναι Ἴυγγες πατρόθεν νοέουσι καὶ αὐταί, / βουλαῖς ἀφθέγκοισι κινούμεναι ὥστε νοῆσαι, *Or. Chald.* 185 = Psellos, 1149a10–11 des Places: Αἱ γε νοούμεναι <ἐκ> πατρόθεν νοέουσι ... , Ο'Μεγα: Αἱ Ἴυγγες νοούμεναι πατρόθεν νοέουσι ...

⁷⁸ XXXII 4.5: Ὡ πῶς κόσμος ἔχει νοερούς ἀνοχῆας ἀκαμπεῖς, *Or. Chald.* 170 = Psellos, 1132c12: Πᾶς ἴσχει κόσμος νοερούς ἀνοχῆας ἀκαμπεῖς.

XXXIII: The Father has snatched himself away;
but not shutting off his own fire in his intellective power.⁷⁹

These seven *Oracles* are conveniently grouped together by Plethon at the end of his edition⁸⁰ and even without his accompanying commentary, it should be evident how he could have derived his tripartite Platonic structure of reality from them.⁸¹ The *Oracles* may well be seen to claim that there is one principle of all, which is called the Father and which is transcendent and yet active outside itself (XXIX–XXX, XXXIII). However, people usually tend to attach themselves rather to the ‘second intellect’, obviously since it is closer to them (XXX). Apart from the second intellect, there are also *inyges*, which are capable of ‘intellective understanding (νοῦσαι)’ and ‘think (νοέουσαι)’, as well as certain ‘inflexible’ entities that ‘uphold our world’ and that are at the same time also ‘intellective’ (XXXI–XXXII). It is therefore quite natural to identify the *inyges* with these entities that produce our world and are intelligible and intellective at the same time. These entities are quite easily recognized as the Platonic Forms, or the intelligible entities existing outside intellect (XXVIIa). Now, if we look back at Plato’s second letter, we shall recall that for Plethon the King of all is analogous to the Father, the first and utmost principle in the *Oracles* who could also be equated with the Father from Plato’s *Timaeus*.⁸² The Second Intellect of the *Oracles* naturally equals with the Second principle of Plato’s second letter.

Thus Plethon is observing the same tripartite structure of reality found in (1) Platonic second letter, (2) the Zoroastrian myth from Plutarch, (3) the *Magian Oracles* and (4) Julian’s *Oration to the King Sun*. Furthermore, if we credit the claim that the *Oracles* lay behind the philosophical doctrines contained in Julian’s text⁸³ and that the *Oracles* themselves originated in the second century AD under the influence of the middle Platonic interpretation of Plato’s *Timaeus*,⁸⁴ Plethon would have been justified in finding the same simple tripartite structure of reality in all the above mentioned texts. One may also claim that he read the *Oracles* with the help of Plato, and more specifically of the second letter ascribed to Plato. Vice versa, Plethon reconstructed Plato’s supposed doctrines on the basis of the system

⁷⁹ XXXIII 4.6–7: ‘Ἐαυτὸν ὁ πατὴρ ἤρπασεν, / οὐδ’ ἐν ἐῆ δυνάμει νοερᾷ κλεισας ἴδιον πῦρ, *Or. Chald.* 180 = Psellos, 1144a8–9 des Places: ... ὁ πατὴρ ἤρπασεν ἑαυτὸν, / οὐδ’ ἐν ἐῆ δυνάμει ... , O’Meara: ... ὁ πατὴρ ἑαυτὸν ἤρπασεν, / οὐδ’ ἐν ἐῆ δυνάμει

⁸⁰ *Or. mag.* XXVIIa–XXXIII 3.17–4.7, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 53 (altered).

⁸¹ For the – partly similar – tripartite structure of reality in the original *Chaldaean Oracles* see Lewy 1978, pp. 137–57.

⁸² Plato, *Tim.* 28c3, 37c7, 41a7, 42c7, 50d3, 71d5; cf. Brisson 2003, pp. 114–17.

⁸³ Smith 1995, pp. 151–9.

⁸⁴ Brisson 2000, pp. 110–12, 118, 2003.

he has found in the *Oracles*. Thus with his version of Platonism Plethon strangely goes back to a time somewhere before Plotinus and the subsequent Neoplatonic doctrinal transformations.⁸⁵ It may be also noted that in his letter to Bessarion Plethon claimed that, unlike Plotinus, the *Oracles* and Pythagoras agree with Plethon on the non-existence of evil daemons.⁸⁶

There are certainly some points which Plethon takes from the later Platonic tradition, of which the most important is clearly the postulating of the highest principle called the One over the ontological level of the Forms.⁸⁷ But this is somewhat a *locus communis* among the Neoplatonists, originating with Plotinus whom Plethon accepts with some reservations, and it is also hinted at in Julian, not to mention Plato's dialogue *Parmenides*, which Plethon refers to in his second letter to Bessarion⁸⁸ and in which the relation between the one and the many is discussed and which was also the main source of the Neoplatonic speculations. Nevertheless, the first principle is sometimes called by Plethon 'being itself (αὐτόων)' or 'true being that really is (ὄντως ὦν τῷ ὄντι)' and in the letter to Bessarion, he is sometimes even willing to go as far as to claim that being should be ascribed to the First principle since it is itself by itself (τὸ αὐτὸ δι' αὐτὸ ὄν), acting as the cause of everything else.⁸⁹ In this identification of the One and being he is closer to the Middle Platonists than to their Neoplatonic successors. For instance, there is a passage in Plutarch's *On the E at Delphi* that makes the same claim.⁹⁰ We can reasonably surmise that this passage was known to Plethon.

Concerning minor points – the flower of the intellect can be found in the *Oracles*. As regards the aethereal body, whose existence Plethon presupposes in his commentary on the *Oracles*, he claims in the *Reply to Scholarios* that Plato's pupils learned it from the followers of Zoroaster, which means that in Plethon's eyes it is very ancient. He refers to John Philoponus and Plutarch, who, according to him, ascribe it also to Aristotle, even though he expresses some reservations concerning such an attribution.⁹¹ Now, in the case of Philoponus⁹² it is obviously the Aristotelian commentary that Plethon has in mind, whereas in the case of Plutarch we are probably dealing with a spurious treatise *On Homer* where

⁸⁵ For the basic differences between Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism see Baltes 2005.

⁸⁶ *Ad Bess.* I 459.8–11.

⁸⁷ Cf. Dodds 1928, Rist 1967, Chlup 2012, pp. 14–15.

⁸⁸ *Ad Bess.* II 465.24–466.7.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* I 461.1.

⁹⁰ Plutarch, *De E* 392e–393e.

⁹¹ *Contra Schol.* XXIX 474.30–476.2.

⁹² Most probably John Philoponus, *De an.* 255.8–14; cf. Lagarde's note to *Contra Schol.*, p. 477, n.250.

this doctrine is quite surprisingly connected with Aristotle.⁹³ And, moreover, Plethon's version of this particular Neoplatonic teaching has nothing to do with that found in Proclus, being far much straightforward, and perhaps closest to Iamblichus.⁹⁴ This all is not to say that Plethon does not owe much to Proclus and other Neoplatonists as concerns his specific vocabulary. Nonetheless, it is his overall structure of reality which is important here.⁹⁵

To conclude, let us compare Plethon with other great contemporary students of Proclus and the whole Platonic tradition, his pupil Bessarion and his contemporary Nicholas of Cusa. We have already mentioned that Bessarion is more conservative trying to combine together the sayings of different Platonists as well as to some extent also Aristotle under a presupposition that they all agree among themselves or, more precisely, that their doctrines may be harmonized after all. Bessarion's *Against the Calumniator of Plato* especially abounds with Platonic and other quotations and resembles an anthology of ancient Platonism. In contrast, Nicholas of Cusa is more radical than Plethon in trying to develop new concepts by which he might significantly transform the previous philosophical tradition. Cusanus is also critical towards the Aristotelianism of medieval scholasticism. The structure of reality proposed by Cusanus is even less hierarchical than that found in Plethon, consisting only of a radical opposition of the unconceivable and infinite God on the one hand and limited and, to some extent, knowable world on the other. Thus, although both put an emphasis on the central position of man in the cosmos, Plethon, unlike Cusanus, reserves for

⁹³ Pseudo-Plutarch, *De Hom.* II, 128, 1: Πλάτων δὲ καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης τὴν ψυχὴν ἀσώματον εἶναι ἐνόμισαν, αἶε μὲντοι περὶ τὸ σῶμα εἶναι καὶ τούτου ὥσπερ ὀχήματος δεῖσθαι· διὸ καὶ ἀπαλλασσομένην τοῦ σώματος τὸ πνευματικὸν ἐφέλκεσθαι, πολλάκις καθάπερ ἐκμαγεῖον ἦν ἔσχε·ν ἐν· τῷ σώματι μορφήν διαφυλάσσουσιν. II, 122, 4: ... τὸ αἶμα νομὴ καὶ τροφή ἐστὶ τοῦ πνεύματος, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμά ἐστὶν αὐτὴ ἡ ψυχὴ ἢ ὄχημα τῆς ψυχῆς Cf. Dodds 1933, p. 317, Nikolaou 1982, p. 397, n.14, reprinted in Nikolaou 2005, p. 75, n.1.

⁹⁴ Nikolaou 1982.

⁹⁵ Demetracopoulos 2004, 2006, has recently made an attempt to show some Thomistic influences on Plethon's thought. Although it is clear now that Plethon definitely knew much more of Western scholasticism than it has been assumed thus far, not all the instances of the alleged Thomistic influence are entirely persuasive: see above, p. 69, n.27, p. 153, n.51. Despite this influence, it seems, however, more likely that the general structure of reality in Plethon's metaphysics is definitely due to the philosophers he names, acknowledges and comments upon, namely, Plato and his followers. A similar conclusion is in order also in the case of Gemistos' alleged teacher Demetrios Kydones, an important Byzantine Thomist, translator of Aquinas and the putative source of his knowledge about Thomistic philosophy. After all, in the only passage where Plethon mentions Kydones and their discussion in the past, he says that they were talking about Plato's *Republic* VIII 546b–c, not Aristotle or Thomistic philosophy, *Ad Bess.* II 467.18–22.

him a specific place in the hierarchy of beings, conceiving him as the boundary between the intelligible and sensible world.⁹⁶

Moreover, unlike Cusanus, Plethon tries to keep to the traditional Neoplatonic concepts, while attempting to resort to texts he considers to be the original sources of genuine Platonism, namely, the texts attributed to Plato and the *Chaldaean Oracles* that are in the centre of his interest. By doing so he simplifies the general structure of reality in his philosophy and at the same time he distinguishes between Plato and Aristotle as well as between different Platonists themselves. In general, Plethon proposes an economical theory as possible to account for the contents of the texts which are the key sources for him rather than elaborate a more complex one to absorb many different traditions, as the later Neoplatonists would do. In such an approach some developments of the later stages of Platonism must be left out of his system. Plethon is not, however, as critical and as historical as the modern student of history of Platonism would be since he believes in the existence of the one perennial, unchanging and universal philosophy. Nonetheless, his ability to see differences where the previous and also subsequent traditions searched for a homogeneity or at least a harmony of the doctrine is indeed exceptional and admirable. Furthermore, as we have hopefully seen in this survey, when developing his own version of Platonic philosophy, Plethon proposes certain original solutions to some ancient problems discussed within the tradition. For all this he certainly deserves to be included in the history of Platonism as one of its remarkable representatives.

⁹⁶ For an outline of Cusanus' philosophy see e.g. an excellent study by Watts 1982; for his relation to the Plato–Aristotle controversy see Monfasani 2012a, pp. 475–80.

PART III
Question of Religion

Chapter 13

Becoming Pagan

The usual conclusions of modern scholarship (after the pioneering work of Charles Alexandre)¹ concerning Gemistos' religious beliefs may be summarized as follows:

1. Gemistos, who had a vivid interest in ancient thought and culture since his youth, was further influenced by his polytheist Jewish teacher Elissaeus, with whom he spent some time at the Ottoman court.² Moreover, Michel Tardieu, followed by Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker, has suggested that Elissaeus was an adherent of Persian *falsafa* and, more specifically, of the school of Suhrawardī, which is supposed to be the source of Gemistos' unusual emphasis on the importance of ancient Zoroaster.³ However, the originator of this theory was Henry Corbin who rediscovered Suhrawardī for modern scholarship and contemporary philosophy.⁴
2. After his return from abroad and the expulsion from Constantinople, Gemistos settled down in Mistra at the court of the Despot of Morea. There, in addition to other duties, he was active as a teacher and established a circle of his pupils who shared with him his pagan beliefs. The *Laws* was

¹ There are, however, some scholars who think that Gemistos was a (heterodox) Christian: see Ruggiero 1930, pp. 117–18, n.2, Kristeller 1959, pp. 511–12, 1972, pp. 97–8, Wind 1967, pp. 244–8, Hankins 1991, pp. 197–205, with other references, p. 197, nn.74–5, or a monotheist: see Allen 1998, p. 2, n.3. For different opinions about Gemistos' beliefs throughout history see Woodhouse 1986, p. 378. For the early tradition of the non-pagan interpretation of the *Laws* see Masai 1956, p. 404, with the n.3. See also Codoñer 2005 who argues that Gemistos attempted to reach a compromise philosophical position between ancient paganism and Christianity.

² Cf. Masai 1956, pp. 55–60, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 23–8.

³ Cf. Tardieu 1987, pp. 142–8, Tambrun-Krasker's commentary on *Or. mag.*, pp. 41–3, Tambrun-Krasker 2006, pp. 91–4.

⁴ He is quoted in Tardieu 1987, p. 145, n.9; cf. most notably Corbin 1964, p. 285–6, Corbin 1971, pp. 31–4. Questionable is Corbin's 'theosophical' interpretation of Suhrawardī which overestimates 'Zoroastrian' motifs in his thought and which presupposes 'a long hermetic tradition in Islam' absorbing in this case also ancient Persian sages: *ibid.*, pp. 23–6. For a different approach and critique of Corbin see Walbridge 1992, esp. p. 30, 2000, esp. pp. 7, 223–4, Walbridge 2001, esp. pp. 13, 107–10.

presumably intended as a kind of sacred book for this pagan religious community.⁵

3. During his visit to Italy in 1438–1439 Gemistos gave lectures on Platonic philosophy to the humanists there. He was perhaps inspired by their admiration and, as they called him the second Plato, he changed his name to Plethon. For Ioannes P. Mamalakis, this was the turning point of his career. Being moved both by the futility of the discussions at the Council and the enthusiasm of his Italian listeners for the polytheistic Platonism, he really became a pagan only now. According to Mamalakis, although apparently interested in the ancient authors already before his journey to Italy, Gemistos remained always an orthodox Christian.⁶ According to other scholars, he was a polytheist already before the Council of Florence and his position was only somehow radicalized there.⁷
4. It is generally accepted that Gemistos wrote at least the largest part of his *Laws* if not the whole book after 1439.⁸ Moreover, it is assumed that he fully agreed with the doctrines contained in it and for this reason the outwardly Christian *Reply to the Treatise in Support of Latins* on the procession of the Holy Spirit, written at the same time, is usually treated as an example of the hypocrisy and an attempt to conceal the real beliefs of its author.⁹

To consider Gemistos' personal philosophical and religious opinions we shall go in the following chapters through all these conclusions one by one and examine each of them separately.

⁵ Alexandre 1858, pp. lxxxii–lxxxiv, Masai 1956, pp. 300–314, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 32–47.

⁶ Mamalakis 1939, p. 176; cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 123, 222–3, and Mamalakis 1955, pp. 521–5, Knös 1950, pp. 113–22.

⁷ Masai 1956, pp. 327–46, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 154–70, 186–8.

⁸ Masai 1956, pp. 401–4, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 318–21, 357.

⁹ Masai 1956, pp. 391–2, Masai 1976, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 271–3.

Chapter 14

Gemistos' Mysterious Teacher

The only report we have about Gemistos' early life and education is provided by Scholarios. The two passages we are interested in are contained in two letters, written some time during the years after the death of Gemistos. The first one is addressed to Theodora, the wife of Demetrios Palaiologos, the contemporary Despot of the Morea. Here Scholarios writes about the results of his examination of the book found after Gemistos' death and gives the reasons why it had to be destroyed. In the second letter sent to the Exarch Joseph, written after the burning of the book, Scholarios then justifies his decision. In both cases he feels the need to explain how and where Gemistos learnt his paganism:

Before he had acquired the maturity of reason and education and the capacity of judgment in such matters – or rather, before he had even devoted himself to acquiring them – he was so dominated by Hellenic ideas that he took little trouble about learning traditional Christianity, apart from the most superficial aspects. In reality it was not for the sake of the Greek language, like all Christians, that he read and studied Greek literature – first the poets and then the philosophers – but in order to associate himself with them; and so in fact he did, as we know for certain from many who knew him in his youth.

It was natural in the case of a man under such influence, in the absence of divine grace, that through daemons with whom he associated there should have come a tendency towards an ineradicable adherence to error, as happened to Julian and many other apostates. The climax of his apostasy came later under the influence of a certain Jew with whom he studied, attracted by his skill as an interpreter of Aristotle. This Jew was an adherent of Averroes and other Persian and Arabic interpreters of Aristotle's works, which the Jews had translated into their own language, but he paid little regard to Moses or the beliefs and observances which the Jews received from him.

This man also expounded to Gemistos the doctrines of Zoroaster and others. He was ostensibly a Jew but in fact a Hellenist [that is, pagan]. Gemistos stayed with him for a long time, not only as his pupil but also in his service, living at his expense

for he was one of the most influential men at the court of these barbarians. His name was Elissaeus. So Gemistos ended up as he did.

He tried to conceal his true character, but was unable to do so when he sought to implant his ideas among his pupils, and he was dismissed from the City by the pious Emperor Manuel and the Church. Their only mistake was that they refrained from denouncing him to the public, and failed to send him into dishonourable exile in barbarian territory, or in some other way to prevent the harm that was to come from him.¹

And furthermore:

You, [Gemistos,] first learned about Zoroaster, having no previous knowledge of him, from the polytheist Elissaeus, who was ostensibly a Jew. Departing from your own country, you lived with him in order to benefit from his famous teaching at a time when he enjoyed great influence at the court of the barbarians. Being what he was, he met his end in the flames, just like your Zoroaster.²

The main problem with Scholarios' report is obvious – he had to defend his decision to destroy the *Book of Laws* and to show by all possible means that its author, once an important and respected person – and even more after the Council of Florence, where Gemistos was one of the few who supported consistently the anti-Latin side, while Scholarios failed to do the same – was in fact a secret pagan and enemy of Christianity. According to Scholarios, his apostasy was supposedly caused by his early education, his stay with Elissaeus, and proved by his forced departure from Constantinople to Mistra. Another significant problem with Scholarios' report is the time distance. Gemistos died at nearly one hundred years old, so some events that are described here must have happened already some 80 years earlier. When Scholarios, our only source of the information about Elissaeus, claims 'we know for certain from many who knew him in his youth', it is queer that he does not name his sources and, needless to say, it is not sure whether these sources themselves are really reliable after so much time had passed.

It was not certainly difficult for Scholarios to surmise that Gemistos, an outstanding authority on ancient culture, literature, science and philosophy, was a fervent student of ancient texts in his early youth, and no informer would have been in fact needed to conjecture this. The report about Gemistos' banishment

¹ Scholarios, *Ad Theod.* 152.26–153.15, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 24 (altered).

² Scholarios, *Ad Jos.* 162.8–12, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 25.

from Constantinople is more problematic, as Scholarios himself shows when he regrets that he was not sent into exile outside the empire. In the last days of Byzantium Mistra was in fact the second important centre of the Empire as well as the capital of the semi-independent Despotate of Morea,³ and Gemistos' settling there may be well explained by other reasons. In 1407 the Despot Theodore I (ruling 1383–1407) died and his brother, the Emperor Manuel II (1391–1425), sent his son to Mistra to become the Despot Theodore II (1407–1443, born around 1396). Since he was very young, Manuel himself to much extent took care of the affairs of the Despotate.⁴ Now, Gemistos, who presumably still was in Constantinople around the year 1405 and is reported to have taught Mark Eugenikos after this date,⁵ appeared in Morea at the court of the young Despot some time during the following years. As Theodore II later mentions, he was sent there by the Emperor himself to serve him.⁶ This is in accord with Scholarios' report about Gemistos' banishment from Constantinople 'by the pious Emperor Manuel'.

It is sometimes claimed that Gemistos was the general judge in Mistra; be it as it may, it is clear that he definitely had some important position at the Morean court.⁷ Furthermore, there is no evidence that he would have been suspect to the Emperor in any way, nor that he would have fallen into disgrace in Constantinople. On the contrary, shortly after 1407 he wrote a 'Preface (Προθεωρία)' to the funeral oration by the Emperor Manuel on his brother, Despot Theodore I.⁸ This is the first dated text by Gemistos preserved for us and was in fact a great honour from the Emperor. In subsequent years, some time during 1414–1418, he wrote three famous texts with his proposals for reforms in the Peloponnese. The first one, *On the Isthmus*, is in fact a report about the

³ For an outline of the history of Morean Despotate see especially Zakythinis 1932, 1953.

⁴ See Zakythinis 1932, p. 166.

⁵ John Eugenikos, *Acol. in Marc. Eugen.* 213.16–24; cf. Masai 1956, p. 59, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 28–9.

⁶ Theodore II Palaiologos, *Bull. arg.* 106.1–5: 'Ο οἰκεῖος τῆ βασιλείᾳ μου κύρ Γεώργιος ὁ Γεμιστός ἤλθε μὲν πρό τινων χρόνων ὀρισμῶ τοῦ ἀγίου μου αὐθέντου καὶ βασιλέως τοῦ πατρός μου, τοῦ αἰοῖδμου καὶ μακαρίτου, καὶ εὐρίσκειται εἰς τὴν δουλοσύνην ἡμῶν, ἐπειδὴ δὲ πολλῶν μὲν εὐεργειῶν, πολλῆς δὲ τιμῆς τυχεῖν ἀξίος ἐστὶ πολλῶν ἔνεκα ...

⁷ Cf. Zakythinis 1953, p. 131, Woodhouse 1986, p. 87, Baloglou 2002, pp. 35–6, on the basis of Filelfo, *Ad Sax.: magistratum gerit nescio quem*, and Hermonymos, *In Gemist.* 379: Καὶ μὴν καὶ δικαιοσύνη τοιαύτη τις ἦν τῷ ἀνδρὶ, ὡς λῆρων εἶναι Μίνω ἐκεῖνον καὶ 'Ραδάμανθυν τούτῳ παραβαλλομένους. Οὐκουν ἠχθέσθη γοῦν οὐδεὶς πώποτε τι τῶν ἐκεῖνῳ δοκοῦντων, ἀλλ' ὡς θεῖα ψήφος τὸ τούτῳ δόξαν ἦν. Στέργοντες δ' οὖν ἄμφω καὶ προσκυνοῦντες ὃ τε ἠττηθεὶς καὶ ὃ νικήσας ἀπέησαν, καὶ τοι μὴ οὕτω πεφυκότες τοῖς ἄλλοις συμβαίνειν· καὶ τοῦτ' εἰκότως, οἶμαι.

⁸ *Proth.*; cf. Zakythinis 1953, pp. 324–5, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 88–92.

state of the Despotate, or rather an analysis of its problems, and was written for the Emperor Manuel shortly before his visit there.⁹ The reformatory *Addresses*, written in the following years, were directed to both the Despot Theodore II and the Emperor.¹⁰ This all leads to the conclusion that Gemistos was in fact charged with a mission in the Peloponnese by Manuel II in order to help his son in his difficult task and not that he fell into disgrace and was banished from the City because of some nonconformist beliefs.

Also the rewards and honours he got during his stay in Mistra confirm that he was far from being an outcast there and his position at the Morean court must have been very important. Five bulls by different Emperors or Despots have been preserved in which land is assigned to Gemistos or previous acquisitions are confirmed for his sons.¹¹ They prove that Gemistos was on good terms not only with the Despot Theodore II (1407–1443), but also with Constantine XI (1443–1449), the subsequent head of the Despotate who was to become the last Byzantine Emperor. Their good relationship was obviously able to overcome even the fact that, unlike Gemistos, Constantine was a supporter of the Union of Churches.¹²

Gemistos did not get on so well with Constantine's successors Demetrios and Thomas, even though, ironically, the former was also a decisive anti-Unionist. Still, some of Gemistos' privileges were confirmed by Demetrios. Also the funeral oration on the Empress Helen delivered in 1450 and discussed above may be a proof that he was in favour with the imperial family since she was not only the mother of the Emperor but also of the two recent rulers of the Despotate, Demetrios and Thomas.¹³ Moreover, in these years (1450–1451) Gemistos wrote an address to Demetrios, the Despot of Morea, who would be involved in the destruction of his most important philosophical treatise. In his last political proclamation Gemistos praises Demetrios for his decision to end the quarrels with his brother Thomas over the rule of the Despotate, supporting his speech by a series of examples from ancient history as was his usual manner.¹⁴ His attempt to mediate between the two Palaiologoi in a dispute is thus another proof that he was definitely a respected member of the court at Mistra until his last days. We may therefore ask whether if he had been suspected of paganism, this all would have been possible. It is also hardly thinkable that

⁹ *De Isthmo*; cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 100–101, Baloglou 2002, p. 97.

¹⁰ *Ad Man., Ad Theod.*; cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 92–8, 102–8.

¹¹ They are edited in LAMBROS III, pp. 331–3, IV, pp. 19–22, 104–9, 192–5; cf. Zakythinis 1932, pp. 207, 240, 246–7, 1953, pp. 122–3, 199. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 324–5.

¹² Zakythinis 1932, p. 224.

¹³ Woodhouse 1986, pp. 309–10.

¹⁴ *Ad Dem.*; cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 312–14.

such an unfaithful person would be even invited as an adviser to the Council in Italy where the traditional faith was at stake, as happened at the end of the 1430s. And it is also highly improbable that in a relatively small city such as Mistra at that time, it would have been possible to carry out any major pagan activity in such a way that the Despot either did not know about it or was even willing to tolerate it, and especially such a pious Despot as Theodore II, who was repeatedly considering retiring to a monastery.¹⁵

Equally problematic is Scholarios' account of Elissaeus, the alleged teacher of Gemistos. The corruption of a Christian by a Jew was a kind of *locus communis* in the Middle Ages and Gemistos, in fact, does not anywhere speak about or hint at his studies with anybody like Elissaeus.¹⁶ Moreover, what Scholarios says about Elissaeus is rather puzzling. He is supposed to be:

1. An interpreter of Aristotle, an adherent of Averroes and other Persian and Arabic commentators on the Stagirite.
2. The one who introduced 'Gemistos to the doctrines of Zoroaster and others'.
3. A Jewish heretic and only 'ostensible Jew', but, in reality, a Hellenist (pagan) and polytheist.
4. An important person at the Sultan court, but finally 'he met his end in flames (πυρὶ τὴν τελευταίην εὔρετο), just like ... Zoroaster'.

To start with the last point – it is extremely improbable that Elissaeus was burnt, because this kind of punishment was scarcely used by either the Ottomans and

¹⁵ Cf. Zakythinis 1932, pp. 204–5, Runciman 1980, pp. 65, 68.

¹⁶ Woodhouse 1986, p. 65, quotes in connection with Elissaeus two passages from the *Reply to Scholarios* in which Gemistos talks about the Jews. However, the first one is Gemistos' reply to another passage by Scholarios, *Pro Arist.* 4.21–5, where it is already said that 'it is possible to hear from the Latins and Jews (... ἔξεστι ἀκούειν Λατίνων τε καὶ Ἰουδαίων ...)', who know Averroes' writings, about the erroneousness of Gemistos' explanation of his thought. Scholarios' text, in fact, reacts to the beginning of the *Differences* where Gemistos criticizes Averroes but where only the Westerners (οἱ πρὸς ἑσπέραν) are mentioned in connection with him, *De diff.* 321.4–13. Gemistos then answers with the sentence which is often quoted as his allusion to Elissaeus: 'But we have learnt, oh dear, from the wiser Italians and Jews what Averroes teaches about the soul.' Καὶ ἡμεῖς, ὦ γὰθε, παρὰ τε Ἰταλῶν τῶν σοφωτέρων καὶ Ἰουδαίων ἔστι ὧν πεπύσμεθα τὰ περὶ ψυχῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ... *Contra Schol.* IV 374.15–24. It is difficult to be certain whether Elissaeus is really meant here. Given the context and rather angry tone of Gemistos' *Reply to Scholarios*, it seems that most probably not. Another passage from the *Reply to Scholarios*, mentioning an unknown empire that is sometimes invoked by the Jews, is simply too general and depreciative, so that it is highly improbable that Elissaeus could be meant, *ibid.* XX 418.1–5.

Byzantines.¹⁷ Elissaeus' death thus need not necessarily be a punishment for a heresy, but perhaps just an accident.¹⁸ It is also possible that eternal damnation of the Jewish heretic in hell is what Scholarios has in mind. Because he obviously makes a connection between Elissaeus' death and the Zoroastrian cult of fire, the whole story about the death of Gemistos' teacher might be, after all, just a spectacular rhetorical comparison.

As for the other points, it is obviously a question of whether at the Sultan's court, either in Bursa or Adrianople, some time in the 1380s or a bit later, there could live someone who was (1) an Aristotelian, (2) a Zoroastrian and (3) an ancient polytheist at the same time. These three aspects of Elissaeus' personality as described by Scholarios seem to exclude one another. Aristotelians are not usually polytheists (unless we have to do with some specific form of Aristotelism incorporated into a different philosophical framework), and Zoroastrianism is different from the Greek polytheism. We should not go as far as to conclude that Scholarios simply made the whole story up and we may admit that Gemistos could really have studied with a certain Elissaeus. In this case it would be more probable to suppose that he was a Jewish Aristotelian, only later identified as Zoroastrian and polytheist by Scholarios, who was trying to prove that Gemistos was a heretic and pagan since his earliest years, basing his claim mainly on Plethon's *Laws*. (As Scholarios puts it: 'This man also expounded to Gemistos the doctrines of Zoroaster and others.')

It has been, however, suggested that Elissaeus was in fact an adherent of *falsafa*, and more specifically of the school of Suhrawardī, representing the Eastern and Persian current in the Islamic philosophy and in many features different from its Western, Averroist branch. According to Scholarios' report, in which Arabic and Persian commentators on Aristotle are mentioned together, Elissaeus was supposed to know both traditions. A combination of otherwise irreconcilable aspects of his personality might have been allegedly possible in the framework of Islamic philosophy of the Eastern, Persian type.¹⁹

It is thus perhaps more useful to make an attempt to determine the influence which Elissaeus might have exerted on Gemistos. First, there is an obvious difference of opinions between them. Gemistos was a determined Platonist while his teacher is supposed to be an Aristotelian commentator. Gemistos knew Aristotle well enough to write a competent critique of him and he could have acquired this knowledge thanks to his alleged teacher. The problem is that Gemistos' exegesis of Aristotle is based much more on his very good knowledge

¹⁷ Woodhouse 1986, p. 27.

¹⁸ Tihon's introduction to *Meth.* p. 8.

¹⁹ Cf. Tardieu 1987, pp. 142–8, Tambrun-Krasker's commentary on *Or. mag.*, pp. 41–3, 2006, pp. 91–4.

of the primary Greek texts²⁰ than on the supposedly syncretic philosophy of Elissaeus combining together – apart from other things – Aristotelianism with Neoplatonism and the Greek and Persian religious traditions.²¹ In contrast, in his *Differences* Gemistos argues against Aristotle because of his alleged atheism.²² Furthermore, it seems that he did not know any Persian.²³ Out of the Islamic thinkers he mentions Averroes, but criticizes him for the doctrine of the mortality of the human soul and for his negative influence on the understanding of Aristotle in the West, who, thanks to the commentaries on Averroes, is considered the supreme sage there while his atheism is concealed.²⁴ Avicenna 'the Arab' is also invoked in the *Differences*, being described as the one who understood Aristotle's mistake and even though he, too, like Aristotle, assigned the separated intellects to stars and spheres, he did not do the same with God, but left him transcendent.²⁵ In other words, Gemistos not only strongly disagrees with Averroes, but he also observes a difference between the teachings of Avicenna and Aristotle. This he could not certainly have learned from Elissaeus, who is supposed to have relied on the Islamic commentaries on Aristotle. Furthermore, Gemistos' last point is, again, dependent on his knowledge of the original texts. Also his criticism of Averroes reflects rather the situation in Italy where the *Differences* were written. He has thus here presumably the Latins, not his former Jewish teacher, in mind. In general, it is difficult to prove that Gemistos was influenced by Islamic culture in any substantial way and in his philosophy he always relies primarily on the ancient Greek sources.²⁶

Furthermore, Suhrawardī's 'philosophy of illumination' seems to be entirely absent from Gemistos' thought,²⁷ and even in his short text, or rather excerpt,

²⁰ In the *Differences* Gemistos thus quotes from various Aristotle's texts, cf. the notes to Woodhouse's and Blum's translations of this treatise based on Lagarde's unpublished thesis, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 191–214, Blum 1988, pp. 112–50.

²¹ Cf. Corbin 1946, 1964, pp. 284–304, 1971, Ziai 1997.

²² In section I of the *Differences*, 321.23–323.4.

²³ Woodhouse 1986, pp. 25–6; Plethon says that the Sun is called in Persian Cyrus, *Or. mag.* 19.13, basing his claim on Plutarch, *Artax.* 1012a.

²⁴ *De diff.* 321.7–13, *Contra Schol.* IV 374.15–24, XXX 488.25–31.

²⁵ *De diff.* I 322.38–323.4.

²⁶ Cf. Anastos 1948, pp. 268–303, Brisson 2006. In contrast, Suhrawardī could not definitely know Plato's dialogues, nor probably the original texts of Aristotle, but just the works of Islamic Peripatetics; see Walbridge 2000, pp. 88–97, 127–37. Demetracopoulos 2004, pp. 21, 49–50, 147–50, 2006, p. 339, has plausibly shown that Gemistos draws his knowledge of Averroes from the Latin medieval sources he had at his disposal in a Greek translation.

²⁷ Cf. Corbin 1964, pp. 286–99, Ziai 1997, pp. 782–3, Walbridge 1992. What might be, after all, seen as a parallel between Gemistos and Suhrawardī is their shared criticism towards

on Muhammad all the information is derived from his Byzantine predecessors.²⁸ Nevertheless, even though Plethon obviously relied on the previous Byzantine tradition of astronomy, Hebrew sources have been detected in his astronomical works²⁹ and a hypothesis has been recently proposed which connects Gemistos' Jewish teacher with the author of the medical treatise *The Key to Medicine*.³⁰ If this identification is correct, we are lucky to be able to form our opinion of Elissaeus from his own work. However, there is no trace of Suhrawardī's philosophical thought or something similar to Scholarios' description of Elissaeus' personality, namely, his alleged paganism or an interest in Zoroaster.³¹ Since we know that Gemistos occupied himself with medicine too, albeit tangentially,³² we may thus conclude that if there were any influence on Gemistos from Jewish thought in general and Elissaeus in particular, it is be restricted to the domain of science (certainly astronomy, perhaps also medicine) rather than to philosophical and religious thought.

A possibility has nevertheless been suggested that Gemistos was influenced by Elissaeus and the Eastern Islamic philosophy of Suhrawardī and his disciples on one point that is extremely important for his conception of the perennial philosophy. There does not seem to be a direct ancient parallel, first, for his locating of Zoroaster in the lead place among the ancient sages, and, second, for his identification of the *Chaldaean Oracles* with the writings of the Magi, the disciples of Zoroaster. For this reason it has been claimed that such a parallel in fact can be found in the Persian philosophy, to which Gemistos was allegedly introduced by Elissaeus. Unfortunately, so far no text has been presented from this tradition in which Zoroaster would have the same sovereign position of

Aristotelianism. However, unlike Gemistos, Suhrawardī undertakes it in order to advocate the 'real' Aristotle, that is, the one that was created by the Neoplatonic reinterpretation of his works, against the traditional Islamic Peripatetics; see Corbin 1964, pp. 290–91, 295, Ziai 1997, pp. 782–3, Walbridge 2000, pp. 117–85, 225–9. Another moment where an interesting similarity between both authors may be pointed out is their theory of intellects issued from the first and highest God and constituting the intelligible word of the Platonic Forms. According to Suhrawardī these intellects are identified with ancient Persian angels, but this is incidental to his system as a whole; see Walbridge 1992, pp. 29, 110–23, 2001, pp. 108–9.

²⁸ Klein-Franke 1972, pp. 3–4.

²⁹ Mercier' commentary on *Meth.*, pp. 250–63, 274–5. Cf. also the saying of Kabakes that Gemistos was acquainted with the Byzantine commentary tradition of Ptolemy's *Almagest*, Ševčenko 1962, p. 114, with n.4, quoted below, p. 219, n.82.

³⁰ Wüst 1989; cf. Tihon's introduction to *Meth.*, pp. 7–8, with the n. 8, Gardette 2009, pp. 297–9.

³¹ Cf. Spira 1964.

³² Cf. Gemistos' notes in *Marc. Gr.* 517 (= 886), fols 121–8, Mioni 1985, p. 386.

the first and wisest sage in the succession of wise men, religious thinkers and philosophers as in Plethon's *philosophia perennis*. In fact, even though in this current of Persian thought, also for patriotic reasons, Zoroaster indeed appears, the foremost place is reserved rather for Hermes (Trismegistus).³³

Here too, therefore, it is more probable that Gemistos relied on the ancient Greek sources³⁴ which he just pushed one step further.³⁵ He derives his conviction about Zoroaster's antiquity from Plutarch³⁶ and he could find further support for the astonishingly early date of his life (5,000 years before the Trojan war) also in Diogenes Laertius, an author Gemistos certainly knew.³⁷ We may add that in the same passage in Diogenes it is even claimed that the Magi are more ancient than the Egyptians.³⁸ This seems to be actually one of the reasons, if not the most important one, why Plethon considered Zoroaster to be the most ancient known sage and lawgiver.

Moreover, already the ancient Neoplatonists were interested in the *Chaldaean Oracles* because they considered the doctrines contained in them to be similar to those in Plato's dialogues.³⁹ There is an ancient tradition which brings the Magi close to the Chaldaeans. The traditional Greek etymology of Zoroaster's name, whose one component seems to be 'star' (ἀστήρ), along with his alleged astronomical interests (he is sometimes claimed to be the inventor of astronomy) could associate him and the Magi with the Chaldaeans, famous

³³ Cf. Corbin 1946, pp. 18–19, 22–6, 1971, pp. 23–6, Walbridge 2000, pp. 7, 29–35, 2001, pp. 17–50. The parallel between Gemistos' emphasizing of the significance of Zoroaster and the school of Suhrawardī was suggested by Corbin 1964, pp. 285–6, 346, 1971, pp. 31–4, including the mediation of Elissaeus. This suggestion has been further developed by Tardieu 1987, pp. 146–8; cf. Tambrun-Krasker's commentary on *Or. mag.*, pp. 41–6, 2006, pp. 91–4. Stausberg 1998, pp. 40–41, disagrees and thinks that Gemistos' 'Zoroastrianism' is to be derived from the ancient Greek sources. Furthermore, Walbridge 2000, pp. 7, 27–35, 83–125, 223–4, 2001, pp. 13–16, 57–64, 107–10, tries to show that Suhrawardī is himself influenced by ancient Greek philosophy, and more particularly Platonism, in the form it has been absorbed by Islamic thought and argues convincingly against Corbin's attempts to see him as an inheritor of ancient Persian tradition. Another sceptical conclusion about alleged Suhrawardī's influence on Gemistos may be found in Monfasani (forthcoming).

³⁴ Nikolaou 1971, pp. 334–41.

³⁵ Bidez–Cumont 1938, vol. 1, pp. 158–63.

³⁶ *Contra Schol.* V 378.11–380.1, *Or. mag.* 19.20–22, Plutarch, *De Is.* 369d; cf. Bidez–Cumont 1938, vol. 2, pp. 7–9 (B 1).

³⁷ Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* I,2; cf. Bidez–Cumont 1938, vol. 2, pp. 7–9 (B 1a). *Marc. Gr.* 517 (= 886), fols 110–115v, contains Diogenes Laertius' life of Socrates written in Gemistos' hand, Mioni 1985, pp. 384–5. Plutarch mentions Zoroaster also in *Numa* 62d, *Def. orac.* 415a, *Quaest. conviv.* 670d. For the early dating of him see Kingsley 1990.

³⁸ Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* I,8; cf. Bidez–Cumont 1938, vol. 2, pp. 9–14 (B 2).

³⁹ See des Places' introduction to *Or. Chald.*, pp. 18–46.

for their astronomical and astrological knowledge.⁴⁰ More importantly, they are definitely joined together in the biographies of Pythagoras, who provided Gemistos a connection through which, with the help of his pupils, the teachings of the Zoroastrian Magi reached Plato. The source on which Gemistos based the connection of Zoroaster and the Chaldaeans may have therefore been Porphyry and Iamblichus, who are both named in the line of the true philosophers at the beginning of the *Laws*. In Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras* the Chaldaeans appear together with 'Zaratos' both of whom Pythagoras allegedly met in Babylon; and according to Iamblichus' *On the Pythagorean Life*, Pythagoras was there in contact with the Magi.⁴¹ Also Lucian, a widely read school author, mentions Pythagoras' alleged stay in Babylon, where he was supposed to have met 'the Magi, the disciples and successors of Zoroaster (οἱ Μάγοι οἱ Ζωροάστρου μαθηταὶ καὶ διάδοχοι)'.⁴² As for other ancient authors, Diogenes Laertius, too, joins together the Chaldaean and Magi in his account of Pythagoras' life⁴³ whereas Hippolytus goes even further saying that Pythagoras came to 'Zaratas the Chaldaean'.⁴⁴ The same Zaratas is supposed to be a teacher of Pythagoras also according to Plutarch,⁴⁵ an author much studied by Gemistos. In both cases it is said that Zaratas teaches that everything is a product of two principles 'the Father and the Mother', that is, 'the male and the female' or 'the limited and the unlimited' respectively. This Zaratas differs from Zoroaster not only in his name. He is also supposed to be one of the Magi and a teacher of Pythagoras, which would be impossible in the case of the much more ancient wise man. Pythagoras' connection with Zoroaster and the Magi is thus very well attested in ancient sources.⁴⁶ Since, during his legendary voyage round the Mediterranean, Pythagoras apparently had to visit all the important places and see all the wise men there, Zoroaster and the Magi originating from rather distant Persia were

⁴⁰ Cf. Bidez-Cumont 1938, vol. 1, pp. 6-7, 30-38, vol. 2, pp. 17-21, 23-5 (B 6-9, 11), Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* I,8; cf. Bidez-Cumont 1938, vol. 2, pp. 67-70 (D 2). On Zoroaster's astronomical interests see further *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 161-3, 174-90, 193-7, 208-30 (O 14-15, 39-46, 52, 79-83, 85). See also Kingsley 1995.

⁴¹ Porphyry, *Vita Pyth.* 12, Iamblichus, *Vita Pyth.* 4,19; cf. Bidez-Cumont 1938, vol. 2, pp. 37-8 (B 27).

⁴² Lucian, *Men.* 6.6-8, the texts about Pythagoras' studies with the Magi were collected and commented upon by Bidez-Cumont 1938, vol. 2, pp. 17-21, 35-40 (B 6-9, 25-30); cf. Nikolaou 1971, pp. 319-27.

⁴³ Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* VIII,3.

⁴⁴ Hippolytus, *Ref.* I,2,12-13; cf. VI,23,2; cf. Bidez-Cumont 1938, vol. 2, p. 35 (B 25a).

⁴⁵ Plutarch, *De an.* 1012d-e; cf. Bidez-Cumont 1938, vol. 2, p. 35 (B 25b).

⁴⁶ Bidez-Cumont 1938, vol. 1, pp. 33-8, Dörrie 1990, pp. 178-85, 458-71 (Baustein 67).

aptly identified with the Chaldaeans living more at hand and probably really intermingling with them because of the Persian expansion.⁴⁷ This tradition could well have been the motive for Gemistos' identification of the *Chaldaean Oracles* as a text by the Magi.

It is slightly more difficult to find a text in which Plato is similarly put into contact with them.⁴⁸ In Diogenes Laertius we are told that after having visited the wise men in Italy and Egypt Plato wanted to meet the Magi too, but he was prevented by the wars currently going on in Asia.⁴⁹ Moreover, according to the same author a Magus came to Athens from Syria in order to meet Plato's teacher Socrates.⁵⁰ Pausanias claims that the Chaldaeans and 'the Magi of the Indians' were the first who taught that the human soul is immortal and they had managed to persuade many Greeks, including Plato.⁵¹ In ancient sources Plato's voyage to Egypt is definitely better attested than the one to Persia or Chaldea. In fact Gemistos never claims that Plato really met the followers of Zoroaster, but that he belonged to the same tradition as that of the Magi and Pythagoras (and his students in Italy). It is thus Pythagoras who provides here a historical link between the Oriental doctrine and Plato's philosophy.

As for their doctrines, Plethon claims that there are many points on which the 'Magian' *Oracles* agree with Plato. Ancient authors tell us much about Zoroaster and the Persian Magi. According to Herodotus and Strabo, an author extensively studied by Gemistos,⁵² the Persians venerated Zeus.⁵³ In Diogenes Laertius they are further said to believe in the immortality of the human soul and, according to Porphyry, they even taught reincarnation.⁵⁴ Plutarch reports

⁴⁷ According to Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praep. evan.* X,4,14–15, Pythagoras travels as far as to Persia and India.

⁴⁸ Horky 2009 argues that an association of Plato and the Magi, including the Chaldaean connection, was established by the early members of the Academy. However, he bases his claim on a papyrus from Herculaneum which was obviously not available to Plethon.

⁴⁹ Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* III,7.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* II,45.

⁵¹ Pausanias, *Gracc. Descript.* IV,32,4.

⁵² Cf. Diller 1937, 1956, pp. 27–9, 31–5, Mioni 1985, pp. 136–7, 158, 386, 417; *Marc. Gr.* 379 (= 520), fols 15v–341v, 406 (= 791), fols 62–72v, 517 (= 886), fols 119–120v, 529 (= 847), fols 492–495v, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 181–6, with further references.

⁵³ Herodotus, *Hist.* I,131, Strabo, *Geogr.* XV,3,13. Plethon, however, erases Herodotus' identification of Zeus with 'the whole circle of heaven (ὁ κύκλος πᾶς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ)': see Pagani 2009, p. 201 (Herodotus, *Hist.* I,131.6–7). The reason might be a parallel with Strabo who agrees with Herodotus that Persians venerate Zeus in high places and on mountain peaks, but he does not identify him with any astronomical object.

⁵⁴ Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* I,9, Porphyry, *De abst.* IV,16,2; cf. Bidez–Cumont 1938, vol. 2, pp. 67–70 (D 2).

that they maintained the doctrine of the existence of daemons as a third kind between the gods and humans.⁵⁵ Moreover, in his commentary Plethon claims that in the *Magian Oracles* the image of fire is used to designate the divine,⁵⁶ which agrees well with the well-known veneration of fire by Zoroastrians.⁵⁷

This all fits well into an extremely favourable picture of Zoroaster we find in Plato's *Alcibiades I*. According to Plato, the young Persians are so successful because they are educated by special instructors. These are presumably the followers of Zoroaster because the first of them teaches the youths magic, that means, the wisdom of the Magi (μαγεία), invented by 'Zoroaster, son of Horomazes', which consists in the veneration of the gods (θεῶν θεραπεία); moreover, Zoroaster instructs them how to rule (τὰ βασιλικά).⁵⁸ Plethon too always emphasizes that Zoroaster is not only a sage, but also an eminent lawgiver; and the same may be claimed for Pythagoras together with his followers whose political activities in Southern Italy are well known.⁵⁹ Moreover, there is an ancient tradition preserved by Eusebius and Proclus (who, nevertheless does not agree with it), according to which Er, the hero of the myth about reincarnation told in book X of Plato's *Republic*, is identical with Zoroaster.⁶⁰ We have furthermore seen that, for Plethon, the structure of reality in the myth of the Magi in Plutarch, in the *Magian Oracles*, and in the second letter attributed to Plato is the same.

Connecting together these or some other ancient texts, Plethon may have 'rediscovered', but in fact rather created, an ancient tradition, according to which the most ancient sage was Zoroaster, whose followers, the Magi, wrote down his doctrines in the *Oracles*, and revealed his wisdom to Pythagoras in Chaldaea, through whom and through whose followers it reached Plato. An immensely important role in developing this conception must also obviously be attributed to the fact that, as it has been just suggested, all the important representatives of this tradition, that is, Zoroaster, Pythagoras and Plato, were both philosophers and lawgivers. This is not, for instance, the case of Orpheus, mentioned by

⁵⁵ Plutarch, *Def. orac.* 415a, based on Plato, *Symp.* 202d–e; cf. Bidez–Cumont 1938, vol. 2, pp. 16–17 (B 5). For Plethon's general interest in Plutarch see Diller 1954, Mioni 1985, p. 385; *Marc. Gr.* 517 (= 886), fols 67–76v.

⁵⁶ *Or. mag.* 5.17 [on II], 9.16 [on XII], 17.4 [on XXIX], 18.15–16 [on XXXIII], *Decl. Brev.* 21.4.

⁵⁷ Cf. Herodotus, *Hist.* III,16, Strabo, *Geogr.* XV,3,13–14, and even Scholarios, *Ad Jos.* 162.11–12. See also Bidez–Cumont 1938, vol. 1, p. 161.

⁵⁸ Plato, *Alc.* I 121e–122a.

⁵⁹ Gemistos' interest in Plato's activities in Italy is proved by his *Diod. Plut.* 16,4–17,1, 18,2–20,5, 22,1–3, 41,1–2.

⁶⁰ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praep. evan.* XIII,13,30 (quoting Clemens of Alexandria), Proclus, *In Remp.* II,109.7–111.5 (on Plato, *Resp.* X 614b); cf. Bidez–Cumont 1938, vol. 2, pp. 158–61 (O 12–13).

Gemistos only en passant,⁶¹ or Hermes Trismegistus, not mentioned at all, both of whom would be potential candidates for the greatest sage of all time.

By this conception of the *philosophia perennis* Plethon influenced other thinkers in the Renaissance and later,⁶² one of the earliest of them being most probably Francesco Filelfo in 1464, a humanist who knew Gemistos personally.⁶³ We know that Filelfo had at his disposal Plethon's edition and commentary on the *Magian Oracles*,⁶⁴ which thus seems to have been the source of his locating of Zoroaster in a prominent position.⁶⁵ In a similar way Gemistos influenced John Argyropoulos⁶⁶ who also owned a copy of his commentary on the *Oracles*.⁶⁷ However, the most famous case is that of Marsilio Ficino who originally held Hermes Trismegistus to be the first sage in the line of the wise men in his ancient theology (*prisca theologia*), but under Plethon's influence opted for Zoroaster.⁶⁸ A century and half later Plethon's edition was replaced by Francesco Patrizi who published a more extended collection of the *Oracles* in 1593,⁶⁹ but the

⁶¹ *Contra Schol.* XXI 420.10–11, *Ad Bess.* I 458.25–6.

⁶² See Stausberg 1998, for Plethon's role in the tradition of *prisca theologia* culminating in Ficino see Vasoli 1994, 1999, pp. 11–50, 2001.

⁶³ Filelfo, *Vers. in Gemist., Ad Gemist., Ad Sax.*, on Filelfo; cf. PLP, no. 29803, Viti 1997.

⁶⁴ Cf. Tambrun-Krasker introduction to *Or. mag.*, pp. xxxviii–xxxix (*Laur. Plut.* LXXX, 24, fols 101v–106).

⁶⁵ Hankins 1991, p. 93, considers Filelfo to be in this a forerunner of Marsilio Ficino. However, the text he publishes to support his claim seems to be at least partly dependent on Plethon's conception of the ancient wisdom and of the role that Zoroaster, Pythagoras and Plato play in it, Filelfo, *Ad Dom.* 21–4, 250–71; cf. Kraye 1979, pp. 121–4. Both Plethon and Filelfo, for instance, mention Plutarch and his dating of Zoroaster's life. It is therefore very probable that Filelfo drew this knowledge from Plethon's commentary on *Magian Oracles*. For the relation of Gemistos to Filelfo see Knös 1950, pp. 138–40, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 158–9.

⁶⁶ Cf. Field 1987, pp. 315–16, Stausberg 1998, pp. 140–41.

⁶⁷ Tambrun-Krasker introduction to *Or. mag.*, p. xxxiv, *Marc. Gr.* XI, 9 (= 1232), fols 98v–105.

⁶⁸ Cf. Hankins 1991, pp. 459–64, Allen 1998, pp. 1–49; Gentile 2007. Ficino owned a copy of Plethon's commentary on *Magian Oracles* (*Riccard.* 76); cf. Tambrun-Krasker introduction to *Or. mag.*, p. lxvii.

⁶⁹ Francesco Patrizi, *Nova de univ.*, appendix *Zoroaster*. In the preface to his edition of the *Chaldaean Oracles* Patrizi gives an extensive survey of ancient sources on Zoroaster and the *Chaldaean Oracles* which is interesting to compare to those presumably available to Plethon who is also mentioned as a relevant authority. *Ibid.*, fols 3r–5v.

identification of them as the sayings of the Magi of Zoroaster was rejected only by modern scholarship.⁷⁰

To sum up, we cannot definitely exclude that there was some Elissaeus whom Gemistos knew. If he really existed, he was most probably a scientist and perhaps a Jewish Aristotelian, but his alleged polytheism is extremely unlikely and seems to be a later conjecture of Scholarios. Even if Elissaeus had told Gemistos about Zoroaster, which is also quite improbable, it would have remained for his pupil to place this sage at the head of the perennial philosophy, for which he was trying to find support in the ancient Greek sources. Thus the influence that Elissaeus might have exerted on Gemistos, who did not share with him even his probable Aristotelianism, is indeed scanty and he cannot be certainly seen as the decisive impulse for Gemistos' apostasy, as Scholarios claimed. If Gemistos was really a pagan, it had to be the result of his studies of ancient thought rather than because of the influence of his mysterious teacher.

⁷⁰ For the cultural impact of the figure of Zoroaster in early modern thought see Stausberg 1998.

Chapter 15

Witnesses

Gemistos' contemporaries who might in any way provide testimony to his religious beliefs can be divided into three groups: first (a), his direct pupils or friends who studied for some length of time in Mistra and, being in a close contact with him, should naturally know much about his beliefs; second (b), his distant admirers who although very sympathetic to him in fact neither studied nor were in any substantial contact with him; third (c), all his adversaries who, accusing him of paganism, being usually motivated by their different philosophical position, criticized him always 'from outside', since none of them was in close relations with him. It is definitely flattering for Gemistos that it seems there was nobody who would have been a close friend, associate or pupil of his and at the same time would have radically criticized or doubted his personality, philosophy – or Christianity.

Pupils and Friends

The main problem with Gemistos' close associates is that it is in fact difficult to find anybody influenced in any way by his alleged paganism. His most notable pupils were Mark Eugenikos and Bessarion, both monks who later became respectively Orthodox Metropolitans of Ephesus and Nicaea¹ and whose views became radically opposed during the Council of Florence, which they both attended and in which they played an extremely important part. Eugenikos was the main critic of the proposed Union. He refused to sign the final decree, and after returning to Constantinople he acted as the head of the anti-Unionist party. Bessarion, in contrast, gradually became the main proponent of the Union, taking a firm pro-Latin stand, and finally was created a Cardinal in Italy, later being even a candidate for pope.²

Nobody can deny the firm Orthodox views of Eugenikos, which certainly show no trace of any paganism.³ The same must be said about his brother John,

¹ See Syropoulos, *Mem.* V,30 284.25–7, John Eugenikos, *Acol. in Marc. Eugen.* 213.21–4, Bessarion, *Ad Dem. Andr.* 469.1–2.

² Cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 32–3, Gill 1964, pp. 45–64.

³ On Mark Eugenikos see P.L.P, no. 6193, Gill 1964, pp. 55–64, and Constatas 2002.

who eventually became the metropolitan of Lacedaemon.⁴ John was a hardline anti-Unionist who was allowed to return home prematurely from Italy because of his determined hostility towards the Union. Afterwards he lived in Mistra, being obviously somehow associated with the Despot's court there. He died some time following the fall of Constantinople.⁵ After the death of his brother in 1445 he became an even more resolute campaigner against the Union, attacking Scholarios too for his inconsistency and progressive changing of sides after the Council. The main impulse for Scholarios' becoming the chief proponent of anti-Unionism was a plea by Mark Eugenikos who, like his brother John, first accused Scholarios of inconsistency regarding the Union. However, when dying, he asked Scholarios to continue the cause because of his intellectual capacity. In these circumstances there was an obvious dispute over Mark's legacy between Scholarios who was present near the dying Mark and his brother who stayed in the Peloponnese at that time.⁶

In contrast to his difficult relations with Scholarios, John Eugenikos was very sympathetic towards Gemistos, and in the Peloponnese he must have lived close to him. He showed a great interest in Gemistos' treatise *On Virtues* which he copied in 1439 while returning to Greece from Italy.⁷ Immediately following his brother's death in 1445 John composed an acoluthia to Mark in which he recapitulated the life of the to-be saint. At one point John says that the person responsible for Mark's education 'in the more perfect of the general and philosophical studies was Gemistos George'.⁸ Like later panegyrists of Bessarion, John thus did not feel ashamed to mention Gemistos among his brother's teachers. Furthermore, John wrote this at a time when, shortly before Mark's death, Scholarios was launching his first attack on Gemistos for his alleged paganism and asking for Mark's judgement about his former teacher. It is difficult to say whether John may have known about the whole affair initiated by Scholarios' *Defence of Aristotle* which, as we shall see, came into Gemistos' own hands only much later.

Most probably shortly after 1446, at the time of his temporary absence from the Peloponnese in Constantinople,⁹ John wrote a warm letter to Gemistos, whom

⁴ On John Eugenikos see PLP, no. 6189, on John's activities regarding the Council of Florence, see Tsirpanlis 1978.

⁵ Zakythinis 1953, pp. 286, 334–6, 361.

⁶ Blanchet 2008, pp. 354–9, 390–400.

⁷ Cf. Tambrun-Krasker's introduction to *De virt.*, pp. xxix, xlv–xlvi, Zakythinis 1953, p. 336, Neri 2010, pp. 295–6.

⁸ John Eugenikos, *Acol. in Marc. Ephes.* 213.21–2: ... ἐν δὲ τοῖς τελεωτέροις τῶν ἐγκυκλίων καὶ φιλοσόφων μαθημάτων ὁ Γεμιστὸς Γεώργιος.

⁹ Zakythinis 1953, pp. 334–6.

he evidently did not suspect of heresy in any way. It is notable that, as has been just mentioned, this happened at the same time that Scholarios already suspected Gemistos of concealed paganism. In his letter John Eugenikos complains about being 'separated from the beauties of the island' and, besides other things, also from Gemistos' company. Then he extols Gemistos for the unshakeable happiness he achieved in his life because of his wisdom and wishes that he, too, might achieve such a state of the soul. This seems to be an echo of Eugenikos' study of Gemistos' treatise *On Virtues*. In the end he asks Gemistos to honour him by a letter, 'even a short one, as it is your habit, – laconic or rather heroic and of greatest ancient sages'.¹⁰ It thus seems that even though John was not perhaps Gemistos' pupil, he had to be in a close contact with him, probably at the court of Mistra,¹¹ admiring him for his life conduct and wisdom which he compares to ancient sages. This all is really remarkable since John is known as a determined Orthodox believer whose opposition towards Union was notorious. Nonetheless, in this opposition he was close to Gemistos. Another point of contact of these two Byzantines could have been also certain Eugenikos' humanistic interests.¹² Furthermore, they both shared a strong dislike for Scholarios.

Bessarion is even a more puzzling case.¹³ Although, here too, as in the case of Mark and John Eugenikos, it is impossible to deny his firm Christian faith, he was certainly influenced by the Platonism of his teacher as well as his vivid interest in ancient Greek culture.¹⁴ As a sign of their common inclination to ancient polytheism Bessarion's letter of consolation to Demetrios and Andronikos, the sons of Gemistos, is often quoted because of its pagan imagery, including reincarnation:

I have learned that our common father and master has shed every earthly element and departed to heaven, to the place of purity, joining the mystical chorus of Iacchus with the Olympian gods. I too rejoice to have studied with such a man, the wisest that Greece has produced since Plato (leaving Aristotle out of account). So if one were to accept the doctrines of the Pythagoreans and Plato about the infinite ascent and descent of souls, I should not hesitate even to add that the soul

¹⁰ John Eugenikos, *Ad Gemist.*; cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 29, 38–9, 179–80, 225.

¹¹ Zakythinos 1953, p. 314.

¹² An overview of John's rich literary activity can be found in Pétridès 1910 and Stiernon 1974, for an example of his interest in classical literature, namely, Heliodorus' *Aithiopika* see Gärtner 1971.

¹³ On Bessarion see PLP, no. 2707, Mohler 1923, Labowsky 1967, Mioni 1991, Fiaccadori 1994 and Coluccia 2009.

¹⁴ Hankins 1991, pp. 217–63.

of Plato, having to obey the irrefragable decrees of Adrasteia¹⁵ and to discharge the obligatory cycle, had come down to earth and assumed the frame and life of Gemistos.¹⁶

However, this does not necessarily mean that Gemistos or Bessarion really were pagan Platonists as it is sometimes assumed.¹⁷ First, it must be pointed out that both Byzantine and Renaissance thinkers sometimes used this kind of comparison. Nicephoros Gregoras thus calls his teacher Theodore Metochites 'a personification of all wisdom' and 'a reincarnation of Homer, Plato, Ptolemy and all the important orators.'¹⁸ Similarly, Janus Pannonius says in a poem that Plato's soul is reincarnated in Marsilio Ficino.¹⁹ What is important to note in Bessarion's praise is the concession 'if one were to accept' which makes of the reincarnation hinted at in the letter a mere theoretical possibility.²⁰ The exalted and 'pagan' tone of the text may be explained simply as a homage to the great interpreter of the ancient philosophy that Gemistos certainly was. In an earlier letter to his former teacher, while asking about some problems of Platonic philosophy, Bessarion calls him: 'nowadays the only initiator and initiated into the divine knowledge of the Platonists'²¹ and, in a letter written after Gemistos' death, an expert on 'not only the Platonic [wisdom] but also that of those men who inquire into divine things.'²² Bessarion's 'pagan' funeral speech on Gemistos

¹⁵ Cf. Plato, *Phaedr.* 248c2, *Resp.* V 451a4–5.

¹⁶ Bessarion, *Ad Dem. Andr.* 468.13–469.8 (the reading according to MS B): Πέπυσμαι τὸν κοινὸν πατέρα τε καὶ καθηγεμόνα τὸ γεῶδες πᾶν ἀποθέμενον ἐς οὐρανὸν καὶ τὸν ἀκραίφνη μεταστῆναι χώρον, τὸν μυστικὸν τοῖς Ὀλυμπίοις θεοῖς συγχορεύσοντα ἴακχον. ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν χαίρω τοιοῦτῳ ὠμιληκῶς ἀνδρὶ, οὐ μετὰ Πλάτωνα – ἐξηρήθω δὲ λόγου Ἀριστοτέλης – σοφώτερον οὐκ ἔφυσεν ἢ Ἑλλάς [MSS M, L: παρὰ τοιοῦτον ἄνδρα φοιτήσας, οὐ Πλάτωνι μετὰ γε τοὺς πρώτους ἐκείνους ἀνδρας οὐκ ἔφυσεν ἢ Ἑλλάς οὐ σοφία, οὐ τῆ ἄλλῃ ἀρετῇ ὁμοιότερον]. ὥστ' εἴ τις τὸν περὶ τῆς ἐντακτικῆς περιόδου, τῶν γε ψυχῶν ἀνόδου τε καὶ καθόδου, Πυθαγορείων τε καὶ τοῦ Πλάτωνος ἀπεδέχετο λόγον, οὐκ ἂν ὠκνησε καὶ τοῦτο προσθεῖναι, ὡς ἄρα Πλάτωνος τὴν ψυχὴν, τοῖς τῆς ἀδραστείας ἀρρήκτοις θεσμοῖς δεῖσαν δουλεῦσαι καὶ τὴν ἀναγκαίαν ἀποδοῦναι περίοδον, ἐπὶ γῆς κατιούσαν τὸν Γεμιστοῦ σκῆνος καὶ τὸν σὺν ἐκείνῳ βίον ἐλέσθαι. Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 13. The manuscript variants are most probably due to Bessarion himself; cf. Masai 1956, p. 306–7, n.7.

¹⁷ Cf. Alexandre 1858, pp. lxxxiii–lxxxiv, n.1, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 13–16.

¹⁸ Sathas 1872, p. vς; cf. Podskalsky 2003, p. 30.

¹⁹ Blum 2010, p. 100, with n.18.

²⁰ Cf. Wind 1967, pp. 256–8.

²¹ Bessarion, *Ad Gemist.* I 456.35: ... τοῦ μόνου τανῦν τῆς Πλατωνικῆς ἐποπτείας μυσταγωγῶ καὶ μύστου ...

²² Bessarion, *Ad Secund.* 470.12–13: ... οὐδ' ὄση μόνον Πλατωνικὴ [sc. σοφία] τε καὶ τῶν τὰ θεῖα ἐρευνησαμένων ἐκείνων ἀνδρῶν ...

may be therefore just a eulogy for the great teacher of ancient philosophy written in an elevated and classicizing style and full of mythological hints that he used on other occasions too, including the verses on his dead teacher he also composed.²³ Nevertheless, the pagan allusions are restricted by a careful reservation. Being probably intended for a public presentation, the consolation letter should not be certainly read as an expression of the secret ideology of neo-paganizing circle, but rather as a public tribute.²⁴

There are two other funeral orations on Gemistos: by Charitonimos Hermonymos and by a certain monk Gregorios. However, it is clear from their texts that only the latter really studied with him.²⁵ Although the orations are often quoted as a proof of his paganism,²⁶ there is, nevertheless, no direct and unambiguous clue to claim this, and in the one written by Gregorios, who seems to have been Gemistos' pupil, a series of saints and Church Fathers is even quoted.²⁷ If we compare Gregorios' oration with Bessarion's consolation letter it is interesting to note that in both texts Gemistos is called 'initiator into secret and divine things',²⁸ and 'the one who was much occupied with secret and divine things, the initiator into lofty celestial doctrines'²⁹ both times in the context of Gemistos' teaching. Similarly, Francesco Filelfo extols Gemistos in his verses of 1439 as 'the head of the sages, an embodied statue of virtue which shines for the Danaans with the knowledge of all learning ...'. Although he uses the expression 'by Zeus (νῆ τὸν Δία)', it has, again, rhetorical rather than religious function and cannot be a proof of Gemistos' paganism, even if we leave aside the fact that Filelfo does not seem to have properly studied with him or stayed any length of time in Mistra.³⁰ It therefore seems that Gemistos' pupils and admirers were used to talking about him in a rather exalted and antiquated style, but this does not necessarily mean that they had anything more than their 'initiation' into the ancient Greek culture and philosophy in mind.

²³ Bessarion, *Vers. in Gemist.*

²⁴ Bessarion, *Ad Secund.* 470.6–7; cf. Woodhouse 1986, p. 14.

²⁵ Hermonymos, *In Gemist.* 385, on Hermonymos and Gregorios see PLP, no. 6126 (Hermatianos) and no. 4605 (Gregorios); cf. Woodhouse 1986, p. 7.

²⁶ For this reason Alexandre added them to his edition of the *Laws* as appendices XIII–XIV; see also Woodhouse 1982, pp. 8–12.

²⁷ Gregorios, *In Gemist.* 390, 392; cf. Monfasani 1992, pp. 58–9.

²⁸ Hermonymos, *In Gemist.* 377: ... ὁ τῶν ἀπορρήτων καὶ θείων μυσταγωγός.

²⁹ Gregorios, *In Gemist.* 388: ... ὁ τῶν ἀπορρήτων πολυπράγμων καὶ θείων, ὁ τῶν ὑψηλῶν οὐρανίων δογμάτων μυσταγωγός...

³⁰ Filelfo, *Vers. in Gemist.*; cf. Knös 1950, p. 139. Monfasani 2012b argues against a close association of Filelfo with Gemistos.

We can also learn about Bessarion's relation to Gemistos from the letters³¹ which he wrote in the first half of the 1430s (before 1436) while staying with him in Mistra³² and which were addressed most probably to Scholarios, with whom he was on friendly terms at that time and who was searching for a position at the court of Mistra.³³ Gemistos (although not mentioned by his name) seems to appear in Bessarion's correspondence at least twice. He is praised as an excellent teacher, persuasive like Odysseus, surpassing Nestor by his language, and able to penetrate to the utmost depth of thought, not to mention all his outstanding virtues and his extremely kind approach to his pupils.³⁴ In a word, Bessarion was really enchanted by Gemistos when he studied with him. However, his letters from this period are otherwise all uniformly and indisputably Christian in their tone. So also in his other texts, in the consolations and the letter to Constantine XI Palaiologos, written at around the same time, Christian themes predominate, and even if Plato and other ancient classical writers are sometimes incidentally mentioned, it is hard to find any trace of the supposed pagan and polytheistic influence of his former teacher.³⁵

What is, nevertheless, more difficult to explain is Bessarion's later silence regarding his otherwise much admired master whom he extols so much in the letters written on him after his death and also in the verses. A possible conclusion may indeed be that of John Monfasani:

³¹ Bessarion's early writings were collected by the author himself in *Marc. Gr.* 533 (= 778); for a description of the manuscript and the dating of the texts see Mohler 1923, pp. 51–5, Loenertz 1944, pp. 116–21, Saffrey 1964, pp. 279–92, Stormon 1981, Mioni 1985, pp. 421–3, Mioni 1991, pp. 25–46, Rigo 1994, pp. 33–7.

³² Mohler 1923, p. 45, Loenertz 1944, Labowsky 1967, p. 687.

³³ Loenertz 1944, pp. 133–42; it seems that Bessarion later erased Scholarios' name from the heading of his letter, *Ep.* I 416; cf. Mohler's note *ad loc.*, Blanchet 2008, pp. 293–4, 299–301. See also Zakythinis 1953, pp. 331–2, Tinnefeld 2002, p. 520, no. 152.

³⁴ Bessarion, *Ep.* I 417.22–418.7, IV 426.30–31; for the identification of Gemistos in Bessarion's letters see Mohler's notes *ad loc.* Loenertz 1944, p. 140, n.2; Mioni 1991, p. 35, n.2, disagrees and thinks that the Despot Theodore II is meant; however, the description provided by Bessarion in his letter definitely suits Gemistos better and the expression ὁ θαυμαστός δεσπότης, *Ep.* I 417.29, need not necessarily designate the Despot of Morea, since the word 'despotes' is 'a title given to eminent men in general'; cf. Sophocles 1914, δεσπότης (s.v.), p. 352. Gemistos is perhaps mentioned also in VIII 430.12, 32; see Mohler's note *ad loc.* However, in this case by the phrase ὁ θεϊότατος ἡμῶν ἡγεμῶν τε καὶ δεσπότης Bessarion may indeed mean the then current Despot of Morea; cf. Mioni 1991, p. 40, n.21.

³⁵ *Ep.* I–XII 416–39; for the ancient texts Bessarion could probably have studied in Mistra, see Mioni 1991, pp. 50–56.

But Bessarion was not revealing his own views here [in his letter of consolation to Gemistos' sons], but delicately acknowledging those of his departed mentor. It is no accident that in his massive *Against the Calumniator of Plato* where he meticulously refuted George of Trebizond's criticisms of Plato point-by-point, Bessarion never took up George's culminating attack on Plethon's neo-paganism. George's whole prior discussion of Platonism built up to this finale, and to have stopped short of answering it was tantamount to admitting its truth.³⁶

Indeed, in his famous response to Trebizond's *A Comparison of Philosophers Aristotle and Plato*, Bessarion mentions 'Plethon' (not Gemistos) only once as a contemporary Platonist, just to reject his criticism of Aristotle in one of the discussed points. He is in fact making fun of Trebizond here by pointing out that the argument which the latter proposes and according to which the first principle and the motion derived from it is ordered, is in fact one by Plethon. Bessarion has most probably Gemistos' reasoning from the *Differences* in mind here according to which a sphere cannot be assigned to God since he is not at the same level as the rest of the things.³⁷ Bessarion talks about 'Plethon' in a similarly detached way also in his treatise *On the Nature and Art* intended as a response to another text by Trebizond, and in a short paper *Against Plethon on Substance* which were both written during the Plato–Aristotle controversy in the second half of the 1450s.³⁸ With the exception of a private conversation recounted by Kabakes,³⁹ there thus seems to be no text by Bessarion written in the years following Gemistos' death in which he would have talked about his former teacher in a personal way. In all Bessarion's contributions to the Plato–Aristotle controversy 'Plethon' is always mentioned either as someone who originated the discussion of the problem in question (by his *Differences*)⁴⁰ or as somebody whose criticism of a certain point of Aristotle's philosophy, however ingenious it can be, may be finally refuted from another, properly Aristotelian, position.⁴¹ On the other hand, mentioning Gemistos as Bessarion's former

³⁶ Monfasani 1992, p. 56; cf. Alexandre 1858, pp. lxxxix–xc, n.4, Knös 1950, pp. 144–6, Hankins 1991, p. 92.

³⁷ Bessarion, *In cal.* 272.21–33 (Latin version: 273.16–19): ... τὸ ὑπὸ Πλατωνικῶν καὶ τοῦ Πλήθωνος, ἀνδρὸς ἐφ' ἡμῶν γεγονότος καὶ τὰ Πλάτωνος ἀποδεχομένου Cf. *De diff.* I 322.21–323.4, *Contra Schol.* VII 384.14–390.2.

³⁸ Monfasani 1976, pp. 152–70, 201–29, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 364–72.

³⁹ See below, p. 218, n.80.

⁴⁰ Bessarion, *De nat.* 92.4–14, 23–6 (Latin version: 93.6–13, 25–7), *Adv. Pleth.* 149.3–10.

⁴¹ Bessarion, *De nat.* 98.14–17, 26–8 (Latin version: 99.16–21), 128.23–6 (Latin version: 129.29–33), *Adv. Pleth.* 149.21–5, 150.8–11.

teacher was certainly not taboo or shameful because this was repeatedly done in the laudatory speeches on the Greek cardinal, both during his life and after his death, in order to prove his excellent education (in particular, specialized mathematical studies are usually mentioned).⁴²

Furthermore, we may ask how much Bessarion knew about the *Laws* and what he thought of it. It is well known that Bessarion avidly collected Gemistos' works and manuscripts, including some of the most important autographs. In his collection there were also some chapters of the *Laws*, and Bessarion possessed a copy of the *Summary of the Doctrines of Zoroaster and Plato* with exactly similar pagan doctrines.⁴³ Also his close associate, Theodore Gazes, who, as we shall see, was otherwise very critical towards Gemistos, had at least a chapter of the *Laws* at his disposal, the one that is preserved in a manuscript owned by Kabakes.⁴⁴

Moreover, interesting evidence is provided by Bessarion's *Against the Calumniator of Plato*. In a passage where Plato's theology is discussed we are told that Plato used the names of the gods that were common in his time and did not try to pass on the names he uses in his discourses to a mob. In reality he explained the traditional names of the Greek gods 'by the meaning of the things which are either natural or supernatural'. Then, among rather standard examples of philosophical interpretation of the Greek divine names provided by Bessarion, Zeus is said to mean 'the One or the First', Poseidon the Form, Hera Matter and Aphrodite 'generation or nature'.⁴⁵ What is noteworthy here is an attempt to defend Plato by showing that his polytheism was in fact based on the principles which are primarily metaphysical. Moreover, Bessarion provides an unusual identification of Zeus with the Neoplatonic One, as well as of Poseidon

⁴² Platina, *Paneg.* cv, Capranica, *Acta* 406.33–407.3, Apostoles, *In Bess.* cxxxiii.

⁴³ *Marc. Gr.* 406 (= 791), fols 138–139v, thus contains chapter III,31: Περὶ δικῶν, *Leg.* 120–28.10, Mioni 1985, pp. 157, 159, whereas *Marc. Gr.* 519 (= 773), fols 94v–95v, 98v–102, chapters II,6: Περὶ εἰμαρμένης, *Leg.* 64–78, III,43: *Epinomis*, *Leg.* 240–60, Mioni 1985, p. 388. *Zor. Plat.* is contained in *Marc. Gr.* 406 (= 791), fols 137v–140, Mioni 1985, p. 159. Cf. also Mioni 1991, pp. 170–72.

⁴⁴ See above, p. 159, n.77. The manuscript in question is *Add.*, see below, p. 311, n.1.

⁴⁵ Bessarion, *In cal.* 232.37–234.26 (Latin version: 233.32–235.22): Οὐ μὴν ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τοὺς ἄλλους θεοὺς, οἷς ἐν ταῖς διαλέξεσιν ἐκάλει Πλάτων ὀνόμασιν, τούτοις παρέδωκε καὶ τῷ ὄχλῳ τιμᾶν, ἀλλ' ὡς ὁ δῆμος ἐκάλει, οὕτω καὶ αὐτὸς ὀνομάζει, δηλονότι Ἀθηνᾶν, Ἑρμῆν, Κρόνον, Ποσειδῶνα, Ἥραν, Ἥφαιστον, Ἀπόλλωνα καὶ τοὺς λοιποὺς τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον, καίτοι οἱ φιλοσοφοῦντες αὐτοὶ ἐκ τῆς τῶν εἴτε φυσικῶν εἴτε ὑπερφυσικῶν πραγμάτων σημασίας ἡρμήνευον ταῦτα. ὡς περ οὖν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ Διὸς τὸ ἐν ἡ τὸ πρῶτον ἐνόει, οὕτως Ἀθηνᾶν μὲν πρὸς σοφίαν καὶ φρόνησιν, Ἑρμῆν δὲ πρὸς τὸν λόγον, Κρόνον δὲ πρὸς τὸν χρόνον, Ποσειδῶνα δὲ πρὸς τὸ εἶδος, Ἥραν δὲ πρὸς τὴν ὕλην, Ἀφροδίτην δὲ πρὸς γένεσίν τε καὶ φύσιν, Ἀπόλλωνα δὲ πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον, Πᾶνα δὲ πρὸς τὸν τοῦ παντός λόγον τε καὶ διάταξιν ἔλεγεν ἀναφέρων.

and Hera with the Form and Matter respectively, while Aphrodite is close to 'mortal matter', which is exactly what Plethon says about them. This shows that Bessarion had to know the 'esoteric' contents of Plethon's *Laws*. However, in the passage in question he claims that this is what Plato himself taught, not Plethon.

Moreover, in another passage Bessarion claims that Plato and his followers distinguished three kinds of the souls – celestial, daemonic and human ones. The first one has the proper knowledge of all (τὸ μὲν ἐπιστημονικὸν πάντων), the second right opinion about everything (τὸ δὲ περὶ πάντα ὀρθοδοξαστικόν), the third has sometimes a correct opinion, sometimes a wrong one. This is a close parallel to a passage from Plethon's *Laws* which shows, once again, that Bessarion must have known the book. It is also interesting to note that here, too, he attributes this opinion to Plato and his followers and uses this distinction taken from Plethon in an overall discussion of the Platonic conception of the soul.⁴⁶ In both cases Bessarion thus uses Plethon's book as the source of information about Plato's philosophy from which one may quote when it is needed while not mentioning its author.⁴⁷ However, we have just seen that in the same treatise he can be openly critical towards Gemistos and does not hesitate to mention his name (Plethon) when he disagrees with his interpretation of Platonism (in this case he had not the *Laws*, but rather the *Differences* in mind).

The most obvious reason why Bessarion might have been so reluctant to speak publicly about his former teacher, were obviously his political ambitions. In 1455, at the start of the heated discussion among the Greeks about Plato and Aristotle, he was close to becoming pope.⁴⁸ The charge of paganism, by which Scholarios marked Gemistos in the East, was a very serious accusation in the eyes of the contemporaries and Trebizond's anti-Platonic attacks, motivated by his lunatic and apocalyptic visions and published in Latin, made this charge known also in Italy. It must have been very uncomfortable for Bessarion and this is presumably the reason why he took so much care to refute Trebizond's objections in detail in the two treatises just mentioned and to defend the doctrines of the ancient Platonists that had only started to be known in the West. For the cause of Platonism there it was not as much important to defend Gemistos, as to disperse any doubts about Plato's compatibility with Christianity, in other words, to refute

⁴⁶ Ibid. 162.33–164.5; cf. *Leg.* 174–6 [III,34]: see Appendix XI, below, pp. 306–7; note the rare adjective ὀρθοδοξαστικόν employed by both authors and sometimes appearing also in Proclus.

⁴⁷ A more detailed comparison of Plethon's *Laws* with Bessarion's *Against the Calumniator of Plato* could probably reveal even more parallel passages in both texts. New editions of both these important works, indicating their sources and mutual textual parallels, are obviously needed.

⁴⁸ Monfasani 1976, p. 137.

Trebizond convincingly. The reputation of the cardinal's teacher thus might have been sacrificed to this goal. One may, nonetheless, interpret Bessarion's refusal to get involved in a discussion with George of Trebizond over Gemistos' orthodoxy in an even more sympathetic manner. By keeping to a meticulous discussion of philosophical and scholarly subjects related to the question of priority of Plato or Aristotle as well as leaving aside Trebizond's personal attacks on his teacher, which were in fact directed against himself, he managed to silence his adversary in a very efficient way. Bessarion even refuses to reveal the name of the opponent against whom the massive *Against the Calumniator of Plato* is directed.⁴⁹ Using this strategy and with a substantive help from his humanist and philosophical circle Bessarion managed to prepare a Latin version of his Greek text and print it in 1469, whereas the circulation of Trebizond's book remained very limited.⁵⁰

Another reason why Bessarion probably did not feel the need to invoke his teacher more often, especially during the Plato–Aristotle controversy, is that he was far from being his uncritical devotee. In fact, there were two points on which he strongly disagreed with him. The first one, as we shall see later on, was their entirely different, but in both cases very consistent and honest views on the Union of the Eastern and Western Churches. The other one was obviously Gemistos' radical anti-Aristotelianism. Bessarion, in contrast to his teacher, was firmly convinced of the deep agreement between the philosophical opinions of these two thinkers, diverse only apparently; and in this he was close to the Neoplatonic commentators.⁵¹ Thus in the short paper *Against Plethon on Substance* mentioned above, giving a rather resolute instruction how the contemporary Plato–Aristotle controversy should proceed, he says:

Let these words of mine show the way for those desiring either to agree with Aristotle against Plethon or wishing to demonstrate that Aristotle and Plato say the same, and that means also Plethon, being at one in their thoughts even though the first two have differed in their words.⁵²

A similar moderate position is apparent from his letter to Michael Apostoles, who was one of the most fervent 'distant' admirers of Gemistos and who passionately

⁴⁹ Bessarion, *In cal.* 8.38–40 (Latin version: 9.38–11.1).

⁵⁰ Monfasani 2008.

⁵¹ Hankins 1991, pp. 236–63.

⁵² Bessarion, *Adv. Pleth.* 150.8–11: Ταῦτα εἰρήσθω μὲν τοῦ ὑποδείξει ἐνεκα τὴν οἴσουσαν ἂν πρὸς τὸ ποθοῦμενον τέλος ὁδὸν τοὺς ἐφιεμένους ἂν ἢ Ἀριστοτέλει κατὰ Πλήθωνος συνηγορήσαι, ἢ Ἀριστοτέλει καὶ Πλάτωνα, ταῦτ' οὖν εἰπεῖν καὶ Πλήθωνα, τοῖς νοήμασι δείξει συμφώνους, κἂν ῥήμασι διενηνόχατον. Trans. Taylor 1924, p. 125 (altered); cf. Bessarion, *De nat.* 128.23–6 (Latin version: 129.29–33).

defended his Platonism against Theodore Gazes, partly in order to gain Bessarion's favour.⁵³ However, the response was rather cold – Bessarion makes clear that he praises 'Plethon', along with Plato and Aristotle, for his wisdom and many virtues, but at the same time criticizes him for his condemnation of Aristotle.⁵⁴ In short, Bessarion admires Gemistos for his teaching of Platonism and mastery of ancient philosophy, but disagrees with his – from Bessarion's point of view – one-sided and extreme critique of Aristotle and attempts to find his own independent position.⁵⁵ It is significant that in his condolence letter to Gemistos' sons quoted above he claims that his teacher was 'the wisest [man] that Greece has produced since Plato (leaving Aristotle out of account).'⁵⁶ Thus even here Aristotle is treated with a due regard and somehow reconciled with Plato. In general, according to Bessarion, those involved in the Plato–Aristotle controversy should either defend Aristotle's philosophy against Gemistos' criticism or show, in the manner of ancient Neoplatonist, that both thinkers in fact agree on the most important issues.⁵⁷ His interest in Aristotle, apart from his other Aristotelian studies, is also proved by the fact that in the second half of the 1440s he made a new Latin translation of the *Metaphysics*.⁵⁸ During his whole lifetime he occupied himself with Latin scholasticism, especially Thomas Aquinas, firmly rooted in the Aristotelian tradition.⁵⁹ This seems to be more important reason for Bessarion's reservation towards his former teacher than Gemistos' alleged paganism.

It is difficult to be sure who were the other pupils of Gemistos. The only one about whom we know for certain is the historian Laonikos Chalkokondyles, but in his case too it is difficult to prove that he was influenced by the supposed paganism of his teacher.⁶⁰ There are, nevertheless, some similarities between them. Laonikos probably changed his original name Nikolaos to a more 'classical'

⁵³ Apostoles, *Ad Gazae*; cf. Geanakoplos 1962, pp. 85–8.

⁵⁴ Bessarion, *Ad Apost.* 511.9–13, 512.7–9, 25–34, 513.3–6, 13–14.

⁵⁵ Taylor 1924, pp. 120–21, 125–7.

⁵⁶ Bessarion, *Ad Dem. Andr.* 469.1–3 (the reading according to MS B). Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 13.

⁵⁷ Monfasani 2002a, p. 276.

⁵⁸ Mioni 1991, pp. 120–26, 136–48.

⁵⁹ Monfasani 2011b.

⁶⁰ On Laonikos see PLP, no. 30512, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 33, 40, 223, Nicoloudis 1996, pp. 42–6. Cyriac of Ancona met both Laonikos and Gemistos in Mistra in the summer 1447, *Ep.* V,2; cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 223, 227–8. Chalkokondyles does not mention

form and he also uses the name Hellene in the positive sense for 'Greek' and not for 'pagan'.⁶¹ Even more noteworthy is that in his work Laonikos does not pay much attention to Christian theology and shows a surprisingly great interest in Islam, describing it from an unbiased perspective, similarly to Plethon's studies of it. In general, he does not speak about the Christian God interfering by miracles in the history of nations, as was usual in Byzantine historiography. Instead he introduces fate (τύχη or εἰμαρμένη) that punishes the arrogance (ὑβρις) of nations, being somehow connected with God (θεός) or the divine (τὸ θεῖον).⁶² This would be indeed an important similarity with Gemistos' own thought expressed not only in his *philosophia perennis*, but also in his 'public philosophy'. What, however, speaks against Laonikos' possible deviation from the Christian faith is the apparent amazement he shows when he talks about the alleged polytheism of the contemporary Bohemians and their veneration of the Sun and fire, Zeus, Hera and Apollo.⁶³ (We have to do here with an obvious misunderstanding of the Czech Hussite movement.)⁶⁴ The Bohemians are mentioned together with the Samogetai (Σαμῶται) who are also polytheists and venerate Apollo and Artemis.⁶⁵ Other examples of polytheism are located in the Far East – in India and in Khataia (Χαταῖη), where Hera, Apollo and Artemis are venerated, the last even with human sacrifices.⁶⁶ This leads Chalkokondyles to the conclusion that the Bohemians are the only nation in Europe which does not profess any religion 'we know now', that is, 'those of Jesus, Muhammad and Moses', which dominate the major part of the known world.⁶⁷ Also elsewhere he similarly claims that the world is divided between Christianity and Islam, which struggle between themselves, whereas other religions have not managed to acquire such power and domination.⁶⁸ It would be tempting to conclude, that, for Laonikos, in contrast to Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which are religions based on a revelation, there exists also some original and natural religion, which can still be found in some remote parts of Europe and in the Far East. Unfortunately, it is difficult to claim this just on the basis of the hint he provides

Gemistos in his historical work, not even when he talks about the Council of Florence and the negotiations of Greeks in Italy: see *Hist.* I,5.16–6.12, II,67.18–69.24.

⁶¹ Nicoloudis 1996, pp. 58–60.

⁶² Turner, 1964, pp. 358–61, Nicoloudis 1996, pp. 61–4.

⁶³ Chalkokondyles, *Hist.* I,124.8–22, II,180.18–21, 186.21–187.4.

⁶⁴ Nicoloudis 1996, p. 344 (n.52).

⁶⁵ Chalkokondyles, *Hist.* I,124.4–7.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* I,153.10–16.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* I,124.13–17: ... ἐκτὸς γενόμενον ταῖς ἐγνωσμέναις ἡμῖν ἐν τῷ παρόντι θρησκείαις.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* I,95.21–96.3.

in his text. What is important for us, is the obvious distance he expresses towards alleged contemporary polytheism, which, according to him, survives only in rather exotic parts of the world and which is described by the names of the ancient Greek gods used also by Gemistos in his *Book of Laws*. If Laonikos were really influenced by the opinions of his teacher, it must have been rather those opinions we know from Gemistos' public philosophy that situates itself above different contemporary monotheistic religions and was acceptable, after all, to any of them, and not the outright pagan and polytheistic *philosophia perennis*.⁶⁹

In this overview of Gemistos' pupils possibly influenced by his alleged paganism we might mention here also a heretic called Juvenal who was executed around 1450 on an accusation of paganism.⁷⁰ According to Scholarios, who writes about him in a letter to Manuel Raoul Oises, he was connected to a certain brotherhood (φατρία) in the Peloponnese,⁷¹ and Scholarios' suspicion that he was close to Gemistos is well demonstrated by Scholarios' use of some expressions from Plethon's *Laws* he knew already at that time.⁷² However, despite all this, Scholarios fails to prove that Juvenal was really a pupil or a close associate of Gemistos, because otherwise he would have said it openly.⁷³ Because of the lack of any evidence there is thus no reason why we should connect Juvenal with Gemistos or his humanist circle in Mistra as is often done.

Admirers

One of the most outstanding admirers of Gemistos was definitely Demetrios Raoul Kabakes.⁷⁴ He and another enthusiast for Gemistos' philosophy, Michael Apostoles, were very much active in collecting and editing of the remnants of his *Book of Laws* burnt by Scholarios⁷⁵ and obviously interested in its pagan content. Furthermore, Kabakes had strong ties to the Peloponnese and the court at Mistra, including Gemistos, and he is therefore usually claimed to be a pupil of

⁶⁹ Harris 2003.

⁷⁰ Masai 1956, pp. 300–304, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 35, 225, 271–2, 315–18. On Juvenal see PLP, nos 8221, 92102.

⁷¹ Scholarios, *Ad Oes.* 477.1–2, 479.17–19; cf. Masai 1956, p. 304.

⁷² Scholarios, *Ad Oes.* 479.19–29; cf. *Leg.* 2–4; see Appendix X,4–5, below, pp. 305–6.

⁷³ Woodhouse 1986, pp. 35, 225, Monfasani 1992, p. 59.

⁷⁴ On Kabakes see PLP, no. 10016, Charzes 1909, pp. 41–8, Keller 1957, pp. 366–70, Bacchelli 2007.

⁷⁵ Masai–Masai 1954, p. 554, Masai 1956, p. 398, n.1, Woodhouse 1986, p. 363.

Gemistos.⁷⁶ This, nevertheless, seems to be hardly possible. Kabakes is notorious for his barbaric spelling of ancient Greek, not far from a phonetic record of the contemporary spoken language, which rather argues against the possibility that he received education from Gemistos who emphasized the classical and Attic models.⁷⁷ He was a fervent worshipper of the Sun since the age of 17, as he claims, and an admirer of Julian the Apostate (but also of Virgin Mary). However, as it has been pointed out, heliolatry is quite difficult to reconcile with the kind of polytheism contained in the *Laws* and there is thus no wonder that Kabakes complains that Gemistos did not use Julian's *Oration to the King Sun*.⁷⁸ If he really became a worshipper of the Sun in the early youth, it would have happened before he supposedly met Plethon. Even when the latter appears to him in a dream⁷⁹ or Kabakes talks about him with Bessarion,⁸⁰ who would have been his younger colleague if he had really studied with Gemistos,⁸¹ he does not seem to be acquainted with the famous philosopher, whom he evidently admired so

⁷⁶ Woodhouse 1986, pp. 34–5; cf. Gemistos (rather courtesy) letter to Kabakes, *Ad Cab.*

⁷⁷ Keller 1957, p. 367, Monfasani 1992, p. 58, n.65.

⁷⁸ Bidez 1929, pp. 70–71, 76–9, Grégoire 1929–1930, pp. 733–4, Keller 1957, p. 368, Medvedev 1985, pp. 737–49, Woodhouse 1986, p. 35, Monfasani 1992, pp. 57–8, *contra* Garin 1958, pp. 195–6. We have seen above, pp. 175–6, that Gemistos was certainly interested in Julian's *Oration to the King Sun* which probably influenced his conception of the Sun, placed in the middle position between the intelligible order of the Forms and the sensible world.

⁷⁹ Lambros 1907, p. 336 (the citation keeps Kabakes' idiosyncratic orthography): Τῆ παρελθοῦσι νικτῆ ἴδον κατόναρ· ὅτι εἰς τόπον τινὰ συνευρέθημεν μετὰ τοῦ φιλοσόφου Πλήθωνος καὶ οὐπω τινὸς ἄλλου λόγου ριθέντος, φησὶ πρὸς ἐμὲ Πλήθων, τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἦπερ· ἐγὼ δὲ σινεστάλην καὶ ἀφικρόμην σιοπόν, δοξάζον εἶνα λέξι καὶ τι πλέον πρὸς τὸ να καταλάβο τί καὶ πρὸς τί βουλετε ὄπερ ἔφη· ὁμοσ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἦρικεν· ὅς ἐν ὀλίγο δέ, ἐγένεθηκα· δημήτριος.

⁸⁰ Mercati 1937, pp. 173–4, n.2 (the citation keeps Kabakes' idiosyncratic orthography): Ὅμηλοῦντος ἐμοῦ ἐνταῦτα περὶ τὴν σκολὴν τῆς τραπέζης, μετὰ τοῦ ἐνδοξοτάτου γαρδυναλίου ἐκίνου κυρ. Βισαρίονος· ἐρέθει λόγος περὶ τοῦ Πλήθωνος· καὶ ἠρότισα τον ἐγὼ· ἐμένη ἢ πρόληψις ἦν ὄριζες πολλακίς περὶ τοῦ Γεμηστοῦ, ἢ χαριζόμενος, τὰ ὄριζες. ἀπεκρίθη ὅτι οὐδὲν ἔλεγον χαριζόμενος, ἀλλὰ θέλο σε ἠπὴν μετὰ ἀλιθείας καὶ νῦν ὅτι ἀπὸ τοῦ Πλοτίνου τὸν κερὸν, ὅς ἦν πρὸ χιλίων τετρακοσίων ἐτῶν, σοφότερον ἄνθρωπον οὐδένα ἐποίησεν ἢ Ἑλλᾶς τοῦ Πλήθωνος. Δημήτριος. Kabakes added a marginal note: Πλάτων· Πλοτίνος· Πλήθων. See also Scholarios' letter to Kabakes from around 1450 (according to its editors) where he informs the latter about their current relations with Gemistos, *Ad Cab.* 457.29–458.3, 13–19; cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 314–15. This is certainly a very weak hint, but would it have been necessary if Kabakes had been really in touch with Gemistos?

⁸¹ Woodhouse 1986, pp. 33–5.

much, more than superficially, and there appears to be always a certain distance between him and Gemistos as well as Bessarion.⁸²

Another enthusiast admirer of Gemistos, Michael Apostoles,⁸³ went even as far as to write to him expressing his devotion for Plato and asking to be accepted as a pupil.⁸⁴ Then he sent two letters to John Argyropoulos,⁸⁵ who, even though most probably was not a close associate of Gemistos, knew him from Italy and, as we shall see, his treatise supporting the Western position in the question of the procession of the Holy Spirit became the target of Gemistos' own treatise. The letters in which Apostoles asks Argyropoulos for an intervention with Gemistos are often quoted as an evidence of the paganism of the latter, because they are full of pagan imagery and admiration for ancient polytheism. However, there is obviously no certainty that their paganizing content is identical with Gemistos' own beliefs. Furthermore, after all, both Argyropoulos and Apostoles proclaimed themselves Christians.⁸⁶ It is also noteworthy that Apostoles attempted to gain the favour of the famous teacher of Platonism by proving that it was he who had managed to get a copy of Scholarios' *Defence of Aristotle* in order to send it to Gemistos.⁸⁷ As we shall see, at the end of Scholarios' treatise there is a passage attacking Plethon, the presumed author of the *Differences* because of his paganism and some lines of the *Laws* are quoted. It is therefore possible that Apostoles' imagination was in fact stimulated by this text of Scholarios' who, however, at

⁸² Ševčenko 1962, p. 114, n.4 (the citation keeps Kabakes' idiosyncratic orthography): οὗτος ἔφη Πρίγκηψ ὁ Χιλᾶς, ἀνὴρ ἐπιστήμων καὶ τήμιος ἄρχων, ὅτι Πλήθων ὁ σοφὸς ἔφη πρὸς αὐτὸν περὶ τῶν ἐξιγαιτῶν τῆς Μεγάλης Συντάξεως· ὅτι θέλουσι ἅς λέγουσι, οὐδὲς ἔφθασεν τὸν μέγαν λογοθέτην τὸν Μετοχίτην. From the quotation it is clear that Kabakes knew about this opinion of Gemistos' by hearsay only. However, the letters to Kabakes from Scholarios, *Ad Cab.*, and Kamariotes, *Ad Cab.*, show that his interest in Gemistos' philosophy preceded the latter's death. It is interesting to remark that both these opponents of Gemistos did not suspect Kabakes of heresy at the time when the letters were written: see Woodhouse 1986, pp. 314–15. This suggests, once more, that they did not consider him as a close associate of Gemistos belonging to his pagan circle.

⁸³ On Michael Apostoles see PLP, no. 1201, Geanakoplos 1962, pp. 73–110.

⁸⁴ Apostoles, *Ad Gemist.* 370–71.

⁸⁵ Apostoles, *Ad Argyr.* I–II 372–5; cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 40–41, 224–5. On Argyropoulos see PLP, no. 1267, Bigi 1962, Field 1987, Geanakoplos 1989, pp. 91–113.

⁸⁶ Monfasani 1992, pp. 56–7.

⁸⁷ Apostoles, *Ad Gemist.* 370. Apostoles proves his claim by describing the copy of Scholarios' book he managed to obtain for Gemistos. It was divided into two parts, the beginning and the end (μαρτυρεῖ μου τῷ λοιπῷ τοῖν λόγοιιν τῷ λόγῳ, τὸ μὲν πέρασ, τὸ δ' ἀρχὴ ὄντε). The manuscript Gemistos used was indeed incomplete and divided into two parts with the middle part missing; cf. Lagarde's note to *Contra Schol.*, p. 369, n.6, Mioni 1972, p. 223: *Marc. Gr.* IV,31 (= 1316). For this reason Gemistos complains that he has not got Scholarios' book in its entirety, *Contra Schol.* I 368.12.

that moment was not sure about what he should think about Gemistos' beliefs. We have already mentioned that later, during the Plato–Aristotle controversy, Apostoles attempted to defend Gemistos against Gazes, but was rather harshly silenced by Bessarion, who disagreed with the extreme anti-Aristotelian position which they both shared.

There were some other admirers of Gemistos in Italy,⁸⁸ for instance, Cyriac of Ancona who visited Mistra⁸⁹ and Gregorio Tifernate who even studied with him there,⁹⁰ but, as pointed out, only Francesco Filelfo, who was in a direct contact with him,⁹¹ seems to be influenced by him without, however, showing any pagan tendencies exceeding the usual humanist interest in the ancient past.

Adversaries

Gennadios Scholarios is definitely Gemistos' most notable adversary.⁹² Although before the Council of Florence he seems to have had good relations with him and showed an interest to settle in Mistra,⁹³ he later, still during his life, accused Gemistos of paganism and he is our most important source for almost everything that is usually claimed about Gemistos' polytheism. Apart from the possibility that it was Scholarios who was guiding the hand of the Emperor John VIII asking Gemistos about some problems connected with the *Differences*, his first attack against the author of this treatise came around 1444 in Scholarios'

⁸⁸ Masai 1956, pp. 315–46, attempts to show the enormous influence Plethon and his teaching in Italy had on humanists and philosophers there. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 154–70, Monfasani 1992, pp. 52–6, 2012b, and Hankins 1991, pp. 436–40, are, however, sceptical regarding this point. It seems indeed that Gemistos' works were discussed more among the Greeks than among the Latins who were not still ready to understand the kind of Platonism he was professing during his stay at the Council. Nevertheless, this still does not exclude that he left a great impression there as a person if not as a philosopher. See also Knös 1950, pp. 132–42, 153–7, Garin 1958, pp. 216–19, Hankins 1991, pp. 436–40, Gentile 1994, 822–31.

⁸⁹ Cyriac of Ancona, *Ep.* V,2, 55, Zeno, *Ad Cyr.* 329–30, with Bertalot's and Campana's introduction, pp. 322–3; cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 21, 130, 165, 223, 227–8. On Cyriac see further PLP, no. 13983.

⁹⁰ Hankins 1991, p. 436, based on Mancini 1923, p. 72. On Tifernate see further PLP, no. 29415.

⁹¹ As mentioned above, Monfasani 2012b argues against a close association of Filelfo with Gemistos.

⁹² On Gennadios Scholarios see PLP, no. 27304, Gill 1964, pp. 79–94, Turner 1969, Tinnfeld 2002 and Blanchet 2008.

⁹³ Blanchet 2008, pp. 293–5, 299–301. See also Zakythinis 1953, pp. 331–2.

Defence of Aristotle that was written as a response to the *Differences*.⁹⁴ At the end of his treatise Scholarios mentions that he has in his possession parts copied from the book about the best legislation based on pagan beliefs and written by certain Plethon and asks its author to provide the whole book in order that he may learn what is really contained in it.⁹⁵ Scholarios' treatise was destined for, and sent to, the rather pro-Unionist Despot Constantine who was ruling in Mistra at that time (1443–1449).⁹⁶ It is thus possible that Scholarios was trying to discredit Gemistos at the court in Mistra and warn the Despot against him. However, Gemistos received the treatise directed only about five years after it had been written. So it is possible that the Despot simply did not care about what Scholarios said or even did not read his treatise at all.⁹⁷ It may be also noted that Scholarios' position at the court, which, in contrast to Scholarios, supported the Church Union, was rather precarious and his own stand in this important question ambiguous at that moment.⁹⁸

At the same time Scholarios wrote a letter to Mark Eugenikos, a former pupil of Gemistos and the first teacher of Scholarios. After the Council of Florence Eugenikos was the leader of the anti-Unionist party in Byzantium and after his death was succeeded (probably in June 1445) by Scholarios.⁹⁹ In his letter the latter asks him for approval of the *Defence of Aristotle* since it is Eugenikos who should obviously know the truth about his former teacher.¹⁰⁰ It is thus clear that at this point Scholarios was not still sure about what to think about Gemistos. He admits his scholarly as well as personal qualities, but he is shocked by what he has heard about him and by the parts of the *Laws* he has at his disposal. We do not unfortunately know what was Eugenikos' answer. Did he die before he was able to provide any? Or was he just too busy in his fight against the Unionist that he just did not have time to answer Scholarios' letter? Or was he simply unable to decide? We might also suppose that Scholarios, remaining unsure about Gemistos, did not make his treatise accessible to the

⁹⁴ Turner 1969, p. 430, Monfasani 1976, p. 206, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 237–8, Tinnefeld 2002, p. 515 (no. 123), and Blanchet 2008, pp. 370–71.

⁹⁵ Scholarios, *Pro Arist.* 114.17–33, 115.20–30; see Appendix X, 1, below, p. 304, and Woodhouse 1986, pp. 264–6.

⁹⁶ Scholarios, *Pro Arist.* 1.5, *Ad Gemist.* 118.31–3; cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 219, 221, 308–9.

⁹⁷ Woodhouse 1986, pp. 238–9.

⁹⁸ Cf. Turner 1969, pp. 431–4, Blanchet 2008, pp. 367–76.

⁹⁹ Cf. Blanchet., pp. 237–8, 268, Gill 1964, pp. 222–32, Conostas 2002, p. 413, Tinnefeld 2002, p. 478.

¹⁰⁰ Scholarios, *Ad Eugen.* 117.18–21; cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 267–8, and Blanchet 2008, pp. 371–2.

general public, but distributed it only within a limited circle of associates. Gemistos indeed complains that he asked for it several times but managed to get it only surreptitiously – in fact it was sent to him by Michael Apostoles – and asks Scholarios why he writes against him, if he has no confidence in his treatise and does not want to send him a copy.¹⁰¹ The only thing that can be claimed for sure is that at this moment Scholarios was still trying to test the orthodoxy of Plethon by mentioning his allegedly pagan book at the end of his attack against *On the Differences*.

The second attack came when Gemistos, some time around 1449, published his *Reply to the Treatise in Support of the Latins*, where he criticized the Western theological conception of the procession of the Holy Spirit, which we shall discuss later on.¹⁰² Scholarios then sent him a lengthy letter in which he seemingly congratulates him. At the same time this is obviously the second test of Gemistos' Christianity because the letter rather illogically contains a passage that, in the context of a fierce condemnation of the polytheism expressed already in Gemistos' text, quotes few expressions from the *Book of Laws* and denounces those who would try to revive similar ideas.¹⁰³ From this letter as well as from another roughly contemporary letter of Scholarios' to Oises concerning Juvenal it is clear that Scholarios had at his disposal the beginning section of the *Laws*.¹⁰⁴ However, it is far less certain that he knew any more about the book because in this case he would have surely attacked Gemistos more directly and openly. The relations between the two men thus remained outwardly friendly – 'Gemistos wrote to me kindly', says Scholarios in his letter to Kabakes whom he surprisingly does not suspect of paganism nor counts him among the 'esoteric' circle of Gemistos' followers; and at the beginning of his letter to Gemistos himself, he also mentions that he is glad about him not being angry that he has sent his treatise in defence of Aristotle to the Emperor.¹⁰⁵

However, probably around the time he received the letter from Scholarios concerning his treatise against the Latins, Gemistos finally got a hold of Scholarios' *Defence of Aristotle*. He reacted to this attack by his equally fierce *Reply to Scholarios' Defence of Aristotle*. Gemistos, like Scholarios, did not care about showing his treatise to the author of the criticized text, but sent a copy of it just to Constantine XI, now the Emperor, something about which Scholarios

¹⁰¹ *Contra Schol.* I 368.5–370.6; cf. *Ad. Schol.*

¹⁰² See below, p. 239.

¹⁰³ Scholarios, *Ad Gemist.* 125.18–23; see Appendix X,3, below, p. 305; cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 277–9.

¹⁰⁴ Scholarios, *Ad Oes.* 479.17–28; see Appendix X,4, below, p. 305.

¹⁰⁵ Scholarios, *Ad Cab.* 457.29–458.3, 13–19, *Ad Gemist.* 118.30–33.

complains failing to notice the fact that he has done the very same before.¹⁰⁶ He claimed some years after the event took place that when Gemistos received his second attack contained in the letter of congratulations, he, Gemistos, much grieved 'and gave up hope that his best legislation would ever prove effective after this, since we would outlive him and could nullify it either in the flames or by the pen, whichever we might choose'.¹⁰⁷ However, this does not help much to understand why Gemistos virtually at the same time that he received Scholarios' congratulatory letter did not hesitate to answer to Scholarios' first attack and warning contained in the *Defence of Aristotle* in such a resolute and uncompromising way as is apparent from many passages of the *Reply to Scholarios*.¹⁰⁸ Although Scholarios promises in his letter to Gemistos not to continue with the polemics about the priority of Plato or Aristotle¹⁰⁹ and later he claims that the 'fate of our country' prevented him from doing so,¹¹⁰ he in fact never really attempted to answer properly. The end of the whole story is well known. After the fall of Constantinople, Scholarios, as he himself admits, wrote several times to Theodora, the wife of Demetrios, the Despot of Morea, about 'the book of Gemistos or Plethon',¹¹¹ who had died not long before. The rulers in Mistra managed to confiscate it and, although asked by many, refused to allow copies to be made from it, but, presumably some time after the fall of Mistra in 1460, gave it to Scholarios for examination.¹¹² Scholarios thus finally

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 118.31–3, 119.5–17; cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 278–9.

¹⁰⁷ Scholarios, *Ad Jos.* 156.21–4, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 281 (altered).

¹⁰⁸ Woodhouse 1986, p. 308.

¹⁰⁹ Scholarios, *Ad Gemist.* 151.6–10.

¹¹⁰ Scholarios, *Ad Jos.* 156.15–16.

¹¹¹ Scholarios, *Ad Theod.* 151.31–152.1; for a lamentation over the destruction of Plethon's book written by some of his admirers, probably Kabakes, see Zakythinis 1953, p. 375, *Ad Pleth.* 410: ... πρὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐπίσταται καὶ ἃ συνέβησαν κατὰ προδοσίαν εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν βίβλιον καὶ συγγραφὴν παρὰ τοῦ δεισιδαίμονος ἀνδρὸς μετὰ τῆς γυναικωνίτιδος ἐκείνης πρὸς τὸν διπλοῦν καὶ κακοῆθη καὶ ἀμαθῆ ἄνθρωπον. It is perhaps Theodora, whom Gemistos has in mind when he reproaches Scholarios for boasting about his success with an otherwise unspecified shameful woman, *Contra Schol.* V 382.4–5; cf. Lagarde's note *ad loc.*, p. 383, n.40, Alexandre 1858, p. xlvi, n.1.

¹¹² Scholarios, *Ad Jos.* 157.27–32. This situation is described by Trebizond writing in 1456 and 1457 respectively: *Sed multa certe invenierentur, si libri in lucem emergerent. Nam, ut ferunt, a Demetrio Peloponnensium principe sive ab uxore, ut alii aiunt, ipsius vel cremati vel reconditi sunt. Adv. Gazam 340.24–7. Nam librum quem de his rebus composuit, post ... exitum eius ... ne publice legeretur et multis offereret, a Peloponnesi principe Demetrio, sicut fertur, ereptus celatusque est. Quare nisi diligenter ab iis qui similibus rebus praesunt quaesitus igni tradatur ... maior clades generi humano futura est quam Machumetus invexit. Comp. III, penultimate chapter = LEGRAND III, pp. 287–8.*

got the book he was seeking for such a long time, and after a brief inspection, he condemned it to the flames. After some hesitation and exchanges with Theodora, he himself took care of its public burning, sparing just some explicitly pagan parts of it in order to support his judgement. At the same time, by his authority, he issued an order under threat of the excommunication that all the copies of it possibly made by Gemistos' pupils should be equally destroyed.

It is interesting to compare Scholarios' severe approach in this case to his generally liberal politics and flexibility at the time, when as the patriarch appointed by the sultan Mehmed II he was dealing with different problems caused by the new situation of the Orthodox Church after the fall of Constantinople. In fact the burning of the *Laws* was the sole occasion when he acted in a similarly intolerant and radical manner.¹¹³ One could thus claim that he was moved – at least to some extent – by his personal hostility towards Gemistos, which may be supported by the very fact that he expressly denied such a personal motive and by the caution with which he carried out the act, meticulously collecting and saving the evidence to justify his decision for the future.¹¹⁴ Scholarios claimed that he was sure about the true character of Gemistos for a long time and heard about Gemistos' working on the *Laws*, which took many years, from many trustworthy people. Furthermore, he allegedly had some clear indications of it already before the Council and also later in Italy.¹¹⁵ From Scholarios' behaviour towards Gemistos, as we have just detailed, it is apparent that the *Book of Laws* was the main reason why he suspected Gemistos of being pagan. Scholarios possessed some parts of it at least around 1444 when he tried to test Gemistos' orthodoxy and possibly also to prompt the authorities to take measures against him. However, apart from the *Laws*, which he had finally managed to acquire and destroy, he did not in fact have many other proofs for his accusation,

¹¹³ Woodhouse 1986, pp. 355–60, Blanchet 2008, pp. 177–92, Monfasani 2006, pp. 462–3. Scholarios gives the detail of the way he acquired Plethon's book in *Ad Jos.* 157.27–35: 'Ἐπεὶ δὲ εἶδε πάντα φανεροῦσθαι τῷ χρόνῳ, καὶ ἦν μὲν τὸ βιβλίον τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ τεθνεώτος παρὰ τοῖς ἄρχουσι τῆς Πελοποννήσου (διτῶν δὲ ὄντων, τοὺς εὐσεβεστέρους τε καὶ μείζους φημί), οὐκ εἶχον δὲ ἀγνοεῖν τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ γεγραμμένων τὴν ἀτοπίαν, ἐβούλοντο μὲν αὐτίκα πέμπειν ἡμῖν, καὶ πολλοῖς ἀπαιτοῦσιν ἐγκράφειν οὐκ ἤξιον διδόναι· ὑπὸ δὲ τῶν καιρῶν τουτὶ κωλυθέντες, ὑπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν αὐτοὶ καὶ παρ' ἐλπίδας ἡμῖν ἦκον φέροντες, καὶ διπλοῦν ἡμῖν ἤνεγκαν πένθος, τὸ μὲν ἐπ' αὐτοῖς, ἀποναμένοις τῆς κοινῆς συμφορᾶς, ἐξ ὧν ἄλλοι προπετέστερον βουλευσάμενοι κατεπράξαντο τὸ δ', ἐπὶ τῷ βιβλίῳ. *Ibid.* 171.8–11, 34–172.10. Blanchet argues for the dating of the burning to the *Laws* to 1455 or early 1456, but this is difficult to square with the information provided by George of Trebizond and the overall chronology as reconstructed by Monfasani. It seems that both in 1456 and in 1457 he thinks that the book still exists; cf. the previous n.112.

¹¹⁴ Blanchet 2008, pp. 188–9.

¹¹⁵ Scholarios, *Ad Jos.* 155.30–156.1.

although he reports on Gemistos' education and the reasons of his moving to Mistra, which definitely seems to be information he knew only indirectly from hearsay and thus not very reliable as a proof.¹¹⁶ If our assumption that Apostoles really learned about his alleged paganism from the end of *Defence of Aristotle* is true, then Scholarios remains completely isolated in this period in his suspicion towards Gemistos, based primarily on few lines from the *Laws*.

At the same time, it is clear that Scholarios is being, at least to some extent, tendentious. Although the main reason of his attacks against Gemistos seems to be indeed the suspicion of paganism, there are also other, personal reasons for his hostility. First, it has been assumed that both held the office of general judge – Scholarios in Constantinople and Gemistos in Mistra – which may have possibly provoked their mutual rivalry.¹¹⁷ What is, however, more certain is the bad conscience of Scholarios after the Council of Florence. While Gemistos, together with his pupil Mark Eugenikos and his brother John, took a decided anti-Unionist position, Scholarios was more reluctant and tried to stand between both camps, if he was not at some moment even supporting the Latins. However, after his return home he became a follower of Mark Eugenikos and finally, as it has been already mentioned, even succeeded him as the head of the anti-Unionist party.¹¹⁸ It is no wonder that Gemistos, like John Eugenikos, regarded Scholarios as an inconsistent opportunist in religious questions and did not hesitate to say so in full in his *Reply*.¹¹⁹ What, nevertheless, is certainly the main reason why Scholarios looked at Gemistos with animosity, was his critique of Aristotle. Scholarios was not only an Aristotelian in the traditional Byzantine style, but he was also strongly influenced by the Western scholastics. He thus did not observe the traditional distinction between the secular philosophy of Aristotle and the sacred theology of the Fathers, as was usual in Byzantium,¹²⁰ but, in contrast, he attempted to introduce into Byzantium rational speculative theology according to Western models and based on the works of the Philosopher. In this situation, Gemistos published his *Differences* in which he claimed that Plato was superior to Aristotle and, furthermore, hinted that the former was also closer to the Christian faith.¹²¹ Such an opinion was certainly very uncomfortable for Scholarios and may have even equalled heresy in his eyes.

¹¹⁶ Scholarios, *Ad Theod.* 152.26–153.15, *Ad Jos.* 162.3–29.

¹¹⁷ Zakythinos 1953, p. 131, Masai 1956, p. 63, n.2, Turner 1969, p. 429, 1976, p. 57.

¹¹⁸ Gill 1964, pp. 222–32, Turner 1976, pp. 428–38.

¹¹⁹ *Contra Schol.* XXVII 452.20–454.3.

¹²⁰ Benakis 1990 and also Podskalsky 1977.

¹²¹ Turner 1969, pp. 424–8, 430–31.

Another important critic of Gemistos, who attacked him probably just shortly after his death, was Matthew Kamariotes.¹²² He was formerly an enthusiastic admirer of his treatise *On Virtues*, even expressing a wish to see its author.¹²³ Some time around 1455 he finished a treatise¹²⁴ refuting the determinism contained in Plethon's *Laws*. He had obviously at his disposal chapter 6 of book II, devoted to the problem of fate.¹²⁵ It seems that this text circulated separately¹²⁶ – perhaps because it has been copied from the *Laws* without the knowledge of its author – and was never officially published. (Scholarios at least does not mention it anywhere.)¹²⁷ Kamariotes was, however, a pupil of Scholarios, so it is probable that he learned about Gemistos' polytheism from this source,¹²⁸ and this information was just confirmed by the text on fate, which he somehow managed to obtain and which he denounced in his treatise. Because of his previous wish to see Gemistos mentioned above, it, nevertheless, seems that he did not know him personally.

Scholarios was the most important opponent of Gemistos in the Greek East; George of Trebizond was to play a similar role in the Latin West.¹²⁹ Most probably in 1456 and 1457 he wrote in Latin two important treatises¹³⁰ that contain an account of Gemistos' paganism and that are often accepted as a reliable source of information about it. For many reasons they deserve to be quoted in full. In 1456 in his treatise against Bessarion's associate, Theodore Gazes, Trebizond tells us:

There lived in the Peloponnese a certain man who was utterly impious and irreligious, by name Gemistos. During his lifetime he perverted many from faith

¹²² On Kamariotes see PLP, no. 10776.

¹²³ Kamariotes, *Ad Cab.*

¹²⁴ Kamariotes, *In Pleth.*; cf. Astruc 1955, 259–61.

¹²⁵ However, Kamariotes makes clear that it was the only text by Plethon he had at his disposal, *In Pleth.* 208–10: ὡς κἀντεῦθεν ἡμῖν γίνεσθαι δῆλον καὶ ἕτερα αὐτῷ πεπραγμάτευται, ἡσέβησθαι δὲ μᾶλλον εἰπεῖν οἰκειότερον, βιβλία πάντα πάσης ἀσεβείας ἀνάμιστα. εἰ καὶ μήπω τῶν ἄλλων οὐδὲν οὐδὲ ὤπται ἡμῖν, μηδὲ ὄφθειν, πυρι πάντων ζήλω εὐσεβείας παραδοθέντων ὑπὸ παντός, ἵνα μὴ καὶ εἰς ἕτερον ἀγῶνα λόγων ἀναγκασθῆμεν καταστῆναι. μόνω δὲ τῷ περι εἰμαρμένῃς ἐντύχομεν καὶ ὡς παρασκευῆς εἶχομεν, ἀπηντήσαμεν πρὸς αὐτό ...

¹²⁶ Alexandre 1858, pp. xc–xcii, Masai 1956, pp. 197–8.

¹²⁷ Masai 1956, p. 396, n.1, Monfasani 1992, p. 48, n.16.

¹²⁸ Woodhouse 1986, pp. 362–3.

¹²⁹ On George of Trebizond see PLP, no. 4120, Viti 2000, Monfasani 1976.

¹³⁰ Monfasani 1976, pp. 162–70.

in Christ to the foulest beliefs of the pagans; and on his death, which took place about two years ago, he left some books whose theme was *De Republica*, which laid down to his own satisfaction the foundations of his whole profanity. For he thought to bring it about through his writings and his eloquence that one day all men would adhere to his follies. Thus he preached, while still living, that within a few years after his death all nations would revert to the true theology of Plato. Whether it was from devilish inspiration or from the ungodliness of powerful friends that he convinced himself of this, I do not know. But much would certainly be discovered if the books came to light. It is said that they were burned or hidden by either Demetrios, prince of the Peloponnese, or his wife.¹³¹

A year later in his famous *A Comparison of Philosophers Aristotle and Plato* he gives even more details:

A second Muhammad (*Machumetus*) has been born and brought up in our time who, unless we take care, will be as much more destructive than the first as Muhammad was himself more destructive than Plato.

Then Trebizond introduces Gemistos, praises his abilities and mentions that he has changed his name to Plethon:

so that we should more readily believe him to have come down from heaven, and thus the sooner adopt his doctrine and law.

As Trebizond claims, he is also said to have written new customs of life, in which there is much against the Catholic faith:

It is known that he was so much a Platonist that he claimed that nothing other than what Plato believed about the gods, the soul, sacrifices to the gods or daemons, and all the rest, great and small, was true, and he dared to write it without restraint. I myself heard him at Florence – for he came to the Council with the Greeks – asserting that the whole world would in a few years adopt one and the same religion, with one mind, one intelligence, one teaching. And when I asked: ‘Christ’s or Muhammad’s?’ he replied: ‘Neither, but one not differing from paganism.’ I was so shocked by these words that I hated him ever after and feared him like a poisonous viper, and I could no longer bear to see or hear him. I heard, too, from a number of Greeks who escaped here from the Peloponnese that he openly said, before he died, almost three years from now, that not many years

¹³¹ Trebizond, *Adv. Gazam* 340.15–27, trans. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 365–6.

after his death both Muhammad and Christ would be forgotten and the real truth would shine through on all the shores of the world.¹³²

The problem with George Trebizond's testimony is that it is burdened with his hatred towards Plato (he was a firm Aristotelian) and to Cardinal Bessarion and his humanist circle that he believed was conspiring against him. The two testimonies, just quoted, must be therefore read in this particular context. Trebizond's *Comparison*, one of the main proofs that is usually quoted to illustrate Gemistos' paganism, certainly deserves the verdict, according to which it 'has an excellent claim to rank among the most remarkable mixtures of learning and lunacy ever penned.'¹³³ It starts with a relatively reasonable criticism of Plato, but at the end it culminates with an apocalyptic vision in which Trebizond claims that Christian faith is threatened by four succeeding Platos – Plato himself, Muhammad who received his education from a Platonic monk and Gemistos Plethon, who recently preached pagan Platonism. The fourth Plato is not named, but it may well be Bessarion, who almost became pope in 1455.¹³⁴ It therefore seems that Trebizond, apart from expressing his indignation over the news of the recently found neo-pagan book which could well have been really genuine, attempts to involve Gemistos in his own previous personal quarrels with the circle of Bessarion and the cardinal himself, using his former teacher as a means to discredit him.

These are not, however, the only problems with Trebizond's testimony. First, both accounts were obviously written after Gemistos' book was confiscated, which must have certainly provoked a scandal and attracted public attention to its author, already dead at that time. From the first text we do not, in fact, learn much more than anybody in Mistra or perhaps Constantinople would have known (but naturally not in Italy). Trebizond does not even mention here that he met Gemistos some years ago and knew about his polytheistic beliefs, as he claims later, which is strange, but still not impossible to accept. More important is thus the second text, where Trebizond speaks about his personal encounter with Gemistos. The way he describes it is, nevertheless, highly untrustworthy. First, it is far from certain that Trebizond was at that time in Florence.¹³⁵ We may also ask why he did not warn against such a dangerous person, as Gemistos in his eyes had been, earlier, but published the truth about him only now, almost 20

¹³² Trebizond, *Comp.* III, penultimate chapter = LEGRAND III, p. 287, trans. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 168, 366–7 (altered, see Monfasani 1976, p. 163, 1988, p. 119). See also the English summary of the whole passage in Woodhouse 1986, pp. 366–8.

¹³³ Hankins 1991, p. 236.

¹³⁴ Monfasani 1976, pp. 79–84, 90–97, 108–9, 152–62, Hankins 1991, pp. 236–45.

¹³⁵ Monfasani 1976, pp. 39–40.

years later. Furthermore, if Gemistos was really a pagan, he must have been very successful in concealing his true beliefs from the people around him, including the participants in the Council. But why then would he have talked so openly to Trebizond whom he scarcely knew?

There are also some internal problems with the conversation as reported by Trebizond. Both in Plethon's writings as well as in contemporary Byzantine discussion there is difficult to find a Greek equivalent for the Latin term 'religion' (*religio*) employed by Trebizond which, as Gemistos is supposed to have said, should soon be adopted by 'the whole world'. However, this is the very core of Trebizond's allegation.¹³⁶ The conversation reported by him thus can be, at best, an *ex post* interpretation of some of his, certainly more cautious and innocent, talk with Gemistos.¹³⁷ Furthermore, it is clear from another passage in which, like Kabakes, he attributes to Gemistos the belief in the Sun and heliolatry, that Trebizond was not in fact properly informed about the form of the paganism described in the *Laws*.¹³⁸ Despite all his unreliability, what is still sometimes accepted as a true point of Trebizond's narrative is Gemistos' belief in the revival of paganism in the near future.¹³⁹ However, a similar prophetic vision is in fact already contained in the first Trebizond's text quoted above and the problem is that it is not really compatible with Gemistos' and Laonikos' conception of history, in which fate, quite indifferent to any particular religion, saves the just, and punishes the unjust.¹⁴⁰ The belief in the recent revival of paganism suits certainly much better the apocalyptic and eschatological fears of Trebizond who even considered himself a prophet and many times in his life professed clear visions of the future, in which Plato and Aristotle had also their specific roles.¹⁴¹

To illustrate further this side of his character, we may quote two other, much later texts, in which he speaks about Gemistos and his connection to Bessarion.

¹³⁶ Feil 1986, pp. 165–7: 'Doch dürfte es aus sachlichen Gründen höchst unwahrscheinlich sein, daß die Mitteilung bei Georgios eine wenn auch verdeutlichende Wiedergabe einer Aussage Plethons enthält. Schon gar nicht kann es sich um eine einigermaßen wortgetreue Übersetzung eines Ausspruchs Plethons handeln. Denn Plethon sprach und schrieb griechisch. In dieser Sprache aber gab es auch zu dieser Zeit keinen Terminus, der von seinem Sinn und seiner Bedeutung her "*religio*" als Übersetzung verlangt hätte.' This conclusion is based on a broader comparison with contemporary authors, since in his book Feil studies the general usage of the term '*religio*' in the Modern Era, including Trebizond as well as Bessarion and his circle, *ibid.*, pp. 168–91.

¹³⁷ Monfasani 1976, pp. 39–40.

¹³⁸ Trebizond, *Adv. Gazam* 302.38–303.4, *Comp.* III, penultimate chapter; cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 367–8.

¹³⁹ Monfasani 1992, pp. 59–61.

¹⁴⁰ See above, pp. 12–13, 27, 216, and below, 242–4.

¹⁴¹ Monfasani 1976, pp. 35, 49–53, 85–103, 128–36, 140–41, 148, 183–4.

The first one is an address to the sultan Mehmed II, written in Greek probably in 1476, in which Trebizond undertakes a rather difficult task, to persuade the triumphant conqueror of Constantinople to embrace Christianity:¹⁴²

Then also occurred at Rome the apostasy from Christ to Plato at the instigation of Cardinal Bessarion, who is honoured as pious by Pope Paul and by all his own people because he lives his life according to Plato and who is held in reverence by the Venetians and by King Ferrante of Naples as a saint and a wise man, or rather one should say, as an apostle and evangelist of Plato himself, and of Gemistos, who strove to paganize the Eastern Church by his own writings.¹⁴³

In 1466 he warned Sigismondo Malatesta, who two years earlier had transferred the remains of Gemistos from Mistra to his paganizing temple in Rimini, against the dangerous influence the philosopher might have even after his death:¹⁴⁴

I told Sigismondo that unless he threw out of his city the Apollo who lives in the corpse of Gemistos, something bad would befall him. He promised to do it. He left it undone. Sickness brought him to the brink of death in Rome. He sent for me the hour he was stricken so that through the vain predictions of the astrologers I might tell him what would happen to him. Putting my trust in God, I sent the message: 'In eight days he will be well.' After the prophecy came true, I told him that the disease had struck him because he retained in his home the corpse of Gemistos. He promised again that as soon as he returned to Rimini, he would cast it into the sea. I praised his resolution and urged him to do it lest worse happen to him. He returned to Rimini. Again he left it undone. Again he became ill. Before I learned about it, he died [9 October 1468]. I wrote to his wife and children why this had occurred and added that unless they fulfilled what he had promised, worse would befall them.¹⁴⁵

It therefore seems that the testimony of Trebizond on Gemistos is not only highly tendentious as it is the case of Scholarios, but also extremely unreliable and, in fact, it is doubtful whether it contains any independent information about his alleged paganism at all.

¹⁴² Ibid., pp. 223–4.

¹⁴³ Trebizond, *De div.* 571 (ch. 3), trans. Monfasani, 565–6 (ch. 3).

¹⁴⁴ Monfasani 1976, p. 214.

¹⁴⁵ Trebizond, *Ad Bess.* 171 (ch. 38), trans. Monfasani 1976, p. 214 (altered). The date in brackets is supplied by John Monfasani.

There are two other, perhaps less significant, but also notable adversaries of Gemistos among the contemporary Greek philosophers and scholars. The first one is George Amiroutzes who travelled as one of the three lay philosophers (the other two were Gemistos and Scholarios) to the Council of Florence. Being a pro-Unionist, he silenced Gemistos in a very impolite way at an occasion when the latter was trying to support Mark Eugenikos.¹⁴⁶ Because in his treatises, which have come to us unfortunately only in a very fragmentary state, Amiroutzes acts as a firm partisan of Aristotle and refutes both Plato and Plotinus; it seems that one of his aims is to respond to Plethon's attempts to revive ancient Platonism.¹⁴⁷

Theodore Gazes, mentioned above already several times, was a great rival of George of Trebizond. As a prominent translator of Aristotelian texts, a member of the learned circle of Bessarion and his expert on Aristotle he was the natural target of Trebizond's attacks.¹⁴⁸ At the same time, however, Theodore was much worried about the Platonic studies of Gemistos and many of his writings are directed against him. During the Plato–Aristotle controversy he thus argues against some of the latter's refutations of Aristotle in the *Differences*,¹⁴⁹ but also against his deductions about the origin of the Turks.¹⁵⁰ Gazes' most notable rejection of Plethon's attack on Aristotle is contained in a letter to Bessarion in which he reacts to Trebizond's accusations from *A Comparison of Philosophers Aristotle and Plato*. Gazes' situation was delicate since Gemistos was a teacher of his patron Bessarion. Even though he denounces Celsus' and Julian's critique of Christianity, aiming possibly indirectly also at Plethon's interests in ancient pagan Platonism, he mentions him only briefly refusing his one-sided refutation of Aristotle.¹⁵¹ As he says:

To Plethon happened the same thing as to so many other people: they eagerly seize upon whatever notions occur to them and found sects. Then they dispute among themselves and quarrel continuously, so that they are never free from empty contentiousness. They should agree in their opinions ...¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ Syropoulos, *Mem.* IX,12 446.17–21; cf. Woodhouse 1986, p. 173.

¹⁴⁷ On Amiroutzes see PLP, no. 784, and Monfasani 2011a where Amiroutzes' philosophical treatises are published and translated.

¹⁴⁸ On Gazes see PLP, no. 3450, Geanakoplos 1989, pp. 68–90, Bianca 1999; for his philosophy and role in the Plato–Aristotle controversy see Monfasani 2002a; for Trebizond's attack on Gazes see Labowsky 1968.

¹⁴⁹ Gazes, *Adv. Pleth., De fato*, Monfasani 2002a, pp. 269–70, 273–4, 275–7.

¹⁵⁰ Gazes, *Ad Phil.*, Gazes quoted Gemistos' *Ad Theod.* 114.24–115.3.

¹⁵¹ Gazes, *Ad Bess.* 196 (7), fols 15v–16r; cf. Labowsky 1968, Monfasani 2002a, pp. 278–9.

¹⁵² Gazes, *Ad Bess.* 196 (7), fol. 16r, trans. Labowsky 1968, p. 185.

Gazes thus complies with Bessarion's wish, mentioned above, that those who want to contribute to the Plato–Aristotle controversy should either defend Aristotle's philosophy against Gemistos' criticism or demonstrate that there is a harmony between both authors.¹⁵³ Furthermore, in his treatise on ancient Greek months, Gazes attempts to refute Plethon's rather artificial calendar. This criticism is definitely noteworthy since it shows that he had to have had some parts of the *Laws* at his disposal.¹⁵⁴ However, there is one interesting feature of Gazes' critique of Gemistos. In none of his treatises he attacks, at least overtly, Plethon's neo-paganism, but rather tries to counterbalance his anti-Aristotelism and disagrees with him on some other scholarly issues. At the same time, however, he is willing to discuss, critically though, Plethon's paganizing *Laws* in his own work *On Months*.

Thus, unlike in the case of Scholarios or George of Trebizond, Gazes is more concerned with Gemistos' critique of Aristotle than with his alleged apostasy from Christianity. Moreover, the resolute pro-Aristotelian stand may be ascribed to all four main critics of his – Scholarios, Trebizond, Amiroutzes and Gazes alike. It is obvious that this was the main driving force that set them against Gemistos, since, in general, the partisans of Plato seem to be more tolerant of his views.

• • •

Having gone through the testimony of the most important contemporaries associated in diverse ways with Gemistos, we may conclude that, strangely enough, those who most resolutely accuse him of paganism or, on the contrary, admire him for it, were not, in fact, in close contact with him and that they based their accusation or admiration on the fragmentary information they had. Gemistos' direct pupils or friends, in contrast, do not provide any substantial evidence for his alleged paganism. Furthermore, it is highly improbable that there was any neo-pagan circle in Mistra because, again, there is no evidence that any of them would have been a member of it or directly influenced in this way by their allegedly pagan teacher. There are also further external indications pointing strongly against the existence of a paganizing circle in Mistra or any Gemistos' pagan activity there. First, it is highly improbable that any Despot of the Morea would have tolerated any unorthodox activity by Gemistos and his pupils. On the contrary, during his roughly 40-years-long stay in Mistra, Gemistos was allowed to take part in the governing of the Despotate, several times he received

¹⁵³ Bessarion, *Adv. Pleth.* 150.8–11; cf. Monfasani 2002a, p. 276.

¹⁵⁴ *Gazes, De mens.*, see above, p. 159, n.77, and most notably 1168B: *κάν τοῖς περι νομοθεσίας δὴ λόγοις.*

land in reward for his services, he was also invited to participate in the Council and, moreover, he was buried according to Orthodox custom.¹⁵⁵ Second, even if an extremely well concealed circle of neo-pagans really had existed in Mistra, it would have supposedly included also Gemistos' sons as well as other relatives and close associates.¹⁵⁶ In such a case it is difficult to imagine that after the death of Gemistos the *Laws*, allegedly a sacred book of a secret society, could ever have been seized by the Despot and his wife and also, as we shall see, that there would have been only one copy of it. We thus have to conclude, that if Gemistos had been really a pagan polytheist, it had to be his personal belief only.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Alexandre 1858, p. xxxix, Woodhouse 1986, p. 7.

¹⁵⁶ Masai 1956, pp. 306–9 *contra* Woodhouse 1986, p. 363.

¹⁵⁷ Already Kamariotes notes that Gemistos was very successful in concealing his real opinions, *In Pleth.* 218: καθὸ Πλήθων πάντας καὶ τοὺς πώποτε ὑπέρβαλε· βεβιωκῶς μὲν αὐτὸς ἐν ἀβελτερίᾳ παντοῖα, ὑπόκρισιν δ' ἐσχάτην παρὰ πάντα τὸν αὐτοῦ βίον ἐπιδειξάμενος καὶ βιβλία τοιαῦτα καταλελοιπῶς, ἃ το γ' εἰς αὐτὸν ἦκον, πάντας ἔμελλε τῆς μακαριότητος ἀποσχοινίζειν καὶ ἀγαθοῦ, ἵνα μὴδ' ἀποθανῶν γοῦν παύσαιτο τῶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων λυμαίνεσθαι γένει· εἰ μὴ κἀνταῦθα μᾶλλον ἢ πρότερον, παρόσον ζῶν μὲν ἔτι, δεδιῶς καὶ ὑποκρινόμενος, τὸ δὴ λεγόμενον λαγῶ βίον ἔζη κρυπτόμενος καὶ μόνοις ἐκείνοις τὸν ἰὸν τῆς κακίας ἐγγέων, ὅσοι ἀμαγέπη αὐτῷ ἐπλησίαζον. ... ἐκρύπτετο οὖν ἔτι ζῶν, μὴ φωραθεὶς ἀσεβῶν, δίκην ἀποτίση, ἦν εἰκὸς ἀποτιννύειν τοὺς ἀπόνοιαν νενοσηκότας καὶ ἐσχάτην ἀσέβειαν. ἀποθανῶν δέ, οὐκέτι οὐδ' ὑποκρίνεται, ἀνέδην οὕτω πᾶσι νομοθετῶν, ἃ τοῖς καὶ ὀπηοῦν προσέχειν, ἢ τετολμηκόσιν, ἢ τολμῶσιν, ἢ καὶ τολμήσουσιν

Chapter 16

Change of Name

What is usually invoked as a proof of Gemistos' paganism is the change of his name to Plethon, which supposedly happened in 1439 in Florence during his lectures on Plato to the humanists. The name itself, which is just a classicized form of Gemistos, certainly associates its bearer with Plato.¹ But not only this – because the metaphysical system of the *philosophia perennis* requires that the human soul is repeatedly reincarnated, 'Plethon' could be also understood as the second Plato in the sense of a new reincarnation of the soul of 'the divine philosopher'.²

In order to trace how this 'pagan' pseudonym progressively begun to be used, we must naturally rely only on Gemistos' autographs (the manuscripts written in the hand of the author) or on the texts within which it appears, not in their headings or titles since these may easily be a result of later alterations. The text in which the name 'Plethon' is usually thought to be used for the first time is the *Differences*, written in Florence during the Council.³ However, at the beginning of the autograph, which has been preserved, only George Gemistos appears as the name of the author.⁴ Thus the usage of the surname Plethon is not in fact documented until the *Defence of Aristotle*, written by Scholarios around 1444.⁵ It is similarly absent from the headings of the autographs of the *Reply to Scholarios*⁶ and appears in the text of this treatise in the two passages that are, however, direct quotations from Scholarios.⁷ Other early occurrences are two letters of Apostoles to Argyropoulos⁸ and Kamariotes' book,⁹ the former written still

¹ Schultze 1874, pp. 72–3, Masai 1956, pp. 384–6, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 186–8.

² Bessarion, *Ad Dem. Andr.* 469.3–8.

³ Masai 1956, pp. 384–5.

⁴ *De diff.* 321.1, Mioni 1985, p. 385: *Marc. Gr.* 517 (= 886), fol. 13.

⁵ Scholarios, *Pro Arist. passim*.

⁶ *Contra Schol.* 368.1 Lagarde = 1 Maltese; cf. Mioni 1972, p. 223: *Marc. Gr.* IV,31 (= 1316), Mioni 1985, p. 385: *Marc. Gr.* 517 (= 886), fol. 30.

⁷ *Contra Schol.* III 372.2, VII 384.15.

⁸ Apostoles, *Ad Argyr.* I 373, *Ad Argyr.* II 375.

⁹ Kamariotes, *In Pleth. passim*. There is only one passage where Kamariotes uses the name Gemistos: *ibid.* 2: ὑφ' ὧν [sc. πονηρῶν δὲ πνευμάτων], ὡς εἰκός, καὶ Πλήθων ἑλληνικώτερον δῆθεν ἐκ Γεμιστοῦ τὴν ἀρχὴν ὀνομασθῆναι δεδιδακται ...

during Gemistos' life, the latter probably finished shortly after his death. These three texts have been discussed above and we have seen that they all depend in some way on Scholarios and his *Defence of Aristotle*. It is noteworthy that even Scholarios, when writing to Eugenikos, does not talk about Plethon, but about Gemistos.¹⁰ There is no other reliable evidence that the name 'Plethon' was publicly or privately used during Gemistos' life. We may note that Cyriac of Ancona mentions in his diary meeting Gemistos the Platonist (*Gemisteus Platonicus*)¹¹ which may be the title by which he was sometimes addressed.

There is just one important exception when the name Plethon is used during his lifetime and this is the *Book of Laws*. According to Scholarios' thorough description provided in order to justify his decision to burn it and whose reliability we have no reason to doubt, it was entitled: 'Plethon's *First Book of Laws* (Πλήθωνος Νόμων συγγραφῆς βιβλίον πρῶτον)' and similarly in the case of the other two books.¹² At the end of the *Defence of Aristotle* Scholarios makes clear that he possesses a part of the *Laws*, presumably its beginning with the heading declaring its author. It is therefore possible that he consciously connected together the excerpts from the polytheistic book, which had first aroused his suspicion against Gemistos, with the recently published *Differences* and wrote his reply to this treatise using the name 'Plethon', and not 'Gemistos' under which it had appeared. He intended this intrigue in order to test Gemistos' real beliefs, about which he was far from certain at this time. To a Byzantine with classical Greek education it had to be undoubtedly clear that both names meant the same thing.¹³ It therefore seems that Scholarios connected the critique of Aristotle, whose author, Gemistos, was well known and, which was in his eyes impious, with his information about the *Laws* written by a certain Plethon. This is confirmed by Scholarios' appeal to Gemistos. He wanted him to declare that he was not Plethon, nor did he know any Plethon writing against the Christian faith, which would dispel any suspicion and refute his accusers.¹⁴ If both treatises had been published under the name of Plethon or this had been a well-known surname, Scholarios would not have had to ask this.

We can therefore conclude that the name Plethon was neither used publicly before Gemistos' death¹⁵ nor were his works published under it and that it was restricted solely to the *Laws*. However, in the years following Gemistos' death, during the Plato–Aristotle controversy that took place among the Greek

¹⁰ Scholarios, *Ad Eugen.* 117.8.

¹¹ Cyriac of Ancona, *Ep.* V,55.

¹² Scholarios, *Ad Jos.* 159.10–12.

¹³ Scholarios, *Pro Arist.* 114.17–33.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 115.20–30.

¹⁵ Masai 1956, p. 52.

émigrés in Italy in the second half of the 1450s,¹⁶ the situation changes and the texts written in Greek at that time exclusively refer to Plethon.¹⁷ One of the possible sources through which this name became known might have been Kamariotes' *On Fate*, in which the name Plethon already appears. Thus in the late 1450s Theodore Gazes wrote a treatise with a similar title,¹⁸ where Plethon is mentioned. More important is the fact that during the controversy Gemistos is never mentioned as a person influential at the court of Mistra, an eminent humanist and teacher or someone suspect of polytheism,¹⁹ but rather as an extreme Platonist and radical anti-Aristotelian. He thus appears as an abstract character, rather than a living person and a late colleague of the debaters. The *Differences* and the *Reply to Scholarios* whose autographs have 'Gemistos' written in their headings, had to be gradually subsumed under the name 'Plethon', which, because of its form, was naturally very appropriate to designate a determined Platonist. However, the situation is quite different when the actual person is meant. In this case Gemistos always comes to the fore, sometimes just with a note that he changed his name to Plethon. Trebizond thus always speaks about Gemistos, who was guilty of paganism, and only in the second place about Plethon.²⁰ Similarly, even though Kabakes writes about Plethon in his personal notes, in conversation with Bessarion they talk about Gemistos.²¹

¹⁶ Monfasani 1976, pp. 152–70, 201–29, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 364–72.

¹⁷ Bessarion, *Adv. Pleth.* 149.2–3, 6, 22, 24, 150.9–10, *Ad Apost.* 511.4, 10, 13, 512.8, 28, 31, 513.13, *De nat.* 92.4–5, 9, 12, 24, 98.16, 26, 128.25 (Latin version: 93.10, 25, 99.19, 129.30), *In cal.* 272.23, 30 (Latin version: 273.16), Gazes, *Ad Bess.* 196 (7), *De fato* 243.22, 25, 244.21, *Adv. Pleth.* 153.3, 10, 154.12, 15, 17, 155.12, 19, 30, 34, 156.18, 33, 157.1, 12, 26, 29, 32, 34, 158.8, *Apostoles, Ad Gazae* 161.13, 15, 22, 29, 162.10–12, 20, 23, 26–7, 164.5, 11, 167.34, 168.5, 8, 18, 35, 169.1, 26, 30, Kallistos, *Def. Gazae* 171.10, 27, 29, 33, 172.2, 8, 14, 17, 19, 40, 174.4, 16, 19–21, 24, 26, 31, 176.7, 178.20, 22, 35, 180.28, 182.3, 183.9–10, 187.24, 189.25, 27, 36–7, 190.3, 29, 195.29, 196.4, 198.36, 39, 202.32–3, 203.23. See also early Arabic translation of the *Laus* where 'Plethon' does not even appear at all, and only Gemistos is mentioned as the author, Nicolet–Tardieu 1980, pp. 39–40, Tardieu's appendix to *Or. mag.*, pp. 157–8.

¹⁸ Gazes, *De fato*; cf. Monfasani 1976, p. 211.

¹⁹ Not a really important exception is Andronikos Kallistos, who claims that Plethon does not represent a real Platonic theology, because this was genuinely Greek and Plethon's book is reported to be influenced by Zoroaster, *Def. Gazae* 178.19–24. Kallistos might have learnt this detail already from Scholarios' *Defence of Aristotle* and even in his treatise Plethon is rather an abstract person than somebody who lived just few years ago.

²⁰ Trebizond, *Adv. Gazam* 302.39, 340.16, *Comp.* III, penultimate chapter = LEGRAND III, pp. 287–9, with the mentioning of the change of Gemistos' name (*is vulgo Gemistus a semetipso Pleton est agnominatus*), *De div.* 571 (ch. 3), *Ad Bess.* 171–2 (ch. 36–9, 41).

²¹ See above, p. 218, nn.79–80.

It therefore seems that the name 'Plethon', which was originally restricted to the *Book of Laws*, later gradually came to designate the author who, with his two anti-Aristotelian treatises *On the Differences* and *Reply to Scholarios*, started the whole controversy about the priority of Plato and Aristotle.

Chapter 17

Fight for Orthodoxy

Gemistos' *Reply in Support of Latins* is directed against the work of John Argyropoulos, whom he knew well from the Council of Florence.¹ With a certain degree of probability we may suppose that the treatise was written around 1449, when its addressee Lukas Notaras became the Grand Duke of the new (and last) Byzantine Emperor, Constantine XI (1449–1453). Both the Unionists, defending the recently signed agreement with Rome as well as the anti-Unionists were attempting to influence the politics of the new government. Probably in this situation Gemistos was, as he says, asked (νῦν κελευσθεῖς) – possibly by Notaras² – to defend his previous stand at the Council or perhaps he wished to answer himself the Unionist treatise of his colleague at the Council. His reply is most probably to be dated to around 1450.³ Both Scholarios⁴ and Bessarion then reacted to his work.⁵

We cannot go into all the details of the theological reasoning about the Trinity developed by both thinkers,⁶ but it is definitely useful to look closely at the key arguments of Gemistos. The main point contested by him is the argument Argyropoulos introduced to support the Latin position, according to which the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son alike (the problem of the *filioque*). To assure the common consubstantiality (ὁμοούσιος) as well as the same 'perfections (τελειότητες)' of the first two divine persons, Argyropoulos postulates the following principle: things with different potentialities must have also different essences, which is obviously not true about the Father and the Son.⁷ Gemistos takes this 'axiom' as representing the official Latin theology. He admits that it is intended to ensure the Son's role in the procession of the Holy Spirit

¹ Woodhouse 1986, pp. 40–41.

² Turner 1976, pp. 62–3.

³ Masai 1956, p. 391, Turner 1976, pp. 61–3, Woodhouse 1986, pp. 270–72, Monfasani 1994, p. 841.

⁴ Scholarios, *Ad Gemist.*

⁵ Bessarion, *Contra Gemist.*

⁶ For fifteenth century discussions concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit see Monfasani 2012d.

⁷ Argyropoulos, *De proc.* 118.10–119.6: see Appendix VII,3, below, pp. 298–9. Cf. Monfasani 1994, pp. 842–3.

because if the Son did not participate in it, he would have a different potentiality and, consequently, also a different essence than the Father. However, he criticizes rather maliciously the axiom as 'exceedingly convenient' for Hellenic, that is pagan, theology, but fundamentally opposed to the Church.⁸ Moreover, other details as well as the overall tone of his treatise show that Gemistos does not attempt to argue against Argyropoulos only, but against Latin and pro-Unionist theology in general.

To support his criticism, he first explains that Hellenic theology places one God uppermost in all things. This God is himself an indivisible one, in contrast to the plurality of his children, of whom some are higher and some lower and each has assigned a larger or smaller part of this universe. Nevertheless, none of them is either equal to the Father or similar to him because all the other essences are much lower in their divinity. They are also called the gods as well as the children and the works of the highest God since Hellenic theology does not distinguish between God's generation and creation, will and nature, or, 'in general', between activity and essence. Hellenic theology presupposes that the children of the highest God are different in their divinity because they are lower essences, and bases this claim on the axiom in question. According to it, the greatest difference of potentialities may be found between the thing that exists itself through itself and the one that exists through something different. As Gemistos claims, this is, nonetheless, unacceptable for the Church because, if we admit the axiom introduced by Argyropoulos, it would necessarily lead to a conclusion that the first two divine persons have different essences. This is because the Father has a potentiality to be himself through himself and is really so, whereas the Son, apart from other differences between them, is not any more himself through himself, but through the Father.⁹

⁸ *Contra Lat.* 300: see Appendix VII,4, below, p. 299.

⁹ *Ibid.* 302–3: 'Ἡ μὲν γὰρ Ἑλληνικὴ θεολογία ἓνα Θεὸν τὸν ἀνωτάτῳ τοῖς οὐσίαις ἐφιστάσα, καὶ ἄτομον ἓν, καὶ ἔπειτα πλείους αὐτῷ παῖδας διδοῦσα, προύχοντάς τε ἄλλους ἄλλων, καὶ ὑποδεεστέρους, οὐς καὶ ἄλλον ἄλλῳ αὐτῷ μείζονι ἢ μείονι τοῦ παντὸς τοῦδε μέρει ἐφίστησιν, ὅμως οὐδένα αὐτῶν τῷ πατρὶ ἴσον, ἢ γούνην παραπλήσιον ἀξιοῖ εἶναι. Καὶ γὰρ ἑτέρας τε ἅπαντας οὐσίας καὶ πολὺ ὑποδεεστέρας ποιεῖ, καὶ θεότητος ὡσαύτως. Πρὸς γούνην τῷ πατρί τῷ Θεοῦ καὶ Θεοῦ καὶ αὐτοῦ καλεῖν, ἔτι καὶ ἔργα ἅμα τοῦ αὐτοῦ Θεοῦ καλεῖ, οὐκ ἀξιοῦσα ἐπὶ γε τοῦ Θεοῦ γεννήσεως δημιουργίαν διακρίνειν, ὅτι μηδὲ βούλησιν φύσεως, ὅλως δὲ εἰπεῖν, μηδ' οὐσίας ἐνέργειαν. Ἐτέρας δ' οὖν θεότητός τε καὶ οὐσίας ὑποδεεστέρας τοὺς τοῦ ἀνωτάτῳ Θεοῦ παῖδας ἢ γε Ἑλληνικὴ θεολογία ποιεῖ, οὐδενὶ ἄλλῳ ἢ ἐκεῖνῳ ἐπεριδομένη τῷ ἀξίωματι, ὡς ὧν αἱ δυνάμεις διάφοροι, καὶ αὐτὰ ἂν εἴη ταῖς οὐσίαις διάφορα, κρίνουσά τε μεγίστην δυνάμειν διαφορὰν τὴν τοῦ αὐτοῦ δι' αὐτὸ ὄντος πρὸς τὸ δι' ἕτερον ἤδη ὄν. Ἡ μὲντοι Ἐκκλησία τοῦτο τὸ ἀξίωμα δὴλῶς ἐστὶν οὐ προσοιμένη. Οὐ γὰρ τὸν Υἱὸν τῷ Πατρὶ ἴσον, ἢ οὐσίας τῆς αὐτῆς, εἰ τὸ ἀξίωμα τοῦτο προσέτετο, ἀπέφαινε. Πῶς γὰρ ἂν ὁ Πατὴρ τοῦ γε Υἱοῦ οὐ διάφορος εἴη τὴν

According to Gemistos, there is, in fact, one essence (οὐσία) of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, but three different persons, each distinguished from the other two by its individual properties (ιδιότητες). There are thus some features that are common to each of them – essence and nature, creation of the world, providence, being the principle of the universe, and so on. However, there are likewise also some properties that cannot be attributed to all of them alike and which belong to one or two individual persons of the Trinity only. Such is also the property of ‘having been caused’, which is not common to the whole Trinity but just to the Son and the Spirit, who have been caused by generation and procession respectively. As a result of these considerations Gemistos states a different axiom which he claims to be compatible with the teaching of the Church and according to which nothing can produce itself, but what is being produced must be different from its producer or, more generally, what is being caused must be different from its cause.¹⁰ This conclusion then enables Gemistos to show that the Spirit must be produced not by the essence common to all the divine persons, but by one or two other members of the Trinity. If he were produced by the essence which is common to them all, he would produce himself, which is impossible (because of the axiom just stated by Gemistos), or he would have a different essence, which would be heretical. However, if the Spirit were produced by both the Father and the Son alike, their persons would be somehow coalesced, which means that we would get a Holy Dyad. Conversely, if he were produced by two different acts or the Son served as a by-cause to the main production by the Father, the Spirit would suffer an inner division and the result would be a Tetrad. This is because if the Father were not capable of producing the Spirit himself and had to be supported by the Son, the Spirit would have from each of them something different.¹¹ According to Gemistos, his views are

δύναμιν, εἰ ὁ μὲν αὐτὸς δι' αὐτὸν δύναται τε εἶναι καὶ εἶστί, ὁ δ' οὐκέτι αὐτὸς δι' αὐτόν, διὰ δὲ τὸν Πατέρα εἶστί.

¹⁰ Ibid. 304: Μίαν οὐσίαν Πατρός, Υἱοῦ καὶ Πνεύματος ἢ γε Ἐκκλησία ἀξιοῦσα βούλεται εἶναι: πρόσωπα δὲ τρία, ἰδιότησι τισιν ἕκαστον τῶν ἄλλων διακρινόμενον. Καὶ τὰ μὲν τοῖς τρισὶν ἐφαρμοζόντα κοινὰ τε εἶναι καὶ ἐν ἀριθμῷ ἕκαστον αὐτῶν, αὐτὴν τὴν οὐσίαν καὶ φύσιν, τὴν δημιουργίαν τῆς κτίσεως, τὴν πρόνοιαν, τὴν τοῦ παντός ἀρχήν, ἅπαν ὅτι τοιοῦτον εἴη ἂν εἰπεῖν· τὰ δὲ μὴ τοῖς τρισὶ δυνάμενα ἐφαρμοσά, προσωπικά τε προσώποις καὶ ἴδια ἐκάστῳ εἶναι, καὶ οὐδοτιοῦν αὐτῶν ἐν ἀριθμῷ, ἐν πλείοσιν ἢ ἐνὶ προσώποις θεωρούμενον. Τὸ γάρ τοι αἰτιατόν, τοῖς μὲν τρισὶ κοινὸν οὐκ ὄν, τοῖν δὲ δυσὶν μόνοις, οὐ ταῦτόν ἂν ἀριθμῷ εἴη ἐπ' ἀμφοῖν, εἰ τῷ μὲν που γεννητῶς, τῷ δὲ ἐκπορευτῶς πρόσεστι. Τούτων οὕτως ὑποκειμένων, προσελήφθω καὶ τι ἀξίωμα, οὐ τῶν τῆ Ἐκκλησίᾳ πολεμίων, ἀλλὰ καὶ μάλα φίλιον, ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν ὅ τι αὐτὸ ἑαυτὸ δύναται προβάλλειν, ἀλλ' ἕτερον αἰεὶ δεῖ εἶναι τοῦ γε προβάλλοντος τὸ προβαλλόμενον, καὶ ὅλως αἰτίου αἰτιατόν.

¹¹ Ibid. 305–6: Οὐκοῦν, εἰ μὲν κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν κοινήν οὐσαν ὅ τε Πατὴρ καὶ ὁ Υἱὸς μὴ προβολῆ τὸ Πνεῦμα προβαλοῦσιν, ὥσπερ ἄρα καὶ ἀξιοῦσιν αὐτοὶ ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ, ἦτοι καὶ αὐτὸ

supported by various saints and theologians (he mentions John of Damascus, Dionysius the Areopagite, Justin Martyr, Gregory of Nazianzus and Cyril of Alexandria, who are, he claims, often misunderstood or misinterpreted by the Latins). He finds further support in the Scripture, which he quotes.¹²

Gemistos then complains that the manner by which the Council of Florence achieved the Union of the Eastern and Western Church was not fair: 'because in Italy, when ours concluded the Union, they were not defeated by arguments to conclude it, but we know how the Union was concluded'. Some of them joined the Latin side because they thought it would be profitable for Byzantium. However, not everything that seems profitable in the end really proves so and sometimes, on the contrary, it can even cause great damage. Furthermore, such an approach in fact equates to not believing that God cares about human affairs. Many Byzantines, nonetheless, share this belief because their affairs have been in a bad state for a long time and thus it is no wonder that God lets their enemies prosper and leaves them to perish, since many of their enemies have more firmly embedded in their souls the opinion that he cares about humans. The impiety on this point cannot be counterbalanced by piety in another since one either accepts the belief that God presides over us or rejects it. It is natural then that God lets such people perish, as can be shown by many examples from the past. Nations prosper or perish according to whether they hold this opinion about divine providential care or reject it. The proof of this is that those who keep their

ἑαυτὸ τὸ Πνεῦμα προβαλεῖ, κοινήν αὐτοῖς καὶ αὐτὸ ἔχον τὴν οὐσίαν, ἢ εἰ διασταίῃ Πατρός καὶ Υἱοῦ ἐν τῷ προβάλλεσθαι, ἔξ τε ἑτέραν οὐσίαν ἐκπεσεῖται καὶ οὐκέτι αὐτοῖς ὁμοουσίον μενεῖ, εἰ κατὰ τὴν κοινήν οὐσίαν, ἀλλὰ μὴ προσωπικῶς αὐτὸ προβαλοῦσιν. ... Εἰ δ' ὅτι οὐ τοῖς τρισὶ προσώποις τὸ προβάλλειν οἶον τε ἐφαρμόττειν (οὐ γὰρ οὐδὲ τῷ Πνεύματι), διὰ τοῦτο καὶ προσωπικὸν αὐτὸ ἄξιον φάναι, οὐκέτι οἶόν τε μιᾷ ἀριθμῷ προβολῆ τὸν Πατέρα τε καὶ Υἱὸν τὸ Πνεῦμα προβάλλειν, εἰ μὴ καὶ τῶν προσώπων τις συναλοιφή αὐτοῖς προσάψει. Εἰ δὲ δύο τῷ ἀριθμῷ αἱ προβολαί, ἀμήχανον, μὴ οὐ διαφυὴν τινα ἔχον τό γε Πνεῦμα προῖέναι, τὸ μὲν τι ἐκ τῆς ἑτέρας, τὸ δ' ἐκ τῆς ἑτέρας προβολῆς ἴσχον. Οὐ γὰρ οὐδ' εἰ μὴ αἴτιος ἀπλῶς ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Πνεύματος, ἀλλὰ συναίτιος ἔσται ... Εἰ γὰρ οὐδοτιοῦν δώσει, οὔτ' ἂν αἴτιος εἴη ἀπλῶς, οὔτε συναίτιος, ἀλλ' ὁ Πατὴρ αὐτὸ αὐτάρκως προβαλεῖ, ἐπεὶ οὐδ' ἂν αὐτάρκως αὐτὸ ὁ Πατὴρ προβάλλοι, εἰ καὶ τινος συναίτιου ὄλως δέοιτο. Οὕτω δὴ τὸ Πνεῦμα, τὸ μὲν τι ἐκ τοῦ Πατρός, τὸ δ' ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἴσχον, καὶ διαφυὴν ἅμα ἔξει, καὶ κινδυνεύσει ὁ Θεὸς τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ ἀντὶ τριάδος τετράς ἀναφανήσεσθαι διὰ τὴν τοῦ Πνεύματος ταύτην διαφυὴν.

¹² Ibid. 307–9; cf. similar religious language used by Gemistos in *Ad Schol.* in the same context of a polemic against the Latins: τὸ δὲ τοῖς πατριόσι σε συνίστασθαι δόγμασι ἐπαινω, ἐπεὶ οἶσθ᾽ αὖ καὶ ἡμᾶς τούτοις ἐκ πολλοῦ συνισταμένους, πολλῶν γὰρ ταῦτα τῶν ἐτέρων ἰσχυρότερα κρίνομεν καὶ τοῖς λογισμοῖς καὶ ταῖς τῶν πατέρων ῥήσεσι. ἐπεὶ πρὸς μὲν τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν ἐναντίων προτεινόμενα ἔστι τι καὶ ἀντειπεῖν οὐ φαῦλον, πρὸς δὲ τὰ ὑφ' ἡμῶν οὐδὲν ἔστιν ἀντειπεῖν λόγον ἔχον. καὶ πρόσσεστιν ἡμῖν μὲν ἢ ἀπὸ τῶν ἱερῶν εὐαγγελίων ἐν ἅπασιν συνηγορία, ἐκένοις δ' οὔτε ἀπὸ τῶν εὐαγγελίων, οὔτε ἀπὸ τῆς ἄλλης ἱερᾶς γραφῆς οὐδεμία συνηγορία ἔστιν, εἰ μὴ τι σοφίζονται. πρὸς ἃ οὐ χαλεπὸν ἀπαντᾶν.

oath prosper, while those who break it perish. The Byzantines cannot be saved unless they correct every wrong opinion about God, not by concluding a Union with the Latins.¹³ In other words, the contemporaries of Gemistos are, in his eyes, guilty of the second type of atheism that he systematically criticized since his very first works.¹⁴

The treatise about the procession of the Holy Spirit is very difficult to put into the context of Gemistos' other writings. Most interpreters tend to think that he is trying to gain the favour of the anti-Unionist party and hide his own opinion here, having in fact no serious interest in the problem of the Trinitarian debate.¹⁵ Scholarios seems to have been also of the same opinion and the long letter of congratulation he sent to Gemistos with many tirades against the ancient Greek polytheism should be obviously read as a hidden threat and (the second) attempt to find out what his real religious beliefs were.¹⁶ Scholarios must have been convinced that the main intention of the treatise seemingly consecrated to the problems of Christian theology was simply to dispel the suspicion he, Scholarios, had expressed in *Defence of Aristotle*, which, as it is clear from his letter, was already known to Gemistos who at this moment had just finished his *Reply to Scholarios*.¹⁷

However, if all this were really so, then it would not have been very wise of Gemistos to talk about Hellenic theology at the beginning of his treatise on the procession of the Holy Spirit instead of concentrating strictly on the problems of the Christian religion. Furthermore, if he was not being serious here in criticizing Hellenic theology and in reality accepted it as his own, his behaviour is hardly understandable. Why, when attending the Council, did he simply not join the Latins if their theology is really closer to the Hellenic beliefs as he asserts in the treatise in question and defended the anti-Unionist side instead? Is it not possible that, despite his alleged paganism, he in fact adhered to the Orthodox position that he clearly professed and intended his treatise as a contribution to the theological discussion that was going on after the Council till the end of the Byzantine Empire? Bessarion's opposition to Gemistos' argumentation may

¹³ *Contra Lat.* 309–11: 'Ἐπεὶ καὶ ἐν Ἰταλίᾳ, ὅτε οἱ ἡμέτεροι ἐκείνοις συνέθεντο, οὐ τῷ λόγῳ ἠττηθῆναι καὶ συνέθεντο, ἀλλ' ἴσμεν ὃν τρόπον συνέθεντο.

¹⁴ See above, pp. 18, 52.

¹⁵ Masai 1956, pp. 321, 325–7, Woodhouse 1986, p. 273, Monfasani 1994, pp. 833–4, Siniouoglou 2011, pp. 125–31, 400.

¹⁶ Scholarios, *Ad Gemist.*; cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 278–82.

¹⁷ Scholarios, *Ad Gemist.* 118.31–3.

help to settle this question and show, once again, that not only Argyropoulos' treatise, but wider theological problems were at stake. His reply does not have the form of a finished text, but consists of short remarks that probably originated as marginal notes to Gemistos' treatise and were then obviously sent back to him because Gemistos reacts to them in a short letter.¹⁸ Bessarion resolutely and quite naturally rejects the axiom that, according to Gemistos, lies behind the fallacy of the Latins. He thus claims that what may be attributed to one divine person in the Trinity must be indeed common also to the other two, but only under the condition that it is not in a contradiction with some of their individual properties. The axiom contested by Gemistos should thus be restated as follows: what has the same essence, has indeed the same potentiality too, unless this potentiality contains something which is in a contradiction with the individual property of one of them, that is, the persons of the Trinity.¹⁹

We may skip Bessarion's technical argumentation and just mention that he wonders why Gemistos was silent in Italy and claims that Byzantines at the Council did not listen to rational arguments.²⁰ Interesting is also the final comment directed against Gemistos' remark that the enemies of the Christians have more firmly embedded in their soul the belief about divine providential care (πρὸνοεῖν). In order not to be impolite, as he explicitly says, Bessarion refuses to speak against the opinion that those 'who follow the Arabian sophist', that is, Muhammad, 'will, because of piety ... prevail over those who are called after Christ', that is, Christians.²¹ In his answer to Bessarion, Gemistos leaves it to readers to decide whether Bessarion says something reasonable or 'whether he managed to penetrate into what is usually for you', that is, presumably, the Latins and Unionists, 'impenetrable'. He then explains that he was silent in Italy because he thought that it was not appropriate for him to speak about these matters there, leaving it to the priests (τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν), and that he has written now a treatise because he was 'asked' to do so. During the Council they would not have even allowed him to speak because the then patriarch often said that unordained persons should not discuss theological issues. Furthermore, Mark Eugenikos sufficiently argued these matters and was never defeated but only ordered to be silent so that the Unionists might achieve what they wanted. At the Council there were other things that were unjust and those who concluded the Union were not persuaded by arguments because when they came back to

¹⁸ Monfasani 1994, pp. 838–41.

¹⁹ Bessarion, *Contra Gemist.* 1, 5: τὰ αὐτῆς οὐσίας καὶ τῆς αὐτῆς ἐστὶ δυνάμει εἰ μὴ τι τοιοῦτον ἐκείνη περιέχεται τῇ δυνάμει ὃ τῇ τινοῦ ἐκείνων ἀντίκειται ἰδιότητι.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 21–2.

²¹ *Ibid.* 24.

Greece they retracted what they had agreed to, 'with the exception of very few and I will be silent about what our people think of them because of you.'²²

What is remarkable in this discussion between Gemistos and his pupil, who gradually became the main proponent of the Union, is its agitated tone. Gemistos seems to be entirely engaged in the problem of the procession of the Holy Spirit as well as of the Union, something we would not expect of somebody who tries to hide his secret pagan beliefs and is not, in fact, interested in Christian theology and politics at all. At the end of his letter he even goes as far as to offend his pupil, who despite all the criticism is otherwise very polite to him, and generally behaves as somebody who thinks that the suppressed and silenced truth is on his side. Unlike the original treatise, Bessarion's comments and Gemistos' reply were not intended for the general public. So it is improbable that Gemistos just pretends here to be scandalized by the Latins merely in order to conceal his real opinions. Conversely, when Bessarion argues with Gemistos, he considers him to be a perfectly orthodox Christian, with just a small reservation concerning the providential care that might favour the enemies of the Christians, which is otherwise a theme that appears also in his teacher's public philosophy. It is noteworthy that in their subsequent discussion Bessarion completely disregards this Hellenic theology and concentrates just on the argumentation against Gemistos' theological claims. If Bessarion had really been aware of the heretical opinions of his teacher as it is usually supposed, we may ask why he passed over in silence the identification of the Hellenic theology with his own Latin stand and, in contrast, let himself be offended by a minor remark on the role of providence that can sustain even the non-Christians if they believe more firmly in it. We should also note that this debate took place just a few years before Gemistos' death after which Bessarion sent to his sons the famous letter of consolation filled with the paganizing imagery.²³ Thus, even though Bessarion shared Gemistos' admiration for ancient culture and appreciated his knowledge of it, he seems at the same time to have regarded him as a faithful member of the anti-Unionist party and does not appear to have been hesitant about the sincerity of his Christian faith.

Indeed, if we go back to the discussions at the Council of Ferrara–Florence,²⁴ it is obvious that Gemistos is critical towards the Catholics and especially towards their position in this dogmatic dispute from the very beginning.²⁵ In

²² *Contra Bess.* 311–12.

²³ See above, pp. 207–9.

²⁴ For the role Gemistos played at the Council of Ferrara–Florence and in Italy in general see Woodhouse 1986, pp. 130–88.

²⁵ Laurent, Gill and Woodhouse think that at one point during the negotiations Gemistos submitted, on a demand by the Emperor, a written declaration in favour of

the texts related to the Council he appears in a more significant way only in the *Memoirs* of Sylvester Syropoulos, written in the years 1444–1445,²⁶ where he is often called the sage Gemistos (ὁ σοφὸς Γεμιστός). He is recorded there to have recalled in Ferrara a warning he had given to the Emperor 12 years before, on the occasion of a vote on a possible council in Italy, namely, that the Byzantines were at risk of being outvoted by the Latin majority.²⁷ Along with his former pupil, the anti-Unionist Mark Eugenikos, he proposed beginning the discussions about the procession of the Holy Spirit with the question of whether the addition of the *filioque* to the Latin text of the Creed is justified, and not by the problem of the Western doctrines because, according to the Greeks, the former was the main cause and the origin of the schism.²⁸ He replied to cardinal Cesarini, who has presented the text of the *Acts* of the Seventh Council containing the *filioque*, that if it had really been a genuine part of the Creed since that time, he did not understand why Thomas Aquinas and other Latin authors would have to spend so much time defending the justifiability of its addition and why they never mention that it is so ancient.²⁹ Before proceeding to the discussion of the Western doctrine he advised the Byzantine delegation to adopt careful tactics, preparing themselves well beforehand for the probable argumentation of the Latins and allowing the discussion only if the reasons of the Greek party are

a compromise with the Latins. They claim this on the ground that all the members of the Greek delegation were asked to do so and that only Mark Eugenikos is said to have refused: Laurent 1952, Gill 1959, pp. 260–61, Gill 1964, p. 258, Woodhouse 1986, p. 174. However, this is only an argument *ex silentio* and, on the basis of our records, we cannot be sure whether Gemistos really agreed with the *filioque* at a certain point, perhaps even forced by the Emperor. We have also to keep in mind, as he himself later wrote to Bessarion, that he did not feel authorized to join the discussion, *Contra Bess.* 312. Be that as it may, even if he was really forced to agree with the aforementioned compromise, he would probably not have felt obliged by such an involuntary consent.

²⁶ On Syropoulos and the dating of his *Memoirs* see PLP, no. 27217, Laurent's introduction to Syropoulos, *Mem.*, pp. 3–19, Gill 1959, p. xi, 1964, pp. 144–85. Pagani 2008, pp. 14–16, and Siniouoglou 2011, p. 126, attempt to downplay the reliability of Syropoulos who 'may well have credited Plethon and other members of the Greek delegation with views and a role expedient to his own [anti-Unionist] case'. However, Syropoulos' portrayal of Gemistos fits very well with other evidence confirming his firm anti-Unionist stand. Syropoulos also seems to be close to Scholarios and on rather difficult terms with John Eugenikos which makes hard to understand why he would have portrayed Gemistos as an Orthodox opponent of the Union, especially after 1444 when Scholarios first came out with his accusation of Gemistos of paganism.

²⁷ Syropoulos, *Mem.* VI,19 312.1–17; cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 111–12.

²⁸ Syropoulos, *Mem.* VI,21 316.27–30; cf. Woodhouse 1986, p. 140.

²⁹ Syropoulos, *Mem.* VI,31 330.17–332.8; cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 141–2.

stronger.³⁰ When asked by the patriarch whether the Catholics or the Orthodox were right in this matter, according to Syropoulos, he allegedly answered:

None of us should be in any doubt about what our side is saying. For see, we hold our doctrine in the first place from our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and secondly from the Apostle; and these are the foundations of our faith on which all our teachers base themselves. Since therefore our teachers adhere to the foundations of the faith and do not deviate in the slightest, and since the foundations are absolutely clear, no one should have any doubt about what they say. If anyone is in doubt about these matters, I do not know how he can prove his faith. For even those who disagree with us do not doubt what our Church holds and proclaims, since they admit that what we say is valid and wholly true, and they feel obliged to prove that their own views coincide with ours. So no one who belongs to our Church should be in any doubt about our doctrine, when even those who differ from us are not. As for the Latins' doctrine, there is nothing unreasonable about calling it in question, and doing so perhaps where it is subject to examination and proof, for it would be another matter where their doctrine is completely irreconcilable with our own.

As Syropoulos relates, Gemistos said more to the patriarch in a similar manner about the procession of the Holy Spirit in order to reassure him about the position of the Eastern Church.³¹ Furthermore, when, before the discussion about purgatory, the Emperor asked the Byzantine delegation to free themselves of preconceptions and not to consider the Latin doctrine to be false, nor the Greek one to be true, but doubt similarly both until they are examined, Gemistos, according to Syropoulos said to 'us' and especially to his pro-Unionist pupil Bessarion:

In all the years I have known the Emperor, I never heard a more deplorable remark from him than what he has just said. For if we are to be doubtful about the doctrine of our Church, there is no reason to believe its teaching; and what could be worse than that?³²

And just before the beginning of the discussions about the procession of the Holy Spirit, Gemistos is supposed to have said: 'This day will bring us either

³⁰ Syropoulos, *Mem.* VII,16 366.13–22; cf. Woodhouse 1986, p. 144.

³¹ Syropoulos, *Mem.* VII,17 366.23–368.7, trans. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 144–5.

³² Syropoulos, *Mem.* VII,18 368.8–16, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 145; cf. VII,28 380.24–8.

life or death.³³ Whenever he then – very rarely – took part in the discussions he is always recorded as adopting a rather anti-Union stand,³⁴ and, as mentioned above, once was even insulted by George Amiroutzes when trying to defend Eugenikos who was violently disputing with this pro-Unionist Greek. According to Syropoulos, ‘everybody was amazed that the Emperor did not thereupon rebuke Amiroutzes for his insolence, nor did he say a word of consolation to the good Gemistos.’³⁵ Finally, in order to express his disagreement, he, together with Scholarios, joined the Despot Demetrios and left Florence before the official signing of the Union.³⁶

In Syropoulos’ *Memoirs*, written about five years after the Council, Gemistos thus appears only rarely and cannot certainly be regarded as one of the most important participants, but he is portrayed as an honest and rather sympathetic figure. This is not surprising since Syropoulos’ chronicle was intended to support the anti-Unionist cause and to excuse the failure of the Byzantine delegation. For this reason the heroes of the day are the firm anti-Unionists, especially Mark Eugenikos, but also to a certain extent his teacher Gemistos, who did not yield to the pressure of the Latins. The point which is important for us is that Syropoulos regards Gemistos as perfectly orthodox, as is shown by the few interventions which the historian records and which have been quoted here at length. It might be, again, objected that Gemistos was only trying to conceal his real pagan inclinations by a pretended Orthodox zeal. Such an explanation is, however, once again, not very convincing. Adopting, along with Eugenikos, an anti-Unionist position, he certainly did not very much please the Emperor who desperately needed the Union of the Churches in order to get military help from the West. If Gemistos were just an opportunist, we might, once more, expect that, in contrast, he would have adopted a pro-Latin stand or would have simply remained silent as far as religious beliefs were concerned. In fact, in Syropoulos’ account we see that he was highly critical towards the Latins, declaring himself firmly persuaded of the truth of the Orthodox side, and especially interested in the problem of the addition of the *filioque* as well as the procession of the Holy Spirit. He was thus very consistent in his interest in this dogmatic question years before he wrote his treatise at the end of the 1440s, and, as it appears, he was also entirely serious. It could be suggested that his motivation for adopting such a firm Orthodox stand may still have been just a result of his pagan philosophical beliefs, namely, his conviction about the providential care of God that must not be abused by mistrust and unjust behaviour and that is expressed also in the

³³ Syropoulos, *Mem.* VII,21 370.24, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 146.

³⁴ Syropoulos, *Mem.* VIII,39 426.8–15; cf. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 172–3.

³⁵ Syropoulos, *Mem.* IX,12 446.16–21, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 173.

³⁶ Syropoulos, *Mem.* IX,25 460.22–5; cf. Woodhouse 1986, p. 175.

texts just discussed. This opinion is certainly behind both his treatise on the procession of the Holy Spirit and what, according to Syropoulos, he said and did at the Council. Nevertheless, this does not manage to explain why Trinitarian theology seemed to him relevant at all, and why he thought that the Latin position, claimed by him to be closer to Hellenic beliefs, should be rejected.

Another important philosophical treatise written by Gemistos at this time, the *Reply to Scholarios*, also fits well with the picture just sketched. Its addressee, who intended his *Defence of Aristotle* as a test of Gemistos' orthodoxy and a means to frighten and discourage him from his alleged pagan activities, was probably surprised by the fierceness of the counter-attack. The author of the *Reply to Scholarios* certainly does not seem to be scared by his accusation, as would someone with a bad conscience trying to hide his secret beliefs. In the *Differences* he takes a rather neutral position towards specific religious questions although he makes it clear that he does not necessarily agree with Plato on everything.³⁷ Here, in contrast, Gemistos repeatedly points out that, compared to Aristotle, Plato's philosophy is more in accord with Christianity, without, again, maintaining the same on all points.³⁸ There are thus some passages in which he distinguishes between Platonism and Christianity or speaks in favour of the latter. Simplicius is presented in this treatise as someone who conceived his doctrine of the harmony of Plato and Aristotle against the Church.³⁹ Although elsewhere⁴⁰ Gemistos accepts Plutarch's claim that Zoroaster lived 5,000 years before the Trojan war, he says here that this dating is not credible (οὐ πιστόν)⁴¹ obviously because it would be in a conflict with the traditional Byzantine date of the creation of the world.⁴² He mocks Scholarios, who accuses him of writing his treatise against the Christians, by saying that if he

³⁷ *De diff.* X 334.22: ... περὶ ὧν [sc. εἰδῶν] οὐ πλάτωνι συνεπιτεῖν ... '... without following Plato on this subject [that is, the theory of Forms] ...'; trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 205.

³⁸ *Contra Schol.* II 370.7–23, IV 374.24–376.10, VIII 390.3–392.9.

³⁹ *Ibid.* II 370.7–23.

⁴⁰ *Or. mag.* 19.20–22, *Leg.* 252 [III,43: *Epinomis*].

⁴¹ *Contra Schol.* V 378.16–18.

⁴² In his astronomical treatise Gemistos dates the return of Heracleidae, which according to tradition took place only few decades after the fall of Troy, to 1103 BC ('–1102'); cf. Mercier's commentary on *Meth.*, pp. 228–9. This would mean that Zoroaster lived earlier than 6600 BC. At the same time, however, he accepts 5508 BC as the traditional Byzantine date of the creation of the world, *ibid.* 64, 68, 78; cf. also his correspondence with Bessarion, *Ad Gemist.* II 464.37, and Grumel 1958, pp. 219–20. See also Tambrun-Krasker 2001, p. 175, 2006, pp. 84–5, Codoñer 2005, p. 99.

really adheres to the Aristotelian axiom he defends, it means that he belongs to the Arian and not to 'our (καθ' ἡμᾶς)' Church.⁴³ In the reply to Scholarios' reproach, he says that he knows well which divine inspirations (ἐνθουσιασμοί) and which human reasoning (λόγοι ἀνθρώπινοι) should be accepted and which should not.⁴⁴ Gemistos also shows a certain distance towards Plato's doctrine of reincarnation which, just as is claimed in the *Laws*,⁴⁵ is for him here a necessary conclusion if one maintains both the eternity of the world and the immortality of the human soul (the number of the souls has to be finite and so they have to descend into bodies again and again). At the same time, however, he does not reject it explicitly and only tells Scholarios to leave it to more competent critics.⁴⁶ This all may support an impression that here Gemistos is talking as a Christian who is just commenting on Plato's philosophy.

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We have thus seen that if we were to judge just from Syropoulos' account of Gemistos' behaviour at the Council his treatise on the procession of the Holy Spirit and from the *Reply to Scholarios* (including the boldness of its tone), a probable conclusion would be that we are dealing with an Orthodox Christian. Gemistos thus seems to have been interested, mainly for the religious reasons, in Trinitarian theology. He consistently defended it at the Council as well as later in a special treatise. He was also critical of the conditions under which the Union was concluded. His admirer and perhaps an associate was the hardline anti-Unionist John Eugenikos, and he was treated as a serious Christian by his pupil Bessarion. The latter is for us an extremely important testimony for assessing Gemistos' orthodoxy because, being a close associate of his, he must have known his religious beliefs very well. Bessarion shared with Gemistos admiration for ancient thought and did not even hesitate to resort to 'paganizing' imagery without, however, showing any trace of real paganism.

There is, however, one serious point that speaks against Gemistos' Christianity, namely, his *Laws*, written in an apparently very pagan tone, being the main source of Scholarios' accusation. Before reaching the final conclusion on Gemistos' religious beliefs, we must therefore try to examine the intentions behind this definitely very unusual book.

⁴³ *Contra Schol.* VIII 390.3–392.9.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* IX 392.10–17.

⁴⁵ *Leg.* 250–52, 256–60 [III,43: *Epinomis*].

⁴⁶ *Contra Schol.* XXV 442.20–444.27.

Chapter 18

The Book

In order to understand well the *Laws* of Plethon (and not of Gemistos) it is, first, appropriate to summarize what we know about this text. According to Scholarios, who provided a detailed description before he let it burn, it was divided into three parts or books in the ancient sense. Each part was preceded by a long list of the topics treated in it corresponding exactly to a table of contents placed at the beginning of the modern edition of the *Laws*.¹ Each book had also the heading: 'Plethon's *First Book of Laws* (Πλήθωνος Νόμων συγγραφῆς βιβλίον πρῶτον)' and so forth,² all beginning with the same general introductory sentence.³ We are told by Scholarios that 'the whole book was written in his hand.'⁴ It was therefore Gemistos' autograph and the source of all the copies which seem to have been made sometimes with his consent and sometimes without. When Scholarios was destroying it, he spared just the list of topics, which were bound to the boards of the book, and the hymns to 'his gods' in order to justify the decision he had made. He tore off the rest and burnt it in public.⁵ From Scholarios' description, we can also try to estimate the approximate length of the book. According to his testimony, it took him four entire hours, 'the shortest part of one day', to 'go through' the whole book.⁶ He also says that the chapters about offerings, hymns and allocutions (that means, presumably chapters III,34–9 in the modern

¹ Scholarios, *Ad Jos.* 157.37–159.12: 'Ἐκάστου [sc. βιβλίου] ὑποθέσεις προτεταγμένα ἦσαν πολλαί, καθάπερ ἐν πίνακι Cf. *Leg.* 6–14.

² Scholarios, *Ad Jos.* 159.10–12; cf. *Leg.* 16 [I,1].

³ Scholarios, *Ad Jos.* 159.13–17: Τάδε συγγέγραπται περὶ νόμων τε καὶ πολιτείας τῆς ἀρίστης, ἧ ἂν διανοοῦμενοι ἄνθρωποι, καὶ ἄττ' ἂν καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ κοινῇ μετιόντες τε καὶ ἐπιτηδεύοντες, ὡς δυνατόν ἀνθρώπῳ κάλλιστά τε καὶ ἄριστα βίωεν, καὶ ἐς ὅσον οἶόν τε, εὐδαιμονέστατα. Cf. *Leg.* 16 [I,1].

⁴ Scholarios, *Ad Jos.* 171.37: 'Ἦν δ' ἅπαν χειρὶ γεγραμμένον ἐκεῖνου.

⁵ *Ibid.* 171.37–172.3: Τοὺς τῶν ὑποθέσεων πίνακας μόνους ἀφήκαμεν ταῖς σανίσι μένειν προσδεδεμένους, καὶ τοὺς ὕμνους πρὸς τῷ τέλει τῶν ἐκεῖνου θεῶν, ὅπως, σωζομένων αὐτῶν, μηδεὶς ἔχη ποτὲ τῆς ἡμετέρας καταψευδεσθαι κρίσεως· τὸ δ' ἄλλο πᾶν ἀποσπασθέν ἐπαφείθη πυρὶ, καὶ πολλῶν ἐπ' ὄψεσι ταῦτα ἐγένετο.

⁶ *Ibid.* 160.4–5: ... ἐν ὥραις τέτταρσιν ὄλαις, ἐλαχίστῳ μιᾶς ἡμέρας μορίῳ, τὸ βιβλίον ἅπαν ἐπήλθομεν Cf. Monfasani 1992, pp. 49–50.

edition), constituted 'almost one third of the book.' We may thus suppose that the huge chapters III,34–6, which have been preserved in their entirety, and which are apparently a part of the text spared by Scholarios,⁸ probably represent the majority of 'almost one third' of the *Laws*. What is missing from it are only three technical chapters (III,37–9) on the right offering whose titles we know from the list of topics and which seem to be much shorter than the hymns and especially the allocutions. If the entire chapter III,36 on the calendar,⁹ which is also very technical, has roughly a little more than 10 pages in the modern edition, the length of chapters III,37–9 should not then exceed 30 pages, and even this number may be too much. Now, in the modern edition chapters III,34–6 have some 70 pages, and so, if we add other 30, 'almost one third of the *Laws*' will equal about 100 pages. It therefore seems that the whole book was a little longer than 300 pages¹⁰ whereas the modern editions have 130 pages, which means that we have some 43 per cent of the book, that is, nearly half of it.¹¹ The allocutions to the gods is a very long chapter, and so, if the text of only 15 chapters out of 101 listed in the list of topics is preserved,¹² this would mean that most of those that have been lost had to be really short.¹³ On the whole, we thus have not as bad a knowledge of Gemistos' book as is often assumed, because it seems that a substantial part of it has come down to us. This enables us to guess that the missing parts of the book were not probably much different (for instance, more open to an interpretation that would be in better agreement with Christianity) than the rest.¹⁴

⁷ Scholarios, *Ad Theod.* 154.22–3: τὰ δὲ περὶ θυσίων καὶ ὕμνων εἰς τοὺς αὐτοῦ θεοῦ καὶ προσηύσεων, τοὺς γε οὐκ ὄντας, ἃ τὸ τρίτον σχεδὸν τοῦ βιβλίου μέρος ἐστὶν αὐτῷ ...

⁸ *Leg.* 58–60 [III,36], 132–240 [III,34–6], completed by *Add.* 101.1–7, 108v.1–3, 114.2–7, 118v.21–123.17, 132.5–133.4, 133.4, 133v.7–134.4, below, pp. 311–20. Cf. Masai 1956, pp. 395, n.2, 399–400. In the manuscript tradition the allocutions and the hymns form a compact and independent whole. Thus the manuscript *Additional* 5424, kept in British Library, starts with them, fols 101–34, and the beginning of the book, including the table of the topics and some preserved initial chapters, follow only afterwards, fols 134v–146. Furthermore, the early translation of the *Laws* into Arabic includes exclusively these three chapters; cf. Nicolet–Tardieu 1980, pp. 45–9.

⁹ In the Alexandre's edition only a part of it is published: see the references in the preceding note.

¹⁰ See Monfasani 1992, pp. 49–50, where the approximate length of *The Book of Laws* is estimated to about 240 pages on the basis of the speed of Scholarios' reading.

¹¹ There are roughly 12–13 unpublished pages from chapters III,34 and 36 preserved in *Add.*, which were calculated into the length of what was 'almost one third' of the *Laws*.

¹² Masai 1956, pp. 394–400.

¹³ Cf. Schultze 1874, pp. 121–2, Masai 1956, p. 395, n.1, Monfasani 1992, p. 50.

¹⁴ Cf. Monfasani 1992, pp. 49–52, *contra* Kristeller 1972, p. 97.

Another feature of Plethon's book is its apparently disorderly composition. Already Scholarios complains about the disorder in the list of topics, which, according to him, is not a sign of a wise man.¹⁵ The themes in chapter headings as well as in the extant texts often recur; digressions and repetitions of the same thought in the later chapters are also frequent. This is in contrast to Gemistos' other writings which usually have a more elaborated and meticulous composition (perhaps with the exception of the *Differences* written during a very short time in Florence, whose structure would probably be closest to the disorder in some chapters of the *Laws*). However, despite such an overall impression about Plethon's text, from its list of topics it seems that, on a more general level, book I formed an whole with a clear arrangement. After an introduction (chapter I,1–5) Plethon provides a general description of the levels of reality (6–13), including man; then he discusses ethics (14–16), and political and religious prescriptions (17–26), after which he concludes the whole book with chapters devoted again partly to metaphysics (27–31). Book II begins once more with themes similar to those that were discussed already in book I, and from the list of topics it seems that they are treated in more detail. However, ethical and political chapters, that is, the legislation proper, are absent. They reappear in book III, which starts with two chapters that 'take up again' (Ἀνάληψις) the reasoning about fate and the immortality of the human soul. After ethics (3–13) there is a series of chapters devoted to practical legislation (14–20), which are followed by the chapters on theological and philosophical questions (21–3), once more, ethics (24–8), economics (29–30) and punishments (31). Book III ends with chapters on the gods and their veneration, including allocutions and hymns to them (32–42), the very last chapter (43) being an *Epinomis*, which makes Plethon's *Laws* recall all the more Plato's dialogue of the same name.¹⁶ It has been suggested that book I and books II–III were in fact two separate units.¹⁷ However, this does not explain why they were both contained in the same manuscript and numbered from I to III, as is confirmed by Scholarios. It is therefore more probable to suppose that we have to do here with a kind of a loose composition, where the chapters, although organized in a certain order, are to some extent self-sufficient. This is certainly true for the allocutions and hymns and the *Epinomis*. It also seems that chapter II,6 *On Fate* circulated as a separate treatise, because of the number of copies

¹⁵ Scholarios, *Ad Theod.* 154.12–13, 157.37–158.1.

¹⁶ *Leg.* 6–14.

¹⁷ Masai 1956, pp. 402–4, thus on the basis of the presumed development of Gemistos' ethics, distinguishes two successive redactions, the first (book I) before the Council of Florence, the second (books II–III) after it. Tambrun-Krasker 1998, p. 273, goes as far as to proposing that 'chaque livre du *Traité des lois* correspond donc plutôt à une étape ou à un niveau de son programme d'enseignement'. See also Monfasani 1992, pp. 50–51.

and because Kamariotes had it at his disposal. It has been assumed that it was diffused in a close circle of Gemistos' associates. However, it is improbable that it was ever officially published during Gemistos' life.¹⁸ Its content was – as the rest of the *Laws* – apparently pagan¹⁹ and it is also probable that Scholarios would have mentioned or used it in some way, when he was trying to unveil the mystery of Plethon's paganism.²⁰ It is similarly clear that Scholarios somehow got hold of the beginning of the *Book of Laws*. This all supports the conclusion that the *Book of Laws* was a collection of rather independent essays. On the whole, they were, however, united by the same philosophical views and ordered according to a certain pattern (into book I and books II–III).

We may also suppose that there was just one manuscript of the *Laws*, written in Gemistos' hand, from which some copies had been made. It seems that by burning this particular exemplar Scholarios successfully managed to prevent the diffusion of the book any further. We do not know about any other occasion when Plethon's *Laws* was burnt, and its first editors, Kabakes and Apostoles, tried to collect as many fragments as possible to reconstruct the text.²¹ This original manuscript was apparently Gemistos' unique personal exemplar, from which some semi-independent parts circulated separately, and we may also conclude that the composition of the *Laws* was gradual. When Gemistos finished the individual chapters, he might have transcribed them in his personal exemplar and gradually arranged them into three books. This conclusion gains support from the fact that, according to Scholarios, each book had its independent list of topics at its beginning.²² (Gemistos might have left a blank page at the beginning of each book on which he gradually added the titles of the finished chapters, which he had transcribed into the manuscript.)

This leads to another important question concerning the date when the book was written. It is often assumed that Gemistos was working on the *Laws* most intensively after his return to Mistra from the Council.²³ We have nevertheless seen that the change of his name to Plethon, which appears at the heading of

¹⁸ Cf. Alexandre 1858, pp. xc–xcii, Masai 1956, pp. 197–8.

¹⁹ Precisely because of its pagan tone, Johannes Sophianos, while translating it into Latin for the cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, significantly 'skips a mention of Zeus, and consistently renders the plural θεοί with the singular *deus*', Kristeller 1970, pp. 26–7.

²⁰ Cf. Masai 1956, p. 396, n.1, Monfasani 1992, p. 48, n.16.

²¹ Cf. Masai–Masai 1954, p. 554, Masai 1956, p. 394, n.6, p. 398, n.1, Woodhouse 1986, p. 363.

²² Scholarios, *Ad Jos.* 157.37–8: 'Ἐκάστου δὲ [sc. βιβλίου] ὑποθέσεις προτεταγμένα ἦσαν πολλαί, καθάπερ ἐν πίνακι, μηδεμίαν πρὸς ἀλλήλας σώζουσαι τάξιν. Cf. *Leg.* 6–14.

²³ Cf. Alexandre 1858, pp. xix–xxi, Masai 1956, pp. 401–4, Woodhouse 1986, pp. ix, 318–21, 357.

each book, has probably nothing to do with this event and with the publication of the *Differences*. There is in fact no reason which would exclude the possibility that Gemistos had started writing it much earlier, before his journey to Italy.²⁴ On the contrary, placing this work into his last years brings some significant difficulties. The book would have had to be written when he was supposedly over 80 and certainly very old. Although we know that he was active until his last days and was able to compose such a long treatise as the *Reply to Scholarios* or to discuss with Bessarion the procession of the Holy Spirit, not to mention other shorter, occasional texts, the book of the *Laws*, nonetheless, exceeds all these works by its much greater length. Furthermore, if we locate the most important part of Gemistos' literary activity after the year 1439, there would not remain many texts written before this date. Was he so absorbed by his political and teaching obligations that he had no time for writing down his philosophy? This is hardly credible.

We have seen that Scholarios had certainly some passages from the beginning of the *Laws* at his disposal around 1444. If the *Laws*, at least in part, were really written before the Council of Florence, we may be able to detect some thought or textual parallels between various chapters of his book and other texts by Gemistos that we can date more or less accurately.²⁵ Furthermore, if the composition of the *Laws* was indeed gradual, as it has just been suggested, we should be able to observe the progress of Gemistos' work.

(I) The first possible parallel that may be pointed out is the classification of the three types of atheism and the corresponding three basic principles concerning the divine, inspired by book X of Plato's *Laws*, that appears in the *Address to Theodore* from 1416–1418 and in the *Laws* I,1. In both cases a similar vocabulary is used. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the texts contain the same doctrine, they are not identical.²⁶

(II) Another potential candidate for a parallel is rather a similar motif appearing in two different texts, not a close textual similarity. In the oration *On Cleope* from 1433 it is claimed that God would not have given us the ability to know him, by which we are somehow akin to him, as well as the desire for everlastingness, if we had not been capable of achieving it. It is, similarly, asserted

²⁴ Cf. Masai 1956, p. 401, Theodorakopoulos 1977, pp. 19–20.

²⁵ The parallel passages are reprinted and arranged together in the Appendix at the end of this work: see below, pp. 287–309.

²⁶ *Ad Theod.* 125.3–126.7, *Leg.* 22–4 [I,1]: see Appendix I, below, pp. 287–8.

in the *Laws* I,3 that the gods would not have made us able to inquire into divine things, if it would have been a vain task.²⁷ In these two cases we cannot speak of parallels in the strong sense, but we may make the observation that Gemistos was interested in certain motifs at some time.

(III) The next parallel is much more obvious. In the *Differences* IV and X from 1439 as well as in the *Laws* I,5 not only similar words, but also similar expressions are used to describe the gradual differentiation of reality. The only difference is that while in the first text the Greek word ἐνεργία is used to designate actuality, in the second one it is πρᾶξις which is, however, ἐνεργός. Moreover, in the *Differences* X the attributes (τὰ προσόντα) are distinguished from the essences of the Forms and it is not at first sight clear how this distinction is related to the one between their activity and essence that appears both in the *Differences* IV and in the *Laws*. In the latter text the problem of the attributes of the Forms is discussed separately in a different context in the same chapter only few pages earlier.²⁸ Given the fact that the same motif of the gradual differentiation of reality appears in the *Differences* in two distinct passages (in section IV and X) and in view of the short time and an improvised manner in which this treatise was written, based on lectures to the Italian humanists, as we are told by Gemistos himself,²⁹ we may conclude that the *Laws* are here the source for the *Differences*, rather than vice versa. Gemistos most likely used one and the same text of the *Laws* twice, in section IV and X of the *Differences*, and in both cases he replaced the original πρᾶξις (activity) that is ἐνεργός (active) by ἐνεργία (activity–actuality), which is an obvious counterpart of δύναμις (potentiality). At the same time he added to the distinction between essence and its activity appearing in the *Laws* another one between essence and its attribute that he had taken from other part of the same chapter. This is also the reason why the passages in the *Differences* are less clear than those in the *Laws*.

(IV) The fourth parallel, between the *Differences* X and the *Laws* III,15 is even closer than the previous one as many common expressions or even identical

²⁷ *In Cleop.* 172.14–173.8, *Leg.* 40 [I,3]: see Appendix II, below, pp. 288–9.

²⁸ *De diff.* IV 326.31–327.4, X 337.7–28, *Leg.* 46–8, 54 [I,5]: see Appendix III, below, pp. 289–91.

²⁹ *Contra Schol.* XXIV 438.3–8: Οὐ γὰρ οὐδὲ πάνυ σπουδάσασιν ἐκεῖνα συνεγράφη, ἀλλὰ νοσήσασιν ἐν Φλωρεντία ... καὶ ἔκ τε τῆς οἰκίας ἐν ἧ ἔσκηνοῦμεν, συχνῶν ἡμερῶν οὐ προϊοῦσι καὶ κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἀλύουσι· ἅμα μὲν καὶ ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς ἐς τὴν ἀλύην παραμυθούμενοι, ἅμα δὲ τι καὶ τοῖς Πλάτωνι προσκεκίμενοις 'χαριζόμενοις' συνεγράφη. 'Ἐν βραχυτάτοις οὖν ἐκεῖνά τε συνεγράφη ...'. 'That work was not composed as a result of thorough research ... but at a time when I had been indisposed at Florence and was unable for several days to go out of the house where I was staying; perhaps, too, because I was bored, and was trying at one and the same time to relieve my boredom and to "do a favour" to those who were interested in Plato. Thus I wrote that work in the briefest form ...'. Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 156.

phrases and sentences appear. In both of them the problem of the existence of the ideal model for human artefacts and the status of mathematics in relation to the world of the Platonic Forms are jointly treated. However, the argumentation in the *Laws* proceeds more naturally. While discussing different orders of the gods and especially the Forms, Plethon suggests a possible objection that the Forms of mortal things may be located in the intellect of the Sun. He compares this intellect to a craftsman who has in his mind the form of the thing which he is working on. Then he argues at length against this conception, and finally shows that the Forms of artefacts are to be placed in Pluto, the Form of the human soul, where they are supposed to exist simultaneously and together ('in the manner of unity'). He then compares their manner of being to mathematical entities that exist 'in the manner of unity' in Hera, the Form of matter, but may be extended to infinity in human thought. Compared to the gradual argumentation in the *Laws*, the composition of the *Differences*, in which the same formulations are used, is much more fragmentary. The localization of human artefacts in the Form of man and the subordination of mathematical infinity to one ideal Form, in which it is contained simultaneously, is also mentioned jointly, but in reverse order. Both these points belong to a series of succinct counter-arguments against Aristotle's objections to the Platonic Forms taken from chapter 9 of book I of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.³⁰

Table 9 A textual comparison of Plethon's *Differences X* and Aristotle's *Metaphysics I,9*

<i>De diff. X</i>	<i>Met. I,9</i>
335.19–22	990b11–14
335.39–336.1	990b11–14
338.27–8	990b19–20
338.31–2	990b28–9
339.16–19	991a2–3, 5–8
339.28–31	991a9–11
340.21–4	991a12–14
340.28–30	991a29–b1
340.38–341.4	991b4–9

³⁰ The relation of the *Differences* to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* may be summarized in Table 9. Cf. the notes 78, 81, 88–9, 91–2, 99, 101, 103 of Woodhouse's translation based on Lagarde 1976 in Woodhouse 1986, pp. 206–12; cf. also the notes to the translation in Blum 1988, pp. 148–9.

Moreover, the conception according to which the Forms are to be located in the intellect of the Sun, with which the argumentation in the *Laws* begins, is also discussed in the *Differences* and the similarity of both texts is, once again, very close. This theme appears almost at the end of section X, among replies to various critical arguments by Aristotle that do not in fact have much in common.³¹ It thus seems that here, too, the *Differences* depends on the *Laws* and not vice versa. Because of the textual similarity, we may conclude that Gemistos most probably used parts of the long passages of *Laws* III,15 when he was composing the *Differences* or in this case he was obviously even copying the text directly. It is also interesting to note that in section X of the *Differences* the passage inspired by the *Laws* I,5, discussed above, and the section dependent on *Laws* III,15 (artefacts and mathematics) follow closely one after another. This may suggest that Plethon was borrowing arguments from different parts of his secret book and perhaps also other texts, either by him or by other authors (especially Aristotle), which he had at his disposal when working on the *Differences*.³² This treatise is thus indeed an occasional writing that, in a specific form of the systematic refutation of Aristotle's philosophy, just summarizes and presents in rather improvised and succinct way Gemistos' favourite ideas and considerations.

(V) Another parallel is the argument for the immortality of the human soul based on the occurrence of human suicide. This argument can be found not only in both Gemistos' funeral orations, *On Cleope* from 1433 and *On Helen* from 1450, but also in the *Epinomis*, the closing part of the *Laws* (III,43).³³ Both orations have many features, including textual affinities, in common with the secret book, and especially the later oration seems, as we shall see further on, dependent on it. It is, however, more difficult to establish its relation to the earlier oration, though this oration may, in fact, have been the impulse for writing the final section of the *Epinomis*, where Plethon seems to have used some text from it – actually just one sentence.

(VI) The sixth parallel is by far the most complex. The common motif here is the composed nature of man that consists of a mortal and an immortal part akin to the divine. Gemistos developed this thought in a rudimentary form as early as the *Address to Theodore* from 1416–1418, but also in the oration

³¹ *De diff.* X 337.34–338.10, 341.11–39, *Leg.* 108–10, 114 [III,15]: see Appendix IV, below, pp. 291–3.

³² Karamanolis 2002, pp. 264–7, argues that Gemistos based his treatise on Atticus' criticism of Aristotle contained in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Praep. evan.* XV,4–13.

³³ *In Cleop.* 173.9–174.4, *In Hel.* 278.4–279.2, *Leg.* 248 [III,43: *Epinomis*]: see Appendix V, below, pp. 293–4; cf. Masai 1956, p. 403.

On Cleope from 1433 and tentatively at the beginning of the *Laws* (I,1).³⁴ In the case of *On Cleope* it is the same passage that was discussed as the second parallel, which has some, but not really strong, connection to *Laws* I,3. The beginning of the *Laws* is again very systematic and its composition is well ordered. Could it thus be that Gemistos had already written the beginning of the *Laws*, which has some affinities to the *Address to Theodore*, and then he recalled some thoughts contained in opening of the *Laws* when writing *On Cleope*? Our evidence is unfortunately very weak.

The same motif of man composed of a mortal and an immortal part can be found also in the *Response to John VIII Palaiologos*, written most probably shortly after 1439. There are some significant textual similarities between it and the *Epinomis* (*Laws* III,43) which in turn also has close affinities to *On Helen* from 1450.³⁵ The text of the secret book is, again, the most systematic of all of these works, the argumentation there being well ordered, and it is thus highly probable that both the other texts relied on it. This would mean that the *terminus ante quem* for the composition of this closing part of the *Laws* are the years immediately following Gemistos' visit to Italy and the publication of the *Differences*, if it is not, as we have seen during the discussion of the fifth parallel, as early as the oration *On Cleope* of 1433 that takes a formulation from the *Epinomis*.

The resemblances with *On Helen* are even more important for the proper understanding of the oration in praise of the deceased Empress. In the *Epinomis* the passage begins by laying down three 'axioms'. The first presupposes that there is one God that is supremely good and eternity is then derived from this presupposition. In the second, the analogy of generation (γέννησις) and essence (οὐσία) is asserted from which Plethon derives the division of reality into a tripartite structure: (1) the gods of the second order, some of whom are mentioned along with the difference between the legitimate and illegitimate ones, (2) the gods of the third order and (3) mortal things.³⁶ Finally, the third axiom asserts a similar analogy between essence and its action (ἔργον) upon which the argument for the immortality of the human soul, capable of action akin to the divine, is based. The structure in *On Helen* is very similar, although only the last axiom is mentioned. Gemistos talks first about God who is supremely good. In the second place, he mentions 'the nature between him and us' that may exist in one genus or in many genera. Finally, he uses the third axiom

³⁴ *Ad Theod.* 126.11–23, *In Cleop.* 172.14–173.3, *Leg.* 26 [I,1]: see Appendix VI,1–3, below, p. 295.

³⁵ *Ad quaes.* 99–104, 109–20, *In Hel.* 275.10–277.11, *Leg.* 242, 246 [III,43: *Epinomis*]: see Appendix VI,4–6, below, pp. 295–8. Other – not so close parallels – are suggested in Benakis' introduction and appendix to *Ad quaes.*, pp. 340–43, 369–76.

³⁶ *Leg.* 96 [III,15].

as well as many other formulations from the *Epinomis* to prove the immortality of the human soul. It is thus clear that Gemistos used exactly this latter text when he was writing the funeral oration. The original structure based on the three initial axioms remained the same while some of its parts were left out. What is also noteworthy is the correspondence between the gods of the second order and 'some other nature between him and us'. This rather odd passage is sometimes treated as the proof that in his last years Gemistos professed pagan beliefs.³⁷ However, in fact, it seems that he just reformulated for the purpose of the oration an earlier text that in its original form was even more pagan (since it contained the names of the ancient Greek gods appearing in the *Epinomis*).

(VII) Moreover, the second and third axioms (essence is analogous to generation and essence is analogous to action respectively) have several more or less close parallels in various texts, such as the *Differences X*, the *Reply to Scholarios XXIII* and the *Reply to the Treatise in Support of Latins*,³⁸ the last of which has been discussed above.

(VIII) There is also an important parallel between the calendar contained in chapter III,36, in which the right order of the sacred days is determined and Gemistos' astronomical treatise (*A Method of Fixing the Sun, Moon, Conjunctions, Full Moons and Period of the Planets*).³⁹ This text exists in two variants, the first one, anonymous and identified as probably Gemistos' work (proto-Plethon) by its editors, originated presumably in Constantinople at the beginning of fifteenth century,⁴⁰ whereas the second one was very likely written in the Peloponnese in 1433. This would mean that the first version was written before Gemistos moved to Mistra where he revised it substantially in 1433.⁴¹ Now, chapter III,36 of the *Laws*⁴² shares with both version the same definition of month and year, which is, furthermore, written in very similar formulations. It is, however, interesting to note that there are some formulations that are closer to the first version, whereas others are closer to the second or even missing in proto-Plethon.⁴³ This may be best explained by situating the origin of this part of

³⁷ Mamalakis 1939, pp. 222–3, Woodhouse 1986, p. 312.

³⁸ *De diff. X* 340.9–15, *Contra Schol.* XXIII 430.25–432.11, *Contra Lat.* 300, 302–3, *Leg.* 242 [III,43: *Epinomis*]: see Appendix VII, below, pp. 298–300.

³⁹ *Meth.* 40–42, 132, *Leg.* 58–60 [III,36]: see Appendix VIII, below, pp. 300–303.

⁴⁰ Cf. Tihon's and Mercier's introduction and commentary on *Meth.*, pp. 33–6, 216–17, 274.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 20–22, 33, 216, 274.

⁴² Wrongly classified as I,21 in the modern edition of the *Laws*; cf. Masai 1956, p. 395, n.2.

⁴³ Notable is also the specification of the winter motion of the Sun πρὸς νότον in the second version, but missing in both proto-Plethon and the *Laws*, which caused much

the *Laws* between the composition of both version of the astronomical treatise. Gemistos might have used proto-Plethon when he was working on this chapter of the *Laws* in which he elaborates in more detail than in the astronomical treatises his rational calendar⁴⁴ and then, in turn, copied some of the formulations from the *Laws* to a new version of his astronomical treatise. If this conclusion is true, it would mean that chapter III,36, which is one of the last chapters of the *Laws*, was written before 1433.

There is also the last parallel (IX) between the *Laws* III,15 and the *Reply to Latins*, which we shall come back to later on.⁴⁵

The gradual development of Plethon's *Laws* may be thus demonstrated in Table 10 (below), where the individual chapters of the *Laws* and other writings of Gemistos' that may be dated with some precision are compared.⁴⁶ (The close textual parallels, including the same expressions or whole phrases, are marked with an asterisk.)

We may thus conclude that it is highly probable that Gemistos began to work on his *Laws* some time before his journey to the Council in Italy. We may also quite plausibly surmise that he had already used his surname Plethon before 1439 because it was written at the beginning of each book of this treatise. It would be really tempting to claim that he actually began to conceive an ideal philosophical constitution, elaborated in the *Laws* in detail, in 1416–1418 when he was proposing his Platonic reforms for the Despotate. Since we have found merely similar motifs in the *Laws* and the *Address to Theodore*, and not a real parallel, it would be too risky to draw a strong conclusion on the basis of this material. In the *Differences* some passages from the *Laws* are adopted and transformed, including chapter III,15 that is already near the end of this treatise. Its closing part, the *Epinomis*, has also quite significant textual parallels with a text that was written with some degree of certainty in the years immediately after 1439. It is therefore possible that the 1433 text somehow depends on the *Epinomis*. As can be also surmised from a comparison with the two versions of Gemistos' astronomical treatise, chapter III,36 was written before 1433. The *Laws* thus may have been written in a period of roughly 20 years, between the

confusion in the understanding of the passage in the latter Gemistos' treatise; cf. Tihon's commentary on *Meth.*, p. 180.

⁴⁴ Tihon's commentary on *Meth.*, pp. 178–83.

⁴⁵ *Contra Lat.* 302–3, *Leg.* 100 [III,15]: see Appendix IX, below, p. 303. See also the title of lost chapter III,22 of the *Laws*: Περὶ Διός, ὡς οὐδὲ λόγῳ διάκρισις τις ἐν αὐτῷ ἔστιν. 'On Zeus, and the non-existence of division in him, even in thought.' *Leg.* 14, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 324 (altered).

⁴⁶ Some of the parallels proposed here have been already noted by Theodorakopoulos 1977, pp. 19–20.

second half of the 1410s, when Gemistos first started to speculate about the ideal state order, and some time around 1440, when, as it seems, he had already written most of it (certainly chapter III,15 and very probably also III,36).⁴⁷ Furthermore, it is possible that he finished or he was working on the *Epinomis* in 1433 when he was writing *On Cleope*.

Table 10 A comparison of chapters of Plethon's *Laws* with his other dated writings

Parallel	<i>Laws</i>	Other writings	Date of composition
I	I,1	<i>Address to Theodore</i>	1416–1418
VI	I,1	<i>Address to Theodore</i> <i>On Cleope</i>	1416–1418 1433
II	I,3	<i>On Cleope</i>	1433
*III	I,5	<i>Differences IV, X</i>	1439
IX	III,15	<i>Reply to Latins</i>	c.1450
*IV	III,15	<i>Differences X</i>	1439
*VIII	III,16	<i>Method</i> (proto-Plethon) <i>Method</i>	1400s 1433
VII	III,43 (<i>Epinomis</i>)	<i>Differences X</i> <i>Reply to Scholarios XXIII</i> <i>Reply to Latins</i>	1439 c.1449 c.1450
*VI	III,43 (<i>Epinomis</i>)	<i>Response to John VIII</i> <i>On Helen</i>	shortly after 1439 1450
*V	III,43 (<i>Epinomis</i>)	<i>On Cleope</i> <i>On Helen</i>	1433 1450

⁴⁷ According to Marcantonio Antimaco (c.1473–1551), Gemistos amused himself with composing verses while staying in Florence: Giraldi, *De poet.* II,2–4; cf. Woodhouse 1986, p. 178. Though Antimaco wrote many years after the events, he had very good sources of information. The only poetry by Gemistos we have are the hymns incorporated into the *Laws* as chapter III,35. This would again mean that the closing parts of Plethon's book were written some time around the Council.

This conclusion is naturally based on several assumptions discussed above, namely, that the writing of the *Laws* was gradual and evolved and that Plethon never radically reworked the composition of this treatise but just added new chapters (which could sometimes even stand by themselves as short independent treatises) into a broader but not really too strict and well-ordered plan, as is apparent from the table of topics. Thus the *Epinomis*, although it may be seen as a wholly independent text, was obviously projected as the closing chapter of the *Laws* appearing in the table of the topics placed at the beginning of Book III. The assumption that Plethon worked on the *Laws* in this manner is also supported by the repetition of the themes that was noted already by Scholarios. Gemistos was apparently accustomed to using the arguments and philosophical considerations contained in the *Laws* during the composition of his other texts that are more succinct and dense. It is thus quite possible that the *Laws* were for him a kind of exercise book in which he developed his Platonic thought at length. As it is obvious from the table of the topics in the *Laws* he returned to the same thoughts again from a different perspective and sometimes added new features to them, thus gradually developing his own version of Platonism. Even the allocutions and hymns, accompanied by instructions for the right cult of the gods could be thus seen as an attempt to find other than a purely philosophical approach to ancient polytheism and to demonstrate what sort of poetry is appropriate for the veneration of the gods. In other words, the *Laws*, especially in its philosophical passages, seems to be a workbook rather than a sacred book.⁴⁸ Although it is most probably a text that contained personal and private thoughts, we cannot exclude a possibility that he also used some parts of it in his teaching. This might be the reason why some parts seem to have circulated as separate treatises. That this was exactly one of the purposes of this odd work could be further supported by the fact that Bessarion sometimes used it in a similar way.

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One might argue, as Fabio Pagani has recently done, that it is possible to determine the real intention of Plethon's *Laws* by the fact that Gemistos crased and altered passages in classical texts, most notably in the works of Plato, the

⁴⁸ According to a brief remark made en passant, the book of the *Laws* is supposed to be sometimes placed in a sanctuary (ἐν δ' ἱερῶ ... ἢ τῶν νόμων τῶνδε προκείοιτο βιβλος); *Add.* 132.22, below, p. 318. However, Plethon says this in a context of his detailed description of the due rituals to the gods and there is naturally no indication that such a sanctuary really existed. It is thus more probably just a part of the detailed 'utopian' fiction developed in the *Laws*. See below, pp. 278–82.

Orphic Hymns and the *Hymns* of Proclus. It has been suggested by Pagani that these textual modifications are a result of a projection of the mythology and theology from the *Laws* into the ancient texts, mainly those by Plato.⁴⁹

However, as regards the Platonic texts, such a conclusion is not necessary, not even very probable. First, Gemistos indeed erased several passages which contain paraphrases or quotations from the ancient poets (especially from Homer and Hesiod) or simply some myths.⁵⁰ However, in his *Republic* Plato, too, bans from the ideal city the myths that describe violent deeds of the gods and the fights in which they take part, even though they might be explained allegorically.⁵¹ So in his modification of Platonic corpus Gemistos was following more probably Plato's bidding rather than the peculiar mythology of his own *Laws*. As has been mentioned above, Gemistos claims that myths may be useful for the education of the many if they conceal the deeper truth and that even Plato, following the example of other theologians, invented his own myths in order to counterbalance the negative influence of the poets.⁵²

More particularly, in his modification of Plato's texts Gemistos erased the information related to the genealogical origin of some of the gods and references to the golden age under the rule of Cronus;⁵³ in other words, he tended to conceive the gods atemporally. Moreover, he suppressed the mythological names of the planets and used the 'Chaldaean' ones instead.⁵⁴ Finally, Gemistos left out the passages where reincarnation into animals is implied.⁵⁵ Nonetheless,

⁴⁹ See Keydell 1942, pp. 77–9, Pagani 2008, 2009, pp. 186–99. It is, however, doubtful whether Plethon's motivation was really to promote his own ideas under the guise of an altered text; cf. *ibid.*, p. 198. Unlike in the West, the text of Plato was relatively accessible in Byzantium; see Runciman 1970, pp. 31–2, Fryde 2000, pp. 185–91. So one wonders whether Gemistos could have really hoped that he would manage to keep his alterations of the text – easily observable in the manuscript – cf. Pagani 2009, tab. iii–xv – unnoticed and be successful in spreading them among his associates who were able students of ancient Greek texts.

⁵⁰ Pagani 2009, pp. 176–81, Plato, *Gorg.* 523a3–5, *Symp.* 178b1–c2, 195c1–6, 197b5–9, *Leg.* I 636c7–d5.

⁵¹ Plato, *Resp.* II 377e–378e; cf. *Euth.* 5e–6a.

⁵² *Contra Schol.* VI 382.22–384.5, *Ad Bess.* I 462.32–5. A more tangible case of Plethon's projection of the *philosophia perennis* into an ancient text is his treatise *On Homer*. Here he explains the gods appearing in Homer's *Iliad* as the metaphysical principles from the *Laws*.

⁵³ Pagani 2009, pp. 176–81, Plato, *Gorg.* 523b4–5, *Symp.* 181c1–4, 195b7, *Leg.* II 672b4, IV 713b2, c5, c7.

⁵⁴ Pagani 2009, pp. 181–4, Plato, *Epin.* 984d3–5, 986e8, 987a8–b5, c4–6; the erasure at 987b7–8 seems to be provoked by some astronomical reasonings. For the 'Chaldaean' names of the planets used by Plethon see Cumont 1935. See above, p. 133, n.39.

⁵⁵ Pagani 2009, pp. 184–6, Plato, *Resp.* X 618a3–4, 619e6–620d5.

he did not or could not introduce similar alterations systematically in all the relevant passages.⁵⁶ It is possible to claim that, on the whole, there are indeed obvious parallels between the doctrines contained in his *Laws* and the passages Gemistos erased. However, such parallels are not always close ones. It indeed rather seems that the motivation for his corrections was provided by Plato's own text in the case of the censorship of Homer and Hesiod and by the Neoplatonists in the case of the atemporal conception of the gods and the reincarnation into animals.⁵⁷ As for the 'Chaldaean' names of the planets, they are not decisive since Gemistos used them both in his *Laws* and in his astronomical treatise, although inconsistently there, which suggests that they had not got any special significance for him.⁵⁸

Gemistos' alteration of the *Orphic Hymns* is even a more puzzling case. He reordered the hymns and deliberately left out certain verses, and composed the first three hymns from verses taken from different hymns. Furthermore, he felt free to make his own conjectures, which sometimes result in composing his own verses. What is even more remarkable is the fact that in the proem to the whole collection as modified by Plethon almost all the gods of the mythology from the *Laws* appear (only Tithonus, Hecate, Hestia and Aphrodite are missing whereas Ares, who does not appear in the *Laws*, is mentioned). At the same time many verses mentioning less important divinities are left out. Moreover, the order of the hymns to the different gods as altered in Plethon's edition corresponds roughly to the order of the gods in the mythology of the *Laws* (only the positions of Hera and Poseidon, Artemis and Apollo are interchanged so that in both cases the goddesses have prominence). The Titans and the stars are addressed together in the respective hymns, similarly to the hymns contained in the *Laws*, while, unlike it, the Sun and Moon have received their separate hymns. The only mythological figure praised which has no correspondence in

⁵⁶ Thus, for instance, the golden age under the rule of Cronus is an integral part of the myth in the *Statesman*, 271c–274e. In the *Timaeus*, 38d2, 6, Mercury is called 'the star of Hermes', and at the end of the same dialogue the conception of the reincarnation into animals is developed at length; *ibid.* 90e–92c.

⁵⁷ The Neoplatonic atemporal interpretation of traditional myths is hopefully apparent from the discussion above. For the discussion of the reincarnation of the souls into animals see Dörrie–Baltes 2002, pp. 96–111, 344–82 (Bausteine 178–9), with further references. It is noteworthy that a *Chaldaean Oracle* explicitly rejects the conception of reincarnation into animals, *Or. Chald.* 160, although it does not appear in the edition of the *Oracles* as collected by Plethon. However, he could have come to it in Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, II, 336.29–337.5.

⁵⁸ *Meth.* 52, 56–8 Gemistos, however, does not use the Chaldaean names of the planets in the annexed tables; *ibid.* 98–116, and does not use all of them in proto-Plethon, *ibid.* 144, 148.

the *Laws* appears in the hymn to the dream.⁵⁹ The conjectures made by Gemistos in the first three hymns of his altered collection are also striking since they bring the *Orphic Hymns* closer to the mythology of the *Laws*.⁶⁰ In the modified passages exactly the same expressions as in the hymns composed for the *Laws* appear.⁶¹ We know that Gemistos was interested in hymnic poetry since, apart from the *Orphic Hymns*, he also studied and altered Proclus' hymns. As concerns his handling of the *Orphic Hymns*, it could be that by its 'editing' Gemistos was doing a kind of preparatory work for the composition of his own hymns, which were destined to accompany the *Laws*. There is also the possibility that he was using them in some fashion at the time when the *Laws* was not yet finished.

In contrast to his treatment of the *Orphic Hymns*, Plethon's changes in his edition of Proclus' hymnic poetry are much less radical. He reordered Proclus' seven hymns and he gave them the names usually used afterwards by subsequent editors.⁶² Similarly to his edition of the *Orphic Hymns*, Gemistos not only tried to emend the text, but he also omitted certain verses presumably because he found them difficult to square with some basic conception he had of Plato and perennial philosophy in general.⁶³ Once again, we may thus observe Plethon's interest in hymnic poetry, but in this case it is definitely difficult to see a more substantial relation to his *Laws*.

We have mentioned above⁶⁴ that while making his own edition of the *Chaldaean (Magian) Oracles* Plethon felt free to make substantial emendation of the text as given by Psellos and sometimes even made his own use of extensive passages from the latter's commentary. In this case, though, his approach is praised by modern scholarship to be in some points more in accord with the original meaning of the *Oracles*. It is also quite clear that his textual corrections are largely based on the analysis of the doctrine he identified in them, and not on his *Laws*.

⁵⁹ See Quandt's editorial commentary and *addenda* to Orpheus, *Hymni*, pp. 19^{*}–22^{*}, 82–3, Keydell 1942, pp. 77–80.

⁶⁰ Thus Zeus is not the son of Cronus, Hera is said to be 'of a big name (μεγαλώνυμος)', not 'of many names (πολυώνυμος)', she is called not the spouse but the daughter of Zeus, and Poseidon is his son. Orpheus, *Hymni* 15.6, 16.9: see Appendix XII, 1–2, below, pp. 307–8.

⁶¹ Orpheus, *Hymni* 16.2, 17.1, *Leg.* 204–6 [III,35]: see Appendix XII, 2–4, below, pp. 307–8.

⁶² In Plethon's ordering of the titles goes as follows: 1. The Common Hymn, 2. To the Lycian Aphrodite, 3. The Common Hymn to the Gods, 4. To the Muses, 5. To Aphrodite, 6. To the Sun, 7. To Athena.

⁶³ See Vogt's editorial commentary on Proclus, *Hymni*, pp. 6, 9–11 as well as his critical apparatus; Plethon's edition is marked as *codex O* = *Marc. Gr.* 406 (= 791), fols 133r–135r. Cf. Mioni 1985, p. 159, also van den Berg 2001, pp. 5–8.

⁶⁴ See above, pp. 36–9.

To sum up, Plethon made very frequent, extensive and sometimes quite insensitive alterations in several works of different authors in which he was interested.⁶⁵ We may note that an even more radical procedure was adopted by Theodore Gazes when he was translating some works of Aristotle.⁶⁶ Plethon's approach is certainly very different from that of a modern philologist, but his motivation was apparently an attempt to get to the original form and meaning of the text as he thought it should be.⁶⁷ However, from this fact it does not necessarily follow that he himself adhered to paganism, be it a philosophical paganism or a practical, ritual one. He could well have done this as a Christian who has a vivid interest in ancient texts and who, by his emendations, wanted to support the version of Platonic or Zoroastrian thought he considered to be genuine on the basis of his previous conclusions. In other words, the palaeographic data on their own cannot reveal the secrets of Plethon's philosophical considerations.

⁶⁵ Furthermore, we know that Gemistos erased for instance Herodotus, *Hist.* I,131.6–7; see Pagani 2009, p. 201.

⁶⁶ Cf. Monfasani 2012c, pp. 55–6.

⁶⁷ Cf. Pagani 2008, p. 40.

Chapter 19

Conclusion to Part III: Pagan or Christian?

It is obviously a problem to determine who can be considered to be a pagan in the fifteenth century since it is to a large extent a question of the perspective of the modern scholar. It has been observed that in the nineteenth century, when Renaissance thought began to be studied seriously, almost every significant Renaissance thinker was accused of being a neo-pagan. In contrast, according to present scholarship virtually all these thinkers have been rehabilitated and are now usually taken as good Christians.¹ There is just one fifteenth-century exception of someone who is still today generally considered to have been a pagan – that is, Gemistos Plethon, who has not yet been rehabilitated. This apparently reveals also something about us, namely, that, on the whole, we are more open to accept motivations of someone combining together different religious traditions, in this case the ancient gods and Christian theology, and thus we are perhaps more able to understand the religious spirit of *quattrocento* rather than nineteenth-century scholars. Indeed, reading Alexandre's seminal preface to his edition of Plethon's *Laws* published in 1858, which is otherwise an excellent piece of scholarship, one is sometimes surprised by how much from a conservative (Catholic) position Gemistos as well as his pupil Bessarion are occasionally treated.² Such an observation is even more important since Alexandre's edition of the *Laws*, including the numerous appendices he published with it, still forms our opinion about Gemistos and his religious beliefs.

To enter into the very complex problem of Plethon's alleged polytheism, it is necessary to make two distinctions in advance: first, we have to distinguish on the one hand (1) a mere admiration for ancient Greek culture, including its thought and religion. Such an admiration may even influence one's opinions and writings and may seem offensive to some conservative Christian minds, but it does not naturally equate to a full adherence to ancient polytheism.³ On the other hand, there is of course (2) a genuine paganism whose proponents

¹ Monfasani 1992, pp. 45–7.

² See e.g. Alexandre 1858, pp. lxxxii–lxxxiii, with n.1.

³ Pace Siniosoglou 2011.

embrace ancient beliefs as their own. However, there is an obvious problem in how to recognize this. The criterion may be proposed that a real pagan must exercise some outward activity recorded by contemporaries or at least produce some evident written proof of his inner identification with ancient beliefs. If there is nothing similar at our disposal, it would seem best to absolve the suspect from the accusation of paganism. Second, in the case of Gemistos, one must also make another distinction between the conclusions we can establish with relative certainty and the questions we can only speculate about. The problem we have to face here is obviously caused by the fact that we are simply not able ever to be certain about Plethon's real intentions behind some of his actions and writings.

To start from the first distinction we have just made, one must admit that, as we have seen when discussing the people around Gemistos, it is highly probable that there was no secret pagan society in Mistra. The *Laws*, the only evidence on which the accusation of polytheism was based from the very beginning, seems to be in fact a private writing of Gemistos, not a sacred philosophical and ritual book of a sacred society, and most likely it was not intended for a publication. Indeed, the story of Gemistos' paganism seems to be, if not created, then much exaggerated and widely diffused by his Aristotelian enemies, Scholarios and Trebizond, and zealously accepted by some of his quite eccentric admirers like Kabakes and Apostoles. In contrast, his direct pupils do not support such an accusation in any way, rather contesting it by their firm Christianity. There is also no evidence that Gemistos practised polytheism of the ancient form, that is, celebrated pagan rituals and feasts or made sacrifices to the gods. His polytheism, if this was really his true belief, had to be obviously highly rational, theoretical and, as it seems, strictly personal. On the other hand, Gemistos was certainly a pagan not in the way that the ancient Greeks were, but as the Renaissance humanists were. He definitely shared their literary and philosophical admiration for the Greek pagan gods and was ready to appropriate much from ancient pagan texts for his purposes. Nonetheless, this does not mean that he did not remain within the limits of Christianity, although his Christian beliefs may have been rather heterodox as was the case of many humanists.⁴ A revival of ancient Greek polytheism and Christian humanism drawing on ancient pagan texts are thus two extremes between which it is necessary to find a place for Gemistos' own intellectual position.

Since a decision about his personal attitude in theological matters is closely connected with Gemistos' *Laws*, let us concentrate on this text. We may further restrict the problem to the question of whether his inner beliefs were identical

⁴ For the problem of paganism in the Renaissance and the Middle Ages see Sez nec 1940, Wind 1967, Brisson 1996, pp. 147–220, and Godwin 2002.

with the content of the book or not. First, let us consider a possibility that the *Laws* is a faithful expression of Gemistos' real thought. By writing such a book he would put down on paper his religious and political ideas and he could also plan a reform of the Peloponnese according to them. In the last case the *Addresses* to the contemporary Despot of Morea, Theodore and the Emperor, Manuel, would thus represent an attempt to introduce his *Laws* into practice. However, we have seen, the political philosophy expounded in these two kinds of text differs significantly from the *Laws*. In this book Plethon proposes an oligarchic type of government whereas in his *Addresses* he proposes a monarchical one. Although his proposals are obviously inspired by Plato's political philosophy, they are apparently adjusted to the situation of the late Byzantine Empire and they are not in any major conflict with Christianity.⁵

In contrast, there seems to be no serious attempt by Gemistos to harmonize his *Laws* with Christianity, nor curiously also to put its philosophical content into practice. Nor did he ensure its survival as a source of ideology for a future polytheist revival – as George of Trebizond suggests in his famous testimony, not very reliable, as we have seen – since there is no trace of any pagan to whom he would have bequeathed the book, which was easily confiscated by the rulers of Mistra after his death.⁶ This all confirms that public usage really does not seem to be the main function of his *Laws* and so it must have been created for some personal purposes only.

Judging from Gemistos' external activities only and not knowing of the existence of his *Laws*, one would tend to think of him as a determined anti-Unionist, critical of the Latin conception of the procession of the Holy Spirit and close to people with similar attitudes, for whom the future of Orthodoxy was surely a very important issue. Such a position could have been naturally combined with an interest in classical culture and thought. One must admit that Gemistos certainly attracted the attention of certain individuals who were interested – either positively or negatively – in the polytheistic thought of the *Laws*. Nonetheless, they were people who were not in fact his close associates. In contrast, among his friends and pupils there were indisputable Christians who unanimously shared an affection for the great philosopher and scholar. The most notable case is Bessarion, who must have known about Plethon's *Laws* and was even willing to use it in his own writings, but at the same time disputed seriously with his teacher over Christian theology in a private exchange, which would have not made sense if in his eyes Gemistos was not a Christian.⁷ These

⁵ See above, pp. 15–16, 161–2.

⁶ See above, pp. 227–8, 233.

⁷ See above, p. 212–13.

are the difficulties which are often overlooked, but which make it hard to label Gemistos as a pagan.

On the other hand, accepting the scenario in which Gemistos is a Christian, perhaps with extravagant and fervent predilection for ancient Platonism, it is difficult to explain away the existence of the book of the *Laws*. It seems hardly thinkable that somebody would have spent so much time and effort in writing such a book without taking its content seriously at least in some way.

• • •

Until this point the conclusions of the previous discussion are hopefully sufficiently supported by the evidence at our disposal. Since the indications pointing against the traditional assumption of Gemistos' resolute paganism must be definitely taken into account, at this point we could leave the question of Gemistos' real beliefs open and suspend our judgement – after all, we cannot ask him directly (and he would not probably tell us). In fact, there is not much difference between an intellectual pagan who culturally, socially or nationally affiliates himself with an Orthodox stand and a Byzantine Christian who has a deep interest in ancient culture, religion and philosophy which is his main professional subject. However, such a conclusion, though safe, is not entirely satisfactory. But in order to proceed further, we must enter a more slippery ground while trying to unravel what could have been Gemistos' stand concerning the relation of his apparent Christianity to the Platonism and pagan religious beliefs embraced in his *Laws*. It is quite natural that not everybody will agree with the way we are going to follow as well as the solution we are about to reach.

The question obviously is whether an interpretation of the *Laws* other than as a book expressing Gemistos' personal religious beliefs hidden from the outward world is possible. After we have gone through the evidence about Gemistos' alleged paganism, we may accept most of the following points made by Paul Oskar Kristeller:

According to the testimony of several contemporary enemies, which has been accepted by most recent scholars, Plethon ... planned to restore the pagan religion of Greek antiquity. In the preserved fragments of his chief work, the *Laws*, he speaks at length of the ancient deities and their worship. Yet, the work was destroyed after Plethon's death by his enemy Scholarios, who preserved only these paganizing passages in order to justify his action, and I suspect that the complete text of the work might have suggested an allegorical and less crude interpretation of the same passages. The part Plethon took in the Council of Florence, his theological opposition to the Union of the Greek and Latin Churches and, finally,

the unqualified admiration shown for Plethon by his pupil Cardinal Bessarion tend to cast some doubt on the supposed paganism of Plethon. On the other hand, Plethon always maintained a strict separation between his philosophy and Christian theology and never tried to harmonize them.⁸

Although these comments of Kristeller's concerning Gemistos' religious beliefs are unfortunately quite laconic, they contain some extremely illuminating points. The only statement that is impossible to accept is that the theology contained in the *Laws* should be interpreted allegorically, as suggested by Kristeller. However, it is certainly true that the 'traditional' names of the ancient Greek gods appear there as a description of the philosophical principles based on rational thought. They are thus not intended to represent a living pagan religious tradition, but they should rather help a philosopher-lawgiver to provide the people with the proper philosophy that would cover both religion as well as the political constitution. Plethon chose ancient Greek mythology presumably because of its 'biological' polarization between male and female divinities that together produce some other entity of a lower kind. For this reason they can represent better his metaphysical system than, for instance, asexual Christian angels and saints. Furthermore, the possibility is not to be excluded that when Plethon introduces pagan mythology, he is trying – among other things – to find out and explain how the Greeks managed to develop their rich religious ideas, which would thus reflect the influence of the common notions and the Forms standing behind them, universally forming all human knowledge.

There is an important difference between Gemistos' Platonism presented to the contemporary Byzantine public and that of Plethon's *Laws* and the whole perennial philosophy. Whereas in the former we have to do with a rational philosophy that is formulated so generally that it can be accepted by any important monotheistic religious tradition of his time (that is, Judaism, Christianity and Islam), in the latter we are confronted with a kind of Platonism that necessarily leads to conclusions close to ancient pagan Neoplatonism. There are three main divergences that make the *philosophia perennis* irreconcilable with Christianity: (1) the absence of the doctrine of the Trinity (the First God is conceived as 'supremely united' and there is no plurality in him), (2) the eternity of the world and (3) reincarnation. As we have seen, the last two doctrines are connected together and made dependent on the goodness of the first principle, which forces us to conclude that the creation of the universe is eternal and proceeds in the best possible way.⁹ The hierarchies of the gods and

⁸ Kristeller 1972, p. 97; cf. also his reservations about Gemistos' paganism as reconstructed by Masai 1956 in a review of this book in Kristeller 1959, pp. 511–12.

⁹ See above, p. 250.

the use of ancient pagan names for the gods were obviously the most disturbing feature of the perennial philosophy for a contemporary Byzantine, as may be clearly seen in the case of Scholarios. Both, however, could be easily reconciled with contemporary Christian theology, which presupposes similar hierarchies of angels and divine beings, especially if the use of ancient Greek names in the theology of the *Laws* was required largely for explanatory reasons and not because of ancient pagan ritual customs.

The problem which is, however, difficult to overcome is that while the commentaries or the explanation of the teaching of Plato and Zoroaster may be naturally produced by a Christian scholar who does not share all their beliefs, the style of the *Laws* is more personal and less detached. It is claimed here that the book presents an ideal legislation based on reason,¹⁰ including the controversial points mentioned above. Moreover, it contains not only a theology that makes use of the ancient Greek pagan gods, but also a collection of allocutions and hymns to them as well as the description of rituals. Finally, it ends – according to an already ancient suggestion by Scholarios¹¹ – with a seemingly obvious attack on the Christian doctrine of the creation of the world in time and the redemption of the soul. More precisely, ‘some sophists,’ allegedly identified with the Christians, are criticized for denying the eternity of the world and the proper conception of reincarnation. In fact this criticism touches not only Christianity but also other monotheistic religion influential in Gemistos’ time. This attack is really odd because nowhere else in Plethon’s texts on the perennial philosophy does a comparable criticism appear. Even in his *Laws* Plethon observes meticulously a distinction between his version of Platonism and Christian thought which is entirely absent from it. These two religious worlds do not seem to interact there in any way. The *Laws* thus keeps strictly to the themes that would have been interesting for an ancient Platonic thinker.

However, the criticism of the conception denying the eternity of the world and the claim that the souls may be released from the cycle of reincarnation need not have been directed against only Christian theology. The context of the whole passage is important since Plethon claims there that the same people (Dionysus and Heracles) are born again and in general ‘the [cosmic] periods bring always similar lives and actions and always will’, nothing new can happen since everything ‘had to be first identical with its Form’ before it was generated. Plethon also adds that the true doctrine – that of Zoroaster, the Pythagoreans and Plato – is also one and everlasting. He then suggests that an objection can be made according to which there are ‘some sophists followed by many people’

¹⁰ See above, p. 59.

¹¹ Scholarios, *Ad Theod.* 154.26–30, *Ad Jos.* 171.22–7.

who promise 'reaching some pure immortality' which 'is not mingled any more with anything mortal'. These sophists, as sophists generally do, at least according to Plethon, promise pleasant hopes instead of what is 'more trustworthy'. The reason is that they do not assume 'the complete and perfect everlastingness neither' for the whole heaven nor for the human soul'. According to them the heaven 'began in time ... and will change together with human things'. They claim too that God will visit evil 'deeds' upon humankind for a short time only and then good ones for an infinite time. Plethon then argues against the sophists that there must exist complete everlastingness going 'into both directions', into the past and into the future.¹² This is indeed a conclusion which follows from the presuppositions he expounds in his perennial philosophy and is in conflict with the contemporary monotheistic religions.

Nonetheless, such a refutation is not pertinent only in a Christian context. There was a discussion among the ancient Platonists over the question of whether the world originated in time or not. Proclus in his *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, a treatise Gemistos certainly knew, while commenting on the specific passage of the dialogue poses the question and refutes at length those who argued for the beginning of the world in time, primarily Plutarch and Atticus.¹³ A similar discussion took place also among the Platonists regarding the final release from the cycle of reincarnation,¹⁴ and Plethon could also point to some passages in

¹² *Leg.* 254–60 [III.43: *Epinomis*]: ... Φέρειν δὲ δὴ τὰς περιόδους παραπλησίους καὶ βίους ἐκάστοτε καὶ πράξεις, καὶ οἷσιν γε αἰεὶ γεγονένα τε οὐδὲν οὐδεπώποτε καινόν, οὐδὲ γίγνεσθαι, ὃ μὴ καὶ πρότερον ποτε ταῦτο γέγονε τῇ ἰδέᾳ, ἅμα τε καὶ αὐθίς ποτε ἔσται. ... Ἄλλ' εἶποι ἂν τις ὡς τῶν σοφιστῶν ἔνιοι, οἷς καὶ ἀνθρώπων πάμπολλοι ἔσποντο, μείζω τὰ ἀγαθὰ τοῖς σφίσι πειθομένους τῶν ὑφ' ἡμῶν περὶ τὸ ἀνθρώπειον γένος ἀποφαινομένων καταγγέλλουσιν, εἴ γε καὶ εἰς εἰλικρινῆ τινα ἤξιεν αὐτοὺς ἀθανασίαν διατεινόνται, θνητῶ οὐδενὶ οὐκέτι ἐγκαταμιχθησομένην, τῶν ἡμετέρων λόγων οὐποτε παύσεσθαι ἀξιούντων τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν θνητῇ ἐκάστοτε κοινωνούσας φύσει, ὅποτε δὴ ἐκάστη ἡ περίοδος καθήκοι. Ἀλλὰ πρῶτον μὲν καὶ ἀνθρώπων οὐ τοῖς μείζω ὑπischουμένοις συμβάλλειν μάλλον ἢ τοῖς πιστοτέροις οἷ γε εὐφρονοῦντες ἀξιοῦσιν. ... Πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ αὐτοὶ οὐχ ὀλόκληρον τὴν αἰδιότητα οὐδ' ἄρτιαν, οὔτε ὄλω τῶ οὐρανῶ, οὔτε τῇ ψυχῇ τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ ἀξιοῦσιν, οὐκ ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρα, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ θάτερα μόνον, τὸ μέλλον, φάσκοντες τῇ γενέσει τῶν ὄντων τὴν αἰδιότητα ἔσεσθαι. Τὸν γὰρ τοι οὐρανὸν χρόνον τε ἠργμένον ποιοῦσι, καὶ ἅμα τοῖς πράγμασι τοῖς ἀνθρωπείοις συμμετασκευασθῆσθαι ἀξιοῦσιν, ἵνα πιθανώτεροι γοῦν, οἷς ταῦτα διαγγέλλουσι, φαίνοντο, τοῦτο μὲν μὴ καθ' ἑαυτὰ τὰ ἀνθρώπεια πράγματα, ἀλλὰ τῶ ὄλω φάσκοντες μεταβαλεῖν, τοῦτο δὲ καὶ βραχὺν μὲν τινα χρόνον φαῦλα, τὸν δὲ μετὰ ταῦτα καὶ ἄπειρον σπουδαῖα τὰ ἔργα τὸν θεὸν ἀποδώσειν ἀξιούντες. Πιθανώτερον γὰρ πως τὸ τοιοῦτον ἢ εἰ ἄπειρον μὲν χρόνον τὸν πρότερον φαῦλα, ἄπειρον δ' αὐτὸν μετὰ ταῦτα σπουδαῖα ἔφασκον ἀποδώσειν.

¹³ Plato, *Tim.* 28b6–c2, Proclus, *In Tim.* I, 276.8–296.12; cf. Plutarch, *De an.*

¹⁴ Cf. Dodds' commentary on Proclus, *El. theol.*, pp. 304–5, Dörrie–Baltes 2002, pp. 110–13, 383–7 (Baustein 180), with further references. We should note that the main texts articulating the position according to which the soul may be released from the eternal

Plato (if understood in a wrong way, according to him) where the philosophers living a good life are said to be released from the cycle of reincarnation.¹⁵ Most notable is a passage from the *Timaeus* in which those who have lived a good life are said to return to live on a star which has been allotted to them.¹⁶ Proclus, in his commentary on this dialogue, deals with this passage in detail¹⁷ and, in the section preceding and following it, makes clear that Plato cannot mean here that these souls are released from the cycle of reincarnation. It is noteworthy that, like Plethon, Proclus connects this question with the doctrine of the everlasting existence of the world, and concludes, that both, the existence of the world as well as the circulation of the souls within it, have neither beginning nor end.¹⁸ Plethon thus could well have intended to articulate his position in the discussion of this problem among the ancient Neoplatonists. His sayings are indeed hardly reconcilable with Christianity. Nonetheless, it may not be the target he has in mind here in the first place. The passage in question therefore does not necessarily cross the well-delimited boundary between the *philosophia perennis* and the contemporary Christianity which Plethon otherwise observes so meticulously. Furthermore, despite what is claimed by Scholarios, it seems that in other passages where Plethon mentions the sophists he has the ancient opponents of Socrates in mind and he draws upon their portrait in Plato.¹⁹ So it is really probable that in this particular case, too, he stays within in ancient philosophical discussions, supposing that from the genuine Platonic principles one must arrive at the conclusions that the world is eternal and the soul can never be released from the cycle of reincarnations.

We have seen that Gemistos used his surname 'Plethon', exclusively and only in this peculiar treatise. Furthermore, this name is not only a more classical form of Gemistos, but reminds us also of Plato.²⁰ Like the author of the famous *Laws*, Gemistos wrote a work with the very same title. Moreover, Plethon's *Laws* clearly imitates its model and takes some themes from it as well. Its close is the *Epinomis*,

cycle of reincarnation, usually attributed to Porphyry, have been preserved in Latin, most notably in Augustine. However, Plethon could have known it from some minor remarks and references in the Platonic texts or drew upon Byzantine translations already existing in his time. For example, the very end of Julian's *Oration to the Sun King*, 158b–c, a text certainly known to Plethon, also seems to hint at a similar doctrine.

¹⁵ Plato, *Phaedr.* 248c2–5, 248c3–249a5, 256a7–b7, *Phd.* 81a4–9, 114b6–c6, *Gorg.* 526c1–5; cf. Dörrie–Baltes 2002, pp. 383–4 (Baustein 180).

¹⁶ Plato, *Tim.* 42b3–5.

¹⁷ Proclus, *In Tim.* III, 289.26–292.9. On Plethon's good knowledge of Proclus *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* see above, pp. 171–2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* III, 275.24–279.2, 282.27–283.11, 293.24–294.17.

¹⁹ Kélessidou 1984; see above, pp. 53–4, with n.13.

²⁰ See above, p. 235.

which is named after a dialogue traditionally attributed to Plato and is intended as a kind of appendix to his *Laws*. It has been also mentioned several times that there is a parallel between book X of Plato's dialogue concerning the three types of atheism and Plethon's treatise.²¹ Furthermore, as it is clear from the table of topics at the beginning²² as well as the themes that appear in the *Laws*, Plethon attempted to fulfil the duties of the lawgiver that Plato states in book I of his *Laws*.²³ This passage is very important indeed. In the section that immediately precedes it, the virtues are classified in a manner similar to the way the four general virtues are classified in Plethon's ethical treatise. Furthermore, it seems that a large part of book III of Plethon's *Laws* was also originally dedicated to the discussion of the same four virtues.²⁴ Plato wants all the instructions people get from the lawgiver to observe these virtues, while human practices observe divine practice, which, in turn, observe the leader intellect.²⁵ This is because, as it has been stated by Plato, human goods depend on the divine goods.²⁶ The laws are also said to be promulgated for the sake of what is best.²⁷ This all is in close agreement with the general principles of Plethon's legislation. More specifically, according to Plato, it is a duty of a lawgiver to supervise marriage as well as the procreation and education of children and in this manner humankind attains in a certain sense immortality.²⁸ Moreover, for Plato, the lawgiver must regulate economics and determinate the punishments of those who violate the law, and

²¹ Plato, *Leg.* X 884a–907b, especially 885b, vs. *Leg.* 24 [I,1]; cf. Webb 1989, p. 217.

²² *Leg.* 6–14.

²³ See Webb 1989, pp. 217–18.

²⁴ Plato, *Leg.* I 631c–d, vs. *De virt.* A,1 1.8–16, A,2 4.2–3, *Leg.* 12–14. Lost chapter III,4 was dedicated to prudence (φρόνησις), III,7–9 to courage (ἀνδρεία), III,10, 12–13 to temperance (σωφροσύνη), III,25–6 to justice (δικαιοσύνη), and III,27–8 to virtue and vice in general. Cf. also Plato, *Leg.* I 632d–650b, XII 963a–964b.

²⁵ *Ibid.* I 631d: ταῦτα δὲ πάντα ἐκείνων ἔμπροσθεν τέτακται φύσει, καὶ δὴ καὶ τῷ νομοθέτῃ τακτέον οὕτως. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα τὰς ἄλλας προστάξεις τοῖς πολίταις εἰς ταῦτα βλέπουσας αὐτοῖς εἶναι διακελευστέον, τούτων δὲ τὰ μὲν ἀνθρώπινα εἰς τὰ θεῖα, τὰ δὲ θεῖα εἰς τὸν ἡγεμόνα νοῦν σύμπαντα βλέπειν.

²⁶ *Ibid.* I 631b: διπλᾶ δὲ ἀγαθὰ ἐστίν, τὰ μὲν ἀνθρώπινα, τὰ δὲ θεῖα ἤρηται δ' ἐκ τῶν θεῶν θάτερα ...

²⁷ *Ibid.* I 628c: Ἄρα οὖν οὐ τοῦ ἀρίστου ἔνεκα πάντα ἂν τὰ νόμιμα τιθεῖται πᾶς.

²⁸ *Ibid.* I 631d–e, IV 721b–d, vs. *Leg.* 86–90 [III,14]. The title of lost chapter III,5 of Plethon *Laws* is: Περὶ παιδῶν ἀγωγῆς. 'On the education of children.' Furthermore, chapter III,14 had the title: Περὶ τῆς τῶν γονέων ἐκγόνοις οὐ μίξεως. 'On the prohibition of sexual intercourse between parents and children.' It was originally followed by III,16: Περὶ τῆς ἐνὶ ἀνδρὶ γυναικῶν πλειόνων συνοικίσεως. 'On polygamy of one man with several women.' III,17: Περὶ τῆς κοινῶν γυναικῶν χρήσεως. 'On the use of public women.' *Leg.* 12, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 324. For family legislation see also Plato, *Leg.* VI 772d–776b; for sexual restrictions see *ibid.* VIII 835d–842a.

even the need to organize appropriately the burial of the dead is mentioned. All these topics were treated also by Plethon.²⁹ Of other parallels that could be pointed out, one of the most important is Plato's statement about the infinity of time (χρόνου ... ἀπειρία) during which many diverse cities appear and perish.³⁰ This is certainly close to Plethon's conception of *philosophia perennis* existing throughout the eternity of the world. Furthermore, an important inspiration for Plethon's *Laws* could be the critique of the poets from books II and III of Plato's *Republic*.

We shall note the obvious utopian character of this work by Plato,³¹ and even his *Laws*, in spite of being more realistic in its tone, might be also regarded as only hardly realizable and thus belonging to the same genre of writing.³² Furthermore, in the *Timaeus*³³ and *Critias* Plato talks about the ideal city of Atlantis. When reading Plato's work, one may thus observe that he proposes a kind of fiction about the perfect government which, nonetheless, cannot be realized in practice. At the same time, however, while working out such an unrealistic fiction, Plato manages to develop important themes of his philosophy which may be held and used outside the ideal background of the perfect city. Similarly to Plato's writings, Plethon's *Laws* thus quite probably represented a special kind of discourse, in which Gemistos identified himself with his more classical *alter ego*, Plethon, a second Plato or his reincarnation. During such a game Plethon was obviously developing various Platonic motifs and arguments, worked them

²⁹ Ibid. I 632b–c, vs. *Leg.* 120–30 [III,31]: Περὶ δικῶν. 'On judgements.' Trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 325. See also the titles of lost chapters of Plethon *Laws* – I,18: Περὶ κληρονομιῶν. 'On inheritances.' I,19: Περὶ τῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλους συμβολῶν. 'On mutual contracts.' I,24: Περὶ δικῶν. 'On judgements.' I,25: Περὶ ταφῆς. 'On burial.' I,26: Περὶ θεραπείας τῶν οἰχομένων. 'On the cult of the dead.' III,19: Περὶ μιᾶς τῆς ἐν οἰκίᾳ τῇ αὐτῇ κτήσεως. 'On the unity of property in a single household.' III,20: Περὶ τῆς παρὰ τὰς τελευταῖς ἐκάστων οὐκ οἰκοφθορίας. 'On avoiding the dispersal of property on the death of individual owners.' III,29: Περὶ τοῦ ἐν δωρεαῖς πρέποντος. 'On propriety in making gifts.' III,30: Περὶ τῶν ἐς τὸ κοινὸν ταμειῶν εἰσφορῶν. 'On contributions to the public treasury.' *Leg.* 8, 12–14, trans. Woodhouse 1986, pp. 323–5. For regulation of economics see also Plato, *Leg.* VIII 842b–850d; for burials see XII 958c–960b.

³⁰ Ibid. III 676a–c.

³¹ See O'Meara 2003, pp. 92–3, Thein 1998. For different possible interpretations of realizability of Plato's utopia as proposed in his *Republic* see Morrison 2007, pp. 232–5.

³² In his *Laws*, V 739a–e, Plato explains that the city he describes is the second best, the first one being obviously the city described in the *Republic* which 'is inhabited by the gods or the sons of the gods' only. The second best city of the *Laws* is to be 'closest to immortality and united in the second manner (ἡ μία δευτέρως)', which suggest that it is somehow imperfect imitation of the divine model which is in itself unattainable; cf. Pradeau 1998, pp. 164–6.

³³ Plato, *Tim.* 24e–25d.

out extensively. However, as we have seen in the case of his political speeches on the Peloponnese, only some of them was he, in fact, willing to put into practice, drawing rather upon Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* (the situation is different in the case of the funeral orations on the Despoina Cleope and Empress Helen, written later when Gemistos probably used his own *Laws*). Even Plethon's *Laws*, as he claims at the start, is in fact supposed to contain the philosophy of Zoroaster and Plato. The only differences with Plethon's commentaries on someone else's thought are that, first, he does not base this work on numerous and extensive quotations from other authors, but tries to render Platonic motifs in his own words, and, second, that he is more personally involved, writing in a more engaged style. The arguments are developed in a special kind of discourse of a self-stylization as the second Plato, in which the author does not respect scholarly distance from someone else's philosophy, but, on the contrary, attempts to develop it further in a creative way.

Also the allocutions and hymns to the gods might be understood as Plethon's attempt to imitate ancient religious poetry and to transform it in accordance with philosophical reasoning. Moreover, here too, he seems to imitate Plato, who at the beginning of book VIII of the *Laws* proposes that the festivals and sacrifices should be devised and offers a religious calendar, based on the regular mathematical character of the motions of celestial bodies, where there are 12 feasts consecrated to the 12 gods. The last month is to be dedicated to Pluto, quite like Plethon's calendar, in which, too, this god, along with remembrance of the deceased, is symbolically venerated at the end of the year.³⁴ Furthermore, Plato had said a little earlier on that the appropriate form, including tune, metre and rhythm of the religious songs and dances, needed to be determined. Plethon fulfils this injunction in his *Laws* by providing detailed instructions for the proper composition and performance of the hymns and allocutions, which he himself devised.³⁵ Also, the priests (ἱερείς), who are occasionally mentioned by

³⁴ Plato, *Leg.* VII 801e–802a, 809c–d, 818c–d, VIII 828a–d, vs. *Leg.* 58–60 [III,36], *Add.* 133v.7–134.4. See also the titles of lost chapters of Plethon *Laws* – III,33: Περὶ προσευχῆς. 'On prayer.' III,37: Τίσι τῶν θεῶν τίνα θυτέα. 'Appropriate sacrifices to particular gods.' III,38: Ἐπὶ τίσι πράξεσι, τίσι τε θεῶν καὶ ὅπως θυτέα. 'In what circumstances, to which gods, and in what way sacrifices should be made.' III,39: Ὅπως ἔχουσι τῶν θυσιῶν μεταληπτέα. 'With what predisposition men should take part in sacrifices.' III,40: Περὶ ἀκριβείας τῶν πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς. 'On exactitude in matters relating to the gods.' III,41: Κατὰ τίνων εὐκτέα τοῖς θεοῖς. 'To what ends prayers should be addressed to the gods.' III,42: Περὶ μαντειῶν. 'On oracles.' *Leg.* 14, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 325.

³⁵ Plato, *Leg.* II 653d–671a, VII 798d–803b, vs. *Leg.* 132–240 [III,34–6], *Add.*

Plethon as presiding over religious ceremonies and whose life was presumably regulated in a now lost chapter, have their parallel in Plato's *Laws*.³⁶

Another reason why the significance of the *Laws* for determining Gemistos' religious beliefs may be limited is the fact that it was probably composed at date earlier than usually supposed. The evidence based on the parallels with some other of his writings indicates that Gemistos may have ceased to work on the *Laws* either before his visit to Italy in 1438–1439 or shortly afterwards. It seems that at the Council he adopted a decidedly Orthodox and anti-Unionist stand. Probably at the end of the 1450s he wrote his only theological treatise, that on the procession of the Holy Spirit, and then discussed it with Bessarion. The *Reply to Scholarios* also has some rather Christian formulations. If the *Laws* was written much earlier, it really is the source of the disturbing passage in the oration *On Helen* in which the higher spiritual natures are mentioned, and which is used as the evidence for the polytheism of the elderly Gemistos. Thus all the major texts we have from the time after the Council points to the conclusion that he was a firm Christian, and even the passage in the oration *On Helen* was radically reformulated to be in accord with Christianity.

In spite of all this an objection still can be made, namely, that it is improbable that a Christian who has written such a long text elaborating a system of the ancient gods, including allocutions and hymns to them, could not have done so unless he accepted its contents as his personal belief. However, some examples of an extreme devotion for Antiquity, including its religious aspects, by contemporary Renaissance humanists can be pointed out which – although certainly very different from Plethon's *Laws* – may help to demonstrate that something similar was possible at the time. First, there is the famous *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (*Poliphilo's Strife of Love in a Dream*) published in 1499 and most probably written by a Dominican friar, Francesco Colonna. This huge novel, definitely comparable with Plethon's *Laws* in its size, takes place in a dreamlike world, filled with ancient monuments and even divinities, from which all reference to Christianity is excluded.³⁷ Similarly, *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods* written by Giovanni Boccaccio in the second half of fourteenth century is a vast and highly systematic treatise in which the origin and mutual relationships of the ancient gods are described on the basis of the sources available at the time. At the end of his account Boccaccio explains why such a study is profitable also for a Christian – the ancient gods are a part of the world of poetry, which is a venerable art leading to a deeper truth. Pagan poets are considered to be 'theologians of myths

³⁶ *Leg.* 8, 126 [III,31], 230–32 [III,36], 252 [III,43], *Add.* 132v.19, 24, vs. Plato, *Leg.* VI 759a–760a, X 909d–e. Lost chapter I,22 has the title: Περὶ ἱερέων καὶ βίου αὐτῶν. 'On priests and their way of life.' *Leg.* 8, trans. Woodhouse 1986, p. 323.

³⁷ Colonna, *Hypn.*; cf. Godwin 2002, pp. 21–37.

(*mythicos ... theologos*)' who are wholly independent on philosophers, including Plato.³⁸ This is naturally not an argument Plethon would adopt, but Boccaccio's book demonstrates well the willingness of Renaissance humanists to occupy themselves intensively and at length with pagan and polytheist themes in their writings, while not wanting to compromise their Christian faith.

The most interesting example of a similarly ardent approach to the classical past is, however, provided by Gemistos' contemporary Cyriac of Ancona who met him in Mistra, although only briefly, but was not influenced by his alleged paganism since he had developed his own enthusiastic admiration for the classical past before then. Cyriac was certainly a good Christian, 'an ardent supporter of papacy' and 'equally at home in a Greek Orthodox church'. At the same time, nonetheless, he employed paganizing language, designated the days of the week in the ancient manner using the names of the pagan gods and considered Mercury to be his tutelary spirit.³⁹ He invoked and mentioned also the Muses, nymphs and other divinities (for instance, Jove, Neptune, Apollo, Aeolus) of 'the ancient religion (*vetusta religio*)'.⁴⁰ Delos was for him 'a sacred island' and when he left it he composed a short prayer to Mercury which he noted down in his diary.⁴¹ The simple mentioning, although frequent, of ancient deities in Cyriac's letters and diaries are not comparable in length to the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* or Boccaccio's systematic treatise on the pagan gods. However, they demonstrate well the spirit of a time when Christianity could be combined with a personal religious approach to the ancient past.

This mode of thought of the *quattrocento* humanists, in which Gemistos' work is probably also to be counted, was appropriately called 'the pagan dream of the Renaissance', that is, a medium or a discourse in which the ancient gods could be brought back into the life by the Renaissance authors. Nonetheless, they did not become pagans themselves, but retained their Christian faith, at least on the most important points.⁴² The interest of the Renaissance humanists in ancient polytheistic mythology and theology was caused by their study and admiration of ancient texts of pagan authors reflecting ancient mythology and theology of their age. The humanists tried to solve the tension between their

³⁸ Boccaccio, *Gen.* XIV–XV, esp. XIV,17–19, XV,8–9.

³⁹ See Bodnar's introduction to Cyriac of Ancona, *Ep.*, pp. xiv–xv, for the references see index; cf also Neuhausen 1992.

⁴⁰ See Cyriac of Ancona, *Ep.* e.g. 4,2, 8,2, 12,5–6, 17,5, 18,2, 19,4–5, 32,2, 9, 33,3–4, 36,6, 37,2, 40,3, 11,45, for other Cyriac's references to ancient deities, see index.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* III,4, 27.

⁴² See Godwin 2002; the author, however, bases his approach on Henry Corbin's conception of the *mundus imaginalis*, see pp. 253–4, which is not necessary for his otherwise extremely useful metaphor of the pagan dream of the Renaissance authors.

own Christian faith and their admiration for ancient polytheism usually through allegorical and symbolical interpretation of ancient texts, which would deprive them of their straightforward pagan contents and thus help to reconcile them with Christianity.⁴³ In the Renaissance, the admiration for ancient mythology was so strong that, as it is well known, it inspired numerous objects of art or even some public festivities.⁴⁴ Also the Byzantine humanists tirelessly copied the texts of ancient pagan 'Hellenes' and, like their Western counterparts, based their whole education on them.⁴⁵ At the same time, however, it is clear that, especially compared to the Western Renaissance, it was much more problematic to 'revive' the ancient gods in the Byzantine context. There was obviously a different degree of the willingness to return back to the ancient gods in the different humanist cultures. In the light of these considerations, one may wonder whether it is not better to cease to think of Gemistos as a polytheist and to take him out of the category of Byzantine philosopher, where such a flirting with the Greek pagan past is certainly suspect at least, and reclassify him as a Renaissance humanist and Platonic philosopher for whom such interests seem to be more acceptable.

It could be objected that one cannot compare these humanist writings with the systematic philosophical treatise as the *Laws*. However, whatever interpretation of his religious beliefs we adopt, Plethon will remain a solitary figure in late Byzantium or the Renaissance since his *Laws* is a quite idiosyncratic book for which it is difficult to find any real comparison. As we have mentioned, given the current scholarly opinion which considers the Renaissance humanists and philosophers to be Christians drawing upon ancient thought and religion, he would remain the only one fully apostasized to the old gods. On the other hand, if he were a Christian, no one else arguably dared to go as far as he did.

Gemistos' alleged paganism immediately fascinated his contemporaries, in the positive and negative sense, and this is even more true after Scholarios' spectacular burning of his *Laws*. (Today's scholars are no exception.) Gemistos appeared to the *quattrocento* humanists as an ancient Hellenic thinker who had emerged from the dying empire of the Byzantine Greeks. As an expert in ancient Platonic philosophy he was known to lead a central attack on the greatest medieval philosophical authority, Aristotle, and at the same time he seemed to take Platonism so seriously that he identified himself with Plato, calling himself Plethon. He thus provided a missing link with ancient past important for a revival of Platonism in the West. The best example of this is perhaps Ficino, who in a famous passage makes Gemistos the fundamental impulse for his patron

⁴³ Cf. Trinkaus 1970, pp. 651–721, Allen 1970, used also in Brisson 1996, pp. 185–220. For Ficino's approach to ancient polytheistic mythology see Allen 1984, pp. 113–43.

⁴⁴ Cf. Sez nec 1940, Wind 1967, Godwin 2002, Bull 2005.

⁴⁵ Brisson 1996, pp. 147–70.

Cosimo de' Medici to found the Platonic Academy in Florence and thus in a way makes himself his successor. At the same time, nonetheless, Ficino was quite critical towards some of Plethon's ideas and did not rely on his work as much as one might expect.⁴⁶ One is also tempted to think that modern scholars, too, tend to regard Plethon as a polytheist in order to provide a connection between the Renaissance admiration for the pagan past and real ancient polytheism of which he is supposed to be the last inheritor or rather a contemporary renovator.

In connection with this complicated question a passage from Gemistos' treatise on the Holy Spirit we have discussed above is definitely remarkable. It is claimed here that 'Hellenic', that is pagan, theology postulates that the highest God is 'indivisible one (ἄτομον ἓν)' and there are no distinctions within him. At the same time Gemistos describes a kind of polytheism that is similar to the constitution of the gods of the second order in the *Laws*.⁴⁷ This passage also corresponds to *Laws* III,15, where Plethon claims that in Zeus, because of his supreme simplicity, there is no distinction between generation (γεννᾶν) and creation (δημιουργεῖν) as well as no difference between will (βούλεσθαι) and nature (πεφυκότα).⁴⁸ From the treatise on the procession of the Holy Spirit it thus seems that within the first principle, which, unlike in the *philosophia perennis*, need not be 'indivisible one', but may contain some plurality, there are three distinctions, by which, according to Gemistos, Christianity differs from Hellenic theology. These are the distinctions between generation (γέννησις) and creation (δημιουργία), will (βούλησις) and nature (φύσις), and between essence (οὐσία) and activity (ἐνέργεια). This opens a possibility for developing a theology that would be rational like the perennial philosophy, but different from it. The distinction between generation and creation enables us to conceive of the Trinitarian dogma by which the Son is generated in a process different from the creation of the world, and therefore can exist on the same ontological level as the Father and not on a lower one. The distinction between will and nature can explain why God decided to create the world at a certain moment in time and why he does not have to produce it, but does so by the goodness of his nature, continuously and for ever. Because the doctrine of the reincarnation of the soul depends closely on that of the eternity of the world, all three problematic differences between the *philosophia perennis* and Christianity would thus be solved. Finally, the last distinction between essence and activity enables Gemistos to conceive appropriately – or from his point of view in the only possible way – the procession of the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁶ Cf. Monfasani 2002b, esp. pp. 184–6, and also Tambrun 2006, pp. 241–59.

⁴⁷ *Contra Lat.* 302–3: see Appendix IX,1, below, p. 303.

⁴⁸ *Leg.* 100 [III,15]: see Appendix IX,2, below, p. 303.

Given all this, we may speculate whether for Gemistos there existed above the level of polytheist perennial theology, accessible by rational thought to all people alike, a higher level of understanding of the divine. This level is attainable by Christian theology only since it draws upon the revelation of a deeper truth about God exceeding the capacity of human reasoning. In the works of Bessarion and Laonikos Chalkokondyles, we have seen some traces of a similar difference between supernatural theology and natural theology, that is, the Christian theology based on biblical revelation and ancient polytheism.⁴⁹ Furthermore, such a conception would no doubt be similar to some Renaissance attempts to reconcile ancient pagan myths and theology with Christian teaching.⁵⁰ Therefore although obviously well aware of the differences between the *philosophia perennis* and Christianity, in the treatise against the Latins Gemistos tentatively indicated an alternative conception to the *Laws*, but, unfortunately, did not develop it in a more substantial way.

The reason for Gemistos' reluctance to go further in this direction seems to be really, as suggested by Kristeller, the 'strict separation' between rational philosophy and Christian theology. Perhaps, according to Gemistos, it is indeed due to Christian revelation and not to reason, on which the perennial philosophy is based, that we learn about the distinctions inside the first principle from which the Trinitarian dogma, the creation of the world in time and a conception of the soul that would be an alternative to its periodical reincarnation. The distinction between 'our', Christian philosophy (ἡ καθ' ἡμᾶς φιλοσοφία) and the 'external', pagan one (ἡ ἕξωθεν or ἡ θύραθεν φιλοσοφία) is traditional in Byzantium⁵¹ and it is possibly this distinction which Gemistos had in mind when he mentioned in the *Reply to Scholarios* that he knows well which divine inspirations (ἐνθουσιασμοί) and which human reasoning (λόγοι ἀνθρώπινοι) should be accepted and which should not.⁵² Moreover, we must not forget that Gemistos was in the first place a scholar and teacher of ancient philosophy, not a professional theologian. He himself complained to Bessarion that being a layman he was not allowed to speak

⁴⁹ See above, pp. 212, 216.

⁵⁰ A good example may be Marsilio Ficino, who obviously distinguished between the supernatural God to whom access is provided by Christian religion, on the one hand, and ancient polytheistic theology reinterpreted in various ways or 'natural' magic, both derived from Neoplatonic conceptions, on the other hand; cf. Kristeller 1943, pp. 314–23, Walker 1958, esp. pp. 75–84, Allen 1984, pp. 113–43. Moreover, in the Middle Ages and Renaissance the ancient pagan gods were often identified with the heavenly bodies (an identification that holds until today) which are a part of the natural cosmos: see Sez nec 1940, pp. 35–74.

⁵¹ Cf. Benakis 1990, Podskalsky 1977, Hankins 1987, pp. 8–13, Parry 2006, pp. 228–9, Runciman 1970, pp. 28–35, 78.

⁵² *Contra Schol.* IX 392.14–17.

at the Council.⁵³ Nonetheless, the problem is that he does not seem to have made any attempt to reconcile his 'perennial philosophy' with Christianity. Perhaps he did not want to or was not capable of it.

However, what he was able to do very well was to formulate some basic principles acceptable not only to the polytheist Platonism, but also to the monotheistic religions of his time, including Christianity. His main divergence from contemporary Christian beliefs that Bessarion found unacceptable was his emphasis on fate or necessity, about which he repeatedly talks and by which he might have influenced also one of his pupils, the historian Laonikos Chalkokondyles.⁵⁴ These general Platonic conceptions were the philosophy he presented as his own to the public and not the thoughts he was developing in the *Laws*. As for the latter book, we may surmise that he was so fascinated by the Platonic philosophy that sometimes, when working on it, he just – from a rigid and conservative Christian perspective – dared to go rather too far. Although we can perhaps never be sure about his real intentions in composing the *Laws*, it is highly probable that it was a work written earlier than in his last years when he seems to act as a firm Orthodox and anti-Unionist.⁵⁵ To decide about his religious position, we thus should not listen so much, as it is often done, to his enemies accusing him of paganism or to rely on his rather odd book that was written on the basis of motives and in a context that are not entirely clear to us, but rather to Gemistos himself. When he was asked or forced by the circumstances to choose, he declared himself publicly an Orthodox Christian, and we should accept and respect this as the most plausible statement about his faith.

⁵³ See above, p. 244.

⁵⁴ See above, pp. 216, 242–4.

⁵⁵ See above, pp. 239–50.

Appendix

(The textual similarities between the other Gemistos texts and the *Laws* are underlined.)

I

1. *Ad Theod.* 125.3–126.7

Καὶ πολιτείας μὲν σπουδαίας νόμοι οὗτοί τε καὶ τοιοῦτοι ἕτεροι
καὶ μείζους καὶ ἐλάττους, ὧν περ κεφάλαιον ἀπάντων τὰ περὶ τῆν
5 τοῦ θείου δόξαν ἠκριβῶσθαι καὶ κοινῆ καὶ ἰδίᾳ, μάλιστα δ' ἐκεῖνα
τρία τε καὶ κυριώτατα, ἐν μὲν εἶναι τι θεῖον ἐν τοῖς οὔσι,
προὔχουσάν τινα τῶν ὄλων οὐσίαν, δεύτερον τὸ θεῖον τοῦτο καὶ
ἐπιμελὲς εἶναι ἀνθρώπων, ἅπαντά τε τὰ ἀνθρώπεια ὑπὸ τούτου
καὶ μείζω καὶ ἐλάττω διοικεῖσθαι, τρίτον κατὰ γνώμην τὴν αὐτοῦ
10 διοικεῖν ἕκαστα ὀρθῶς αἰεὶ καὶ δικαίως, μὴ ἐξιστάμενον μηδαμῆ
τοῦ περὶ ἕκαστον καθήκοντος, μήτ' οὖν ἄλλως μήθ' ὑπ' ἀνθρώ-
πων δώροις ἢ τισιν ἄλλοις θωπευόμενόν τε καὶ παρατρεπόμενον.
Οὐ γὰρ οὖν ἐνδεὲς εἶναι ἀνθρώπων, οἷς ἔχουσιν οὕτως ἔπεται καὶ
τὸ τὰς πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἀγιστείας θυσίας τε καὶ ἀναθήματα μέτριά τε
15 καὶ ἀπ' εὐσεβοῦς τῆς γνώμης τελεῖν, ὁμολογίας ὄντα ζύμβολα τοῦ
ἐκεῖθεν ἡμῖν εἶναι τὰγαθὰ καὶ μήτ' ἐκλείποντας ἢ τοῖν δυοῖν ἢ
θατέρου γοῦν τοῖν προτέροιον εἰδοῖν τῆς ἀσεβείας ἐνεχομένων
δόξαν παρέχεσθαι, μήτ' ὑπερβολαῖς δαπανῶν τούς τε ἰδίους οἶκους
καὶ τὰ κοινὰ φθειρόντας ὡς τι πλεον ποιήσοντας τῆ πολυτελείᾳ
20 τῶν ἀπαρχῶν τε καὶ ἀναθημάτων, μηδ' ἀπαρχομένων ἔτι, ἀλλ' ὡς
ὠνουμένων δόξαν παρεχομένους τῷ τρίτῳ εἶδει τῆς ἀσεβείας
ἐνέχεσθαι· ταῖς δὲ τοιαύταις δόξαις ἰδίᾳ τε καὶ δημοσίᾳ νομιζο-
μέναις καὶ κρατούσαις ἀμήχανον μὴ οὐ καὶ ἀρετὴν ἔπεσθαι πᾶσι
παρ' οἷς ἂν τύχῃσι κεκρατηκυῖαι καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν περὶ τὸ καλὸν
126 σπουδῆν. Κακία δὲ πᾶσα καὶ τὰ μεγάλα ἀνθρώποις ἀμαρτήματα
ἀπὸ τῶν ἐναντίων γίνονται αὐ̄δοξῶν· γίνονται γὰρ αἰεὶ τῶν
ἀνθρώπων ἔνοι οὐχ ὑγιῶς περὶ ταῦτα ἔχοντες, οἱ μὲν οὐδ' εἶναι τι
τὸ παράπαν θεῖον ἐν τοῖς οὔσι νομίζοντες, οἱ δ' εἶναι μὲν, φρον-

- 5 τίζειν δὲ μηδὲν τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων, οἱ δὲ καὶ εἶναι καὶ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, παραιτητὸν δ' εἶναι καὶ τισι θυσίαις καὶ ἀναθήμασι καὶ εὐχαῖς κηλούμενον μὴ ἀκριβοῦν ἐκάστοτε τὰ δίκαια.

2. *Leg.* I,1, pp. 22–4

- Ἄλλὰ δὴ καὶ περὶ τῆς τῶν ἄλλων αὐτῆς φύσεως, ὅπη ἔχει, οὐκ ὀλίγη πρὸς γε ἀλλήλους τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἢ ἀμφισβήτησις· ἔστι μὲν ὧν οὐδ' εἶναι θεοὺς τὸ παράπαν οἰομένων· τῶν δ', εἶναι μὲν, τῶν δ' ἀνθρωπίνων οὐκ ἂν προνοεῖν πραγμάτων· τῶν δέ, προνοεῖν μὲν θεοὺς τῶν πάντων, τῶν τε ἄλλων καὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων, εἶναί γε μὴν πρὸς τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς τοὺς αὐτοὺς καὶ τῶν κακῶν αἰτίους τῶν δέ, κακοῦ μὲν οὐδενός, τῶν δὲ ἀγαθῶν μόνων αἰτίους τοὺς θεοὺς εἶναι. Καὶ τῶν μὲν παραιτητοῦς οἰομένων εἶναι καὶ ὑπ' ἀνθρώπων παρατρεπτοὺς ἐφ' οἷς καὶ αὐτοὶ κρίναντες μελλήσωσιν ἀποτελεῖν· τῶν δὲ ἀπατραπέτους τε πάντη ἡγουμένων καὶ ἀμεταστρέπτους, γνῶμη αἰεὶ τῇ σφετέρᾳ καθ' εἰμαρμένην χωρούση ἕκαστα ἀποτελοῦντας, ἧ ἂν ἐκ τῶν ἐνότων βέλτιστα ἔξιν μέλλοι.

II

1. *In Cleop.* 172.14–173.8

- Οὐκ ἂν οὖν τὸν θεὸν
- 15 οὐτ' ἂν ἀλλοτρία τε πάντη καὶ θνητῇ φύσει ἑαυτὸν γνωρίζειν, ἀλλὰ πη καὶ οἰκεία· κοινωνεῖν γὰρ ἂν δέοι τὸ γινῶσκον τῷ
- 173 γινωσκομένῳ, τὰ δὲ κοινωνοῦντα καὶ οἰκεῖα πη ἀλλήλοις δέοι ἂν εἶναι, οὐτ' ἂν ἀϊδιότητος ἐπιθυμίαν ἐνθέμενον τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἔπειτα ἀτελεῖ τε ἂν αὐτὴν καὶ μάταιον ἀπολιπεῖν. Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄλλο οὐδὲν τῶν μεγάλων καὶ κατὰ φύσιν ἀτελές ἂν ἀπολιπεῖν τὸν θεόν,
- 5 ἀλλὰ τελεσφόρα τε πάντα ποιεῖν κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς καὶ ἕξ τι προσῆκον ἑαυτοῖς πέρασ ἐς αἰεὶ ἢ ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ γοῦν ἀποβαίνοντα· ὥστ' ἂν καὶ κατ' ἄμφω τούτῳ, τὴν τε τοῦ θεοῦ δόξαν τὴν τε τῆς ἀϊδιότητος ἐπιθυμίαν, αἴδιον ἂν τὴν γε ἀνθρωπίνην εἶναι ψυχὴν.

2. *Leg.* I,3, p. 40

Οὐ μὲν δὴ οὐδ' ἐκεῖνο ὑπολογιστέον, ὃ αὐτῶν φασὶ τινες, ὡς κἂν περὶ ὅτουοῦν τῶν ἄλλων ἡμῖν ἧ τις ἀληθείας

κατάληψις, ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὡς περὶ τῶν θείων ἀνθρώποις οὕσι
 προσήκοι διασκοπεῖν πραγμάτων, ὡς οὐτ' ἂν εἰσομένους
 σαφές οὐδὲν περὶ αὐτῶν, ἅτε δὴ κρειττόνων ἢ καθ'
 ἡμᾶς, οὐτ' ἂν αὐτοῖς θεοῖς φίλον τοῦτο ἐπιτηδεύουσι,
 περιεργάζεσθαι τε δὴ καὶ πολυπραγμονεῖν τὰ αὐτῶν. Οὐ
 γὰρ ἂν θεοὶ μάτην ἡμᾶς τῶν γε σφετέρων τούτων ἐποίουν
 ζητητικούς, εἰ μήτε ἐβούλοντο καὶ ζητεῖν ἂν περὶ αὐτῶν
 ἡμᾶς, μήτε τινὰ καὶ ἕξιν τοῦ εἴσεσθαι ποτ' ἂν σαφές τι
 περὶ τῶν τοιούτων ἔμελλον παρέξειν. Καὶ μὴν ὁμοίως
 ἂν ἄτοπον εἶη ὅποτερον οὖν, ἢ μῆδ' ὅτι οὖν ἂν περὶ τῶν
 τοιούτων ἡμᾶς διανοουμένους, ἐν ἴσῳ ἂν τοῖς θηρίοις καὶ
 ἀλόγοις βιοτεύειν, ἢ τὰ προστυχόντα εἰκῆ ἂν καὶ ἀβα-
 σανίστως παραδέχεσθαι· οὐ γὰρ οἶόν τε οὕτως ἔχοντας
 τῆς σπουδαζομένης ἂν εὐδαιμονίας τυχεῖν.

III

1. *De diff.* IV 326.31–327.4

Οἱ μὲν οὖν περὶ Πλάτωνα τὸ μὲν ὑπερούσιον ἐν ἄκρως ἐν
 εἶναι τίθεται, οὔτε οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ, οὔτε δύναμιν, οὔτε ἐνεργίαν
 διακρίνοντας. Τὰ δὲ μετ' αὐτὸ εἶδη τὲ καὶ νοῦς οὐχ ὁμοίως ἀπλῶς
 ἔχειν ἀξιοῦσιν, ἀλλ' ἐνεργίαν ἤδη αὐτῶν τῆς οὐσίας διακρίνουσι,
 35 δύναμιν δ' οὐ πᾶν τοι τῆς ἐνεργίας, διὰ τὸ ἀκίνητα ὄντα, μὴ δ'
 ὅτι οὖν δυνάμει, ἀλλ' ἅπαντα ἐνεργίᾳ αἰεὶ ἑαυτοῖς ἔχειν παρόντα
 τὰ προσόντα. Ψυχῆς δ' ἤδη καὶ οὐσίαν καὶ δύναμιν καὶ ἐνεργίαν
 327 διακρίνουσι, διὰ τὸ κινουμένην ἀπὸ νοήματος ἐπὶ νόημα, τὴν δ'
 ἀνθρωπίνην καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ νοεῖν ἐπὶ τὸ μὴ νοεῖν ἢ μὴ νοεῖν ἐπὶ τὸ
 νοεῖν, μὴ αἰεὶ ἢ μὴ πᾶσαν ἐνεργίᾳ ἀλλὰ καὶ δυνάμει ἔχειν μᾶλλον
 τὴν τῶν ὄντων γνῶσιν.

2. *De diff.* X 337.7–28

Ἄλλα τῷ μὲν ὑπερουσίῳ θεῷ οὐδ' ὅλως πλή-
 θους ἄκρως γὰρ δὴ ἐν αὐτὸν εἶναι. Τῷ δὲ νοητῷ τούτῳ δια-
 κόσμῳ πλήθος μὲν ἐνεῖναι, πεπερασμένον δ' αὐτὸ εἶναι καὶ
 10 οὐδαμῆ ἄπειρον, οὔτε δυνάμει οὔτε ἔργῳ. Τῷ δ' αἰσθητῷ
 τῷδε κόσμῳ τὴν ἀπειρίαν ἤδη, ὡς ἐνδέχεται, ἐγγεγονέαι διὰ
 τὴν ὕλην, ἣ πρώτως τὸ ἄπειρον πρόσεστιν, ἐκεῖθεν μὲν καὶ
 ταύτην ἔχουσιν τὴν αἰτίαν, οὐ μέντοι κάκει ἄπειρον οὐσαν.
 Οὐδὲ γὰρ τῶν τῆδε ἀλόγων ἄλογον κάκει εἶναι τὸ εἶδος, οὐδέ γε

- 15 τῶν κινουμένων κινούμενον. Τῶν γε μὴν τῆδε οὐσιῶν, τῶν τε ταῖς οὐσίαις καθ' αὐτὰ προσόντων καὶ σχέσεων ἐκεῖ εἶναι τὰ εἶδη τὲ καὶ παραδείγματα· τῶν μὲν σχέσεων, ὅτι οὐδὲ τάκεῖ ἄσχετα πρὸς ἄλληλα· τῶν οὖν ἐκεῖ σχέσεων τὰς τῆδε δεῖν εἶναι εἰκόνας· τῶν δὲ προσόντων, ὅτι οὐδ' ἄνευ προσόντων τάκεῖ. Τοῦ μὲν
- 20 γὰρ ὑπερουσίου ἑνός, ἅτε ἄκρως ἑνός ὄντος, οὔτε οὐσίαν οὔτε προσὸν οὔτε ἐνεργίαν οὔτε δύναμιν διακεκρίσθαι. Τῶν δ' εἰδῶν τε καὶ νῶν τούτων, ἅτε οὐκ ἐκείνῳ παρισουμένων, προσόντα μὲν οὐσίας διακεκρίσθαι, ἐνεργίας δὲ δύναμιν οὐδέπω. Ἀλλὰ τοῖς τῆδε ἤδη πρὸς τῆ ἑτέρα καὶ ταύτην τὴν διάκρισιν ἀποδε-
- 25 δόσθαι, ὥστ' ἂν τάκεῖ μέσως πως ἔχειν τοῦ τε ὑπερουσίου ἑνός καὶ τῶν τῆδε καὶ αἰσθητῶν. Οἷα μὲν οὖν καὶ ὅπως ἔχοντα τὰ εἶδη οἱ τιθέμενοι ἀξιοῦσιν εἶναι, εἴρηται ἡμῖν ὡς διὰ βραχυτάτων τὲ καὶ ἐν κεφαλαίοις εἰπεῖν.

3. *Leg.* I,5, pp. 46–8

- Καὶ τοὺς μὲν ἐξ αὐτοῦ Διὸς προσεχῶς γεγεννημένους ὑπερουρανίους θεοὺς εἶναι, δευτέρους θεότητι, σωμάτων μὲν καὶ ὕλης πάμπαν ἀφειμένους, εἶδη δ' ὄντας εἰλικρινῆ αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά, καὶ νοῦς ἀκινήτους, αἰεὶ τε καὶ περὶ πάντα ἅμα μιᾷ τῇ ἑαυτῶν ἐκάστους νοήσει ἐνεργούς· οὐς οὐσίαν μὲν ἐκάστους ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἴσχειν τοῦ Διός, ἀμερῆ μὲν ἐξ ἀμεροῦς, ἅπαντα δ' ἐν ἑαυτῇ συλλήβδην τε καὶ καθ' ἐν προειληφυῖαν, ὀπόσων γ' ἂν πλειόνων αὐτὸς ἕκαστος τοῖς ὑφ' ἑαυτὸν αἰτίος ἦ. Τὰ δὲ προσόντα, ἔξω ἑνός τοῦ πρεσβυτάτου αὐτῶν Ποσειδῶνος, ἄλλους ὑπ' ἄλλων διατίθεσθαι τε καὶ κοσμεῖσθαι, τοῦ βασιλέως τε καὶ πατρὸς κοινωνίαν τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ παισὶν ἀλλήλοις τῶν ἀγαθῶν μεμηχανημένου· ὃ
- 48 δὴ αὐτοῖς καὶ ἀγαθῶν μετὰ γε τὴν ἑαυτοῦ κοινωνίαν τὸ κράτιστον ἐμπεποιήκει.

4. *Leg.* I,5, p. 54

Εἶναι δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ τούτου τὴν τε οὐσίαν καὶ πρᾶξιν ταυτόν καὶ ἀλλήλοιν ἥκιστ' ἂν διακεκριμένῳ ἄκρως γὰρ δὴ ἐν εἶναι, καὶ οὐδαμῇ ἂν ἕτερον αὐτὸν αὐτοῦ. Νῶ δὲ διακεκρίσθαι μὲν ἤδη πρᾶξιν οὐσίας, ἐνεργῶν δὲ καὶ τούτῳ αἰεὶ καὶ οὐδαμῇ ἂν ἄργον προσεῖναι αὐτήν, ὥστ' ἂν καὶ τὰ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, ὧν ἂν μηδενὶ οὐ συγγενεῖ συναιτίῳ κεκρημένος αἰτίος γίνοιτο, αἴδια ἔτι προίεναι.

Ψυχῆ δ' ἤδη, πρὸς τῷ τῆς οὐσίας τε καὶ πράξεως διακεκριμένῳ, καὶ μὲν τι ἐνεργόν, τὸ δὲ πλεῖστον ἀργόν ἂν ἐκάστοτε λείπεσθαι τῆς πράξεως, ἐς ψιλὴν δὴ τινα ἀποπίπτον δύναμιν. Σώματι δὲ πρὸς πᾶσιν ἂν τούτοις καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν διακεκρίσθαι ἤδη ἐς εἶδος δὴ τι καὶ ὕλην, οὐ κινήτην μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ σκεδαστὴν δὴ τινα ἤδη φύσιν καὶ μεριστὴν ἐπ' ἄπειρον.

IV

1. *De diff.* X 337.34–338.10

ἀλλὰ τῶν μὲν ἐς πε-

35 περασμένα εἶδη τὰ τῆδε διακρινομένων ἔν ἐφ' ἐκάστῳ εἶδει, τῶν δ' ἐς ἀπειρίαν ἤδη ἐκπιπτόντων ἔν ἐπὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ἀπείροις. Αὐτίκα τῷ τῆδε ἀριθμῷ παντὶ διὰ τὴν ἀπειρίαν ἔν τὸ ἐκεῖ εἶδος ἐφιστάσιν, ἐνιαῖον τὲ καὶ καθ' ἔν ἅπαντα περιέχον τὰ τῷ τῆδε ἀριθμῷ διακεκριμένως τὲ καὶ καθ' αὐτὰ συμβαίνοντα. Καὶ
40 ἐπὶ τῶν τοῖς μεγέθεσι συμβαινόντων ὡσαύτως αὐτὸ ἔν τὸ ἐκεῖ
338 εἶδος τοῦ μεγέθους καὶ ἀμερές. Ἄφ' ὧν τὴν ψυχὴν ἐλλαμπομένην τὸν μαθηματικὸν ἀριθμὸν καὶ μαθηματικὰ μεγέθη ἐκτάδην ὑποδέχεσθαι, σκιάς τε καὶ εἶδωλα νοητῶν ὄντα, ἧ καὶ Πλάτων ἀξιοῖ ἀνάλογον αὐτὰ τιθεὶς πρὸς τὴν νοητὴν οὐσίαν ἧ
5 τὰ τῆδε ἔν τε ὕδασι εἶδωλα καὶ σκιάς τῶν αἰσθητῶν πρὸς αὐτὰ τὰ αἰσθητά. Καὶ μὲν δὴ καὶ τὰ ὑπ' ἀνθρώπων σκευαστὰ ταῦτα ἐν τῷ ἐκεῖ φασιν ἀνθρώπου εἶδει καθ' ἔν περιέχεσθαι ὄθεν τῆ διανοίᾳ τοὺς δημιουργοὺς ἄλλα ἄλλους ὑποδεχομένους, καὶ διανοητὰ πρότερον ἐν ἑαυτοῖς τὰ τῶν σκευῶν εἶδη ἐκάστων
10 διαμεμορφωκότας, οὕτω τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς ἐγχειρεῖν.

2. *De diff.* X 341.11–39

Ἄλλα φαίη ἂν

ἴσως Ἀριστοτέλης ἐν τῷ ἡλίου νῷ καὶ τούτων τὰ παραδείγματα ὑφισταῖν, καὶ οὐκ ἔτι δεῖν ἐτέρου παραδείγματος καθ' ἑαυτὸ ὑφεστηκότος οὐδενός. Δῆλον γὰρ ὡς τὸν ἡλίον τῶν γιγνομένων
15 τῆς γενέσεως Ἀριστοτέλης αἴτιον τίθεται. Πρὸς οὖν ταῦτα που οἱ τὰ εἶδη τιθέμενοι ἐροῦσιν· ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν ἐρωῶμεν ὧ Ἀριστοτέλης, ὡσαύτως τὰ τε σκευαστὰ ταῦτα ὑπὸ τῶν σφετέρων δημιουργῶν δημιουργούμενα, καὶ τὰ φύσει γιγνόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ ἡλίου, συνεχωροῦμεν ἂν σου τῷ λόγῳ. Νυνὶ δ' ὀρώμεν τὰ μὲν

- 20 σκευαστά ταῦτα, ἕως μὲν ἂν ὑπὸ τῶν δημιουργῶν δημιουργῆ-
ται παρόντων τὲ καὶ ἀπομένων τῶν ἔργων, καὶ αὐτὰ προχω-
ροῦντα ἐς τὴν τελειότητα τὴν ἑαυτῶν· καταλειφθέντα δ' ἡμι-
τελῆ ὑπὸ τῶν δημιουργούντων, οὐκ ἔτι προχωροῦντα ἐς οὐδέν,
ἄτε τῶν δημιουργούντων οὐ τὰς χεῖρας μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ
25 παραδείγματα ταῦτα ἑαυτοῖς συναποφερόντων. τῶν δὲ φύσει
γιγνομένων τὰ πλεῖστα ὀρώμεν καὶ τοῦ ἡλίου ἀποκεχωρηκότος
αὐτὰ ἔτι ἐς τὴν τελειότητα τὴν ἑαυτῶν προχωροῦντα· ὃ μάλιστα
ἐνδηλον γίγνεται ἐν τοῖς ταχὺ τελειομένοις φυτοῖς τε καὶ καρ-
ποῖς. Ἄ καὶ νύκτωρ οὐδὲν ἦττον ἢ μεθ' ἡμέραν φαίνεται τελειού-
30 μενα. τὸν μὲν οὖν ἡλίου νοῦν οὐκ ἂν αὐτὰ ἔτι τελειοῦν· οὐ γὰρ
ἂν τοὺς μεθεκτοὺς τούτους νοῦς ἄνευ τῶν σφίσι συνόντων σωμα-
των οὐδ' ὅτιοῦν δρᾶν ἕξ γε ἕτερα σώματα. τὰ δὲ γε σώματα
πάντα καὶ θέσεώς τινος δεῖσθαι καὶ σχήματος πρὸς τὰ πεισό-
μενα, ὃ τότε ἂν τὸν ἡλίον πρὸς αὐτὰ μηκέτι ἔχειν. Μηκέτι δ'
35 ὑπὸ τοῦ ἡλίου τότε ἂν τὰ τοιαῦτα τελειούμενα, οὐδ' ἂν αὐτὰ
δι' αὐτῶν τελειοῖτο· οὐδὲ μίαν γὰρ δύναμιν ἐς ἐνεργίαν προ-
χωρεῖν, μὴ οὐχ ὑφ' ἐτέρας ἐνεργίας προβιβαζομένην, οὐδ' ἂν
τὸ δυνάμει τέλειον καὶ ἔργῳ ποτε τέλειον γίγνεσθαι, μὴ οὐχ
ὑφ' ἐτέρου τοῦ ἔργῳ τελεωτέρου προβιβαζόμενον.

3. *Leg.* III,15, pp. 108–10, 114

- Ἴσως γὰρ ἂν τις οἰηθείη
τὸν Ἥλιον ἐν νῶ ἔχοντα τῷ ἑαυτοῦ τὰ τῶν θνητῶν
ταῦτα εἶδη, διανοητά τε καὶ καθ' ἑαυτὰ οὐδαμοῦ ὑφε-
στηκότα, ὃν τρόπον καὶ ἀνθρώπων οἱ δημιουργοῦντες τὰ
τῶν σκευαστῶν εἶδη, οὕτω τῶν θνητῶν αὐτὸν ἕκαστα
παράγειν. Ἄλλ' ἡμεῖς γε ὀρώμεν οὐχ ὡσαύτως τὰ τε σκευ-
αστά ταῦτα ὑπὸ τῶν δημιουργούντων ἀποτελούμενα,
τά τε φύσει συνιστάμενα ταῦτα τῶν θνητῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ
Ἥλιου. τὰ μὲν γὰρ που σκευαστά ἅπαντα, ἕως μὲν ἂν
110 αὐτοῖς παρῶσιν οἱ δημιουργοῦντες καὶ ἐργάζωνται, ὀρώμεν
καὶ αὐτὰ ἐς τὴν τελειότητα προχωροῦντα τὴν ἑαυτῶν,
καταλειφθέντα δὲ ποτε ἡμιτελῆ ὑπὸ τῶν δημιουργούν-
των, οὐκέτι οὐδὲ προχωροῦντα ἐς οὐδέν· ἔτι τε κατὰ
λόγον τὸν τῆς μεταχειρίσεως, ἢ ἂν αὐτὰ οἱ δημιουργοῦν-
τες ἐκάστοτε ἐργάζωνται, καὶ αὐτὰ ἅπαντα ἀεὶ τελειού-
μενα. τὰ δὲ φύσει ταῦτα συνιστάμενα, οὐ πρὸς τὸν
αὐτὸν ἅπαντα λόγον τῶν τε προσόδων καὶ ἀποχωρήσεων
τῶν τοῦ Ἥλιου ὀρώμεν τελειούμενα, οὐδὲ γε ζῶντα. Ἥ

γάρ ἂν ἅπαντα ἐφήμερα, ἢ γοῦν ἐπέτεια ἦν· ἔτι τε νύκτωρ οὐδὲν ἂν αὐτῶν προυχώρει ἐς τελειότητα. Νῦν δ' ὀρῶμεν καὶ νύκτωρ συχνὰ ἐπιδήλως τελειούμενα φυτὰ τε καὶ καρπούς. Τὸν μὲν οὖν Ἥλιον, οὐκ ἂν ὡσαύτως τελειοῦν ἕκαστα, προσάγοντά τε καὶ ἀποχωροῦντα. Οὔτε γὰρ ἂν νοῦν τὸν αὐτοῦ, ἄνευ τοῦ ἑαυτῷ συνόντος σώματος, αὐτὰ τελειοῦν. Οὐ γὰρ τοὺς γε μεθεκτοὺς τούτους νοῦς, ἄνευ τῶν σφίσι συνόντων σωμάτων, οὐδ' ἂν ὅτιοῦν δρᾶν ἐς γε ἕτερα σώματα· τοῖς τε αὖ σώμασι πᾶσι, τοῖς τι δράσουσι, καὶ θέσεως δεῖν τοιαῦδε ἢ τοιαῦδε πρὸς τὰ πεισόμενα. Οὐδ' αὖ τὰ τελειούμενα αὐτὰ ἂν ὑφ' αὐτῶν τελειοῦσθαι· οὐδεμίαν γὰρ ἂν δύναμιν ἐς ἐνέργειαν χωρεῖν, μὴ οὐχ ὑφ' ἑτέρας ἐνεργείας πρεσβυτέρας προβιβαζομένην· οὐκ ἂν οὖν οὔτε τὸ δυνάμει τέλειον, καὶ ἔργω ποτὲ τέλειον γίγνοιτο, μὴ οὐχ' ὑφ' ἑτέρου τοῦ ἔργω ἤδη τελείου ἐς τὴν τελειότητα προβιβαζόμενον. ...

114

...
Οὐ γὰρ αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ εἶδος χωρὶς ἕκαστον αὐτῶν [sc. τῶν σκευαστῶν] ὑφεστηκέναι, ἀλλ' ἐν θεῷ τῷ Πλούτωνι, ὃς εἶδους σύμπαντος τοῦ ἀνθρωπέου προέστηκε, σύμπαντα ἔχων ἐν ἑαυτῷ καθ' ἓν τι, τὰ γε ἀνθρώπεια πράγματα, ἐνόητα, καὶ ταῦτα ὡσαύτως καὶ καθ' ἓν τι τοὺς δημιουργοῦντας χωρὶς ἤδη ἕκαστον, καὶ ἄλλον ἄλλο, ταῖς διανοίαις ὑποδέχεσθαι. Ὡσπερ που καὶ ἀριθμὸν τὸν μαθηματικὸν καὶ μεγέθη τὰ μαθηματικὰ καθ' ἓν τι τῇ θεῷ Ἡρᾷ ἐκάτερον αὐτοῖν προσόντε, ἢ καὶ ἀπειρίας ἀπάσης προέστηκε τῆς κατ' αὐτά, διὰ τὸ καὶ ὕλης τὴν αὐτὴν προεστάναι, τὴν ψυχὴν ἤδη αὐτὰ ἐκτάδην ὑποδέχεσθαι, σκιάς μὲν που τῶν θείων καὶ εἰδῶλα ἄττα ὄντα, πρὸς δ' ἀκριβῆ κάκεινων ἀνθρώποις ἐπιστήμην ἀναγωγότατα. Τὰ μὲν οὖν σκευαστὰ ἀνθρώποις εἰκότως ταύτη τελειοῦσθαι.

V

1. *In Cleop.* 173.9–174.4

- 10 Ἴτι δὲ κἂν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀθαιρέτων θανάτων τοῦτό τις λογί-
σαιτο· οὐδὲν γὰρ τῶν ἀλόγων αὐτὸ αὐτὸ φαίνεται κτεῖνον ἐκ προ-
νοίας, τῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων εἰσὶν οἱ ἑαυτοὺς ἀποκτινύουσιν. Εἰ δὲ
μηδὲν ἔστιν ὃ ἂν τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ ὀλέθρου ἐφίοιτο· τὰ γὰρ ἄλογα,

εἰ καὶ μὴ αἰδιότητος ἐφίεται διὰ τὸ μηδὲ συνιέναι τοῦ τοιούτου,
 ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἐπὶ τὸν ἑαυτῶν ὄλεθρον σπεύδει ἐκόντα εἶναι· οὐκ ἂν οὖν
 15 οὐδ' ἡ ψυχὴ ἢ ἀνθρωπίνη ἐπὶ τι τοιοῦτον ὥρμα, εἴ γε καὶ αὐτῇ
 ὄλεθρον φέρειν ἂν ὁ τοῦ σώματος ἔμελλε θάνατος, ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴν
 174 μηκέτ' ἂν ἑαυτῇ λυσιτελεῖν τὸν μετὰ τοῦ σώματος νομίση βίον
 κτείνασα τοῦτο ἢ καὶ τοῖς κτεῖναι ἂν ἐθέλουσι προεμένη ὑπὲρ τοῦ
 μηδὲν τι τῶν αἰσχυρῶν καὶ βλάβην ἂν ἑαυτῇ οἰσόντων συγχωρῆσαι,
 αὐτὴ δηλαδὴ οἴχεται ἀπιούσα.

2. *In Hel.* 278.4–279.2

Καὶ μὲν δὴ κἄν οἱ αὐτοὶ αὐτοὺς ἀποκτινύντες
 5 εἴτε δὴ εὐλόγως τοῦτο δρῶντες εἴτε μὴ· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἂν διαφέρει
 τὸ τοιοῦτο πρὸς ὃ βουλόμεθα ἐνδείξασθαι· δηλώσειαν ὡς ἐκ δυοῖν
 ὁ ἄνθρωπος σύνθετός ἐστιν οὐσίαι, καὶ τῆς μὲν ἀθανάτου, τῆς
 δὲ θνητῆς. Οὐδὲν γάρ ἐστιν ὃ αὐτὸ ἐπὶ τὸν ἑαυτοῦ ὄλεθρον
 πέφυκεν ὀρμᾶν, ἀλλ' ἅπαντα τοῦ εἶναι τε καὶ σώζεσθαι κατὰ δύνα-
 10 μιν γε οὐ μεθίεται. Οὐκ ἂν οὖν οὐδ' ὁ ἄνθρωπος αὐτὸς αὐτὸν
 279 ἀποκτινύς τῷ θνητῷ αὐτὸ τὸ θνητὸν κτείνει, ἀλλὰ τῷ ἑαυτοῦ
 ἀθανάτῳ τὸ θνητὸν.

3. *Leg.* III,43 (*Epinomis*), p. 248

Ὡς γε μὴν ἐκ δυοῖν ὁ ἄνθρωπος συντέθειται εἰδοῖν,
 καὶ ἐξ ἑτέρου ἡμῖν, οὐδὲ τούτου ἀμφιλόγου, ἀποδείκνυ-
 ται ἀξιώματος, τοῦ μηδοτιοῦν τῶν ὄντων εἶναι, ὃ ἂν
 αὐτὸ ἐπὶ τὸν αὐτοῦ ὄλεθρον ὀρμήσειεν, ἀλλ' ἅπαντα parallel *In Hel.*
 τοῦ σώζεσθαι τε καὶ εἶναι ἐς δύναμιν γε μὴ μεθίεσθαι.
 Τοῦτο γὰρ λαμβάνουσι τὸ ἀξίωμα, καὶ ἔπειτα αὐτῶν
 ἀνθρώπων τοὺς αὐτοὺς αὐτοὺς ἀποκτινύντας ἐπιβλέ-
 πουσιν, ἐναργεστάτως καταφαίνεται οὐ τὸ θνητὸν ἡμῶν ὄν
 τὸ αὐτὸ αὐτὸ ἀποκτινύν, ἀλλὰ τι ἕτερον τούτου τε
 κρεῖττον, καὶ οὐ συναπολούμενόν γε, ἅτε οὐδ' ἂν τούτου
 ἐξημμένον, οἷά περ τὰ θνητὰ ἅπαντα εἶδη, ἃ δὴ τῶν
 σωματίων τέως οἷς ζύνεστιν ἐξημμένα, τούτοις καὶ λυο-
 μένοις συνδιόλλυται· οὐ γὰρ ποτ' ἂν αὐτῷ οὐ μόνον γε
 οὐκ ἐς τοσοῦτον, ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἂν ἐπὶ σμικρὸν τι ἀντέβαινεν,
 εἰ αὐτοῦ ἐξῆπτο· ἀλλ' οὐσίαν ἰδίαν τε ἔχον καὶ ἐφ' ἑαυτῆς
 ὑφεστηκυῖαν, ὃ ἐπειδὴν μηκέτι ἑαυτῷ λυσιτελεῖν τὸν parallel *In Cleop.*
 μετὰ τοῦ θνητοῦ βίον οἰηθῇ (εἴτ' ὀρθῶς, εἴτε καὶ μὴ, τοῦτο
 οἰηθέν· οὐδὲν γὰρ διαφέρει) κτεῖνάν γε αὐτό, ὡς ἄλλο ὄν,
 ἄλλου, κακοῦ δὴ δόξαντος καὶ οὐκ εὐχεροῦς συνοίκου,
 ἀπαλλάσσεται.

VI

1. *Ad Theod.* 126.11–23

Ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἐστὶν

ὁ ἄνθρωπος ζύνθετός τις φύσις ἕκ τε θείας οὐσίας καὶ θνητῆς,
ὡς δοκεῖ δὴ πᾶσι καὶ Ἑλλήνων καὶ βαρβάρων τοῖς γε καὶ ὄσονοῦν
νοῦ μετέχουσι, καὶ τὸ μὲν θεῖον αὐτοῦ ἢ ψυχὴ ἐστὶ, τὸ δὲ θνητὸν
15 τὸ σῶμα, οἳ μὲν, ἂν τῷ ἐν αὐτοῖς θείῳ κεκρατηκότι ἐπισπώμενοι
τάς τε περὶ τὴν ξυγγενῆ οὐσίαν ἠκριβωκότες εἶεν δόξας καὶ ἀρετῆν
καὶ τὸ καλὸν παντὸς τοῦ βίου προστήσαιτο, πάντα ἀγαθὰ ἐν
ἀνθρώποις ἀπεργάζονται, οἳ δ' ἂν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐν αὐτοῖς θνητοῦ καὶ
θηριώδους κρατηθέντες τάς τε περὶ τὸ θεῖον δόξας ἀμαρτάνοιεν
20 καὶ ἡδονῇ τὸ πᾶν δοῖεν τοῦ βίου, τὰ μεγάλα αὐτῶν πανταχῇ ἀπεργά-
ζονται κακὰ· οἷν μεταξὺ αὐτῶν καὶ οἷ τε περὶ δόξαν ἐσπουδακότες
καὶ οἱ περὶ χρήματα, δόξης μὲν ἀρετῆς καὶ τοῦ καλοῦ οὐσης
εἰδῶλου, χρημάτων δὲ παρασκευῶν ἐφ' ἡδονάς.

2. *In Cleop.* 172.14–173.3

Οὐκ ἂν οὖν τὸν θεὸν

15 οὐτ' ἂν ἀλλοτρία τε πάντα καὶ θνητῆ φύσει ἑαυτὸν γνωρίζειν,
ἀλλὰ πῃ καὶ οἰκεία· κοινωνεῖν γὰρ ἂν δέοι τὸ γινώσκον τῷ
173 γιγνωσκομένῳ, τὰ δὲ κοινωνοῦντα καὶ οἰκεῖα πῃ ἀλλήλοις δέοι ἂν
εἶναι, οὐτ' ἂν αἰδιότητος ἐπιθυμίαν ἐνθέμενον τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ
ἔπειτα ἀτελεῖ τε ἂν αὐτὴν καὶ μάταιον ἀπολιπεῖν.

3. *Leg.* I,1, p. 26

Παραπλήσια δὲ

καὶ περὶ τῆς ἀνθρωπείας φύσεως διαφορομένων, <τῶν μὲν>
τῇ ἄλλῃ θνητῇ τε καὶ θηρίων φύσει παραπλησίαν καὶ τὴν
ἀνθρωπεῖαν οἰομένων, οὐδὲν ἐκείνων σεμνότερον ἐν ἑαυτῇ
οὐδὲ θεϊότερον κεκτημένην· τῶν δὲ καὶ ἐς τὴν θεῖαν τε
δὴ καὶ πάντῃ ἀκήρατον ἀναγόντων ταῖς ἐλπίσι· τῶν δὲ
μέσῃ δὴ τίνα ἔχειν τε νῦν καὶ αἰεὶ ἔξειν χώραν τῆς τε
θείας καὶ ἀθανάτου καὶ αὐτῆς θνητῆς τὸν ἄνθρωπον νομιζόν-
των, μικτὴν ἐξ ἀμφοῖν.

4. *Ad quaes.* 99–104, 109–20

τῷ γὰρ ὄντι οὐχ ἄπλοῦν τι εἶδος ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ' ἐκ δυοῖν

100 εἰδοῖν σύνθετον ὄν, θεοῦ τε δὴ καὶ θηριώδους, δηλὸς γίγνεται, ἐν ἐ-
κεῖνο ἀξίωμα λαβοῦσιν οὐκ ἀμφίλογον νοῦ ὄσονοῦν μετέχουσιν ἄν-

θρώποις, ὡς τῶν αὐτῶν τῷ εἶδει ταῦτό καὶ ἔργον πάντων δέοι εἶναι καὶ παραπλήσιον καὶ τὰ μέγιστα τι τῶν ἔργων διαφέροντα καὶ ἀπὸ μέγα τι διαφερόντων προβάλλεσθαι εἰδῶν. ...

...

- 110 τοῖς δ' ἀνθρώποις ὀρώμεν πάμπολυ διαφέροντας τοὺς βίους καὶ τοὺς μὲν θείῳ βίῳ τινί, τοὺς δὲ θηριώδεσι χρωμένους, ἔστι δ' ὅτε καὶ τοὺς αὐτοὺς ἐκ θηριώδους βίου εἰς τὸν κατ' ἀρετὴν καὶ θεῖον μεταβάλλοντας, τοὺς δὲ καὶ ἐκ τοῦ θείου εἰς τὸν θηριώδη, ἐπειδὰν μὴ ἐπιστήμη τις τὴν ἀρετὴν, δόξη δὲ μόνη ὀρθῇ ἄνευ λόγου ἡρημένος τύχη. Εἰ μὲν οὖν ἀπλοῦν τι εἶδος ἦν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, εἰ μὲν θηριώδες, 115 θηριώδει ἂν ἅπαντες ἄνθρωποι καὶ τῷ βίῳ ἐχρῶντο, εἰ δὲ θεῖον, θείῳ ἂν ἐχρῶντο καὶ τῷ βίῳ ἅπαντες. Νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ οἱ μὲν θείως, οἱ δὲ θηριώδως φαίνονται ζῶντες, οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ καὶ ποικίλλοντες τὸν βίον, τοτὲ μὲν τοῖς θείοις, τοτὲ δὲ τοῖς θηριώδεσι προσνέμοντες σφὰς τῶν ἔργων, 120 δηλὸς ἐστὶν ἐκ δυοῖν εἰδοῖν, θείου τε δὴ καὶ θηριώδους, ὁ ἄνθρωπος συντεθειμένος ...

5. *In Hel.* 275.10–277.11

- 10 Θεὸν μὲν τινα ἓνα τοῖς ὅλοις ἐφεστάναι δημιουργόν τε αὐτῶν ὄντα καὶ παραγωγόν καὶ τοῦτον ἄκρως ἀγαθὸν εἶναι οὐδεὶς ὅστις οὐ νομιεῖ ἢ αὐτὸς ἐννοήσας ἢ τῶν οὕτως ἀξιούντων ἀκούων μὴ συγχωρήσας, εἰ μὴ σφόδρα τις διεφθόρει τὴν διάνοιαν, οὐδ' ὡς 276 τούτου καὶ ἡμῶν μεταξὺ εἶη τις ἂν καὶ ἄλλη φύσις, εἴτε δὴ μία τῷ γένει, εἴτε καὶ ἐς πλείω διακεκριμένη γένη, ἡμῶν μὲν κρείττων, ἐκείνου δὲ καὶ πάνυ λειπομένη, οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτὸς οὐ καὶ τοῦτο νομιεῖ. Οὐ γὰρ ἀξιώσει τις τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἔργων τὸ κράτιστον ἡμᾶς γε εἶναι. Ταύτας δὴ τὰς ἡμῶν κρείττους φύσεις οὐδεὶς ὅστις 5 οὐ νοῦς ἂν φαίη εἶναι ἢ καὶ ψυχὰς τινὰς τῶν ἡμετέρων κρείττους. Εἰ δὲ τοιαῦται ἐκεῖναι αἱ φύσεις, τί ἂν ἄλλο αὐτῶν τὸ κυριώτατον εἶη ἔργον καὶ πρᾶξις ἢ ἡ τῶν ὄντων θεωρία καὶ ἐπ' αὐτῇ ἢ τοῦ τῶν ὄλων δημιουργοῦ ἐννοια, ἣς τοῖς τυγχάνειν πεφυκόσιν οὐδεμία τις ἂν ἄλλη γένοιτο κρείττων πρᾶξις οὐδὲ μακαριωτέρα, ἣς καὶ 10 ἄνθρωπος πρὸς τῇ ἄλλῃ τῶν ὄντων θεωρίᾳ καὶ ταύτης δηλὸς ἐστὶ τυγχάνων. Οὐκοῦν οὐ μόνον τοῖς θηρίων ἔργοις κοινωνοῖ ἂν ἄνθρωπος καὶ τὰ θηρίων πράττοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς τῶν κρείττων ἡμῶν γενῶν, εἰ τῆς αὐτῆς αὐτοῖς θεωρίας ἐς δύναμιν καὶ αὐτὸς ἄπτεται, 277 τὰ δὲ κοινωνοῦντα τοῖς ἔργοις καὶ ταῖς οὐσίαις ἀνάγκη κοινωνεῖν. Ἄναλογον γὰρ δεῖ ἔχειν οὐσίας τε ἔργοις καὶ ἔργα οὐσίαις. Ὡσπερ οὖν τις τοῖς θηρίων ἔργοις κοινωνοῦντα ἄνθρωπον ὀρῶν

- 5 και ούσιαν τῇ θηρίων παραπλησίαν τίθεται αὐτὸν κεκτῆσθαι, καλῶς ἀξιῶν οὕτω καὶ τοῖς τῶν κρειττόνων ἡμῶν γενῶν κοινω-
 νούντα ὁρῶν ἔργοις καὶ ούσιαν παραπλησίαν τῇ ἐκείνων ἔχειν
 ἀξιούτω, ὡς οὐχ οἶόν τε ὄν μὴ οὐκ ἀπὸ παραπλησίας τῆς ούσιας
 παραπλήσια καὶ τὰ ἔργα εἶναι καὶ ἐκ δυοῖν ούσιαιν τὸν ἄνθρωπον
 10 νομιζέτω συντεθεῖσθαι, τῆς μὲν θείας τινός, τῆς δὲ θηριώδους,
 καὶ ταύτης μὲν θνητῆς, τῆς δὲ θείας ἡμῶν ἀθανάτου, εἴ γε καὶ
 ἢ τῶν κρειττόνων ἡμῶν γενῶν ἀθάνατος.

6. *Leg.* III,43 (*Epinomis*), pp. 242, 246

Οὐ δὴ,

κυριωτάτου τε ὄντος καὶ κοινουῦ ἐπιθυμήματος, ἅπαντες
 μὲν ἄνθρωποι ἐφίενται, ζητοῦσι δ' αὐτὸ οὐκ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ
 ἅπαντες βίῳ, ἀλλ' ᾧ ἀποδέδεικται ἕκαστα ἀπ' ἐν-
 νοιῶν τε καὶ ἀξιωματῶν οὐκ ἀσθενῶν τινῶν καὶ ἀμφιλό-
 γων, ἄλλων τε δὴ, καὶ τριῶν μεγίστων ἐκείνων, ἐνὸς μὲν,
 τοῦ ὡς ἡ ἀρχὴ αὕτη τῶν πάντων, ὁ μέγιστος θεός, ὄν γε
 ἡμεῖς πατρίῳ φωνῇ Δία καλοῦμεν, ἄκρω ἀγαθός ἐστιν, οὐ-
 δεμιᾶς αὐτῷ ἀγαθοῦ ὑπερβολῆς μὴ οὐκ ἐς ὅσον οἶόν τε
 βελτίστῳ εἶναι λειπομένης ἐτέρου δέ, τοῦ τὰς τε οὐ-
 σίας ταῖς γεννήσεσι ταῖς αὐτῶν, καὶ τὰς γεννήσεις ταῖς
 ούσιαις ἀνάλογον ἔχειν δεῖν· καὶ τρίτου, τοῦ καὶ τὰ
 ἔργα ταῖς ούσιαις, καὶ τὰς ούσιαις τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς σφετέ-
 ροις ἀνάλογον δεῖν καὶ αὐτὰ ἔχειν.

...

- 246 Ἐκ δ' αὖ τοῦ τρίτου ἀξιώματος τὰ περὶ τῆς φύ-
 σεως ἡμῖν τῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀποδείκνυται, ὡς ἐκ δυοῖν
 ὃ γε ἄνθρωπος σύνθετός ἐστιν εἶδοιν, τοῦ μὲν θηριώδους
 καὶ θνητοῦ, τοῦ δὲ ἀθανάτου τε καὶ τοῖς θεοῖς συγγενοῦς.
 Ἐπεὶ γὰρ τοῖς ἔργοις ὁ ἄνθρωπος, τοῖς μὲν θηριώδεσι,
 τοῖς δὲ καὶ τοῖς τῶν θεῶν παραπλησίοις χρώμενος φαίνε-
 ται, ἀνάγκη που καὶ τῶν ἔργων τούτων ἑκατέροις ούσιαν
 ἰδίαν τὴν ἀνάλογον ἔξουσιν ἀποδιδόναι. Ὡς δ' ἔτι θά-
 τερα ἀνθρώπῳ τῶν ἔργων τοῖς τῶν θεῶν παραπλήσια,
 καὶ ταῦτα αὐτῶν τοῖς σπουδαιοτάτοις, ἐναργές· οὔτε γὰρ
 τοῖς θεοῖς τῆς τῶν ὄντων θεωρίας ἄλλο σπουδαιότερον
 φήσομεν εἶναι ἔργον, ἢ κεφάλαιον ἢ Διὸς ἔννοια ὃ τε
 ἄνθρωπος φαίνεται τῆς τε ἄλλης αὐτοῖς θεωρίας τῶν
 ὄντων κοινῶν, καὶ οὐδὲ τῆς Διὸς ἔννοιας ἀπολειπόμε-
 νος, ἄχρι ἢ ἐσχάτης καὶ αὐτοῖ θεοῖ ἐξικνοῦνται. Δέοι ἄρα

ἂν αὐτῷ καὶ οὐσίας τῇ τῶν θεῶν παραπλησίας τῆς καὶ
 τοῦργον παραπλήσιον ἀποδωσοῦσης, καὶ ἀθανάτου δῆ,
 εἴ γε καὶ οὐσία ἀθάνατος ἢ τῶν θεῶν οὐ γάρ ποτ' ἂν
 θνητὸν γένοιτο ἀθανάτῳ παραπλήσιον οὐδ' ἐφ' ὅσονοῦν·
 οὐ γὰρ οὐδὲ συμβλητὸν ὅλως τὸ πεπερασμένην ἔχον τὴν
 τοῦ εἶναι δύναμιν καὶ ἐπιλείπουσαν τῷ ἀνεπίλειπτον
 ἔχοντι καὶ ἄπειρον.

VII

1. *De diff.* X 340.9–15

- Πυνθάνομαι γὰρ δὴ τοσοῦτον τῶν αὐτῷ
 10 προσκειμένων, τί δὴ ποτε οὐ τῷ αὐτῷ θεῷ καὶ τὰς κινήσεις
 ἀπάσας τὰς κατ' οὐρανὸν ἀπένειμεν, ἀλλ' ἄλλο ἄλλη κινουῦν
 κινήσει ἐφίστησιν, ἢ δῆλον δὴ ὅτι δι' ἐκεῖνο τὸ ἀξίωμα τὸ αὐτοῦ,
 ὃ αὐτὸς που ἀξιοῖ, ἔν ἐνὸς αἴτιον εἶναι. Δῆλα δὴ ὅτι διὰ τὸ αὐτὸ
 ἀξίωμα κἂν πλείω πλείοσιν οὐσαις ταῖς αἰδίοις οὐσίαις ἐφίστη
 15 τὰ παράγοντα, εἴ γε εἶναι τι αὐτῶν ὅλως αἴτιον ᾤετο.

2. *Contra Schol.* ΧΧΙΙΙ 430.25–432.11

- 25 'Ἄλλ' οὐ καὶ Ἀριστοτέλη τοῦτ' ἔνεστιν εἰπεῖν, ὅς ἐν ἐνὸς αἴτιον
 εἶναι ἀξιοῖ δι' ὃ δὴ καὶ ταῖς κατ' οὐρανὸν κινήσει πλείοσιν οὐσαις
 ἄλλο ἄλλη κινήσει κινουῦν ἐφίστησιν, ἵνα δὴ μὴ ἐν κινουῦν πλείους γε
 432 εὐθύς κινήσεις κινή. Εἰ μὲν οὖν ἀφ' ἐνὸς αἰτίου καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης τὰ
 ὄντα ἅπαντα παρήγε, κἂν ἐφ' ἐν αὐτὰ γένος καὶ αὐτὸς ἀνήγεν, ἵνα
 καὶ ἐν ἐνὸς αἴτιον κατὰ τὸ αὐτοῦ ἀξίωμα ἦν· νῦν δὲ διὰ τὸ μὴ ἀφ'
 ἐνὸς αἰτίου τὰ ὄντα παράγειν, ἢ μὴδὲ παράγειν ὅλως, εἰκότως καὶ
 5 ᾤθη μὴδὲν οἱ προσίστασθαι πρὸς γε τὸ μὴ ἐφ' ἐν γένος τὰ ὄντα
 ἀναγαγεῖν. Ἡμεῖς δ' οἷς βεβαιότατα ἀφ' ἐνὸς θεοῦ τὰ ὄντα παρήχθαι
 τὲ καὶ παράγεσθαι δοκεῖ, οὐδ' ἂν δυναίμεθα μὴ οὐ καὶ ἐνὶ αὐτὰ
 κοινῷ περιλαμβάνειν γένει, ἵνα δὴ καὶ ἐν μὲν ἐνὸς αἴτιον ἦ· οὐ
 μέντοι γε καὶ ἀμερὲς ἀμεροῦς, ἀλλὰ ἀμερὲς ἔν, ἐνὸς μὲν μεριστοῦ δέ.
 10 Οὐ γὰρ μεμπτὸν τὸ Ἀριστοτέλους τοῦτο ἀξίωμα, ἦν αὐτῷ καλῶς τις
 καὶ ἐπισταμένως χρῶτο.

3. John Argyropoulos, *De proc.* 118.10–119.6

- 10 Ὡστε τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον εἰκότως ἐκ πατρὸς ἐκπορευέσθαι λέγε-
 ται δι' υἱοῦ κατὰ τὴν ξυνεπτυγμένην θεολογίαν. Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐκ μό-
 νου πατρὸς, ἵνα μὴ νομίζοιτο ὁ υἱὸς αὐτῷ ἀνόμοιος, μὴ τὰς αὐτὰς

- ἔχων τελειότητας τῷ πατρὶ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο μηδ' ὁμοούσιος, ὅπερ
 οὐδαμῶς ἀπέοικε τῇ τοῦ Ἀρείου αἰρέσει, τὸν υἱὸν ἀλλοτριούση
 15 τῆς θείας φύσεως τοῦ πατρός· ὧν γὰρ αἱ δυνάμεις διάφοροι καὶ
 αὐτὰ ἂν εἶεν ταῖς οὐσίαις διάφορα· οὐδ' αὖ ἐξ υἱοῦ, ἵνα μὴ πάλιν
 ὁ υἱὸς ἀρχὴ νομίζοιτο ἄναρχος καντεῦθεν πάλιν ἀλλότριος τῆς
 πατρικῆς οὐσίας καὶ φύσεως, πρὸς δὲ καὶ ἵνα μὴ υἱωνὸς νομί-
 119 ζοιτο το Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τοῦ πατρός καὶ υἱὸς αὖ πάλιν τοῦ
 υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ· ἦν γὰρ ἂν καὶ ὁ υἱὸς αὖ πάλιν πατήρ· πρὸς δὲ καὶ
 ἵνα μὴ νομίζοιτό τι τῷ υἱῷ προσεῖναι ὡς παρακτικὴ δύναμις τοῦ
 ἁγίου Πνεύματος, μὴ τὸ αὐτὸ ὄν τῷ ἀριθμῷ κὰν τῷ θεῷ καὶ πα-
 τρὶ. Ἐπεισάγεται γὰρ καὶ τούτῳ πάλιν αὐθις τὸ τῆς οὐσίας ἀνό-
 5 μοιον, ἃ δὴ πάντα ἀνόσια καὶ ἀθέμιτα καὶ πόρρω τῆς τῶν Χρι-
 στιανῶν ἐκκλησίας καὶ πίστεως.

4. *Contra I lat.* 300, 302, 303

300

Τὸ ὑπὲρ Λατίνων βιβλίον τὸ ἐς ἡμᾶς ἦκον, ἄρχεται
 μὲν τοῦ τῇ σφετέρᾳ ἀμύνειν δόξῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ τὸν Πατέρα
 τοῦ προβολέως προεπινοεῖσθαι. Ἐπὶ γοῦν
 ταύτῃ τῇ ὑποθέσει, καὶ ἀπὸ ταύτης ὀρμώμενοι, καὶ ὁ
 βούλονται οἶονται οἱ τὸ βιβλίον συνθέντες συμπεραίνειν,
 ταύτῃ ἀκολούθως καὶ τὸν Υἱὸν τῆς τοῦ Πνεύματος ὑπάρ-
 ξεως ἀξιοῦντες προεπινοεῖσθαι· καὶ ἐντεῦθεν προσλαμβά-
 νοντες καὶ τι ἀξίωμα, τῇ μὲν Ἑλληνικῇ θεολογίᾳ καὶ
 μάλα φίλιον, τῇ δὲ Ἐκκλησίᾳ πολεμιώτατον, ὡς ὧν
 μὲν αἱ δυνάμεις διάφοροι, καὶ αὐτὰ ἂν εἴη ταῖς οὐσίαις
 διάφορα, οἶονται οὖν δεῖν καὶ τὸν Υἱόν, ἅτε προεπινοούμενον
 τῆς τοῦ Πνεύματος ὑπάρξεως, κοινωνῆσαι τῷ Πατρὶ καὶ
 τῆς τοῦ Πνεύματος προβολῆς, ἵνα μὴ τῆς προβλητικῆς
 δυνάμεως οὐ κεκοινωνηκῶς, καὶ τῇ οὐσίᾳ διενέγκῃ. Καὶ
 οὔτοι μὲν οὕτω.

302

...
 Τοῦτο μὲν οὖν, οὕτως ἐχέτω. Τὸ δ' ἀξίωμα ἐκεῖνο, τό,
 ὅτι αἱ δυνάμεις διάφοροι, καὶ αὐτὰ ἂν εἶναι ταῖς οὐσίαις
 διάφορα, πῶς οὐ τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ, ὡς γ' ἡμῖν ἀνωτέρω εἴρη-
 ται, πολεμιώτατον;

303

...
 Ἐτέρας δ' οὖν θεότητός τε καὶ οὐσίας ὑποδεεστέρας τοὺς
 τοῦ ἀνωτάτω θεοῦ παῖδας ἢ γε Ἑλληνικῇ θεολογίᾳ ποιεῖ,
 οὐδενὶ ἄλλῳ ἢ ἐκείνῳ ἐπεριδομένη τῷ ἀξιώματι, ὡς ὧν

αἱ δυνάμεις διάφοροι, καὶ αὐτὰ ἂν εἴη ταῖς οὐσίαις διάφορα, κρίνουσά τε μεγίστην δυνάμεων διαφορὰν τὴν τοῦ αὐτοῦ δι' αὐτὸ ὄντος πρὸς τὸ δι' ἕτερον ἤδη ὄν.

... ἔτι δέ,

καὶ εἰ ὁ μὲν γεννητικός, καὶ ἴσου γεννητικός, ὁ δ' οὔτε ἴσου, οὔτε οὐκ ἴσου γεννητικός, ὥστ' ἂν μηδὲ τῆς οὐσίας εἶναι τῆς αὐτῆς, εἰ ὢν αἱ δυνάμεις διάφοροι, καὶ αὐτὰ ἂν εἴη ταῖς οὐσίαις διάφορα; Ἀλλὰ Λατῖνοι μὴ ἀξιώματι τῇ γε Ἐκκλησίᾳ πολεμιωτάτῳ τὴν σφετέραν προεπέτειάν τε καὶ καινοτομίαν συνιστάντων, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῶν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἀρχῶν τοῦτο πειράσθων δεικνύναι.

5. *Leg.* III,43 (*Epinomis*), p. 242

Οὐ δὴ,

κυριωτάτου τε ὄντος καὶ κοινοῦ ἐπιθυμήματος, ἅπαντες μὲν ἄνθρωποι ἐφίενται, ζητοῦσι δ' αὐτὸ οὐκ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ἅπαντες βίῳ, ἀλλ' ὧ ἀποδέδεικται ἕκαστα ἀπ' ἐννοιῶν τε καὶ ἀξιωμάτων οὐκ ἀσθενῶν τινῶν καὶ ἀμφιλόγων, ἄλλων τε δὴ, καὶ τριῶν μεγίστων ἐκείνων, ἐνὸς μὲν, τοῦ ὡς ἡ ἀρχὴ αὕτη τῶν πάντων, ὁ μέγιστος θεός, ὃν γε ἡμεῖς πατρίῳ φωνῇ Δία καλοῦμεν, ἄκρως ἀγαθός ἐστιν, οὐδεμιᾶς αὐτῷ ἀγαθοῦ ὑπερβολῆς μὴ οὐκ ἐς ὅσον οἶόν τε βελτίστῳ εἶναι λειπομένης· ἐτέρου δέ, τοῦ τὰς τε οὐσίας ταῖς γεννήσεσι ταῖς αὐτῶν, καὶ τὰς γεννήσεις ταῖς οὐσίαις ἀνάλογον ἔχειν δεῖν· καὶ τρίτου, τοῦ καὶ τὰ ἔργα ταῖς οὐσίαις, καὶ τὰς οὐσίας τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς σφετέροις ἀνάλογον δεῖν καὶ αὐτὰ ἔχειν.

VIII

1. *Meth.* 132 (proto-Plethon)

Νυχθήμερόν ἐστι χρόνος μιᾶς ἡλίου περὶ γῆν περιφορᾶς· μὴν δὲ χρόνος μιᾶς σελήνης περιόδου τε περὶ τὸν ζωδιακὸν καὶ ἐπικαταλήψεως ἡλίου· ἐνιαυτὸς δὲ χρόνος μιᾶς ἡλίου περὶ τὸν ζωδιακὸν περιόδου.

Νυχθημέρου μὲν οὖν ἀρχὴν ποιούμεθα τὰς μέσας νύκτας· τῆνικαῦτα ὁ ἥλιος ὑπὸ γῆν τὸ πλεῖστον ἀποστάς αὐθις ἐπὶ τὸ φανερόν ἡμῖν ἡμισφαίριον προσιέναι ἄρχεται· καὶ ἅμα ἡ μὲν ἀνωμαλία ἡ τῶν νυχθημέρων πολὺ ἐλάττων κατὰ μέσας νύκτας τε καὶ μεσημβρίας

ἀρχομένων ἢ κατὰ τὰς ἡλίου ἀνατολάς τε καὶ δυσμὰς αἱ δὲ μέσαι αὐτῶν νύκτες τῆς μεσημβρίας ἀμείνους εἰς νυχθημέρου ἀρχὴν ὡς ἂν οὕτω τῆς μὲν ἡμέρας ὀλοκλήρου τε καὶ μιᾶς μενούσης, τοῦ δὲ χείρονος τοῦ νυχθημέρου μέρους τῶν νυκτῶν διαιρουμένου, καὶ τοῦ μὲν τῇ παρεληλυθῖα, τοῦ δὲ τῇ ἐπιούσῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἀποδιδόμενου.

Μηνὸς δὲ ἀρχὴν τὴν σύνοδον τῆνικαῦτα γὰρ καὶ τὸ σελήνης φῶς ἀφ' ἡμῶν τὸ πλεῖστον ἀποστραφέν, πρὸς ἡμᾶς αὐτῶν ἄρχεται ἐπιστρέφειν.

Ἐνιαυτοῦ δὲ ποιούμεθα ἀρχὴν τὰς χειμερινὰς τροπὰς τῆνικαῦτα γὰρ τοι καὶ ὁ ἥλιος τὸ πλεῖστον ἡμῶν ἀποκεχωρηκῶς προσιέναι αὐτῶν ἄρχεται καὶ τὴν ἡμέραν αὐξίνει, ἐλαχίστην τέως περὶ αὐτὰς τὰς χειμερινὰς τροπὰς γενομένην. Πρῶτη μὲν οὖν μηνὸς ἡμέρα, ἢ ἀπὸ μέσων νυκτῶν τῶν πρώτων μετὰ σύνοδον ἀρχομένη, ἦν καὶ νομηνίαν καλοῦμεν τῶν δὲ μηνῶν ὁ μὲν πλήρης, τριάκοντα ἡμερῶν, ὁ δὲ κοῖλος, ἑννέα καὶ εἴκοσι γινόμενος ἡμερῶν.

Ἔτους δὲ πρώτος μὴν ὁ ἀπὸ συνόδου τῆς πρώτης μετὰ χειμερινὰς τροπὰς ἀρχόμενος, καὶ τῶν ἐτῶν τὸ μὲν δωδεκάμηνον, τὸ δὲ καὶ τρισκαιδεκάμηνον, ἐμβόλιμος δὲ ὁ τοιοῦτος τρισκαιδέκατος μὴν.

2. Meth. 40–42

Νυχθημέρον ἐστὶν ἡλίου μία περὶ γῆν περιφορὰ καὶ ἡμέρα δὲ τὸ ὅλον νυχθημέρον λέγεται.

Μὴν ἐστὶ σελήνης μία περὶ τὸν ζωδιακὸν περιόδος τε καὶ ἐπικατάληψις ἡλίου.

Ἐνιαυτός ἐστὶν ἡλίου μία περὶ τὸν ζωδιακὸν περίοδος καὶ ἔτος δὲ ὁ ἐνιαυτός λέγεται.

Νυχθημέρου μὲν οὖν ἀρχὴν τὰς μέσας νύκτας ποιούμεθα, μηνὸς δὲ τὴν σύνοδον, ἐνιαυτοῦ δὲ τὰς χειμερινὰς τροπὰς. Περὶ μὲν γὰρ χειμερινὰς τροπὰς ἀφ' ἡμῶν τὸ πλεῖστον ὁ ἥλιος πρὸς νότον ἀποκεχωρηκῶς ἡμῖν αὐτῶν ἄρχεται προσιέναι· περὶ δὲ σύνοδον τὸ τῆς σελήνης φῶς ἀφ' ἡμῶν τὸ πλεῖστον ἀποστραφέν, πρὸς ἡμᾶς αὐτῶν ἄρχεται ἐπιστρέφειν. Μέσων δ' αὐτῶν νυκτῶν, ὁ ἥλιος ἀφ' ἡμῶν ὑπὸ γῆν τὸ πλεῖστον ἀποστάς, πρὸς ἡμᾶς αὐτῶν ἄρχεται ἐπανιέναι. Ἄμα δὲ συμβαίνει καὶ ἀπὸ μὲν μέσων νυκτῶν ἢ μεσημβρίας τὰ νυχθημέρα ἀρχόμενα πολλῶ ἐγγυτέρω εἶναι τῶν ὀμαλῶν, ἢ περ' ἀπ' ἀνατολῶν ἢ δυσμῶν ἡλίου. Ἀπὸ δ' αὐτῶν μέσων νυκτῶν τοῦ νυχθημέρου ἄρχεσθαι ἀμείνουν ἢ περ' ἀπὸ μεσημβρίας ἵνα μὴ ἡμῖν ἢ αὐτῇ καὶ μία ἡμέρα διασπῶτο, ἀλλὰ τοῦ τοῦ νυχθημέρου χείρονος μέρους τῆς γε νυκτὸς διαιρουμένης, ἢ μὲν ἑσπέρα τῇ οἰχομένη ἡμέρᾳ, ὁ δ' ὀρθρος τῇ ἐπιούσῃ λογίζοιτο.

Αὕτη μὲν οὖν ἢ περιέχουσα τὴν σύνοδον ἡμέρα ἔννη καὶ νέα καλεῖται, ἢ δὲ μετ' αὐτὴν εὐθύς νομηνία ἢς ἡγοῦνται μέσαι νύκτες αἱ μετὰ σύνοδον

εὐθύς, ἀφ' ἧς ἤδη τὰς λοιπὰς τοῦ μηνὸς ἡμέρας ἀριθμεῖν, τοῦ ὅλου μηνὸς τριακονθημέρου μὲν γιγνομένου πλήρους καλουμένου, ἐννέα δὲ καὶ εἴκοσιν ἡμερῶν κοίλου.

- 2 Τῶν δὲ τοῦ ὅλου ἔτους μηνῶν, νέος μὲν μὴν οὗ ἡγεῖται σύνοδος ἢ μετὰ χειμερινὰς εὐθύς τροπᾶς· μεθ' ὃν δεῦτερος καὶ τρίτος καὶ ἐξῆς ἄχρι δωδεκάτου· εἰ δὲ τρισκαιδεκάμηνον τὸ ἔτος γίγνοιτο, ἐμβόλιμος καλεῖται ὁ τοιοῦτος τρισκαιδέκατος μὴν.

3. *Leg.* III,36, pp. 58–60

..... Καὶ μὲν δὴ καὶ μῆσι καὶ ἔτεσι τοῖς γε κατὰ φύσιν χρῆσθαι, μῆσι μὲν κατὰ σελήνην ἀγομένοις, ἔτεσι δὲ πρὸς τὰς ἡλίου τροπᾶς, καὶ τούτων τὰς χειμερινὰς, ἀποκαθισταμένοις, ὅτε τὸ πλεῖστον ἡμῶν ὁ ἥλιος ἀποκεχωρηκὼς τῆς πρὸς ἡμᾶς αὐθις ἄρχεται προσόδου. Ἐννὴν μὲν οὖν καὶ νέαν ἄγειν, ἧ ἂν ἡμέρα ἡλίω ἢ σελήνη συνιοῦσα ὑπὸ τῶν ἀστρονομίας ἐμπειροτάτων κρίνηται. Τὴν δ' ἐξῆς νομηνίαν, ἧς ἂν ἡγοῖντο μέσαι νύκτες αἰ μετὰ τὴν τοῖν θεοῖν εὐθύς σύνοδον, ἀφ' ἧς τὰς λοιπὰς ἀπάσας ἡμέρας τοῦ μηνὸς ἀριθμεῖν, τοὺς μὲν πλήρεις τε καὶ τριακονθημέρους ἄγοντας τῶν μηνῶν, τοὺς δὲ κοίλους τε καὶ μιᾶ τῶν ἐτέρων ἡμέρα λειπομένους. Καὶ γὰρ αὐτὰ καὶ τῶν νυκτῶν ἐκάστων τὴν μὲν ἐσπέραν τῇ οἰχομένη ἡμέρα, τὸν δ' ὄρθρον τῇ ἐπιούσῃ λογίζεσθαι, καὶ τὰς μέσας νύκτας ἀμφοῖν εἶναι ὅρον τοῖν ἡμέραιν. Ἀριθμεῖσθαι δὲ καὶ ὧδε τὰς μηνὸς ἐκάστου ἡμέρας· μετὰ μὲν νομηνίαν, δευτέραν ἰσταμένου, καὶ τρίτην, καὶ ἐξῆς, ἐς τὸ πρόσω ἰόντι ἄχρις ὀγδόης· μετὰ δ' ὀγδοὴν ἰσταμένου ταύτην ἐβδόμην αὐτὸν μεσοῦντος, εἴτα ἕκτην, καὶ ἐξῆς, ἀναστρέψαντι ἄχρι δευτέρας, μεθ' ἣν διχομηνίαν· εἴτα δευτέραν αὐτὸν φθίνοντος, καὶ τρίτην, καὶ ἐξῆς, ἐς τὸ πρόσω αὐτὸν ἰόντι ἄχρις ὀγδόης· μεθ' ἣν αὐτὸν ἐβδόμην ἀπιόντος, εἴτα ἕκτην, καὶ ἐξῆς, ἀναστρέψαντι αὐτὸν ἄχρι δευτέρας μεθ' ἣν ἔννην, εἴτα ἔννην

- 60 τε καὶ νέαν, τοῦ μηνὸς πλήρους γιγνομένου· ἣν δὲ κοῖλος ὁ μὴν γίγνηται, μετὰ δευτέραν ἀπιόντος ἔννην τε καὶ νέαν εὐθύς. Τοῦ δ' ἔτους νέον μὲν μῆνα ἄγειν οὗ ἂν ἡγοῖτο σύνοδος ἢ μετὰ χειμερινὰς εὐθύς τροπᾶς, ἀφ' οὗ τοὺς λοιποὺς ἀριθμεῖν μῆνας, τὰ μὲν δωδεκάμηνα, τὰ δὲ καὶ τρισκαιδεκάμηνα ἄγοντας, τὸν ἐκ τῶν ἐμβολίμων γε ἐκάστοτε μῆνα ἐπεμβάλλοντας, ἐπειδὴν ὁ γε δωδεκάτος τῶν χειμερινῶν μὴ ἐφίκηται τροπῶν. Ἡλιοτρο-

πίοις δέ τισιν ἐς τὸ ἀκριβέστατον κατεσκευασμένοις κατὰ δύναμιν τὰς ἡλίου κρίνειν τροπὰς

IX

1. *Contra Lat.* 302–3

Ἡ μὲν γὰρ Ἑλληνικὴ θεολογία ἓνα θεὸν τὸν ἀνωτάτω τοῖς οὐσιν ἐφιστᾶσα, καὶ ἄτομον ἓν, καὶ ἔπειτα πλείους αὐτῷ παῖδας διδοῦσα, προύχοντάς τε ἄλλους ἄλλων καὶ ὑποδεεστέρους, οὐς καὶ ἄλλον ἄλλω αὐτῷ μείζονι ἢ μείονι τοῦ παντός τοῦδε μέρει ἐφίστησιν, ὅμως οὐδένα αὐτῶν τῷ πατρὶ ἴσον, ἢ γοῦν παραπλήσιον ἀξιοῖ εἶναι. Καὶ γὰρ ἐτέρας τε ἅπαντας οὐσίας καὶ πολὺ ὑποδεεστέρας ποιεῖ, καὶ θεότητος ὡσαύτως. Πρὸς γοῦν τῷ παῖδάς τε τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ θεοὺς καὶ αὐτοὺς καλεῖν, ἔτι καὶ ἔργα ἅμα τοῦ αὐτοῦ θεοῦ καλεῖ, οὐκ ἀξιοῦσα ἐπὶ γε τοῦ θεοῦ γεννήσεως δημιουργίαν διακρίνειν. ὅτι μηδὲ βούλησιν φύσεως ὅλως δὲ εἰπεῖν, μηδ' οὐσίας ἐνέργειαν.

2. *Leg.* III,15, p. 100

Τὸν δὲ Δία τῇ ἄκρα ἀπλότητι οὐκ ἄλλως μὲν γεννᾶν, δημιουργεῖν δ' ἂν ἄλλως οὐδὲ γεννᾶν μὲν ἕτερα, ἕτερα δ' ἂν δημιουργεῖν· ἀλλὰ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ δημιουργεῖν ὁμοῦ καὶ γεννᾶν, σὺν τε νοήσει τῇ τοῦ οἴα ἂν γενέσθαι ἕκαστα δέοι, γεννῶντα, σὺν τε αὐτῷ πεφυκέναι ὡσαύτως παράγειν αἰεὶ τὰ παραγόμενα, δημιουργοῦντα. Ἄνθρωπον μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἂν τοὺς παῖδας, οἴους διανοοῖτο ἐκάστοτε, γεννᾶν· τὴν δ' οἰκίαν καὶ τᾶλλα σκευαστὰ δημιουργεῖν ἂν, οἴα διανοοῖτο, ὅποτε δὴ καὶ διανοοῖτο. Τὸν δὲ Δία, πεφυκότα αἰεὶ οὕτως, ὥστε βούλεσθαι τε ἅμα καὶ δύνασθαι, τοιαῦτα ἀπεργάζεσθαι ἕκαστα, οἴα ἂν πρὸς τὴν τοῦ ὅλου ἔργου τελειότητα κάλλιστά τε ἔξοντα καὶ ἄριστα εἰδοῖ, εἰκότως, καὶ δημιουργεῖν τε ὁμοῦ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ γεννᾶν.

X

1. Scholarios, *Pro Arist.* 114.17–33, 115.20–30

114

Ἐπειτα καὶ τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ πίστει ἀμύνειν καὶ τοῖς ταύτῃ ἀνθισταμένοις ἀπεχθῶς ἔχειν ἱεροὶ νόμοι κελεύουσιν· αὐτὸς δὲ τοιαύτην τινὰ ἐδέξατο διαβολὴν ὑπὸ πλείστων, οἱ πιθανοὶ δοκοῦσιν, καὶ συγγράμματι αὐτοῦ ἐντυχεῖν τῷ ἰσχυριζόμενοι, νομοθεσίαν ἀρίστην ἐπαγγελομένῳ· οὗ καὶ ἐκγράψαντες μέρη τινὰ δεικνύουσιν τῆς παλαιᾶς τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἀνάπλευ φλυαρίας· δοκεῖ δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ ἡ τῶν λόγων ἰδέα συνηγορεῖν, ἣν χαλεπὸν ἐστὶ πιστεῦσαι μὴ εἶναι τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἐκείνου, τῷ γε τὰ τοιαῦτα κρίνειν ἐπισταμένῳ, ἐπιγεγράφθαι τέ φασὶ τῷ βιβλίῳ Πλήθωνα, εἴτε τοῦ λαθεῖν ἔνεκα, εἴτε τῷ πάνυ φροντίσαι τὸν ἄνδρα καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ἐπιγραφῇ τοῦ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἑλληνισμοῦ, εἴτε καὶ ἄλλης τινὸς αἰτίας εἶνεκα· πλείους γὰρ ἡμῖν ἐξηγοῦνται· ἐμέλησε δὲ αὐτοῖς πάνυ ταῦτα εἰδέναι. Τοιαῦτά τινά περὶ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς πολλοὶ λέγουσιν, οἷς οὐ ῥάδιον ἀπιστεῖν, καὶ τούτων μάλιστα ἡ τῆς πρὸς Ἀριστοτέλη εὐνοίας ἔνεκα ἐπαχθέστερον αὐτῷ ἐν τῷδε τῷ συγγράμματι χρῆσθαι προήχθη. Εἰ μὲν οὖν οὕτω ταῦτ' ἔχει, καὶ ἔστι μὲν τι Πλήθωνος βιβλίον ἀρίστην νομοθεσίαν ἡμῖν ἐκτιθέμενον, αὐτὸς δὲ ἐστὶν ὁ Πλήθων ὡς ἀληθῶς, καὶ ἡμῖν τοῦτο πεμπέτω.

115

...

Ἰκανώτατον δὲ σημεῖον ἡμῖν τῆς αὐτοῦ μὲν εὐσεβείας, τῶν δὲ συσκοφαντῶν πονηρίας παρέξεται, τῶν φίλων τινὶ ἐπιστείλας, ὡς οὔτε Πλήθων αὐτὸς ἐστίν, οὔτ' οἷδέ τινα Πλήθωνα κατὰ τῆς ἡμετέρας ποτὲ θρησκείας συγγεγραφότα, οὔτε τινὰ νομίζει καὶ ὄντινουν τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ δογμάτων καὶ νόμων βέλτιόν τι καὶ ἱερώτερον θεῶν ἀποδεδειγμένων εὐρεῖν δύνασθαι, καὶ ὅτι τὴν ἑλληνικὴν δεισιδαιμονίαν ἡγεῖται κατάπτυστον, καὶ τοὺς ὑπ' αὐτῆς ἐξηπατημένους καταγελάστους. Τούτοις τοίνυν τοὺς συσκοφάντας ἐλέγξας, οἷς μόνοις ἡμᾶς πεῖσαι δυνήσεται, ἄλλὰ τε πλείστα καὶ μέγιστα κερδαινεῖ καὶ τῶν μὲν ἐν τῷ παρόντι συγγράμματι λόγων αὐτὸς ἀκούσεται μετ' ἐπαίνου, τῶν δὲ λοιδοριῶν οὐκέτι, ἀλλ' ὃν οἱ συσκοφάνται συνεσκεύασαν Πλήθωνα·

2. Scholarios, *Ad Eugen.* 117.8–14

Οὐδὲ τῷ Γεμιστῷ τοίνυν ἠνώχλησα ἂν ποτε, μὴ τοῦ συνειδότος ἔνδοθεν ἐρεθίζοντος. Οἶσθα δ' ὅπως περὶ γε τὰ τοιαῦτα χρῆ διακεῖσθαι, εἰ μὴ τὴν Ἀναξαγόρου μέλλοιμεν ὑφίστασθαι σύγχυσιν. Καίτοι τινὲς αὐτὸν μὲν εὐσεβεῖν φασὶν ἐν τῇ περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ δόξῃ, καὶ μῆτε διδάσκειν μῆτε συγγράφειν νομοθεσίαν τινὰ καινοτέραν, ἐν ἧ τὰ ἡμέτερα διασύρεται,

ἀλλ' ἡμᾶς ὑπὸ βασκανίας αὐτῷ τοιαύτην φήμην ἐγείρειν, οὓς ὁ χρόνος ἐλέγξει λίαν ἀπατωμένους.

3. *Scholarios, Ad Gemist.* 125.7–23

Καὶ ὡς παρα-

- δειγμασι οὖν αὐτοῖς κεχηρημένοι καὶ κανόσιν ἀδιαψεύστοις τῶν σωφρονεστέρων περὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας εὐζωΐας ἐλπίδων, οὐκ ἂν Ἀριστοτέλους καὶ
- 10 Πλάτωνος ὑπεραλοῖμεν ὑπ' ἀλλήλων ἀναιρουμένων· χαίρομεν δ' ἂν καὶ τῆς ἐς τὰ κρείττω τῶν μαθημάτων ἀμβλύτητος σφίσις ὑπὸ τῶν ἐκ Χριστοῦ φωτισθέντων ἐλεγχομένης. Καίτοι καὶ συγγνώμην αὐτοῖς τινα νεμόντων ἀκήκοα λόγων ἱερωτέρων ἐγώ. Ἄλλ' εἴ τινες νῦν τὰ σαπρὰ Ἑλλήνων ἀνεοῖεν ληρήματα, τούτους φασὶν ἐν ἀσυγγνώστῳ καλινδεῖσθαι τῷ
- 15 ψεύδει. Μετὰ γὰρ τὴν λαμπρὰν τῆς μοναρχίας ἀπόδειξιν, ἣν ἐκεῖνοι μὲν, ταῖς ἐπεισαγωγαῖς τῶν ψευδωνύμων ἀναιροῦντες θεῶν, τοῖς λόγοις μόνοις ἐτίμων, ὁ δὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ συμφυῆς καὶ οὐσιώδης Λόγος, μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γεγενημένος, ἀναμφισβητήτως καὶ καθαρῶς πιστεύειν ἐδίδαξε, ποῦ νῦν ὄσιον αὐθις θεοποιεῖν καὶ τὴν ἀλόγιστον ἐκείνην θεοποιῖαν ἀναζωπυρεῖν
- 20 ἀπεσβεσμένην πειρᾶσθαι, καὶ θεῶν τινων ἀναγνωρισμοὺς ἐκ φιλοσοφίας ὑπὲρ τὴν ποιητῶν διάστροφον γνώμην καὶ ἀγιστείας εὐσταλεῖς, ὡς αὐτοὶ φασί, καὶ νόμους ἠθῶν καὶ διαίτης ὑφ' ἡγεμόνι Ζωροάστρη καὶ Πλάτωνι καὶ τοῖς ἐκ Στοᾶς, καὶ τοιαύτην τινα λόγων ὀμίχλην αὐθις συνάγειν;

4. *Ad Oes.* 479.17–28

- Ἄλλὰ πάλιν εἰς Πελοπόννησον ὁ δυσσεβῆς Ἰουβενάλιος καταφεύγει· ἔγνω γὰρ τὴν νῆσον αὐτὴν προσφρονεστέραν οὖσαν τοῖς πονηροῖς αὐτοῦ σπέρμασιν· καὶ φανερώς αὐτόθι λυττᾶ κατὰ τῆς αὐτοῦ σωτηρίας,
- 20 τοσοῦτον ἀφρονέστερος τῶν διδαζάντων γενόμενος, ὅτι περ ἐκεῖνοι μὲν τὸν ἑλληνισμόν ἐκδικοῦσι καὶ λόγοις καὶ συγγραφαῖς, γενεαλογίας θεῶν καὶ ὀνομασίας ἀχράντους ὑπὸ τῶν ποιητῶν καὶ ἀγιστείας εὐσταλεῖς, ὡς αὐτοὶ φασί, καὶ πολιτείας καὶ πάντα δὴ τὰ κατασσησπῶτα καὶ σβεσθέντα καλῶς εἰς τὸν βίον αὐθις εἰσάγειν πειρώμενοι, κατὰ δὲ τῶν Χριστοῦ
- 25 λόγων καὶ δογμάτων καὶ ἔργων καὶ τῆς εὐσεβεστάτης θρησκείας ἡμῶν οὐκ ἀνέδην οὔτω καὶ φανερώς λέγειν ἢ συγγράφειν ἐτόλμησαν, εἰ καὶ τὴν καθαίρεσιν τῶν ἱερῶν πραγματεύονται, δι' ὧν ἐξαίρουσι τὰ βέβηλα καὶ τιμῶσι.

5. *Leg.*, pp. 2–4

ΠΛΗΘΩΝΟΣ
ΝΟΜΩΝ ΣΥΓΓΡΑΦΗ

Ἡ βίβλος ἤδε περιέχει,

θεολογίαν μὲν τὴν κατὰ Ζωροάστρην τε καὶ Πλάτωνα, ὀνομαζομένων τῶν διὰ φιλοσοφίας ἀναγνωριζομένων θεῶν τοῖς πατρίοις τοῖς Ἑλλησι θεῶν ὀνόμασιν, ἔλκομενοὶς ἑκάστοις ἐκ τοῦ οὐ πάνυ τοι συνωδοῦ φιλοσοφία, διὰ τὰς ὑπὸ τῶν ποιητῶν διαστροφάς, ἐπὶ τὸ ὡς μάλιστα δὴ φιλοσοφία συνωδόν·

Ἠθικὰ κατὰ τε τοὺς αὐτοὺς σοφοὺς καὶ ἔτι μὴν τοὺς Στωϊκοὺς·

Πολιτείαν δὲ Λακωνικὴν, ἀφηρημένου μὲν αὐτῆς τοῦ ἄγαν τῆς σκληραγωγίας καὶ τοῖς γε πολλοῖς οὐκ εὐ- παραδέκτου, προστιθεμένης δὲ τῆς ἐν τοῖς ἄρχουσι μάλιστα φιλοσοφίας, τοῦ κρατίστου δὴ τούτου τῶν Πλατωνικῶν πολιτευμάτων·

4 Ἀγιστείας εὐσταλεῖς, καὶ οὔτε περιέργους, οὐδ' αὖ τοῦ δέοντος ἐκλιπεῖς·

Φυσικὰ δὲ δὴ κατὰ Ἀριστοτέλην τὰ πολλὰ.

Ἄπτεται δὲ πῶς ἡ βίβλος καὶ λογικῶν ἀρχῶν, ἀρχαιολογίας τε Ἑλληνικῆς, καὶ πη καὶ ὑγιεινῆς διαίτης.

XI

1. Bessarion, *In cal.* 162.33–164.5

Ὅταν δὲ πᾶσαν ψυχὴν ἀθάνατον τίθηται Πλάτων, μὴ νομισάτω τις καὶ τὴν ἄλογον αὐτὸν τοιαύτην νομίζειν – συκοφαντία γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο καὶ ψεῦδος – ἀλλὰ τὴν λογικὴν μόνον, ἣν καὶ μόνην κυρίως ψυχὴν αὐτὸς τε καὶ οἱ αἰρεσιῶται καλοῦσι, τὰς ἄλλας οὐ ψυχάς, ἀλλὰ ψυχῶν εἶδωλα καὶ ζωὰς τινὰς τιθέμενοι. συμφώνως τε γὰρ καὶ κοινῶς ἅπαντες τριῶν εἶδος ψυχῶν οὐρανίων, δαιμονίων καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων εἶναι δοξάζουσι, τὸ μὲν

ἐπιστημονικὸν

164 πάντων, τὸ δὲ περὶ πάντα ὀρθοδοξαστικόν, τὸ δὲ πῆ μὲν ὀρθῶς, πῆ δὲ καὶ ἐσφαλμένως δοξάζον, μέχρι τούτων τὸ ψυχῆς ὄνομα κυρίως κατάγοντες, τὰς δὲ λοιπὰς ζωὰς τινὰς, ἧ εἴρηται, καὶ καταφορικῶς οὐ κυρίως καλοῦντες ψυχάς, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τὴν λογικὴν μόνον οἰόμενοι τε καὶ διδάσκοντες 5 ἀθάνατον εἶναι, ὅταν ψυχὴν πᾶσαν ἀθάνατον λέγωσι.

2. *Leg.* III,34, pp. 174–6

Ἵν διττὸν τὸ γένος ἀπεργαζόμενος, τὸ μὲν πάντῃ ἀχώριστόν τι τῆς ὕλης ἐποίει καὶ ταύτης ἐξημμένον, τὸ ἄλογον δὴ εἶδος σύμπαν, τὸ δ' οὐκέτι αὐτῆς ἐξημμένον, ἀλλὰ τούναντίον αὐτὸ ἔχον αὐτὴν ἐξημμένην, καὶ ἔργῳ μὲν οὐ χωριστόν, τῇ δὲ δυνάμει χωριστόν τέ τι καὶ αὐτὸ ὄν, καὶ τῇ καθ' ἑαυτὸν οὐσίᾳ τῇ ὑπερουρανίῳ ταύτῃ συγγενέστερον, τὴν ψυχὴν δὴ τὴν λογικὴν. Ἦς αὖ τριχῆ τὸ εἶδος διαιρῶν, τὸ μὲν πάντων τέ τι ἐπιστημονικὸν ἐποίει, καὶ γνήσιον ἑαυτοῦ ἔκγονον, τὸ τῶν ἄστρον, θεῶν γεγονὸς γένος οὐράνιον· τὸ δ' οὐ πάντων μὲν ἐπιστημονικόν, ὀρθοδοξαστικόν δὲ πάντων, ὧν γ' ἂν μὴ τῇ ἐπιστήμῃ ἐφικνοῖτο, νόθον τέ τί οἱ καὶ χθόνιον γεγονὸς γένος δαιμόνων, καὶ θεῶν τε ἔσχατον πάντων, καὶ τούτοις ὅπῃ δέοι ὑπηρετικόν· τὸ δ' οὐ περὶ πάντα ὀρθοδοξαστικόν, ἀλλ' ἀμαρτητὸν τε, καὶ οὐ πάνυ τοι σπουδαῖον ἑαυτοῦ ἔκγονον, τὴν γε ἡμετέραν καὶ ἀνθρωπίνην ψυχὴν, τοῦ τῶν δαιμόνων τούτου γένους ἐφεξῆς που γεγонуῖαν.

XII

1. Orpheus, *Hymni*, 1 (composed by Plethon from various other Orphic hymns)¹

Διός, θυμίαμα στύρακα.	edn Quandt
Ζεῦ πολυτίμητε, Ζεῦ ἄφθοιτε, τήνδε τοι ἡμεῖς	15.1
μαρτυρίαν τιθέμεσθα λυτήριον ἠδὲ πρόσευξιν.	15.2
ὦ βασιλεῦ, διὰ σὴν κεφαλὴν ἐφάνη τάδε πάντα ² ,	15.3
Ζεῦ σκηπτοῦχε μέγιστε ³ , καταιβάτα, ὄμβριμόθυμε,	15.6
παντογένεθλ', ἀρχὴ πάντων πάντων τε τελευτή,	15.7
αὐτοπάτορ ⁴ , μακάρων τε θεῶν πάτερ ἠδὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν,	13.1
ἀλλὰ χαρεῖς λοιβαῖσι δίδου φρεσὶν αἴσιμα πάντα	19.20
ζωὴν τ' ὀλβιόθυμον, ὁμοῦ θ' ὑγίειαν ἄνασσα	19.21
εἰρήνην τε θεόν, κουροτρόφον, ἀγλαότιμον,	19.22
καὶ βίον εὐθύμοισιν αἰεὶ θάλλοντα λογισμοῖς.	19.23

¹ Cf. Quandt's editorial commentary and *addenda* to Orpheus, *Hymni*, pp. 19^a–22^a, 82–83, Keydell 1942, pp. 77–80.

² Plethon : θεῖα Quandt *corr.* Pierson εὐρέϊα.

³ Plethon : Ζεῦ Κρόνιε, σκηπτοῦχε Quandt.

⁴ Plethon : Ἀιθαλής Quandt.

2. Orpheus, *Hymni*, 2 (composed by Plethon from various other Orphic hymns)

Ἦρης, θυμίαμα ἀρώματα.

Ἦρα παμβασιλεία, Διὸς θύγατερ πρεσβύτρα ⁵ ,	16.2
ψυχοτρόφους πᾶσιν αὔρας ⁶ παρέχουσα προσηνεῖς,	16.3
κοινωνεῖς γὰρ ἅπασι κεκραμένη ἠέρι σεμνῶ·	16.6
πάντων γὰρ κρατέεις μούνη πάντεσσί τ' ἀνάσσεις	16.7
μήτηρ μὲν τε θεῶν ἠδὲ θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων·	14.9
ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ καὶ γαῖα καὶ οὐρανὸς εὐρύς ὑπερθεν	14.10
ἀλλά, μάκαιρα θεά, μεγαλύνουμε ⁷ , παμβασιλεία,	16.9
κλυθὶ μευ ⁸ εὐμένεουσα καλῶ γήθοντι προσώπω.	16.10

3. *Leg.* III,35, p. 206

Ὑμνος πέμπτος, ἐπιμηνίων δὲ τρίτος, ἐς Ἦραν.

Ἦρα, πρέσβα θεά, θύγατερ Ζηνὸς μέγαλοιο,
 τῆς τε Ποσειδάων πόσις, ὅς ῥ' ἔστ' αὐτὸ ὃ ἐστὶν
 καλόν, μήτηρ μὲν τε θεῶν, τοῖ οὐρανοῦ ἐντός,
 ἠδ' ὕλης παραγωγέ, ἔδρης τοῖς τῆδ' εἶδεσιν,
 δυνάμεώς τε δότεира προπάσης, ἢ μὲν τ' ἄλλης,
 ἠδέ θ' ἢ εἰς ἀρετὴν φέρει ἀγλαίην τε ἅπασαν,
 τῆ τε νόμους συνάγεις, ἐξ ὧν τοι τοῖσιν ὄλοισιν
 πληθύς, αἰδιότης θ' ἅμα ἐγγέγαεν· σὺ καὶ ἄμμιν
 εὐ βιόεν δίδου, ἐς ῥ' ἀρετὴν ἴλεως προφέρουσα.

4. Orpheus, *Hymni*, 3 (composed by Plethon from various other Orphic hymns)

Ποσειδῶνος, θυμίαμα σμύρναν.

Κλυθι, Ποσειδάων Ζηνὸς παῖ πρεσβυγένεθλε ⁹ ,	17.1, cf. 4.2
οὐρανίων ¹⁰ , μακάρων τε θεῶν πάτερ ἠδὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν,	13.1
ὅς ναίεις κορυφαῖος ἐπ' Οὐλύμπιοι καρήνων,	Plethon
δεύτερος ἐκ Διὸς εἰληχῶς πάντων ἀνάσσειν.	Plethon
ἵππιε, χαλκοτόρευτον ἔχων χεῖρεσσι τρίαιναν,	17.2
εὐρύμεδον ¹¹ , χαριδῶτα, τετράορον ἄρμα διώκων,	17.5
ἄναξ ¹² , παντοκράτωρ, ἱερώτατε, ἀγλαότιμε,	18.17

⁵ Plethon : σύλληκτρε μάκαιρα Quandt.

⁶ Plethon : αὔρας θνητοῖς Quandt.

⁷ Plethon : πολυώνουμε Quandt.

⁸ Plethon : ἔλθοις Quandt.

⁹ Plethon : γαιήοχε, κυανοχαῖτα Quandt.

¹⁰ Plethon : Ἀιθαλής Quandt, cf. above, p. 307, n.4.

¹¹ Plethon : κυμοθαλής Quandt.

¹² Plethon : ἔνθεε Quandt.

σεμνοῖς μυστιπόλοις χαίρων ὁσίοις τε σεβασμοῖς,
ἴλαος εἷης εὐτυχίην μύστησι προφαίνων.

18.18

Plethon, cf. 8.20

5. *Leg.* III,35, pp. 204–6

Ἵγμνος τέταρτος, ἐπιμηνίων δὲ δεύτερος, ἐς Ποσειδῶ.

ἽΩ μέγ' ἄναξ, Διὸς υἱὲ πρεσβυγένεθλε, Πόσειδον,
συμπάσης τῆσδ' ἀγλαΐῃ προύχων σθένεϊ τε,
ὀππόση ἐκ Διός ἐστι γένεσις, τῆς τε καὶ Ἴφι
ἀρχέμεν ἠδὲ ἀνάσσειν δεύτερος ἐκ πατρὸς ἔσχεις,
ὅς τ' αὖ ἔξοχος ὅσσω ἀπείρω ἐστὶ προπάντων,
οὔνεκ' ἄρ' οἶος ἐόντων πάμπαν ἔστ' ἀγένητος.

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Σοὶ μὰν καὶ τόνδ' οὐρανὸν εὐρέα, πατρὸς ἐφετμαῖς,
τεῦξαι ὑπῆρξεν, ἐν ᾧ δὴ σοὶ κᾶμμες γεγάμεν
τοῖσιν ἄρ' ἦπιος αἰὲν ἰδ' ἴλαος, ὧ πάτερ, εἷης.

Manuscript Supplement

(The supplementary texts and information to Alexandre's edition of Plethon's *Laws*)

Manuscript *Additional* 5424¹

(The following text is a mere transcription of the parts missing in Alexandre's edition, it does not pretend to be a critical edition. Only the most important misreadings and peculiarities of the orthography of the scribe are noted. The original punctuation of the manuscript was sometimes changed to be more in accord with the overall sense of the text.)

fol. 101.1–7, follows after: *Leg.* 132.11 [III,34] Alexandre

Τρις ἡμέρας ἐκάστης προσαγορεύειν θεούς· πρῶτον μὲν ἔωθεν ἄρ-
τι ἀναστάντας, ἢ που καὶ ὄρθρον ἔτι τοὺς ὀρθρευομένους· ἔπειτα δὲ
δειλῆς μετὰ τε δὴ τὰ καθήκοντα τῶν ἔργων καὶ πρὸ δείπνου·
εἴθ' ἐσπέρας ἐς εὐνὴν ἤδη ἰόντας· ἔτι δ' ἐν μὲν ταῖς ἱερομηνί-
5 αῖς μακροτέραις, βραχυτέραις δ' ἐν τῶν ἡμερῶν ταῖς
βεβήλοις χρωμένους ταῖς προσήρσει· καὶ ἔστων δὴ αἰ
προσήρσεις αἶδε·

fol. 108v.1–3, a lacuna in *Leg.* 162.6 [III,34] Alexandre

τὴνδε ἡμῶν πρόσρησιν δειλινὴν ἰλεῶ τε καὶ εὐμενεῖς πρό-
σεσθε· ἦν οἱ τῆς ἐν χρόνῳ τε καὶ εἰ ὑπαπιούσης αἰδιότη-
τος τὰ ἔσχατα εἰληχότες ἡμεῖς ...

fol. 114.2–7, follows after: *Leg.* 182.27 [III,34] Alexandre

καὶ ταύτης τῆς προσήρσεως ἐν τῶν ἡμερῶν ταῖς βεβή-

¹ This manuscript *Additional* is in the possession of the British Library, London, having been originally copied by Kabakes; see Masai–Masai 1954, p. 554, Masai 1956, p. 394, n.6, p. 399, n.3, p. 400, n.1, for a brief description of the passages preserved there and not in Alexandre. A complete reproduction of the manuscript is now available on-line: www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?index=1&ref=Add_MS_5424 [accessed 12 June 2012].

λοισ μετὰ τὸ κῶλον ἐκεῖνο· 'καὶ ἀγαθὰ ἅπαντα, ὅποσα τε
καὶ ἐς ὅσον γε ἐνήν κάλλιστα ἔχοντα παραγαγόντι', ἐξαι-
5 ροῦντας τὸ μεταξὺ πᾶν χωρίον, ἐπάγειν· 'οὐ μέγας τῷ ὄντι,
καὶ ὑπέρμεγας', καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς, ἄχρι τῆς τῆς προσρήσεως τε-
λευτῆς. ✽

fols 118v.21–123.17, follows after: *Leg.* 202.2 [III,35] Alexandre
ἅμα πέπρωται ἐκ τοῦ παντὸς αἰῶνος. ✽ καὶ ταύτης δὲ τῆς
προσρήσεως ἐν τῶν ἡμερῶν ταῖς βεβήλοις μετὰ τὸ κῶλον
ἐκεῖνο· 'καὶ μάλιστα ἐπὶ ταῖς μείζοσι τε καὶ τελεωτέροις
τῶν δωρεῶν, ἅς πρὸς ὑμῶν ἔσχομέν τε καὶ ἔχομεν', ἐξαι-
119 ροῦντας τὸ μεταξὺ πᾶν χωρίον, ἐπάγειν· 'ἐν οἷς δὴ ἡμῶν
τῇ ψυχῇ ἐς ἀρετῆς τε καὶ τοῦ καλοῦ λόγον συλλαμβάνετε',
καὶ τὰ λοιπά, ἄχρι τῆς τῆς προσρήσεως τελευτῆς.

Ἐσπερινὴ ἐπὶ νηστεία ἐς Δία πρόσρησις ✽

Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ, σὺ αὐτοῶν τε ὦν καὶ πάντη πάντως ἀγέννητος, ἐν
5 τε εἰλικρινῶς καὶ οὐδαμῇ αὐτὸς σαυτοῦ ἕτερος, καὶ ἀγα-
θῶν πρεσβυτάτος τε ὁμοῦ ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ ἔσχατος, οὐχ ἕτερόν τι
ὦν ἔπειτα ἀγαθόν, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ δὴ τὰγαθὸν καὶ τὸ πᾶν τόδε παραγωγός²,
γενητὸν μὲν τῇ αἰτίᾳ καὶ τῷ ἀπὸ σοῦ εἶναι· ὄν δ' αἰεὶ τῷ ὄλῳ ἑαυτοῦ,
καὶ οὔτ' ἠργμένον³ χρόνῳ, οὔτ' ἄν ποτε παυσόμενον· ἔτι τε ἐν μὲν ἐκ
10 πολλῶν⁴ τε καὶ ἀλλήλοις ὁμολόγων συνεστηκός· ἄριστα δέ σοι ἐκ
τῶν ἐνότων κατεσκευασμένων ἐν τε τῇ αὐτῇ καὶ ἀρίστη κατα-
στάσει, τὸν ἅπαντά σοι αἰῶνα διασωζόμενον· σὺ τέλος ὦν
τῇ ἄκρᾳ τε μονώσει καὶ τῷ μηδὲν ἐν σαυτῷ ἄμεινόν τε
ἕτερον ἐτέρου καὶ χεῖρον κεκτηῖσθαι, οὐδὲν δὴ ὄλως ἕτερον,
15 ἀλλ' ὁ αὐτὸς εἶναι αὐτὸς σαυτῷ καὶ τὸ πᾶν τόδε τέλειον τῇ πάντων
τε καὶ παντοίων εἰδῶν πληρώσει, καὶ τῶν μὲν ἀμεινόνων, τῶν
δ' ὑποδεεστέρων, ἀπείργασαι καὶ ὄντως πᾶν· σὺ Ποσειδῶ,
τὸν μέγαν ἐν τῷ παντὶ τῷδε, τελεώτατόν τε τῶν σαυτοῦ
ἔργων, καὶ σαυτῷ ὅτι ὁμοιότατον γεγέννηκας⁵, τὴν τε τῶν
20 ὄλων τῶνδε ἡγεμονίαν αὐτῷ ἐπιτέτραφας, οὐδ' αὐτός,
οὐδὲ τῆς ἄχρι ἐσχάτων τῶν ὄντων προνοίας⁶ ἀφιστάμενος· ὃς καὶ
δύναμιν αὐτῷ τε καὶ ὅτῳ ἄλλῳ ὁμοίον τι σχῆμα περιτέ-
θειας, τὴν τε τοῦ ἡγεῖσθαι δίδως, ἔτι τε παράγειν,

² *lectio incerta.*

³ ἠργμένων *Add.*

⁴ πολῶν *Add.*

⁵ γεγέννηκας *Add.*

⁶ προνοίας *Add.*, *correctio scribae ex προνοίας.*

- 119v** ἄττ' ἂν καὶ δι' αὐτῶν σοι γεγονέναι δέοι⁷, καὶ πᾶσιν αὐτὸς
 περὶ γ' εὖ ἕκαστα αὐτοῖς τῶν ἔργων τιθεῖς· σὺ τὸν νοητὸν τε
 καὶ ὑπερουράνιον σύμπαντα διάκοσμον διὰ σαυτοῦ
 ὑπέστησας⁸, πάντων τε καὶ παντοίων εἰδῶν τε ἀμερίστων τὴν οὐ-
 5 σίαν πεπληρωκῶς, καὶ νῶν ἀκινήτων τῶν αὐτῶν, σύμπαν-
 τα ἅμα τε καὶ ἔργω τὰ ὄντα μιᾷ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ ἐκάστου
 νοήσει θεωροῦντος, θεῶν τούτων ἀπάντων τῇ γε θεότη-
 τι δευτέρων. ὑπὸ Ποσειδῶνι κορυφαίω σφῶν ἕξ γε
 ἕνα τινα ὅτι κάλλιστον συνεστηκότων κόσμον, ᾧ δὴ αἰ-
 10 ῶνα τοῦ βίου μέτρον ἀποδέδωκας· τῷ μὴδὲν ἐν αὐτῷ παρὶον
 ἐντεθεικέναι, ἀλλ' αἰεὶ τε ἐνεστηκότα, καὶ ὡσαύτως τε καὶ κατὰ
 τὰ αὐτὰ μένοντα ἅπαντα· σῆ διατάξει καὶ οὐρανὸς ὄδε,
 ὑπὸ Ποσειδῶνος ἤδη τοῦ μεγάλου, τῶν τε ἄλλων σῶν ἔρ-
 15 γων θεῶν, εἰκῶν σοι τοῦ νοητοῦ τε καὶ αἰωνίου διακόσμου
 συνέστη⁹, ἕκ τε ἀθανάτων καὶ οὗτος καὶ θνητῶν ἤδη συντε-
 θεῖς, ἵνα σοι τέλεον τὸ σύμπαν ἀποτελεσθῆ, ἅπαντα
 ὅποσα ἐς γένεσιν ἤκειν ἐνῆν ἀπειληφός· ᾧ τοῦ βίου αὐ
 μέτρον ὁ πᾶς τε καὶ ἄπειρος ἀποδέδοται¹⁰ χρόνος, αἰῶνός
 20 σοι εἰκῶν γεγονώς· οὐ δὴ αἰεὶ τὸ μὲν ἤδη οἶχεται, τὸ δ' ἔτι
 μέλλει, καὶ τὸ μὲν οὐκ ἔστι, τὸ δ' οὐπω ἔστιν· ἔστι δ' ἐν τῷ νῦν¹¹ τε
 αἰεὶ καὶ ἀκαρεῖ, ὃ δὴ ἄλλο αἰεὶ καὶ ἄλλο γιγνόμενον, τόν τε οἰχό-
 μενον καὶ μέλλοντα διορίζει χρόνον. σοὶ Ποσειδῶν ὁ μέγας πειθό-
 μενος, καὶ τὸ τῶν ἄστρον θεῖον ἐν τούτῳ ὑπέστησε γένος ἐκ
 τοῦ ἀρίστου ψυχῆς εἶδους, καὶ σώματος τοῦ τούτῳ προ-
 120 σήκοντος αὐτὸ συνθεῖς· ἐν οἷς καὶ Ἥλιον τὸν μέγαν ὑπέστησε
 νῶ μὲν τοῦτον θεῖω συνεζευκῶς, τῶν ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι σοι γεγε-
 νημένων διακόσμω, τῆς γε ὄλοιιν ἐν αὐτῷ τοῖν οὐσίαιιν αἰω-
 νίου τε δὴ καὶ ἐγχρόνου ἕνεκα συνδέσεως· κράτιστον
 5 δὲ τῶν ἐντὸς οὐρανοῦ θεῶν αὐτὸν ἀποφήνας, καὶ αὐτῶν
 τε τούτων ἡγεμόνα, καὶ τῆς θνητῆς φύσεως συμπάσης μετὰ τοῦ ταύτης
 ἰδία ἄρχοντός τε καὶ προστάτου Κρόνου δημιουργόν, συνεργούς
 αὐτῷ καὶ ἕξ ἄλλους πρὸς τὰ ἔργα δούς· οἷς καὶ αὐτοῖς ὁμοίαν
 μὲν, ἴσην δ' οὐκέτι τὴν σύστασιν ἀποδέδωκε· ὃς καὶ τὸν ἅπαντα ἡ-
 10 μῖν ταῖς ἑαυτοῦ ἀπείροις περιόδοις μετρῶν χρόνον οὐ παύεται
 ἡμέραν μὲν καὶ νύκτα τε ὁμοῦ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ ἐκάστη σὺν τῷ παντὶ

⁷ δέοις *Add.*

⁸ ὑπεστήσω *Add.*

⁹ σινέστη *Add.*

¹⁰ ἀποδέδοτε *Add.*

¹¹ νῆν *Add.*

αἰθέρι περιφορᾶ περαίνων. ἡμέραν μὲν οἷς ἂν ὑπὲρ γῆν ἐκάστο-
 τε γίγνηται¹², φῶς ταῖς ὄψεσιν ὅτι πλεῖστον τε παρέχον καὶ κάλλιστον,
 15 νύκτα δ' οἷς ἂν ὑπὸ γῆν, ἀμοιβαδὸν μὲν παραχωροῦντε ἀλλήλοιν
 ταῖς δ' ἀζήσεσι τε καὶ μειώσεσι, τὸ ἴσον ἐκάστοτε¹³ ἐν κόσμῳ,
 ἀφαιροῦντέ τε ἀλλήλοιν καὶ προστιθέντε ἐν τῷ μέρει. μήνα δὲ
 τῆ ἑαυτοῦ τε καὶ Σελήνης συνόδῳ ἐκάστη, ἣν Ἡλίου δὴ τού-
 του δευτέραν τῆ δυνάμει, ὁ τούτων σοι δημιουργὸς συνέστησε·
 20 φῶς τι δεύτερον αὐτὴν τε παρ' αὐτοῦ λαμβάνουσαν, καὶ ἡμῖν
 νύκτωρ ἐκάστοτε φαίνουσαν, ὅποσον τέ τι καὶ ὅποτε, ἥνικα
 τε ἂν αὐτῇ καθῆκῃ¹⁴. ἐνιαυτὸν δέ, τῆ ἑαυτοῦ περὶ τὸν ζω-
 οφόρον τε καὶ λοξὸν ἐκάστη περιόδῳ· ἢ καὶ τὰς ὥρας, τῷ
 προσάγειν τε ἡμῖν καὶ ἀπάγειν, εὖ πως καὶ ἐν κόσμῳ παρέχεται·
 120v σοῖς θεσμοῖς, ὁ σὸς οὗτος παῖς πρεσβύτατος Ποσειδῶν, τῆς
 τε τοῦδε τοῦ οὐρανοῦ δημιουργίας ἡγούμενος, καὶ τὸ δαιμόνων ἐν αὐτῷ ὑπέ-
 στησε φύλον, τοῦ τε τῶν ἄστρον καὶ ἡμῶν ἤδη μεσεῦον, ἔσχατόν τε
 τοῦτο θεῶν φύλον γεγεννηκώς· μετὰ γὰρ ταῦτα τῶν θεῶν τὰ γένη,
 σῆ προνοία ὁ αὐτὸς Ποσειδῶν καὶ ψυχὰς τὰς ἡμετέρας ἐν τῷ
 5 αὐτῷ οὐρανῷ μεθόριόν τι τῶν τε αἰδίων καὶ ἅμα ἐνδελεχέσιν αἰε-
 τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς χρώμενον παντοδαπῶν θεῶν γενῶν, τῶν τε πάμπαν
 ἐπὶ κηρον ὑπέστησεν· αἰδίους μὲν καὶ αὐτάς, καὶ ἀγαθοῖς παρα-
 πλησίοις μὲν πως τοῖς τῶν θεῶν, οὐκέτι δ' ἐνδελεχέσι χρω-
 μένας, ἀλλ' ἀποβλήτοις τε καὶ ἀναληπτοῖς αὐ, καὶ ὄλως δι-
 10 αλείπουσιν, ἐπεὶ σοι ἔδει καὶ τοιούτου τινὸς ἐν τῷ παντὶ
 τῷδε εἶδους, ἵνα πληρὸς τέ σοι καὶ¹⁵ τέλεον ἰ-
 κανῶς ἀποτελεσθῆ. ἔτι δέ, ἐν τε καὶ αὐτὸ πρὸς αὐτὸ
 ἡρμοσμένον, οὐ πλεῖστον τῶν γενῶν ἀλλήλων διεστηκότων, ἀλλὰ
 κατὰ σμικρὸν ὑπαλλαττόντων καὶ πη καὶ ἀλλήλοισ ἐν τοῖς μέσοις ἐ-
 15 αυτῶν κοινωνούντων· οἶαί σοι καὶ αἰ ἡμέτεροι αἶδε ψυχαι
 συστήσαι, καὶ τοῖς θνητοῖς τοῖσδε σώμασιν ἐνδεταί γεγό-
 νασι, τό τε ἀθανάτου τε καὶ θνητῆς μοίρας διεστηκός,
 ἐν ἡμῖν συνάγοντί τε καὶ ἐς ταυτὸν τι συνδούντι· ὡς μηδὲ
 ταύτη ἔτι τῷ φύσει διεστηκοίτην, ἀλλὰ γίγνοιτό τις αὐτῶν
 20 καὶ μῆξις· τῶν ἀθανάτων τοῦ τοῖς θνητοῖς προσεχεστάτου, διὰ
 τῶν ἀγαθῶν τὴν οὐκ ἐνδελεχῆ μετουσίαν, τοτὲ μὲν ἐς θνητὸν
 ἐνδουμένου σῶμα, τοτὲ δ' αὐ ἀπαλλαττομένου τε καὶ καθ' αὐ-
 τὸ βιοῦντος. καὶ τούτου οὕτω ἀμοιβαδὸν αἰετὸν ἅπαντά τε

¹² *correctio scribae ex* γίγνεται.

¹³ *correctio scribae ex* ἐκάστῳ τε.

¹⁴ *superscriptum*: <καθήκ>οι.

¹⁵ *seclusi*, τέ σοι καὶ τέ σοι καὶ.

- καὶ ἄπειρον χρόνον χωροῦντος, ὡσπερ καὶ μόνως τὸ τοιοῦτον
121 συμβαίνειν, οἷόν τ' ἦν. ἔνταῦθα σὺ ἡμᾶς τοῦδε τοῦ παντός δι-
 ἅ Ποσειδῶνός τε καὶ τῶν σῶν μακαρίων παίδων θεῶν τέταχας,
 ἧ καὶ ἀγαπῶμεν χώραν· καὶ σοι χάριν ἅπασαν, ὄσσην οἰοί
 τ' ἔσμεν, ἴσμεν· τῶν τε ἄλλῶν πάντων τε καὶ παντοίων ἀγαθῶν, ἃ γε ἡμῖν
5 δεδώρησάι τε καὶ δωρῆ ἐκάστοτε, καὶ μάλιστα τε καὶ δια-
 φερόντως, ἧς καὶ ἡμῖν μεταδέδωκας θειότητος· ἐπεὶ καὶ
 ἅ γε ἡμῖν διὰ τὴν τοιαύτην χώραν ἀμαρτάνεται τούτων ἐπα-
 νόρθωσιν αὐτὴ ἐκάστοτε, καὶ ἐς τὰς τῆ θειότητι ἡμῶν προση-
 κούσας πράξεις ἐπάνωδον προσένειμας· καὶ νῦν, τῆδε τῆ
10 ἡμέρα, ἦν μεθόριον μηνός τε οἰχομένου καὶ νέου αὐτὸ ἴσταμένου
 ἄγομεν, ἀλλήλοιν τοῖν θεοῖν συνιόντοιν, πρὸς δέ, καὶ ἐνι-
 αυτοῦ, τοῦ μὲν τελευτῶντος, τοῦ δὲ ἀρχομένου, ἄρτι Ἡλίῳ τε-
 τραμμένῳ τε τὰ χειμερινά, καὶ τὴν ἡμέραν ἡμῖν ἐξ ἔλαχι-
 στης γεγονυίας¹⁶ αὐθις αὖξοντι, τῆς σελήνης συνιούσης, ταύτη
15 τῆ ἡμέρα ἐπίσκεψίν τινα ἡμῶν τε αὐτῶν πεπονημένοι καὶ
 τῶν ἤδη ἡμῖν βεβιωμένων, τῶν τε ἡμαρτημένων τε καὶ ἐλλελει-
 μμένων τε δὴ καὶ πεπλημμελημένων ἡμῖν κατεγνωκότες, λύσιν
 τε αὐτῶν αἰτοῦμεν, καὶ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἐπανόρθωσιν. τὴν οὖν ἐσπερι-
20 νὴν τήνδε ἡμῶν προσευχὴν προσέμενος, τὴν τε ἐς γόνατα κλίσιν,
 καὶ νηστείαν πανήμερον, ἃ δὴ ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς σύμβολα, ἔρωτός τε
 τοῦ ἐς σέ, καὶ δουλείας πασῶν δικαιοτάτης τε ὁμοῦ καὶ τοῖς δου-
 λεύουσι συμφορωτάτης τιθέμεθα, λῦσον μὲν τῶν δι' ἀφροσύ-
 νην προσγεγονότων ἡμῖν κακῶν, ἀγαθῶν δέ, τὰ τε παρόντα ἐμπεδῶσιν
 τὰ τε μὴ παρόντα, προσήκοντα δέ πη πρόσθε· λόγον ὀρθόν, καὶ
121v ἀγαθῶν τε καὶ κακῶν γνώμονα, διὰ θεῶν, οἷς σοι τὰ τοιαῦτα
 ἐπιτέτραπται, παριστάς ἡμῖν· ὅς δὴ κράτιστος μὲν ἀμαρτη-
 μάτων τε καὶ ψυχῆς κακίας καθαρτής, κράτιστος δ' ἀγαθῶν πο-
 ριστής τε καὶ φύλαξ· καὶ δίδου σὺν τῶν ἡμερῶν τε καὶ μηνῶν
5 καὶ ἐνιαυτῶν ταῖς περιόδοις τῶν μὲν καλῶν ἐπίδοσιν
 ἐκάστοτε ἴσχειν, τῶν δ' ἡμαρτημένων τε καὶ ἀμαρτανομένων ὡς
 ταχεῖαν τὴν ἀπόλυσίν τε καὶ ἐς τὸ δέον αὐθις ἐπάνο-
 δον!¹⁷ ἐπεὶ οὐδ' ἔστιν ἀναμαρτήτους¹⁸ πάμπαν¹⁹ διατελεῖν, τοιαύ-
 την τινα τὴν φύσιν εἰληχότας, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐλάχιστα μὲν διαμαρ-
10 τάνειν, ὡς τάχιστα δ' ἐπανορθοῦσθαι, καὶ καθορθοῦν
 ὡς πλεῖστα τε καὶ μέγιστα εὐχόμενα, εἰδότες ἐν τῇ τε ἀρε-

¹⁶ ἐλαχίστην γεγονυίας *Add.*

¹⁷ ἐπάνωδον *Add.*

¹⁸ ἀναμαρτίτους *Add.*

¹⁹ πάπαν *Add.*

- τῇ καὶ τῷ καλῷ τὸ εὐδαιμόν τε καὶ μακάριον καὶ ἡμῖν ἀπο-
 δεδομένον, ἕως τὸν ἀπὸ σοῦ πεπρωμένον τοῦ βίου τοῦδε χρόνον
 ἐκπλήσαντες, ἐς ἐκεῖνον ἀφικόμεθα τὸν βίον, τὸν ἀμεί-
 15 νω τε δὴ καὶ θειότερον, τοῦ τε ἐκ τοῦ θνητοῦ τοῦδε σώμα-
 τος ἀπηλλαγμένον ὄχλου. εἰ γὰρ καὶ τῆς τῶν ὄλων ἕνεκα ἐν ἡ-
 μῖν κοινωνίας σοῖς θεσμοῖς τῷ θνητῷ τῷ τῷδε ἐνδεδέμεθα,
 ἀλλὰ καὶ χρόνος ἡμῖν ἀποδέδοται, ἐν ᾧ τὸ θεῖον ἡμῶν καθ' αὐ-
 20 τὸ ἐν τῷ μέρει ἐκάστοτε γιγνόμενον, θειότερας τε καὶ ἑαυτῷ
 μᾶλλον τι προσηκούσης ἄψεται ζωῆς· τοῦ μὲν ὁμοφύλου
 τοῖς προαποικοινομένοις, ὧν καὶ νῦν²⁰ γε δὴ ἐνθένδε ὡς ἕ-
 καστος μνείαν τινὰ ποιούμεθα, συνοργίασον· θεῶν
 δὲ τοῖς ἡμῶν ἐγγυτέρω πεφυκόσιν ἐναργέστερον συνε-
 σόμενον, διδαχθησόμενόν τε ὑπ' αὐτῶν, ἃ δέοι, καὶ πάντα
 122 κάλλιον τε καὶ ἄμεινον πράξον· ὡς μὴ αἰεὶ κακῶν τῶν ἐκ τοῦ
 θνητοῦ τοῦδε ἀναπίμπλαιτο, ἀλλ' ἔχοι τι καὶ βίῳ πολλῶ τοῦ-
 δε κρεῖττονι καὶ θειοτέρῳ χρῆσθαι· τά τε ἄλλα, καὶ χρόνου μήκει
 τὸν τῆδε οὐ σμικρῷ ὑπερβάλλοντι· ἅτε πεφυκὸς σου τῶν
 5 χειρόνων τὰς ἀμείνους ἐκ γοῦν τῶν δυνατῶν πράξεις πολυ-
 χρονιωτέρας ἀπονέμειν, καὶ ὅλων τῶν κακῶν πολὺ μείζω τάγαθά·
 ἀλλ' ἐκεῖσε μὲν ἡμῖν, ᾧ δέσποτα, ἀφικόμενοις, δέσποτα τῶν ἀ-
 πάντων, ἐπειδὰν καὶ ἡμῖν καθήκη, δοίης ἡρώων τε τοῖς ἐκεῖ, ἰλέως
 τε καὶ εὐμενέσι συμμίξαι, τῇ θειοτάτῃ τε καὶ προυχούσῃ τοῦ
 10 ἡμετέρου γένους φύσει· δι' ὧν τῷ τῆδε ἐπιδημούντων βίῳ, μεγάλων
 ἀρχαῖ ἀγαθῶν τῷ κοινῷ ἡμῶν ἐκ σοῦ ἐκάστοτε ἐπιπέμ-
 πονται, ἔτι τε προγόνοις τε καὶ γονεῦσι· σοῦ τε ἡμῖν καὶ θεῶν
 εἰκόσι, τῇ ἡμῶν τοῦ θνητοῦ αἰτία γεγονόσι, συνοίκις,
 συντρόφοις οἰσισινοῦν φράτορσιν· ἄλλοις οἰκείοις, οἱ
 15 ἂν ἐς τὴν θειοτέραν τε ἐκείνην ζωὴν καὶ μακαριωτέραν προ-
 αφιγμένοι τύχωσιν ἡμῶν, ἔτι ἐταίροις τε καὶ φίλοις πᾶσι
 πολιτῶν τε τοῖς τε ἄλλοις καὶ τοῖς τῶν κοινῶν ἡμῶν καλῶς
 προστάσι· τοῖς δὲ καὶ τὸν τῆδε βίον ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κοινοῦ τε
 καὶ ὁμοδόξου γένους ἐλευθερίας ἀποβεβληκόσιν, ἢ τῶν
 20 καθεστηκότων τε καὶ εὐχόντων σωτηρίως, ἢ οὐκ ὀρθῶς
 ἔστιν ὧν κεκινημένων ἐπανορθώσεως, τούτων τοῖς καλοῖς κά-
 γαθοῖς καὶ ἡμᾶς συντάξαις, καὶ συνεορτάζειν τε καὶ σύμπαντι
 γυρίζειν δοίης ὑπὸ Πλούτωνί τε τῷ ἡμετέρῳ προστάτῃ,
 καὶ τῶν ἄλλων θεῶν τοῖς ἡμῶν ἐπιμεληταῖς, ἐορτῶν τε καὶ πανη-
 122v γύρεων τὴν καλλίστην καὶ θειοτάτην τὴν τῶν τε ὄντων, καὶ σοῦ

²⁰ νῆν *Add.*

- τοῦ πρεσβυτάτου τῶν πάντων αἰτίου ἐναργεστέραν θεωρίαν.
 ἐν δὲ τῷ παρόντι δοίης, τῶν γε ἡμαρτημένων λελυμένους, πρῶτα
 μὲν καθαρούς τε καθαρῶς· καὶ σοί τε καὶ παισὶ τοῖς σοῖς θε-
 5 οῖς ἀρεστῶς, τήνδε τὴν ἱερουργίαν ἀγιστεῦσαι, καὶ ἔπειτα
 ἀπὸ ταύτης γενομένους δεῖπνόν τε κοσμίως ἐλέσθαι, καὶ κοίτην
 ἀμόλυντόν τινα καταδαρθεῖν, ἀναγκαιοτάτῳ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ
 θνητοῦ ἡμῶν τοῦδε <σώματος>²¹ ἐς τὸν ἀπονενεμημένον αὐτῷ χρόνον σω-
 τηρίαν πράξεις· καὶ ὄνειρων τε ἀφ' ὑμῶν ἐπιπέμψει²²
 10 ὑπὲρ τῶν ἡμῖν ἂν συμβησομένων ἐνίων ψυχαγωγηθέντας,
 κακῶν τε ἐξαναστάντας ἀπαθείς, ὁσίους ὁσίως σοι ἐορτάσαι·
 καὶ μῆνά τε τόνδε καὶ ἐνιαυτόν, οὐ ἐπιβαίνομεν, καὶ τὸν
 λοιπὸν βίον ἀμέμπτους κατὰ δύναμιν, καὶ ἦ σοι φί-
 15 λῶν, καὶ θεοῦς τε σοὺς παῖδας, ὡς πρέπει, σεβομένους, δι' ὧν
 σοι, ἢ προσήκει, τὰ ἡμέτερα κατακοσμεῖται, καὶ σέ
 ἐπεὶ τὸν τῶν ὄλων ὑμνοῦντας ἀρχηγέτην· ὧ αὐτοπά-
 τος Ζεῦ, ὧ θεῶν ἀμητόρων σοι γεγεννημένων τῶν γ' ὑπερ-
 20 ουραίνων προσεχὲς πάτερ· ὧ τῶνδε τῶν πάντων, τῶν
 μὲν ἀμέσως, τῶν δὲ διὰ τούτων, τῶν γε ἐκ σοῦ ἤδη προϊ-
 όντων πρεσβύτατε δημιουργέ· ὧ αὐτοκράτορ τε
 τῷ ὄντι καὶ αὐτοτελὲς βασιλεῦ· ὑφ' οὗ μόνου ἀνυπευ-
 θύνου τοῖς πᾶσιν ἐφεστῶτος ἅπασα ἀρχὴ εὐθύνε-
 123 ται· ὧ κυριώτατε τῶν πάντων δέσποτα· σὺ μέγας, μέγας τῷ
 ὄντι καὶ ὑπέρμεγας· καὶ σοῦ τὰ πάντα τῆς δυνάμεως²³
 καὶ κλέους πλέα²⁴· ἀλλ' ἴλαθί τε δὴ, καὶ σῶζε· ἄγε τε σὺν τῷ
 παντὶ τῷδε καὶ τὰ ἡμέτερα, ὅπη σοι ἄριστα ἔγνωσται τε καὶ
 5 περὶ ἡμῶν, καὶ ἅμα πέπρωται ἐκ τοῦ παντός αἰῶνος. ✕
 ταύτην τὴν πρόσρησιν ἐν γε ταῖς ἄλλαις ἀπάσαις ἔναις
 τε καὶ νέαις καὶ νηστεῖαις, πλὴν τῆς μηνὸς νέου ἡγουμένης,
 ἐξαιροῦντας²⁵ τὸ περὶ ἐνιαυτοῦ, τοῦ μὲν τελευτῆς, τοῦ δ' ἀρ-
 χῆς ὄλον κῶλον, καὶ ἔτι τοῦ κώλου ἐκείνου, καὶ μῆνά
 10 τε τόνδε καὶ ἐνιαυτόν, οὐ ἐπιβαίνομεν, τὴν τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ
 φάσιν, οὕτω διεξιέναι. ἐν μέντοι τοῖν δυοῖν μηνὸς τοῦ τε-
 λευταίου νηστεῖαιν, τοῖν πρὸ τῆς ἔνης τε καὶ νέας, καὶ ὄλον
 τε τοῦτο τὸ κῶλον ἐξαιρεῖν, καὶ ἔτι πρότερον τὸ περὶ τῆς μεθορίου

²¹ *addidi*, cf. *Leg.* 138.19–20 [III,34].

²² ἐπιπέμψει *Add.*

²³ δυνάμεος *Add.*

²⁴ πλέος *Add.*

²⁵ ἐξαιροῦνταις *Add.*

- τοῖν μηνοῖν ἡμέρας. ✠ αὐταὶ προσήσεις ἐς θεοὺς μέτριοι
 ἔστων, ὧν κυριωτάτη μὲν τῶν δειλινῶν ἡ τρίτη ἢ ἐς τὸν
 15 βασιλέα Δία· μεθ' ἣν ἢ ἐπὶ νηστεία αὕτη ἔσπερινή ἢ ἐς Δία,
 εἴθ' ἢ ἐωθινή, εἴθ' ἢ καθημερινή²⁶ ἔσπερινή, εἴθ' ἢ πρώτη τῶν
 δειλινῶν, ἔπειθ' ἢ τῶν δειλινῶν δευτέρα. ✠

fols 132.5–133.4, follows after: *Leg.* 240.13 [III,36] Alexandre

- 5 μετὰ τοὺς ἄλλους ἐκάστοτε, ἡνίκ' ἂν ὕμνοι οἰτίνεσοῦν ἄδωνται,
 ἀσθήσεται· ἐσάπαξ μὲν ἐκείνων ἄδομένων, καὶ οὗτος ἐσάπαξ,
 δις δ' ἐκείνων, οὗτός γε ἐς τρίς· οὕτω μὲν οὖν ταῖς προσκυνήσεσιν
 ἐκάστοτε, οὕτω δὲ ταῖς προσήσεσιν, οὕτω δὲ τοῖς ὕμνοις. τῶν γε
 ἀνθρώπων τοὺς σπουδαιοτέρους χρῆσθαι, οἷς γε μὴν ὄκνος ἂν τις προσῆ,
 τούτους
 10 ἐκλείποντας ἂν καὶ ὅλας τὰς προσήσεις, καὶ μάλιστα ἐν τῶν ἡμερῶν
 ταῖς βεβήλοις, τοῖς γε ὕμνοις μόνους ἐπὶ ταῖς προσκυνήσεσι χρῆσθαι·
 τοὺς δὲ δὴ καὶ ἔτι αὐτὸν ὀκνηροτέρους, ἢ καὶ ὅλους γραμμάτων ἀπείρους²⁷,
 ἐκλείποντας ἂν ἤδη καὶ τοὺς ὕμνους, αὐταῖς γοῦν ταῖς προσκυνήσεσι
 καὶ μόναις προσαγορεύειν τοὺς θεοὺς· ὅτω μὲν ἂν ἀνθρώπων νόσος τις προ-
 15 σίστηται, πρὸς γε τὸ μὴ εὐμαρῶς προσκυνεῖν, κἂν αὐτὰ τὰ προσ-
 φθέγματα τῶν προσκυνήσεων ψιλὰ ἀδόμητα ἐξαρκεῖν, τῷ γε
 δὴ οὕτω πως ἔχοντι· ἐάν περ μὴν καὶ ἅπαντα ταῦτα ἐκλείπη τις,
 ὃ τοιοῦτός που ἐν τῶν ἀνθρώπων τοῖς ῥαθυμοτάτοις, καὶ τοῦ γε εὐσεβεῖν
 ὀλιγωροτάτοις ταττόμενος, καὶ ὡς μάλιστ' ἂν ἐν δίκη τάττοιτο· καὶ
 20 μὲν δὴ καὶ προσαγορεύοντα ἕκαστον τοὺς θεοὺς, οὕτως ὡς βούλοιο
 τε δὴ καὶ δύναιτο, τελευτῶντα καὶ χεῖρα τὴν δεξιὰν φιλεῖν ὑπτίαν.
 ἐν δ' ἱερῷ, ἢ εἴ που καὶ ἄλλοθι ἢ τῶν νόμων τῶνδε προκέοιτο βίβλος,
 καὶ ταύτης ἀπτόμενος, ἐπ' ἐξόδῳ ἤδη ὄντα, τὴν χεῖρα οὕτω φιλεῖν.
 ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν, οἷσπερ ἂν ἀδυνασία τις, ἢ καὶ ὄκνος προσῆ· τοῖς
 132v γε μὴν ἐντελεῖς τοῖς ἐς θεοὺς ταύτας προσήσεις ποιεῖν αἰρουμένοις, κάκεινον
 ἔτι μετὰ γε δὴ τοὺς ὕμνους τὸ κήρυγμα κηρύττεσθαι· διὰ τε
 καὶ θεοὺς προσειρηκότες τε καὶ ἀγιστεύσαντες κατὰ νόμον,
 ἀπολυώμεθα ἤδη βελτίους τῇ ἐντεύξει τῇ πρὸς αὐτοὺς ὡς ἕκαστοι
 5 γεγεννημένοι. Διὸς καὶ θεῶν ἐν ἀπάσῃ ἡμῶν πράξει, ἐφ' ὅσον γ' ἂν ἡμῖν
 ἢ φύσις ἔποιτο, μεμνώμεθα· τῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ χείρονος ἡμῶν πρῶ-
 τα μὴν ἐλευθερίας καὶ ἀπαθείας· ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ ἀρχῆς τῆς κατ' αὐτοῦ,
 καὶ ἀνταρκειάς, εὐκοσμίας τε τῆς κατὰ φύσιν, ὅση δύναμις ἀντι-
 ποιώμεθα· τῆς τῶν πρὸς ἐκάστους σχέσεων, τῇ τῶν καθηκόντων ἂν ἀ-

²⁶ καθημερινή *Add.*

²⁷ *in margine*: ἀπύρους.

- 10 ποδόσει σωτηρίας, ἧ καὶ ὡς μάλιστα τέλειοι γιγνοίμεθ' ἄν, ἡμῖν
 μελέτω· ἐν ἅσασί τε καὶ πάντη, ἧ ἄν οἰοί τ' ὦμεν, θεοῖς ἐπώμεθα,
 ἧ δὴ καὶ μόνως τῆς ἡμῖν προσηκούσης, ὡς ἐκάστῳ δύναμις, τευ-
 ξόμεθα μακαριότητος· ἀλλ' ἔτι μὴν καὶ ἐς γόνατε ἄμφω κε-
 κλιμένοι, τῆ τε τελευταία εὐχῆ τῆδε προσχόντες, οὕτω ἀπο-
 15 λυώμεθα. ἐν μέντοι τῶν ἡμερῶν ταῖς βεβήλοις ἐξαιρουσί
 τὰ πολλὰ αὐτοῦ, ὧδε κηρύττεσθαι· διὰ τε καὶ θεοὺς προσειρηκό-
 τες τε καὶ ἀριστεύσαντες κατὰ νόμον, ἔτι καὶ ἐς γόνατε ἄμφω
 κεκλιμένοι, τῆ τε τελευταία εὐχῆ τῆδε προσχόντες, οὕτω
 ἀπολυώμεθα. ἔπειτα ἦν μὲν ἱερέων τις παρῆ, αὐτὸν πρὸς τὸν λεῶν
 20 τετραμμένον, καὶ ἐς τρίς τῷ χεῖρε ὑπτίω ἐπαίροντας, τὴν γε
 εὐχὴν ἐκείνην ἐπιλέγειν· 'Ζεὺς ὁ βασιλεύς, καὶ θεοὶ πάντες,
 οἱ ἐκ Διὸς ἔφοροι τῶν ἡμετέρων καθεστᾶσι, πᾶσιν ὑμῖν ἰλέω
 εἶεν·' ἐφ' ᾧ τὸν λεῶν ὑποκρίνεσθαι, δωριστὶ ἄδοντας· 'εἶεν·
 εἶεν·' εἶεν δὴ καὶ σοὶ θεῖε²⁸ ἄνερ·' ἐὰν δ' ἱερέων μηδεὶς²⁹ παρῆ, τὸν τῆς προσ-
 133 κυνήσεως κατάρξαντα ἰδιώτην, καὶ ταύτην ἐπιλέγειν τὴν εὐχὴν,
 οὐκέτι μέντοι ἐπαίροντα τῷ χεῖρε· πρὸς δέ, καὶ ἀντὶ τοῦ ὑμῖν, ἡμῖν
 λέγοντα· καὶ τοὺς λοιπούς· 'εἶεν· εἶεν· εἶεν', ὑποκριναμένους, οὕτω ἀπο-
 λύεσθαι· ✕

fol. 133.4–5, *Leg.* 58.1 [III,36] Alexandre

'Ἡ τῶν μηνῶν καὶ ἐτῶν τάξις ✕' (instead of: I,21: Περὶ θεῶν θεραπείας)³⁰

Καὶ μὲν δὴ, καὶ μῆσι καὶ ἔτεσι, τοῖς γε κατὰ φύσιν χρῆσθαι ...

(in *Leg.* 58.2–60.10 [III,36] Alexandre)

fols 133v.7–134.4, follows after: *Leg.* 60.10 [III,36] Alexandre

- ἱερομηνίας δ' ἄγειν τάσδε τε καὶ τοσάσδε· πρώτην μὲν καὶ ἀγι-
 ωτάτην τῶν μηνὸς ἐκάστου ἱερομηνιῶν, νομηνίαν, Διὶ τῷ βασιλεῖ,
 δευτέραν δέ, ὀγδόην ἱσταμένου Ποσειδῶνι τε καὶ θεοῖς τοῖς Ὀλυμπίοις·
 10 τρίτην, διχομηνίαν, σύμπασιν τοῖς μετὰ Δία θεοῖς ἀξίαν δὲ δευ-
 τέραν ταύτην μετὰ νομηνίαν· τετάρτην, ὀγδόην φθίνον-
 τος, Ἡλίῳ τε καὶ Κρόνῳ καὶ σύμπασιν τοῖς μετὰ τοὺς Ὀλυμπίους θεοῖς,
 πέμπτην, ἔννην, Πλούτωνι τε ἰδίᾳ τῶν ἄλλων θεῶν, καὶ ἐπὶ
 ἠρώων ἅμα, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων φίλων τε καὶ οἰκείων τῶν γε οἰχομένων μνήμη,
 15 ἔκτην, ἔννην τε καὶ νέαν, ἐπὶ τῆ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἐπισκέψει τε,
 καὶ τῶν γε ἡμαρτημένων, ἐκλελειμμένων τε δὴ καὶ πεπλημμελημένων,

²⁸ θεῖ Add.

²⁹ *super linea.*

³⁰ See below, p. 321, n.34.

τότε γοῦν ὡς μάλιστα ἐπανορθώσει. ἦν δ' ὁ μὴν κοῖλός τε ἦ, καὶ
 ἡ ἔνη ἐκλίπη, τὴν αὐτὴν ἂν ἄγειν ἐπ' ἀμφοῖν, τῷ τε Πλού-
 20 τῶνι καὶ μνήμη τῇ τῶν οἰχομένων, ἡμῶν τε αὐτῶν τῇ ἐπισκέ-
 ψει· ἀξίαν δὲ καὶ ταύτην τῆς διχομηνίας οὐ μείω νομίζειν· μνηὸς δὲ
 δὴ τοῦ νέου, καὶ δευτέραν τε καὶ τρίτην ἰστάμενον ἱερομηνίας ἄγειν.
 Ἦρα μὲν τὴν δευτέραν, τὴν δὲ τρίτην Ποσειδῶνι· καὶ τοῦ τε-
 134 λευταίου δέ, δωδεκάτου γε δὴ ἡ ἐμβολίμου, πλήρους μὲν
 ὄντος, τρίτην τε ἀπιόντος καὶ δευτέραν, κοίλου δέ, τετράδα
 τε καὶ τρίτην καὶ δευτέραν· τρίτην μὲν Πλούτωνι τε ἄγοντας ἀν-
 τι τῆς ἔνης, καὶ ἐπὶ μνήμη τῇ τῶν οἰχομένων, δευτέραν δὲ καὶ
 ἔνην, ἡ τετράδα τε καὶ δευτέραν³¹, ἐφ' ᾧ περ καὶ τὴν ἔνην τε καὶ νέαν τῇ
 ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἐπισκέψει τε καὶ ἐπανορθώσει. ✕

Bruxellensis 1871–1877

(The amendments to Alexandre's edition proposed by François Masai on the basis of the manuscript.)

Leg. 86 [III,14] Alexandre, the text missing at the beginning of chapter is contained in *Bruxellensis* 1871–1877, fol. 66r, ed. F. Masai:³²

κοινων τε αὐ γυναικῶν χρήσεως, ἔτι τε κρεῶν ἐδωδῆς, μιᾶς τε τῆς ἐν οἰκίᾳ τῇ αὐτῇ κτήσεως, τῆς τε παρὰ τὰς τελετὰς (sic) ἐκάστων οὐκ οἰκοφθορίας, περὶ τούτων ἂν ἐκάστου ὡς μάλιστα ἐν καιρῷ εἶη ἐπισκεψασθαι, τὰ μὲν αὐτῶν καὶ εἰ ὀρθῶς νομοθετεῖται, τὰ δ' ὀρθῶς ἔχοντα ἂν, ἅτε καὶ πᾶσι σχεδὸν ἀνθρώποις παραπλησίως νομιζόμενα, τῷ ποτ' ἂν λόγῳ καὶ ὀρθῶς ἔχοι, καὶ ...

Leg. 98 [III,15] Alexandre:

αὐτοενί (Masai after *Bruxellensis* 1871–1877) instead of αὐτογενεῖ (Alexandre's conjecture from αὐτογενής)³³

³¹ *Add.*: δευτέρας (= β^α).

³² Masai 1956, p. 125, n.1: 'L'édition de ce fragment par ALEXANDRE, p. 86 est à compléter, par le début grâce à ce texte conservé dans le codex *Bruxellensis* 1871–1877 (de la main du disciple de Pléthon, Michel Apostolès)'. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 398, n.1.

³³ *Ibid.*, n.2.

Masai also showed that in Alexandre's edition the following chapters of Plethon's *Laws* are placed in the wrong order:

III,36 = I,21 (pp. 58–60) Alexandre³⁴

II,26 = II,27 (p. 82) Alexandre³⁵

³⁴ Ibid., p. 395, n.2 : 'ALEXANDRE, p. 58–60, public, comme appartenant à ce chapitre, un fragment que le ms de Londres intitule 'H τῶν μηνῶν καὶ ἐτῶν τάξις et situe après le fragment portant le titre du Livre III, ch. XXXVI. Ce témoignage autorisé, auquel s'ajoute l'argument du contexte, doit faire abandonner la solution d'Alexandre. Celle-ci n'avait pour elle qu'une références d'Allatius : "*Pletho, primo de legibus*" (*De mensura temporum*, p. 140), dont on ne peut contrôler le fondement.'

³⁵ Ibid., p. 397, n.1: 'Alexandre a cru pouvoir attribuer les dernières lignes de ce fragment au chapitre XXVII. Le ms de Londres prouve qu'il a commis une double erreur : le texte est complet et donne uniquement le chapitre XXVI.'

Abbreviations

- ALEXANDRE – Pléthon, *Traité des Lois*, introd. and ed. Charles Alexandre, trans. Augustin Pellissier, Paris: Firmin Didot frères, 1858; reprinted Amsterdam: A.M. Hakkert, 1966; Paris: Vrin, 1982 (partial reimpression with a new preface by Rémi Brague).
- LAMBROS – Spyridon P. Lambros [Σπυρίδων Π. Λάμπρος], *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, 4 vols, Ἀθήναι: Ἐπιτροπή ἐκδόσεως τῶν καταλοίπων Σπυρίδωνος Λάμπρου, 1924–1930.
- LEGRAND I–IV – Emile Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique XV^e et XVI^e siècles*, 4 vols, Paris: E. Leroux, 1885–1906; reprinted Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve & Larose, 1962.
- MOHLER III – Ludwig Mohler (ed.), *Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist und Staatsmann*, vol. 3: *Aus Bessarions Gelehrtenkreis: Abhandlungen, Reden, Briefe von Bessarion, Theodoros Gazes, Michael Apostolios, Andronikos Kallistos, Georgios Trapezuntios, Niccolò Perotti, Niccolò Capranica*, Paderborn: Schöningh, 1942; reprinted Aalen: Scientia, 1967.
- PG – Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca*, 161 vols, Paris: Jacques-Paul Migne, 1857–1866.
- PLP – Erich Trapp et al., *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, 15 vols, Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1976–1996; CD-ROM-Version: Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2001.
- SCHOLARIOS IV – *Œuvres complètes de Gennade Scholarios*, vol. 4, ed. Louis Petit, Xénophon A. Sideridès and Martin Jugie, Paris: Maison de la bonne presse, 1935.

Primary Sources (with Abbreviations and Editions)¹

Gemistos Plethon and His Contemporaries

GEORGE GEMISTOS PLETHON

Ad Bess. I (Ad Bessarionem I) – Βησσαρίωνι (*Letter to Bessarion*), ed. Ludwig Mohler in MOHLER III, pp. 458–63 (= Bessarion, *Ep.* 19).²

Ad Bess. II (Ad Bessarionem II) – Τῷ αἰδησιμωτάτῳ Καρδινάλει Βησσαρίωνι ([*Further*] *Letter to the Most Venerable Cardinal Bessarion*), ed. Ludwig Mohler in MOHLER III, pp. 465–8 (= Bessarion, *Ep.* 21); an alternative edition with a translation: Anne Tihon in *Meth.*, pp. 61, 124–7 (the astronomical part).³

Ad Cab. (Ad Demetrium Raul Cabacen) – Τῷ αὐθέντι καὶ υἱῷ μου κυρίῳ Δημητρίῳ Ῥαοῦλ τῷ Καβάκη (*Letter to Sovereign and My Son Lord Demetrios Raoul Kabakes*), ed. and trans. Franco Bacchelli in Bacchelli 2007, p. 137, n.24.⁴

Ad Dem. (Ad Demetrium) – Προσφωνημάτιον πρὸς τὸν κύρ Δημήτριον δεσπότην τὸν πορφυρογέννητον (*A Small Address to the Sir Demetrios, the Despot, Born in the Purple*), ed. Spyridon P. Lambros in LAMBROS IV, pp. 207–10.⁵

Ad deum unum (Ad deum unum supplicatio) – Εὐχὴ εἰς τὸν ἕνα Θεόν (*Prayer to the One God*), ed. Charles Alexandre in ALEXANDRE, pp. 273–4 (spurious?).^{6,7}

¹ The translations and summaries of the primary texts are indicated in the footnotes; early modern Latin translations are omitted.

² English: Christopher M. Woodhouse in Woodhouse 1986, pp. 233–5 (summary).

³ English: Woodhouse 1986, pp. 233–5; French: Anne Tihon in *Meth.*, p. 61 (the astronomical part).

⁴ Franco Bacchelli in Bacchelli 2007, p. 138, n.24.

⁵ English: Woodhouse 1986, pp. 313–14 (summary); German: Wilhelm Blum in Blum 1988, pp. 191–5.

⁶ See above, p. 44, with n.56.

⁷ English: Woodhouse 1986, p. 45; German: Blum 1988, p. 93; Modern Greek: Eleni Stamou in Πλήθωνος Νόμοι – Γενναδίου Πατριάρχου Ἐναντίον τοῦ Πλήθωνος Γεμιστοῦ, Αθήνα: Ελευθέρη σκέψις, 1997, p. 131.

- Ad Man.* (*Ad Manuelem*) – Εἰς Μανουὴλ Παλαιολόγον περὶ τῶν ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ πραγμάτων (*Address to the Emperor Manuel on Affairs in the Peloponnese*), ed. Spyridon P. Lambros in LAMBROS III, pp. 246–65.⁸
- Ad quaes.* (*Ad quaesita quaedam responsio*) – Πρὸς ἠρωτημένα ἄττα ἀπόκρισις (*Response to Some Inquiries [of John VIII Palaiologos]*), introd., ed. and trans. Linos G. Benakis in Benakis 1974, pp. 330–47, 351–76; reprinted in Benakis 2002, pp. 585–602, 607–32.⁹
- Ad Schol.* (*Ad Scholarium*) – Τῷ αὐθέντῃ καὶ ἀδελφῷ μου κυρίῳ Γεωργίῳ τῷ Σχολαρίῳ (*Letter to Sovereign and My Brother Lord George Scholarios*), ed. and trans. Franco Bacchelli in Bacchelli 2007, p. 138, n.24.¹⁰
- Ad Theod.* (*Ad Theodorum*) – Συμβουλευτικὸς πρὸς τὸν δεσπότην Θεόδωρον περὶ τῆς Πελοποννήσου (*Advisory Address to the Despot Theodore on the Peloponnese*), ed. Spyridon P. Lambros in LAMBROS IV, pp. 113–35.¹¹
- Add.* (*Additus*) – the supplementary text of the *Book of Laws* (*Leg.*) inedited by Charles Alexandre and contained in the manuscript *Additional* 5424 (in the British Library, London), its transcription may be found in the *Manuscript Supplement*.
- Contra Bess.* (*Contra Bessarionem*) – Πρὸς τὰς παρὰ τοῦ Βησσαρίωνος ἀντιλήψεις ἐπὶ τοῖς κατὰ τοῦ ὑπὲρ Λατίνων βιβλίου γραφεῖσιν ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ ἀντιρρητικοῖς (*Reply to Bessarion’s Critical Comments on His Polemical Writing against the Treatise in Support of Latins*), ed. Charles Alexandre in ALEXANDRE, pp. 311–12, corrections John Monfasani in Monfasani 1994, p. 839, n.33.¹²
- Contra Lat.* (*Contra De dogmate Latino librum*) – Πρὸς τὸ ὑπὲρ Λατίνων βιβλίον (*Reply to the Treatise in Support of Latins*), ed. Charles Alexandre in

⁸ English: Ernest Barker in Barker, *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium: From Justinian I to the Last Palaeologus*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957, pp. 198–206 (some parts summarized), Woodhouse 1986, pp. 102–6 (summary); German: Adolf Ellissen in Ellissen, 1860, pp. 85–104, Blum 1988, pp. 173–87; Modern Greek: Christos P. Baloglou in Baloglou, 2002, pp. 213–41; Russian: Boris Timofeevich Goryanov in Георгий Гемист Плифон, ‘Речи о реформах’, *Vizantiyskiy vremennik* [Византийский временник], 6, 1953, pp. 397–404.

⁹ English: Woodhouse 1986, pp. 230–32 (summary); Modern Greek: Linos G. Benakis in *Ad quaes.*, pp. 350–58, reprint, pp. 606–14.

¹⁰ Italian: Franco Bacchelli in Bacchelli 2007, p. 138, n.24.

¹¹ English: Ernest Barker in Barker, *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium: From Justinian I to the Last Palaeologus*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957, pp. 206–12 (some parts summarized), Woodhouse 1986, pp. 92–8; German: Ellissen 1860, pp. 105–30, Blum 1988, pp. 151–72; Spanish: Francisco L. Lisi and Juan Signes in Pletón (Jorge Gemisto), *Tratado sobre las leyes – Memorial a Teodoro*, Salamanca: Tecnos, 1995, pp. 133–66 (with an introduction and notes); Modern Greek: Baloglou 2002, pp. 143–83; Russian: Boris Timofeevich Goryanov in Георгий Гемист Плифон, ‘Речи о реформах’, *Vizantiyskiy vremennik* [Византийский временник], 6, 1953, pp. 404–14.

¹² English: Woodhouse 1986, p. 277 (summary).

ALEXANDRE, pp. 300–311, corrections John Monfasani in Monfasani 1994, p. 839, n.33.¹³

Contra Schol. (*Contra Scholarii pro Aristotele obiectiones*) – Πρὸς τὰς Σχολαρίου ὑπὲρ Ἀριστοτέλους ἀντιλήψεις (*Reply to Scholarios' Defence of Aristotle*), ed. and trans. Bernadette Lagarde, *Byzantion*, 59, 1989, pp. 355–507; an alternative edition: Enrico V. Maltese, Leipzig: Teubner, 1988.¹⁴

De diff. (*De differentiis*) – Περὶ ὧν Ἀριστοτέλης πρὸς Πλάτωνα διαφέρεται (*On the Differences of Aristotle from Plato*), ed. Bernadette Lagarde, *Byzantion*, 43, 1973, pp. 312–43; an alternative edition with a translation and commentary: Lagarde (1976), 2 vols.¹⁵

De Hom. (*De Homero*) – Περὶ Ὁμήρου καὶ τῆς αὐτοῦ Ἰλιάδος (*On Homer and His Iliad*), ed. and trans. Franco Bacchelli (forthcoming), a manuscript of the treatise from the British Library in London, *Additional* 10065, fols 52–53v, is available on-line: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?Source=BrowseScribes&letter=A&ref=Add_MS_10065 [accessed 19.7.2013].

De Isthmo (*De Isthmo*) – Πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα [Μανουὴλ περὶ τοῦ Ἴσθμου] (*To the Emperor [Manuel on the Isthmus]*), ed. Spyridon P. Lambros in LAMBROS III, pp. 309–12.¹⁶

De virt. (*De virtutibus*) – Περὶ ἀρετῶν (*On Virtues*) [Georges Gémiste Pléthon, *Traité des vertus*], introd., ed., trans. and comm. Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker, Ἀθῆναι, Leiden, New York, København, Köln: Ακαδημία Αθηνῶν and Brill, 1987, pp. 1–15.¹⁷

Decl. brev. (*Declaratio brevis oraculorum magicorum*) – Βραχεῖα τις διασάφησις τῶν ἐν τοῖς λογίοις τούτοις ἀσαφεστέρως λεγομένων (*Brief Clarification of What Is Said in These [Magian] Oracles Less Clearly*) [*Oracles Chaldaïques: Recension de Georges Gémiste Pléthon – La recension arabe des Μαγικὰ λόγια*], introd.,

¹³ English: *ibid.*, pp. 273–7 (summary).

¹⁴ English: *ibid.*, pp. 283–307 (summary); French: Bernadette Lagarde in *Contra Schol.*, pp. 369–501.

¹⁵ English: Woodhouse 1986, pp. 191–214; French: Lagarde 1976, vol. 1; German: Blum 1988, pp. 112–50; Italian: Moreno Neri in G. Gemisto Pletone, *Delle differenze fra Platone ed Aristotele*, Rimini: Raffaelli, 2001.

¹⁶ English: Woodhouse 1986, pp. 100–101 (summary); German: Blum 1988, pp. 188–95, Modern Greek: Baloglou 2002, pp. 131–7.

¹⁷ English: Woodhouse, 1986, pp. 180 (partial summary); French: Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker in *De virt.*, pp. 19–28; German: Gudrun Schandl in Blum–Seitter 2005, pp. 25–34; Italian: Pavlos Jerenis in Giorgio Gemisto Pletone, *Trattato delle virtù*, Rimini: Raffaelli, 1999, Moreno Neri in Neri 2010; Russian: Igor Pavlovich Medvedev [Игорь Павлович Медведев] in Medvedev, *Византийский гуманизм XIV–XV вв.*, Санкт-Петербург: Алтейя, 1997 (2nd edn), pp. 291–300.

ed., trans. and comm. Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker, Ἀθήναι, Paris, Bruxelles: Ακαδημία Αθηνών, Vrin, Ousia, 1995, pp. 21–2.¹⁸

Diod. Plut. (De Diodoro et Plutarcho) [*Opuscula de historia Graeca*] – Ἐκ τῶν Διοδώρου καὶ Πλουτάρχου περὶ τῶν μετὰ τὴν ἐν Μαντινεΐα μάχην ἐν κεφαλαίοις διάληψις (*On the Events among the Greeks after the Battle of Mantinea*), ed. Enrico V. Maltese, Leipzig: Teubner, 1989.

In Cleop. (In Cleopam) – Μονωδία ἐπὶ τῇ αἰοιδίμῳ βασιλίδι Κλέοπη (*Funeral Oration on the Venerable Empress Cleope*), ed. Spyridon P. Lambros in LAMBROS IV, pp. 161–75.¹⁹

In Hel. (In Helenam) – Μονωδία εἰς Ἑλένην (Ἵπομονήν) Παλαιολογίαν (*Funeral Oration on Helen (Patience) Palaiologina*), ed. Spyridon P. Lambros in LAMBROS III, pp. 266–80.²⁰

Leg. (Legum conscriptio) – Νόμων συγγραφή (*Book of Laws*), ed. Charles Alexandre in ALEXANDRE, pp. 1–260.²¹

Mah. (Mahomes Araborum princeps et legislator) – Μωαμέτης μὲν ὁ ἀραβάρχης τε καὶ νομοθέτης (*Muhammad the Leader and Lawgiver of the Arabs*), ed. and comm. Felix Klein-Franke in Klein-Franke 1972, pp. 3–8, corrections Demetrios Dedes in Dedes 1981, pp. 66–7.

¹⁸ English: Woodhouse 1986, pp. 53–4; French: Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker in *Decl. brev.*, p. 36; Modern Greek: Maria Kekropoulou in Γεώργιος Γεμιστός Πλήθων – Μιχαὴλ Ψελλός, *Μαγικά λόγια του Ζωροάστηρ*, Αθήνα: Ενάλιος, 1997, pp. 230–34, Eleni Stamou in Πλήθωνος Νόμοι – Γενναδίου Πατριάρχου Ἐναντίον τοῦ Πλήθωνος Γεμιστοῦ, Αθήνα: Ελευθερη σκέψις, 1997, pp. 131–6.

¹⁹ English: Woodhouse 1986, pp. 114–15 (summary); German: Blum 1988, pp. 97–104.

²⁰ English: Woodhouse 1986, pp. 310–12 (summary); German: Blum 1988, pp. 105–11; Italian: Giacomo Leopardi in Leopardi, *Tutte le opere*, ed. Francesco Flora, II: *Le poesie e le prose*, Milano: Mondadori, 1965, pp. 193–8; Serbo-Croat: Dragutin Anastasijević, 'Треша посмртна весеба Јелени Драгашевој' *Brastvo* [Браство], 32, 1941, pp. 50–54.

²¹ English: Ernest Barker in Barker in *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium: From Justinian I to the Last Palaeologus*, Oxford 1957, pp. 212–19 (partial translation, some parts summarized), Woodhouse 1986, pp. 322–56 (translation of some parts, summary of other ones); French: Augustin Pellissier in ALEXANDRE, pp. 3–261; German: Blum-Seitter 2005, pp. 7–23 (translation of some parts); Italian: Moreno Neri, in Giacomo Leopardi, *Discorso in proposito di un'orazione greca – Orazione di G. Gemisto Pletone in morte dell'Imperatrice Elena Paleologina*, Rimini: Raffaelli, 2003, pp. 33–48, 55–65 (*Epinomis*); Spanish: Francisco L. Lisi and Juan Signes, in Pletón (Jorge Gemisto), *Tratado sobre las leyes – Memorial a Teodoro*, Salamanca: Tescos, 1995, pp. 1–132 (with an introduction and notes); Modern Greek: Eleni Stamou in Πλήθωνος Νόμοι – Γενναδίου Πατριάρχου Ἐναντίον τοῦ Πλήθωνος Γεμιστοῦ, Αθήνα: Ελευθερη σκέψις, 1997, pp. 9–126, Demetrios K. Chatzemihael in Γεωργίου Γεμιστοῦ-Πλήθωνος, *Νόμων συγγραφή*, Θεσσαλονίκη: Ζήτρος, 2005; Russian: Igor Pavlovich Medvedev [Игорь Павлович Медведев] in Medvedev, *Византийский гуманизм XIV–XV вв.*, Ленинград: Наука, 1976 (1st edn), pp. 172–241, Санкт-Петербург: Алетейя, 1997 (2nd edn), pp. 220–90.

Meth. (*Methodus*) – Μέθοδος εύρέσεως ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης, συνόδων καὶ πανσελήνων καὶ τῆς τῶν ἀστέρων ἐποχῆς ἀπὸ κανόνων οὓς αὐτὸς συνεστήσατο (*A Method of Fixing the Sun, Moon, Conjunctions, Full Moons and Period of the Planets with Tables Established by Himself*) [Georges Gémiste Pléthon, *Manuel d'astronomie*], introd., ed., trans. and comm. Anne Tihon and Raymond Mercier, Louvain-la-Neuve: Academia Bruylant, 1998.

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ANONYMOUS (PRESUMABLY DEMETRIOS RAOUL KABAKES)

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MICHAEL APOSTOLES

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²² English: Woodhouse 1986, pp. 51–3 (the text of the *Oracles* only, without Plethon's commentary), Karl H. Dannenfeldt in Dannenfeldt, 'The Pseudo-Zoroastrian *Oracles* in the Renaissance', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 4, 1957, pp. 27–8 (the text of the *Oracles*); French: Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker in *Or. mag.*, pp. 25–36; Modern Greek: Μαρία Κεκροπούλου in Γεώργιος Γεμιστὸς Πλήθων – Μιχαὴλ Ψελλός, *Μαγικά λόγια του Ζωροάστρη*, Αθήνα: Ενάλιος, 1997, pp. 167–230.

²³ English: Woodhouse 1986, pp. 88–91 (summary).

²⁴ English: Woodhouse 1986, p. 319, French: ALEXANDRE, pp. 263–9; German: Blum 1988, pp. 94–6; Modern Greek: Eleni Stamou in Πλήθωνος Νόμοι – Γενναδίου Πατριάρχου Ἐναντίον τοῦ Πλήθωνος Γεμιστοῦ, Αθήνα: Ελευθέρη σκέψις, 1997, pp. 127–9.

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JOHN ARGYROPOULOS

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²⁵ English: Woodhouse 1986, p. 13 (partial translation).

²⁶ English: *ibid.*, pp. 233–5 (summary).

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²⁷ English: *ibid.*, p. 236 (summary); French: Anne Tihon in *Meth.*, pp. 122–3 (the astronomical part).

²⁸ English: Woodhouse 1986, pp. 14–15 (summary); Italian: Elpidio Mioni in Mioni 1991, p. 169.

²⁹ English: John Wilson Taylor in Taylor 1924, pp. 123–5.

³⁰ The original text was presumably published under the name Gemistos, not Plethon; cf. the discussion above, pp. 235–8. Italian: John Monfasani in *Contra Gemist.*, pp. 848–54.

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³¹ Italian: Mioni 1991, p. 168.

³² English: Woodhouse 1986, pp. 7–12 (summary).

³³ English: Edward W. Bodnar and Clive Foss in *Ep.*

FRANCESCO FILELFO

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³⁴ French: Legrand 1892, pp. 48–9.

³⁵ Alexandre's citation is taken from the edition of Filelfo's letters published in Paris in 1503, bk. v, fol. lvii. Knös 1950, p. 140, was not able to find this letter in the 1503 edition, to which Alexandre refers, but discovered it in the one from 1513. The text may be found e.g. in *Epistolae familiares Domini Francisci Philelphi, Venetiis: Johannes Tacuinus, 1498*, fol. 24.

³⁶ French: Börje Knös in Knös 1950, p. 139.

³⁷ English: Lotte Labowsky in Gazes, *Ad Bess.*, pp. 179–80, 183–4, 185–6, 188, 193–4 (some parts of the text).

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ANDRONIKOS KALLISTOS

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MATTHEW KAMARIOTES

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BARTOLOMEO PLATINA

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GENNADIOS SCHOLARIOS

Ad Cab. (*Ad Demetrium Raul Cabacen*) – Τῷ αὐθέντῃ μου τῷ ἀδελφῷ μου κυρῷ Δημητρίῳ Ῥαοὺλ τῷ Καβάκη (*Letter to My Sovereign and My Brother Sir*

³⁸ English: Woodhouse 1986, pp. 7–12 (summary).

³⁹ English: *ibid.*, pp. 229 (summary); Modern Greek: Linos G. Benakis in John VIII Palaiologos, *Ad Gemist.*, Benakis 1974, p. 348, Benakis 2002, p. 604.

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SYLVESTER SYROPOULOS

Mem. (*Memorabilia*) – Ἀπομνημονεύματα (*Memoirs*) [*Les 'Mémoires' du Grand Eclésiarque de l'Église de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le concile de*

⁴⁰ English: Woodhouse 1986, pp. 314–15 (summary).

⁴¹ English: *ibid.*, pp. 267–8 (summary).

⁴² The original text was supposedly published under the name Gemistos, not Plethon; cf. the discussion above, pp. 235–8. English: Woodhouse 1986, pp. 278–81 (summary).

⁴³ English: Woodhouse 1986, pp. 359–61 (summary); Modern Greek: Eleni Stamou in Πλήθωνος Νόμοι – Γενναδίου Πατριάρχου Ἐναντίον τοῦ Πλήθωνος Γεμιστοῦ, Αθήνα: Ελευθέρη σκέψις, 1997, pp. 137–67.

⁴⁴ English: *ibid.*, pp. 315–18 (summary).

⁴⁵ English: *ibid.*, pp. 278–81 (summary).

⁴⁶ English: *ibid.*, pp. 240–66 (summary).

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(Specific editions and translations used are indicated.)

ARISTOTLE

Cat. (Categoriae)

De caelo

De gener. et corr. (De generatione et corruptione)

Met. (Metaphysica)

Phys. (Physica)

GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO

Gen. (Genealogia deorum gentilium) [*Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*], vol. 1–, introd., ed., trans. and comm. Jon Solomon, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011 (*I Tatti Renaissance Library*, vol. 46); *Tutte le opere*, vols 7–8, introd., ed., trans. and comm. Vittore Branca, Milano 1998.

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DIODORUS SICULUS

Bibl. hist. (Bibliotheca historica)

DIOGENES LAERTIUS

Vitae (Vitae philosophorum)

EUNAPIUS

Vitae soph. (Vitae sophistarum)

EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA

Praep. evan. (Praeparatio evangelica)

MARSILIO FICINO

Enn. (Enneades) – Plotini *Enneades*, trans. Marsilio Ficino, Florentiae: Antonius Miscominus, 1492.

HERODOTUS

Hist. (Historiae)

HESIOD

Theog. (Theogonia)

HIPPOLYTUS

Ref. (Refutation omnium haeresium)

IAMBlichus

*De myst. (De mysteriis)**Vita Pyth. (De vita Pythagorica)*

HOMER

*Il. (Ilias)**Od. (Odyssea)*

JULIAN THE APOSTATE

Or. Sol. (Oratio ad Solem Regem)

LUCIAN

Men. (Menippus sive necyomantia)

ORIGEN

*Contra Cels. (Contra Celsum)*English translation: Origen, *Contra Celsum*, introd., trans. and notes Henry Chadwick, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980 (3rd edn).

ORPHEUS

Fr. (Fragmenta) – Orphicorum fragmenta, ed. Otto Kern, Berlin: Weidmann, 1922; *Poetae epici Graeci. Testimonia et fragmenta*, II, 1–2: *Orphicorum et Orphicis similibus testimonia et fragmenta*, ed. Alberto Bernabé, München – Leipzig: Saur, 2004, 2005.

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PAUSANIAS

Graec. Descr. (Graeciae Descriptio)

JOHN PHILOPONUS

De an. (In Aristotelis libros De anima commentaria)

PLATO

Alc. I (Alcibiades I)

Crat. (Cratylus)

Ep. (Epistulae)

Epin. (Epinomis)

Euth. (Euthyphro)

Gorg. (Gorgias)

Leg. (Leges)

Phaedr. (Phaedrus)

Phd. (Phaedo)

Philb. (Philebus)

Polit. (Politicus)

Resp. (Respublica)

Soph. (Sophista)

Symp. (Symposium)

Tim. (Timaeus)

English translation: Cooper-Hutchinson 1997.

PLOTINUS

English translation: Plotinus, *Enneads*, 7 vols, trans. Arthur H. Armstrong, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966–1988.

PLUTARCH

Aet. Rom. (Aetia Romana)

Artax. (Artaxerxes)

Com. not. (De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos)

De an. (De animae procreatione in Timaeo)

De aud. (De audiendis poetis)

Def. orac. (De defectu oraculorum)

De E (De E Delphico)

De Is. (De Iside et Osiride)

English translation: Plutarch, *Moralia*, vol. 5, trans. Frank C. Babbitt, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936 (*Loeb Classical Library*, vol. 306), pp. 1–191.

De mon. (De monarchia, democratia, aristocratia)

Numa

Quaest. conviv. (Quaestiones convivales)

PSEUDO-PLUTARCH

De Hom. (De Homero), ed. Jan Frederik Kindstrand, Leipzig: Teubner, 1990.

PORPHYRY

De abst. (De abstinencia)

Vita Plot. (Vita Plotini)

English translation: Plotinus, *Ennead*, vol. 1, trans. Arthur Hilary Armstrong, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966 (*Loeb Classical Library*, vol. 440), pp. 1–87.

Vita Pyth. (Vita Pythagorae)

PROCLUS

El. theol. (Elementa theologiae) [*The Elements of Theology*], introd., ed., trans. and comm. Eric Robertson Dodds, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933 (1st edn), 1963 (2nd. edn).

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In Tim. (In Platonis Timaeum commentaria)

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George Gemistos Plethon (c. 1360–1454) was a remarkable and influential thinker, active at the time of transition between the Byzantine Middle Ages and the Italian Renaissance. His works cover literary, historical, scientific, but most notably philosophical issues. Plethon is arguably the most important of the Byzantine Platonists and the earliest representative of Platonism in the Renaissance, the movement which generally exercised a huge influence on the development of early modern thought. Thus his treatise on the differences between Plato and Aristotle triggered the Plato–Aristotle controversy of the fifteenth century, and his ideas impacted on Italian Renaissance thinkers such as Ficino.

This book provides a new study of Gemistos' philosophy. The first part is dedicated to the discussion of his 'public philosophy'. As an important public figure, Gemistos wrote several public speeches concerning the political situation in the Peloponnese as well as funeral orations on deceased members of the ruling Palaiologos family. They contain remarkable Platonic ideas, adjusted to the contemporary late Byzantine situation.

In the second, most extensive, part of the book the Platonism of Plethon is presented in a systematic way. It is identical with the so-called *philosophia perennis*, that is, the rational view of the world common to various places and ages. Throughout Plethon's writings, it is remarkably coherent in its framework, possesses quite original features, and displays the influence of ancient Middle and Neo-Platonic discussions. Plethon thus turns out to be not just a commentator on an ancient tradition, but an original Platonic thinker in his own right.

In the third part, the notorious question of the paganism of Gemistos is reconsidered. He is usually taken for a Platonizing polytheist who gathered around himself a kind of heterodox circle. The whole issue is examined in depth again and all the major evidence discussed, with the result that Gemistos seems rather an unorthodox Christian with a strong inclination to ancient thought than a pagan in the ancient sense of the word.

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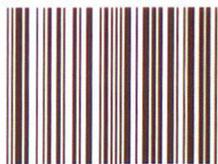
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