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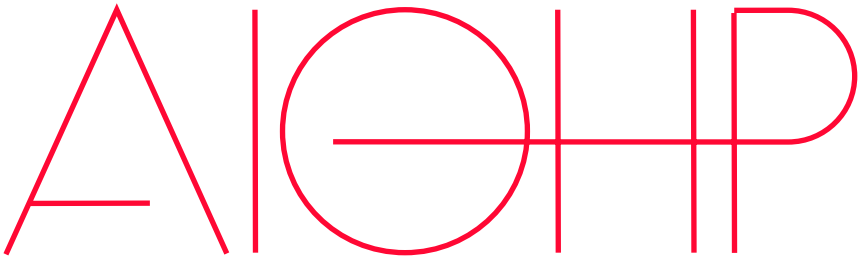

CONTENT

The Arabic *Commentary on the Golden Verses* Attributed to Proclus, and Its Neoplatonic Context

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ABSTRACT

The modern edition of the Arabic commentary to a Greek Pythagorean poem known as the *Golden Verses*, attributed to Proclus, was first published in 1984, more than a quarter century ago. Despite the fact that this Graeco-Arabic text is an interesting example of a late antique Neoplatonic philosophical commentary and it offers a Neoplatonic interpretation of various elements of the Pythagorean tradition, it has hardly been studied as such at all. In this article I argue that there exist enough arguments to conclude that this text contains a number of genuine Neoplatonic elements and should be studied along with the other late antique texts from this tradition. Moreover, I demonstrate that in all probability this text actually comes from the inner circle of Proclus Diadochus' students, or from the philosopher himself.

The Arabic commentary to the *Golden Verses*[1] that is attributed to Proclus has been classified by Concetta Luna and Alain-Philippe Segonds, the authors of the entry about Proclus in the *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, as the last item on a list of "falsely attributed writings" ("*ouvrages faussement attribués*") of Proclus.[2] According to them, the "attribution of this text to Proclus, which without doubt utilises a Greek and Neoplatonic model, is very controversial", and "there is nothing specifically Proclean in the text that could support its attribution to Proclus Diadochus".[3]

Obviously, a text that has been labelled as an Arabic translation of something "falsely attributed" to Proclus does not sound particularly attractive

1 It is a philosophical poem (71 verses) in hexameter, and attributed to Pythagoras or generally seen as originating in the circle of the first Pythagoreans. In fact it was probably composed in the Hellenistic or Early Roman period. It consists of admonitions from a teacher (Pythagoras) to his students, mainly about the proper philosophical way of life, with some elements of metaphysics and theology. It became very popular as a source of Pythagorean wisdom in the Late Roman period and was treated as a classical Pythagorean text by late antique authors such as Iamblichus (who commented on the last verses of the poem in his Protrepticus) and Hierocles (who wrote the commentary to this poem which is fully preserved). Thom 1995; van der Horst 1932.

2 Luna & Segonds 2012, pp. 1652–53.

3 This entry is followed in turn by an entry devoted to Proclus' writings preserved in Arabic where both the Arabic commentary to the *Golden Verses* and the discussion about its authorship are briefly summarised. Endress 2012, pp. 1673–74.

or worthy of study. Unsurprisingly, despite the fact this text is an interesting example of a late antique Neoplatonic philosophical commentary and it offers a Neoplatonic interpretation of various elements of the Pythagorean tradition, it has hardly been studied as such at all.[4] In this paper, therefore, I will argue that there exist enough arguments to conclude that this text contains a number of genuine Neoplatonic elements and should be studied along with the other late antique texts from this tradition. Moreover, I will demonstrate that in all probability this text actually comes from the inner circle of Proclus Diadochus' students, or from the philosopher himself.

PROCLUS DIADOCHUS OF LYCIA OR PROCLUS PROCLEIUS OF LAODICEA?

The commentary is preserved in a single manuscript, Escorial Arab. 888, which contains a collection of various texts and summaries translated from Greek and Syriac into Arabic, entitled *Kitāb an-nukat wa-ṯ-ṯimār aṭ-ṭibbīya wa-l-falsafīya* (*Book of Medical and Philosophical Gifts and Fruits*) (it is the 14th of the 18 sections, on fols. 91a–114a).[5] The author of this collection is Abū-l-Faraǧ Abdallāh Ibn al-Ṭayyib (d. AD 1043), a Syriac bishop and church official, philosopher, physician and theologian. Ibn al-Ṭayyib was a prolific author of biblical commentaries, but he also commented on a huge amount of works of Aristotle, Galen and Hippocrates.[6] The most famous and influential of those works were his commentaries on Porphyry's *Isagoge* and Aristotle's *Categories*.[7] His knowledge of Greek philosophy was profound, which is visible in the manuscript Escorial Arab. 888, which contains his collection of translations, summaries and abridgements of various Greek and Arabic works.

The text that is the object of this study is also presented as an abridgement made by Ibn al-Ṭayyib. The exact title at the beginning of the text is: *The essentials of the treatise of Pythagoras known as the Golden Proclus' commentary* (*Istithmār muqāla fithāghūras ma'arūfa bi-l-dhahabiya tafsīr bruqlus*). The provenance of this extract (*thamarat*) from the commentary of Proclus is again emphasised at the very end of the text. *Istithmār* means literally "extracting the fruit" and *thamarat* "a fruit". According to F. Rosenthal, it was Ibn al-Ṭayyib's "favourite word for the numerous brief summaries of the contents of Greek works prepared by him".[8] Rosenthal compared another *istithmār* from this manuscript, an excerpt from the Arabic synopsis of Plato's *Laws*, with the same text preserved elsewhere and attributed to al-Fārābī, and he concluded that "it is

4 Although this avenue of research has been suggested by the current author in her earlier work: Izdebska 2011; Izdebska 2016.

5 An incomplete list of the contents of this manuscript is available in Brockelmann 1943–49, I 635, and Brockelmann 1937–42, I 884. More on this manuscript: Daiber 1995, p. 630, n. 8; Wakelnig 2013, p. 39 n. 108; Ferrari 2006, p. 28.

6 Faultless 2010, p. 668.

7 Gyekye 1975; Gyekye 1979; Ferrari 2006.

8 Rosenthal 1990, p. 274.

a true abridgement, often using the same words"[9] and "using the abridgement of the Laws as the basis of judgment, it can be said that Ibn al-Ṭayyib's work as an abbreviator was quite skilful, if thoroughly prosaic and uninspired".[10]

The text was edited and translated into English by N. Linley,[11] who unfortunately died tragically before finishing his edition and only expressed his initial thoughts about the authorship of this text in a short introduction. He rejected[12] R. Walzer's hypothesis[13] that it could have been a summary based on the preserved *Commentary on the Golden Verses* of Hierocles (Walzer based his hypothesis on the fact that the names Proclus and Hierocles look almost the same in Arabic). The two texts have almost nothing in common, so this hypothesis can indeed be easily rejected. However, Linley was still sceptical about the Proclean authorship of the text that served as the basis for Ibn al-Ṭayyib's summary: "there is no positive ground to support the view that Ibn al-Ṭayyib had access to a commentary by Proclus on the Χρυσᾶ ἔπη and made use of it as a basis for his own work."[14]

In the Arabic tradition the existence of a commentary to the *Golden Verses* attributed to Proclus which Ibn al-Ṭayyib would have read and abbreviated is attested by a famous scholar and bibliographer Ibn al-Nadīm (10th c.) in his Catalogue (*Fihrist*, 264, ed. G. Flügel). He listed it among other works of Proclus Diadochus:

Commentary on the Golden testaments of Pythagoras – it is about one hundred leaves and extant in Syriac. He wrote it for his daughter. Thabit translated three of its leaves, but [then] died, so that he did not complete it. (p. 608, tr. B. Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm: A Tenth-Century Survey of Islamic Culture*, vol. 2, New York 1970)

Therefore, there probably existed a Greek text of a commentary to the *Golden Verses* attributed to Proclus that was already translated into Syriac in the times of Ibn al-Nadīm. It was this text that Ibn al-Ṭayyib abbreviated from a Greek, Syriac or Arabic version. The information that Proclus wrote it for his daughter is suspicious since we know that he had neither a wife nor any children.[15]

The other trace of the existence of this text and of its translation into Arabic is a fragment of it that survives

9 Rosenthal 1990, p. 276. The fact that Ibn al-Tayyib was a scrutinous translator and compilator was also pointed out by Daiber in his review of Linley's edition of the Commentary (1988, p. 135). However, E. Wakelnig remarked that this manuscript containing Ibn al-Tayyib's collection "has not been properly studied yet" (Wakelnig 2013, p. 39).

10 Rosenthal 1990, pp. 276–77. Also H. Daiber in his review of the Linley's edition of the Commentary points out the fact that Ibn al-Tayyib was a scrutinous translator and compilator (Daiber 1988, p. 135).

11 Linley 1984.

12 Linley 1984, p. vi.

13 R. Walzer, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, I (New Edition, Leiden, 1960), s.v. Buruklus.

14 Linley 1984, x.

15 Marinus, Proclus (17); Damascius, *Philosophical history / Life of Isidore* 56 (ed. Athanassiadi, p. 159).

in the manuscript Oxford Marsh 539, edited and translated by E. Wakelnig as *Philosophy Reader from the Circle of Miskawayh* (passage # 16, pp. 74–75). As. E. Wakelnig remarked: "Passage 16 of the *Philosophy Reader* is strikingly parallel to Ibn al-Ṭayyib's Istithmar in content, but completely different in wording. The simplest explanation for this parallel is to assume a common source for both texts, namely an Arabic translation of Proclus' commentary."[16] The striking differences in wording between this passage and the version by Ibn al-Ṭayyib indicate that there existed an Arabic translation of the commentary independent from Ibn al-Ṭayyib's summary; in other words, they are not the same text. However, given the fact that the differences are so substantial and that according to F. Rosenthal Ibn al-Tayyib was usually quite straight in his abridgements, it is also possible that he abbreviated a Syriac or Greek version or had a different Arabic translation at his disposal. In summary, we can conclude that the text that we have in Ibn al-Ṭayyib's abridgement certainly existed in Greek and reached the Arabic world through various channels of transmission. Moreover, Ibn al-Nadīm and Ibn al-Ṭayyib were both convinced that the original text was written by Proclus Diadochus.

The reason why the mider scholarship has problems with attributing this text to Proclus Diadochus is the fact that there is now no surviving evidence for a commentary on the *Golden Verses* authored by this Neoplatonic philosopher in the Greek texts. This is why the majority of modern scholars follow the idea of L. G. Westerink, who in the most extensive paper about the authorship of this text ever published suggested that its author was not Proclus Diadochus, but Proclus Procleius of Laodicea.[17]

This other Proclus is known from two sources, and no work that he would have authored survives in the Greek corpus, even in fragments. Our knowledge of his writings comes only from the 10th-century Byzantine lexicon-encyclopaedia known as the *Souda* (Pi, 2472):

Proclus, the one surnamed Prokleios; son of Themesion, of Laodikeia in Syria, a hierophant. He wrote a *Theology*, *On the Myth of Pandora in Hesiod*, *On the Golden Verses*, *On the Introduction to Arithmetic of Nicomachus;* and some other geometrical works.[18]

As I have already mentioned, none of the writings listed by the author of this entry are preserved in Greek and their existence is not attested by any other Greek author. However, Damascius in the *Commentary to Plato's Philebus* (19) mentions Proclus of Laodicea in the context of the cult of Hedone as a deity. As he says, this cult "is testified by Proclus of Laodicea".[19]

16 Wakelnig 2013, p. 39.

17 Westerink 1987a.

18 "Proclus." Suda On Line. Tr. Ronald Allen. 1 August 2008. Accessed 7 August 2007 <http://www.stoa.org/sol-entries/pi/2472>.

19 Westerink 2010, pp. 12–14; Damascius 2008, pp. 7–8. See also Westerink 1987a, p. 75. According to Westerink, Damascius'

Given this paucity of sources, we should actually ask if this other Proclus really existed, or – rather – if he produced the works that the *Souda* lists for him.[20] From among the titles that the *Souda* attributes to him, only the commentary to the myth of Pandora is a distinctive title and the rest is very general. The *Theology* could somehow reflect the Proclean *Platonic theology* or the *Elements of theology*. The Nicomachean *Introduction to arithmetic* was very popular among the late antique Neoplatonists and many of them wrote a commentary to this text, with Iamblichus being the most famous among them and his commentary the only one that is preserved.[21] Neither is the *Commentary to the Golden Verses* an unusual title: there survives such a commentary written by Hierocles of Alexandria, and the poem was also commented by Iamblichus in his *Protrepticus* (but only verses 45–71).

There is also one more extant Arabic commentary to this Pythagorean poem, which is attributed to Iamblichus.[22] Nicomachus' *Introduction* as well as the *Golden Verses* belonged to the Neoplatonic teaching curriculum in Late Antiquity and such titles in a dossier of an alleged Neoplatonic author would be an obvious element. Some other writings concerning geometry could have also been connected with Proclus, such as the *Commentary to Euclid*, and they are also something we would expect in a late antique Neoplatonic philosopher's dossier.

As I have already mentioned, the only distinctive title is the commentary to Hesiod's myth of Pandora. However, there is a commentary to Hesiod's *Works and Days* attributed to Proclus in which the myth of Pandora is also described.[23] Thus, again, as with the *Theology*, it could have been a work "inspired" by a work of the "real" Proclus that was added by mistake. We do not know if Proclus Diadochus wrote commentaries to Nicomachus and the *Golden Verses*, but they were so popular among the other Neoplatonists that it is very plausible that he himself also wrote such commentaries or some of his students wrote them down from his lectures and later attributed them to him. In fact, a hypothesis (that is nonetheless rejected by L. G. Westerink) that Proclus wrote a commentary to the Nicomachus' *Introduction* has also been made and, in

mention of Proclus of Laodicea in the context of this cult informs us that his alleged lost *Theology* was rather about cult and not about theology *per se*.

20 In fact, Westerink also described one more possible reference to the name of this Proclus in Greek literature, in the commentary to Aristotle of Pseudo-Alexander (CAG II 3, 8.28–9.1). The author refers to Proclus as the author of the work entitled *List of feasts*. However, Westerink himself qualified this passage as a very improbable mention of Proclus of Laodicea, because the manuscripts do not even allow us to decide if the name mentioned is Proclus or Patrocles. There is also no mention of Laodicea. Therefore I will not use this reference as an argument in favour of the existence of Proclus Procleius. See Westerink 1987a, pp. 75–76.

21 Robbins, D'Ooge & Karpinski 1926, pp. 124–132.

22 Daiber 1995.

23 This text is now considered to be based on an earlier commentary of Plutarch that was slightly reworked by Proclus. See Faraggiana di Sarzana 1987.

this case, the *Souda* entry about Proclus of Laodicea would actually provide evidence for that – assuming that the author of this entry or its source mistook the two Procluses.[24] To sum up, there is nothing in the *Souda* that could not be a vague mention of the works authored by Proclus Diadochus himself.

Despite this fact, L. G. Westerink defends the actual existence of Proclus Procleius as the author of the writings listed in the *Souda*.[25] He rejects the possibility that this list could derive from the known works of Proclus Diadochus, an idea already suggested by L. J. Rosán.[26] According to Westerink, in the case of each of the pairs of writings (of Proclus Diadochus and Proclus of Laodicea) the obvious correspondence is "not complete nor exact".[27] However, it is still astonishing that these works are, in the end, astonishingly similar, even if they cannot be easily identified as being one and the same. Moreover, the fact that we have no writings by the other Proclus at all, and almost no other information about him and his works, should actually cast doubt on the testimony of the late Byzantine lexicon.

Another important fact is that the list of works of this otherwise unknown Proclus of Laodicea is so stereotypical and unspecific that it can easily be connected not only with a list of the works of Proclus Diadochus, but with any other late Neoplatonic author. This makes the entire entry preserved in the *Souda* even more suspicious. Such a list could have easily been made up on the basis of the author's knowledge about a usual Neoplatonic dossier and in particular about the dossier of Proclus Diadochus himself. In fact, there is a possibility that the author of this biographical note knew the name of Proclus of Laodicea, the hierophant from Damascius' commentary, and within the scope of some early medieval project of collecting all the possible information about all Greek philosophers and scientists he "invented" his plausible list of writings.[28]

24 See the summary of this discussion in Luna & Segonds 2012, pp. 1641–1642.

25 Westerink 1987a, p. 74.

26 Rosan 1949, p. 11, n. 1.

27 Westerink 1987a, pp. 74–75.

28 The author of this note was probably one of the earlier authors of late antique and Byzantine *Onomatologoi* (*Tables of Eminent Writers*), which were used by the author/authors of the *Souda* for the compiling of the lexicon. The most famous of such works was the Onomatologos by Hesychius of Miletus (5th—6th c. AD), who is mentioned as an important source in the *Souda* itself ("of which the present book is an epitome"; however, this is probably not a statement about the Souda itself, but about some epitome that was at its author(s) disposal). In fact, Hesychios' *Onomatologos* became so famous in Byzantium that many other, later *Onomatologoi* were also attributed to him. By the 19th century there was already a lively debate on the extent to which Hesychius' work was the source for the *Souda*. The most prevalent opinion nowadays is that the *Souda* was based on a broader collection of such sources. Moreover, it is possible that Hesychius' *Onomatologos* covered only the authors of the classical period and all later material comes from other sources. A. Adler, the editor of the *Souda* (*Suidae Lexicon*, Leipzig 1928–1935) tried to identify a possible source for every entry and she attributed the entry about Proclus Procleius to Hesychius himself. This attribution was later accepted and repeated by L. G. Westerink (p. 74) and more recently by E. Wakelnig (p. 38). However,

E. Wakelnig, who edited and translated the manuscript Oxford Marsh 539, in which the Arabic commentary attributed to Proclus is quoted, addressed the question of the authorship of the commentary in her introduction.[29] She argued in favour of Westerink's hypothesis about Proclus Procleius, pointing to the "hitherto rather puzzling fact that Ibn Buṭlān, according to Yāqūt, claims that Proclus was from Latakia, the ancient Laodicea. This claim must surely refer to Proclus Procleius, who is said to have been from Laodicea in Syria (*Souda*, Pi, 2472) and has thus left his trace in Arabic."[30] As she adds in the note, Yāqūt "further calls Proclus the author of the *Arguments for the Eternity of the World*, which may indicate confusion on the part of either Ibn Buṭlān or a later transmitter or Yāqūt who wanted to display his familiarity with Proclus and thus added this mismatched reference to the *Arguments*."[31] However, this argument should possibly be inverted. Ibn Buṭlān (and the same statement was also repeated, quoting him, by al-Qifti[32]), a later transmitter, or Yāqūt, might have known about only one Proclus (i.e., Proclus Diadochus) and might have simply been convinced that Proclus Diadochus was from Laodicea, and not from Lycia. Prior to Wakelnig, G. Endress actually suggested that Ibn Buṭlān might have simply mistaken Lycia with Latakia (Laodicea).[33]

This hypothesis is even more probable given the fact that the Arabic authors were not aware of where Proclus was born. One can find such names for his home town as *Aṭāṭāriya* (*Fihrist*, 252.13), *Aṭāṭūla* (al-Qifti, 89.3), *aṭ-Ṭaraṭūsī* (in the manuscripts containing the Arabic translation of Proclus' *On the Eternity of the World*).[34] Thus, Arabic authors were probably not aware of Proclus' home town of Xanthos in Lycia (and in fact Proclus was actually born in Constantinople, which his parents were visiting at the time of his birth, to only later return to Xanthos, where Proclus spent his childhood).[35] Furthermore, Arabic authors (or at least most of them) were probably not aware of what Lycia was, since this name of a Roman province ceased to play an important role in Byzantine administrative usage after the 9th century[36] and it was probably unknown to Arabic geographers.[37] Moreover, the Arabic version of the names

there is no evidence that it was he who was the source of this entry, especially given the fact that this alleged Proclus Procleius would have probably been almost contemporaneous with Hesychius. See the summary of the discussion about Hesychius' *Onomatologos* as the possible source of *Souda* in: Kaldellis 2005, esp. pp. 384–389; Wilson, 1983, pp. 145–147; Dickey 2007, pp. 90–91.

29 Wakelnig 2013, pp. 38–39.

30 Wakelnig 2013, p. 38.

31 Wakelnig 2013, p. 38, n. 105.

32 Endress 1973, p. 14.

33 Endress 1973, p. 14.

34 Endress 1973, pp. 13–14.

35 Marinus, *Life of Proclus* 6.

36 Hellenkemper & Hild 2004, pp. 79 and 120.

37 None of the following knows Lycia, while they do know the names of some other "ancient" provinces and the medieval geography of Byzantine Anatolia: Khurradādhbih 1889; Jaʿfar 1889; Bosworth 1970; Ibn al-Fakîh al-Hamadânî, "Description of the Land of the Byzantines", in Brooks 1901; Ibn Ḥawqal

Latakia (*Lādhaqiya*) and Lycia (*Līqīya*) look very similar in the Arabic script and one might have been changed into the other by any author or scribe in the process of transmission. Therefore, it would have been easy for them to identify Laodicea as the place of origin of Proclus Diadochus, who was probably the only Proclus they knew of. The connection might have been reinforced by the fact that some other late Neoplatonic philosophers also came from Laodicea, and thus this city might have anyway been known as having a Neoplatonic episode in its history.[38]

L. G. Westerink concludes his analyses with three alternative hypotheses: (1) the commentary is a summary of a lost work of Proclus Diadochus; (2) it is a summary of a lost work by Proclus Procleius; (3) it is a summary of a work by another Neoplatonic author. He then states that he regards the second hypothesis as being corroborated by the information in the *Souda*.[39] Still, in the same paper Westerink himself showed many ideas that the Arabic commentary shares with the preserved works of Proclus Diadochus, or the works of other significant Neoplatonic authors. Therefore, it actually looks as if Westerink decided that one dubious testimony in the *Souda* is more convincing than the Arabic tradition contemporary with the Byzantine lexicon (and in fact the Arabic tradition probably had better access to the Greek sources at that time, either in the Greek original or in various translations). Moreover, because of the testimony of the *Souda*, Westerink dismissed the arguments based on the text's contents, which I discuss and expand on below. Yet, even if Proclus Procleius really existed and even if he actually wrote a commentary to the *Golden Verses*, this does not mean that he is the author of the Greek text that survives in the Arabic translation. The *Golden Verses* were very popular among the late antique Neoplatonic philosophers and in all probability commentaries to this text were written not only by Hierocles and Iamblichus, but also by other philosophers, among whom could well have been both Proclus Procleius and Proclus Diadochus.[40]

1964. I would like to thank Professor John Haldon for his help with these references.

38 Damascius, in the *Philosophical history*, writes about "Domninus, the philosopher, was of Syrian stock from Laodicea and Larissa in Syria, a pupil of Syrianus and the fellow-student of Proclus" (Damascius 1999, 89a, translation by P. Athanassiadi on p. 223). He also mentions another Neoplatonist, Maras, from Laodicea (90d).

39 Westerink 1987a, p. 78.

40 Westerink's hypothesis about the authorship of Proclus Procleius was repeated with even greater confidence by: Luna & Segonds 2012, pp. 1652–1653; Wakelnig 2013, pp. 38–39; Zampaki 2017. More cautious, but in principle accepting of Westerink's hypothesis were: O'Meara 1989, pp. 231–232; Thom 1995, pp. 23–25; Endress 2012. In this context, however, it is worth emphasising that H. Daiber in his review of Linley's edition criticised Linley as being too cautious in his opinion about the authorship of the text. He pointed at the most obvious analogies with both the Greek works of Proclus and with the Greek tradition in general and the Pythagorean tradition in particular. These include: elements of Pythagoras' biography, the organisation of the first Pythagorean community, the idea of tetractys and number symbolism, the ascetic flavour of the text, the belief that

THE INTELLECTUAL HORIZONS OF THE COMMENTATOR

The preserved Arabic text is an abridgement of what was probably already a Syriac or Arabic translation of the Greek text. This means there was a whole chain of translators, transmitters and authors who could have changed the original text. However, it is not clear which elements of the text that survived should be qualified as later changes and which derive directly from the Greek original. For example, in Westerink's opinion, the monotheist character of the text, as well as its author's opinion that Empedocles was the author of the *Golden Verses*, were both later changes.[41] In fact, both ideas might have been shared by a late Neoplatonic Greek author; moreover, both have significant analogies with the writings of Proclus himself (I address these questions later on).

Given the fact that this version is so heavily reworked, consisting of excerpts that possibly underwent some changes, it is striking that it still has the form of a consistent narrative. It is a text that can easily be read as a coherent whole rather than as a mere collection of excerpts from a lost text. However, only some of the verses of the poem are included in and commented on within this narrative, which suggests that it is indeed an abridgement of the original work. Still, it is conceivable that even this selective character of the commentary was the intention of its author from the very beginning. Most of the verses are not quoted, but paraphrased and summarised. In addition, the commentary very often goes quite far into digressions, treating the poem as just a pretext to express the author's own philosophical ideas. Nonetheless, it has to be emphasised that as far as its structure is concerned, this commentary differs a lot from the Greek commentary to the *Golden Verses* of Hierocles of Alexandria[42] and from another Arabic commentary to the *Golden Verses* attributed to Iamblichus.[43] Both comment on subsequent lemmata from the poem and quote them in their entirety.

The text begins with a short biography of Pythagoras. It is said that he was from Samos, that his birth was predicted by a prophecy and that he was said to have been born of a virgin. The topos of Pythagoras' birth of a virgin can be traced back to the biographies of Pythagoras that started to be composed from around the 1st century BC. They were presenting him as a holy man

Empedocles was a Pythagorean, among others. Daiber also referred to the evidence of Ibn al-Nadim and brought out the context in which the text of the commentary is transmitted (the manuscript of Ibn al-Ṭayyib). Daiber was thus quite strongly convinced about the Greek and Neoplatonic character of this text and did not see any reason to doubt that it was in fact Proclus Diadochus who wrote it originally ("Inhaltliche Kriterien sprechen nicht gegen eine Zuschreibung dieses Kommentars an Proclus" [p. 137]. Nonetheless, Daiber was not aware of the existence of Westerink's paper about the authorship of the Commentary, nor of Westerink's arguments and the hypothesis of Proclus Procleius. See Daiber 1988.

41 Westerink 1987a, p. 65.

42 Köhler 1974.

43 Daiber 1995.

and a pagan saint. Elements pointing at the miraculous circumstances of Pythagoras' birth are also present in the preserved late antique biographies of Porphyry (*Vita Pyth*., 2), Iamblichus (*Vita Pythag.* II),[44] and Diogenes Laertius (VIII 1, 4, who follows Heraclides of Pontus; Pythagoras is said to have been claiming that Hermes was his father).[45] The author of our Arabic commentary is fully aware of the discussions that concerned Pythagoras' divine origins. For instance, later on in the commentary he writes that "there were people who were convinced that Pythagoras was a god, while others regarded him as a mortal" (107a).[46]

Then, it is said that Pythagoras kept company with Thales and travelled to Egypt, a fact mentioned in the biographies by Porphyry (*Vita Pyth*. 6–12) and Iamblichus (*Vita Pythag.* II–IV). It is also mentioned that masses of people from all countries were coming to him for healing and that he performed miracles – again, this is part of the image of Pythagoras depicted as a pagan saint, in particular in the late antique biographies.

After this short biographical section, the commentator presents the first Pythagorean community in a way which is also very close to the image of the Pythagorean community presented by Iamblichus in *On the Pythagorean way of life*:

He used to command his pupils to maintain silence for five years, whereupon he would teach them some philosophy and mathematics. During this period, they would curb their appetites, improve themselves spiritually, and undergo training in ethical conduct. These philosophers kept silence so as to allow their intellects to revert to their essential nature, and to prevent their discourse with themselves from reaching outsiders, and, should they hold converse with an outsider, they would have to purify themselves in the manner appropriate for one who had become polluted by having his intellect won over to something alien. (91a–b)[47]

This five-year period of silence in the Pythagorean student community was well known and described by many authors.[48] This is yet another argument showing that the commentator was very well aware of the late antique legend about the first Pythagorean community.[49] Another example of the acquaintance of the author of the commentary with at least the Iamblichean vision of the first Pythagorean community can be found in two places in the text:

44 According to Iamblichus, the name of Pythagoras' mother was at first Parthenis ("virgin") and then it was later changed by her husband Mnesarchus into Pythais (after Pythia from the Delphic oracle). He also refers to the stories about Apollo as the real father of Pythagoras.

45 Cf. Westerink 1987a, pp. 62–63; Daiber 1988, pp. 135–136.

46 Linley 1984, pp. 76–77.

47 Linley 1984, pp. 4–5.

48 Hippolytus, *Ref. haer.* I 2, 16; Plutarch, *De curiositate* 519c 6–7; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. V 11, 67, 3; Porphyry, *Vita Pyth*. 19; Iamblichus, *Vita Pythag*. XVII 72, 5.

49 Cf. Westerink 1987a, p. 63; Daiber 1988, p. 136.

The Pythagoreans used to employ melancholy music to subdue these appetites; they did this particularly when it was time for sleep, so as to ensure that there remained in the imagination no impressions which might disturb their sleep. (98b)[50]
For the period of sleep, they would employ music such as would purge the soul of malignant fantasies, and they would think about what they had done during the day. (106b)

Those passages are similar to the chapter of the *Pythagorean way of life* that discusses Pythagoras' ideas about music and the ways in which he used it to influence the souls of his students:

For he corrected each of these [emotions] by the rule of virtue, attempering them through appropriate melodies, as through certain salutary medicines. In the evening, likewise, when his disciples were retiring to sleep, he liberated them by these means from diurnal perturbations and tumults and purified their intellective power from the influxive and effluxive waves of a corporeal nature; rendered their sleep quiet, and their dreams pleasing and prophetic. (XV, trans. T. Taylor)[51]

Altogether, the number of the analogies between the Iamblichean *Life* and our Arabic commentary is astonishing (I discuss the rest of them in more detail in the final section of this paper). It shows that the author of the commentary inherited the Iamblichean image of Pythagoras and his vision of the first Pythagorean community. It is very probable that Iamblichus was his main source of knowledge about the early Pythagoreanism and about the figure of Pythagoras.

The affinity of our commentary with the Neoplatonic tradition is also visible in the fact that the words in which our author describes the scope of the poem are very similar to how the *Golden Verses* were seen by the other Neoplatonic philosophers. The commentary summarises the poem in the following way:

The object of the *Golden Sayings* is to inspire souls with longing for their perfection and purity, to make people human, and to guide them towards a proper way of life; man achieves perfection by means of absolute virtue, certain knowledge, and virtuous conduct. Some maintain that the *Golden Sayings* act as a guide towards divine life, the imitation of God and liberation from matter. (91b)[52]

This represents a typical Neoplatonic reading of the poem shared also by Iamblichus (*Protr.* 40,7–8) and Hierocles of Alexandria (*Comm. Aur. carm.*, 11–6,1). This reading not only focuses on the ethical meaning of the poem and its role as a guide to the philosophical way of life, but also underlines the idea of divination, imitation of God and immortality. It was the reason why the late antique Neoplatonists made the *Golden*

50 Linley 1984, pp. 40–41.
51 Taylor 1965, p. 32.
52 Linley 1984, p. 7.

Verses an element of their teaching curriculum and used it as a propaedeutic work. Hierocles presents it as such in the introduction to his commentary, and Iamblichus comments on the poem in the most propaedeutic of his texts, the *Protrepticus* – which can be translated as "Exhortation to philosophy".[53] The Platonic idea of "becoming like God" (*homoiosis theo*) that here seems to be the main goal of the *Golden Verses* was also well known to Proclus, developed by him and incorporated into his own philosophical system.[54]

Another strongly Neoplatonic aspect of the commentary is its religiosity, which very much resembles the late antique pagan religiosity of the philosophers. It is actually the first question on which the author comments (after the biographical introduction about Pythagoras), as it occurs in the very first verses of the poem:

The first of the *Golden Exhortations* is the reminder that "among the immortals, the first to be honoured according to the statutes of the law is God", for God is the cause of all that exists and the source of all the good things that are present in Totality. (92a)[55]

In this quotation, the commentator paraphrases the first verse of the poem: "Honour the immortal gods first, in the order appointed by custom."[56] What the commentator quotes is already modified so as to fit with his monotheistic ideas. Interestingly, the very same verses are quoted by Proclus Diadochus himself in the *Commentary on Timaeus* (vol. 1, 203, 25–26, ed. Diehl), but in that case the original version is given. In our case, in theory the change could have been made in the process of the transmission of the text itself, perhaps even by Ibn al-Ṭayyib or by a translator. However, this seems improbable, as these "monotheistic" verses are then followed by an extensive commentary which addresses the very question of One God who is above the hierarchy of gods. Therefore, if the verses were modified in the process of transmission, they were modified so as to fit the commentary itself. Furthermore, the idea of the one, highest God above the hierarchy of other gods was familiar to the late antique Neoplatonists, including Proclus.[57] In fact, this particular kind of monotheism – the theory of a transcendent One-God above the entire hierarchy of intellectual and divine beings – represents the core of Proclus' philosophy and it was not at all in conflict with the belief in an entire hierarchy of regular "pagan" gods, subordinated to the Highest one.[58]

However, despite being monotheist, the commentary has a clearly pagan character and elements of the pagan Greek religion, theology and cult play an important role in it, exactly as they did in the work and life of Proclus himself. They are relatively numerous and detailed, which is interesting given that

53 Cf. Izdebska 2016, pp. 45–50.

54 Berg 2003; Baltzly 2004.

55 Linley 1984, p. 9.

56 Thom 1995, p. 95.

57 See for example the studies collected in: Nuffelen 2010; Mitchell & Nuffelen 2010; Athanassiadi and Frede 1999.

58 Chlup 2012, pp. 47–62; 112–136.

the text we have in fact passed through the hands of a Christian intermediary. It is striking that he decided to leave all those elements of the Greek pagan cult in the text, elements that in his time and his cultural and religious context were completely anachronistic, strange, foreign and antiquated. However, this fact may actually serve as a yet another proof that the text of the commentary did not undergo substantial modifications, either by Ibn al-Ṭayyib or by a translator. This means that the surviving Arabic summary can serve as a reliable approximation of the contents of the Greek original.

The late antique monotheism is not the only recognisable element of the commentator's pagan religiosity. A discussion of the hierarchy of divine and semi-divine beings (God, gods, demons, and heroes) appears as well at the beginning of the commentary, since, again, the beginning of the *Golden Verses* recommends honouring them.[59] God is presented as the "Master and Supreme Being", underneath are gods and demons that are "similar to gods and serve them", but "they do not descend into human life"; they are "near to being united with God and are accordingly greatly glorified because of their closeness to God and are held in honour, and have sacrifices offered to them". Heroes, in turn, "are souls which have passed lives as humans and have remained with humans without becoming polluted, and were causes of their goods. After their departure, they go to the Truth, and are elevated, and glimpse the things that are divine," (94a–b).[60]

This description of the three kinds of divine beings, with the One-God above the entire hierarchy, is quite similar to the theology described in the *Platonic Theology* (books 2–6). However, in the commentary this theology is presented in an abbreviated form, while in the *Platonic theology* it is spread into several books. As a consequence, the Greek exposition of Proclus' theology is much more sophisticated and covers much more of the metaphysical and soteriological details.

The most significant difference between Proclus' theology and the theology presented in the Arabic commentary is the lack of the category of angels in the latter. In fact, angels do not occur in the text of the commented poem, which seems to be the reason why the commentator does not mention them at all. However, the author does mention the angels at a different place in the commentary: "The demons are deservedly the witnesses of humankind, since they are close to being the angels who are entrusted with their care," (111b).[61] Therefore, it is probable that the author's own theology was much more complicated that the one presented in the commentary, but the actual discussion was limited because of the contents of the poem – and perhaps also by the propaedeutic goals of the text (contrary to the *Platonic Theology*, which was written for more advanced and theologically

59 Linley 1984, pp. 19–21.

60 Linley 1984, pp. 19–21.

61 Linley 1984, p. 95.

aware readers). What is common is of course the importance of the classes of demons and heroes, as well as the description of heroes as human souls who managed to purify themselves and "separate from mankind". Also, both the author of the *Commentary* and Proclus in *Platonic Theology* are very attached to the importance of the cult which should be given to demons and heroes. They both emphasise that people owe them honour and should perform specific ancient religious practices to show this attitude. The commentary speaks even about specific priests for various classes of demons, particular dates of their celebration, etc.

Another important Proclean element connected to religious ideas and raised already by Westerink[62] is the question of Providence and of the influence of the astral bodies on humans and the scale of their freedom.

The commentator is clear in admitting that the astral bodies have some power over us and that there exists justice that gives good to the virtuous and bad to the evil.

> The coming of fate to us is the result of the generated bodies and of freedom, which is to say, of heavenly motions and those of ourselves; we should not therefore become annoyed because these things happen to us, nor should we suppose that they befall us because we have deserved them; instead we should behave rationally, so as to be able to accept the gift of those who gave us life. We must not think, either, that the gods are responsible for injustice, but should believe that sickness and poverty and so on are not divinely premeditated, and be courageous when hardships afflict us, and not give in to them. (...)
> The skills, the knowledge of which we have derived from the gods, are of help to us in the hardships that beset us during the course of our lives, for, since we are parts of this Whole, we are affected throughout our lives by its upheavals, although, by virtue of the capacity of thinking which we possess, we are in a position to heal ourselves. (101b–102a)[63]

This concept of the combination of divine providence with some sort of influence of the heavenly bodies and with the free will of a reasonable man is in complete agreement with the main argument of the Proclean *On Providence*:

> Truly wise people (...) make the god from whom comes the good for all, the primordial cause of all that happens. After him, they posit as cause the periodic revolution of the world and the appropriate time, in which the events are adjusted and ordered to the whole, whereby there is nothing episodic in the government of the whole. They consider themselves to be a third cause whenever they obtain something after making choices and contribute by their own impulses to the accomplishment of what is to be done. (34, trans. C. Steel)[64]

62 Westerink 1987a, p. 68.

63 Linley 1984, pp. 53–55.

64 Proclus 2007, p. 57.

In Proclus' theology, as well as in the Arabic commentary, a man is shown as a free, powerful force in the world – one that can resist bad fate and respond to the divine powers that are above him. It is the Proclean' solution to the conundrum of connecting fate and providence on the one hand, and free human choice on the other. He had a debate about this with a certain "Theodore, an engineer", for which his *On Providence* is the evidence (it is a polemical reply to a letter that this Theodore wrote to Proclus).[65] Proclus refers here explicitly to the idea, described by Plato in the *Laws* (IV 709 b–c), of the three factors playing roles in human life, which he popularized by using them as an argument in this debate.

According to the commentator, to the extent that we realise our rational, divine abilities, we can escape misfortune and bad happenings. According to Proclus, the faculty of choice between good and bad is something specific to humans (in contrast to animals and divine beings) and it gives man a chance to approach the divine:

For a willed life is in accordance with the good and it makes what depends on us extremely powerful and it is really godlike: thanks to this life of the soul becomes god and governs the whole world, as Plato says. (60, trans. C. Steel)[66]
Hence the virtuous are said to be free and are indeed free, because their activity depends upon them and is not the slave of what does not depend on them. (61, trans. C. Steel)[67]

Therefore, it is almost certain that the author of the Arabic commentary made use of the Proclean theory of Providence, because we can find exactly the same answers to the same questions. Of course, it does not prove beyond any doubt that the commentator is Proclus himself.

Finally, an even more significant element connecting this *Commentary* with the preserved Greek works of Proclus is an anecdote about a Pythagorean woman, Theano:

It is said of Theano that when she was angry with one of her servants, she told the servant "If I were not angry, I would hurt you." (98a)[68]

This anecdote was attributed to various Greek philosophers, among them to Plato and Archytas (DL III 38, 39) but it is only Proclus who in the *Ten doubts concerning Providence* (86) attributed it, in exactly the same form, to Theano.[69] This is a yet another strong link between Proclus' Greek writings and the commentary, which suggests that the author of the Greek text that lies beneath the Arabic summary was well acquainted with the world of Proclean ideas.

More generally, as has been demonstrated by Westerink, the

65 See the introduction to Proclus 2007 by Steel, pp. 1–37.

66 Proclus 2007, p. 69.

67 Proclus 2007, p. 70.

68 Linley 1984, p. 39.

69 Westerink 1987a, pp. 69–70; Daiber 1988, p. 135.

commentator shows profound familiarity with the works of Plato, including:[70] *Alcibiades I* (the opinion that the *mageia* of Zoroaster means the cult of gods); *Republic* (attributes of God described in the second book of this dialogue; the idea that that if there were no justice, there would also be no injustice [I 351c7–352d1]; four cardinal virtues [book IV]; the mind as the eye of the soul [VII 533d2]; the *Laws* (the commentator talks about showing respect to parents in very similar words); *Philebus* (the central idea of this dialogue regarding the bodily pleasures not being real pleasures, but only absence of the opposite of real pleasures – pain); *Timaeus* (four genera of living creatures: celestial, aerial, aquatic, and terrestrial).

Another purely Platonic element that could be added to Westerink's list is the juxtaposition of the "divine part of the soul" and the "animal part" (*theriotes*) (in Plato, it plays an important role in the *Republic*: 589d; 590b; 591b); this division corresponds with the division into the rational and irrational parts of the soul. In fact, the very word *therion* is not a general world for an animal, but rather refers to a wild animal or even a beast,[71] and so the use of this particular adjective for the description of the lower part of the soul puts emphasis on its irrational nature. In the Arabic commentary, the lower, irrational part of the soul is very often described with the Arabic adjective *bahīmī*,[72] which means the same as the Greek *theriotes*: wild, animal, bestial.[73] The commentary uses this word several times and always in the same context in which the Greek word would have been used. When we add to that the arguments listed by Westerink, there is no doubt that the author of our commentary knew very well the contents of Plato's *Republic.*

Westerink also lists several ideas that the Arabic commentary shares with the Greek Neoplatonic tradition, such as: the triad of being – living – intellect (already noted by Linley and Daiber[74]); the hierarchy of divine and quasi-divine beings (even those elements in the commentary that may seem heterodox at first glance are actually in agreement with Proclus' texts); the question of human free will and the influence of the celestial bodies on his action; four classes of numbers: those associated with the divine, the intellect, the soul, and the physical numbers (cf. Proclus' *Commentary on Timaeus* II 161,26–28); the division of philosophy (and of the

70 Westerink 1987a, pp. 63–64.

71 *A Greek–English Lexicon*, p. 800.

72 *Proclus Arab.* 97b; 98b; 99a; 100b.

73 *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic (Arabic–English)*, ed. J. M. Cowan, Urbana, Il. 1994, p. 97.

74 Linley 1984, p. ix; Westerink 1987a, p. 66; Daiber 1988, p. 135. However, this is an analogy not only with the writings of Proclus, but also with the writings of many other philosophers who developed this theory after the times of Plotinus. R. Dodds demonstrates that the triad being – life – intellect played an important role in the theologies of Porphyry, Iamblichus, Theodor of Asine, the unknown author of the *Commentary to Parmenides* and Syrianus (and of course Proclus). In Proclus' *Elements of theology* the triad occurs in L. 115 (pp. 101–103 Dodds). Dodds 1992; Saffrey & Westerink 1968, I:I: LXV–LXVI; Chlup 2012, pp. 92–99.

Golden Verses and its commentary) into practical and theoretical parts; the mind as *hieratikos*; aether as the abode of the souls after death (although in the Greek works of Proclus aether is rather the place where the souls are being judged, and their ultimate abode); symbolic association of the adjective "golden" in the title of the poem with purity.[75]

To conclude, the intellectual horizons of the author of the Greek commentary that we have in the Arabic summary were defined by the late antique Neoplatonic philosophy, in particular with what we call today the "Neopythagorean" current. He was well acquainted with the writings of Plato, as well as with the literary tradition on Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans that was available to late antique authors. Moreover, the commentator shows very close familiarity with the theology and anthropology of Proclus. This does not necessarily mean that the commentator was Proclus himself, but probably somebody close to the Proclean community.

PROCLUS, EMPEDOCLES, AND THE PYTHAGOREAN TRADITION

In the context of the Proclean character of the Arabic commentary, there remains one possible problem that needs to be resolved: the surprising identification of Empedocles as the author of the *Golden Verses*.

At the beginning of the Arabic commentary, the author finishes his short historical sketch on Pythagoras and Pythagoreans by introducing Empedocles as one of the students of Pythagoras:

> Prominent amongst Pythagoras' disciples – who numbered about two hundred and fifty – was Empedocles, the author of the *Golden Sayings*. Empedocles held that the elements were four and believed that the regimen of philosophy reaches completion when the soul becomes divine, and that when the soul is separated from the body, it travels, bloodless and immortal, into the ether. Empedocles was a rigorous ascetic, and a lover of purity. (91b)[76]

The beginning of this passage is reminiscent of the famous list of Pythagoreans transmitted at the end of Iamblichus' *On Pythagorean Life* (with which this short biographical introduction has a lot in common), a list that probably comes from Aristoxenus.[77] It names 235 Pythagoreans, among whom there is also Empedocles. Diogenes Laertius (VIII 1, 3), in turn, gives the number of three hundred students of Pythagoras, following Antiphon. Therefore, the Arabic text that speaks of "about two hundred and fifty" is very close to the number transmitted in the late antique biographies of Pythagoras and once again shows a strong familiarity with this material.

However, the statement that Empedocles is the author of the Golden

75 Westerink 1987a, pp. 66–70.

76 Linley 1984, pp. 4–7.

77 Rohde 1871–1872, p. 171; Diels 1965, p. 23; Timpanaro-Cardini 1958–1964, III 38ff.; Burkert 1972a, p. 105, n. 40; Zhmud 2012b, pp. 235–244; Huffman 2008a.

Verses is quite unusual and needs to be addressed, in particular in the context of the question of the authorship of the commentary. As I mentioned above, Westerink thought that it could be a later Syriac or Arabic addition to the original Greek text. However, the author of this text seemed to be convinced that Empedocles was a Pythagorean and that he wrote the *Golden Verses* (he mentions this twice in the text, see 91b and 107a), although even more often he refers to the verses of the poem as something that Pythagoras said or commended. However, he could have been convinced that it was a collection of real admonitions of Pythagoras that were written down by his student Empedocles. Furthermore, he also refers twice to the Empedoclean philosophy, which he considers the appropriate context for a proper interpretation of the contents of the poem (109a; 110b). The figure of Empedocles and his philosophy, as well as its role in the understanding of the Pythagorean philosophy, seems to be important for the commentator and it would be difficult to remove Empedocles from the text and treat it simply as a later addition, as Westerink suggested. As Daiber observed, the fact that the commentator connected Empedocles with Pythagoreanism is rooted in the Greek tradition and may serve as another argument in favour of the Greek origin of this text.[78]

Indeed, the alleged connection between Empedocles and the Pythagorean tradition is very well attested both in Greek and in Arabic texts.[79] Several Greek authors believed that Empedocles was a Pythagorean or at least was closely connected with Pythagoreanism.[80] Olympiodorus calls him Pythagorean every time he evokes him in his *Commentary on Gorgias*.[81] The author of the *Theologoumena arithmeticae* (*Theolog. arithm*. p. 22), wrongly attributed to Iamblichus, identified Empedocles as the author of the so-called Pythagorean oath, which is included into the *Golden Verses* (as v. 47–8): "Yes, by him who imparted to our soul the *tetractys*, the fount of ever-flowing nature."[82]

Oliver Primavesi pointed to the Empedoclean elements in the Pythagorean oath, namely the use of the words *pege* for "source" and *rhidzomata* for "elements" (these words occur in another version of the oath, but they are omitted in the *Golden Verses*).[83] Furthermore, this is not the only link between Empedocles and the *Golden Verses*. Another is the word *katharmoi*

78 Daiber 1988, p. 3.

79 For the Arabic tradition see: S. M. Stern, "Anbaduḳlīs", in *EI*², vol. I, Leiden 1954, pp. 483–484; De Smet 1998, p. 123.

80 Diog. Laert. VIII 2, 54–55; Sextus Emp., *Math*. IX 127; Hippol., *Haer*. VI 26, 3; cf. Proclus, *In Parm*. 723, 22. See also Burkert 1972, p. 220, n. 12; Kingsley 1995, p. 112; Huffman 1999, pp. 66–87; 75–78; Primavesi 2016.

81 Olympiodorus, *In Gorg*., intr. 930, 5, 1; 35, 12, 3.

82 Thom 1995, p. 97.

83 Primavesi 2016, pp. 14–15. At the same time, he stressed that the word "nature" (physis) is post-Empedoclean and that it leads to the conclusion that the oath, which was widely quoted outside of the context of the poem, was influenced by Empedoclean ideas, but not by Empedocles himself.

("purifications") in verse 67, which according to Johan C. Thom may be the title of a work to which the poem refers, and we know that there existed a poem of Empedocles whose title was exactly the same.[84] However, it was certainly not understood as a title of a separate text by the author of the Arabic commentary. Moreover, there are even more striking similarities between the last verses of the poem ("Then, if you leave the body behind and go to the free *aither* you will be immortal, an undying god, no longer mortal."[85]) and a sentence attributed to Empedocles, who according to Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* VI 30; frg. 112, v. 4) dared to describe himself as "an immortal god, no longer mortal" (*theos ambrotos ouketi thnetos*). Although this formula is probably Orphic,[86] according to Thom, the author of the poem was quoting it as a sentence attributed to Empedocles and as such it may be proof of the post-Empedoclean authorship of the poem itself.[87]

Given these common places and similarities between the Empedoclean heritage and the *Golden Verses*, and the fact that Empedocles himself wrote poems, it is not surprising that someone in Late Antiquity considered Empedocles to be the author of the *Golden Verses*. In the description of Empedocles found in the Arabic text that I already mentioned, someone is clearly making allusions to this topos of "being immortal in the aether" which is Empedocles' own statement, and at the same time is also present in the *Golden Verses*. It is entirely possible that this analogy led the author of the commentary to the conclusion that it must have been Empedocles himself who wrote the poem. He also described him as a "rigorous ascetic" and a "lover of purity". These statements might allude to the Empedoclean poem *Katharmoi* (*Purifications*), and to the presence of the word "purifications" in the *Golden Verses*.

Of course, it remains to be investigated whether it is at all plausible that Proclus Diadochus or some of his students were convinced about the Empedoclean authorship of the *Golden Verses*. The *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, the most Pythagorean of the all the preserved works of Proclus,[88] is the only text in which he mentions the *Golden Verses* by its title. He refers to it when he writes about the Pythagorean idea of the tetractys: "the father of the *Golden Verses* also glorifies the Tetrad calling it 'the fountain of ever-flowing Nature'."[89] It is interesting that he did not mention Pythagoras here, so it is not clear whom he meant by "the father of the *Golden Verses*". One sentence earlier he also quoted another Pythagorean poem,

84 Thom 1995, p. 216.

85 Thom 1995, p. 99.

86 Thom 1995, pp. 226–229; van der Horst 1932, p. 72.

87 This fragment of Empedocles is considered to be the source for the inclusion of these verses in the *Golden Verses*, which would be later than the fragment. See Thom 1995, pp. 226–229.

88 "But one should also bear in mind that the dialogue is Pythagorean, and one should make one's interpretative comments in a manner that is appropriate to them." (15, 24–28) Tarrant 2006, p. 110.

89 Baltzly 2007, p. 104.

a "hymn to number", and he called it "Pythagorean", but neither did he point at Pythagoras as its actual author (vol. 2, p. 53, ed. Diehl). Earlier in the same commentary, Proclus quoted the first verses of the *Golden Verses*, introducing them with the words: "it is said among the Pythagoreans" (vol. 1, 203, 25–26, ed. Diehl)[90]. In his *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, he also quoted the same verse about the *tetractys*, this time again mentioning the poem as a *Pythagoreios logos* (vol. 2, p. 69, ed. W. Kroll). Furthermore, in the *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* he evoked the poem *Hieros logos* (*Sacred discourse*; not to be identified with the *Golden Verses*[91]) twice, this time attributing the poem to Pythagoras himself (vol. 3, p. 161, 5; 168, 14, ed. W. Diehl). Therefore, on the ground of the preserved Proclean works, it is possible to assume that he thought that the *Hieros logos* was written by Pythagoras himself, but that the *Golden Verses*, which he considered to be something different, were written by one of the Pythagoreans.

However, does it mean that he could have considered Empedocles to be the author of the *Golden Verses*? In his commentary to another Platonic dialogue, a dialogue that Proclus also considered strongly Pythagorean (i.e. *Parmenides*), Proclus recalls Empedocles in the context of the Parmenidean discussion about the unity and plurality, and the "divine number":

> This is what Empedocles saw later, being a Pythagorean himself, when he called the whole intelligible reality a sphere and says that it converges upon itself by virtue of the goddess of love who beautifies and unifies. For, as he says, all things, in their love and desire for one another, are unified with one another for eternity; and their love is an intelligible love, and their communion and mingling are ineffable. But the mass of men have deserted unity and the monad of things; and their own intrinsically divided and unorganized life carries them down into plurality, to opinions of all sorts, to vague fancies, to feelings and sensations, to physical desires. (*Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* 723, 22, trans. G. R. Morrow, J. M. Dillon)[92]

Beyond doubt, here Proclus portrays Empedocles and his teaching as Pythagorean, placing emphasis on his idea of love as the unifying force in the world and recognising in the idea of Empedocles the Pythagorean concept of one versus plurality. Although the fact that Empedocles is here considered a Pythagorean has also been noticed by Westerink,[93] he did not connect this *locus* with the Arabic commentary to the *Golden Verses*. However, here too, the

90 Tarrant 2006, p. 303.

91 However, it is not clear what this text was and how it was related to the *Golden Verses* as they are known to us today. According to A. Delatte, the *Hieros* logos was an older Pythagorean poem of which fragments were used by someone who compiled the *Golden Verses*. Delatte 1915, pp. 1–79; Thesleff 1961, pp. 18–19, 107; see also Thesleff 1965, pp. 158–166; Thom 1995, pp. 7–8.

92 Morrow & Dillon 1987, pp. 101–102.

93 Westerink 1987b, pp. 110–111.

philosophy of Empedocles is presented in a very similar, Pythagorean way:

According to the doctrine of Empedocles we have in us Love and Strife; through Strife we become dissolved and dissipated, and encounter pain, while through Love we are unified and meet with delight. By the agency of Love we are elevated, and by that of Strife we are made to sink, and our falling into evils of our own choosing occurs when we sink to the lower level, and our intellects enter the world of coming-to-be. (110b)[94]

As we can see, the connection between both texts – the two commentaries, Proclean and Arabic, is very strong. In both cases, Empedocles' idea of Love and Strife is used as a tool to comment on the Pythagorean theory of unity in its "psychological" aspect, applied to human beings and not in its cosmogonic, metaphysical aspect.

To conclude, the fact that the author of the commentary was convinced that Empedocles was the author of the *Golden Verses*, and that he closely connected Empedocles with the Pythagorean tradition, cannot be considered to stand in contradiction with the preserved works of Proclus. If it were, such a contradiction would indeed exclude Proclus Diadochus as the possible author of the commentary. On the contrary, there is nothing in the way in which the commentary describes Empedocles and his philosophy that would disagree with any statement about those matters in Proclus' Greek writings.

THE COMMENTARY AND THE *LIFE OF PROCLUS* BY MARINUS

Since the core of the *Golden Verses* is devoted to practical ethics and the proper way of life, the Arabic commentary – apart from some passages devoted to theology and metaphysics – also focuses mainly on ethical matters and on prescribing the perfect philosophical way of life. Therefore, it is very interesting to compare this text with another text from the circle of Proclus devoted to this subject: *Proclus or On Happiness*, known also as the *Life of Proclus*. This text was delivered as a speech in the form of a eulogy by his student and successor in the *Academia*, Marinus, one year after the death of Proclus.[95]

Marinus' idea was to show Proclus as a perfect example of human happiness and the incarnation of all sorts of virtues man can achieve. Marinus very often evokes his master's humility and the fact that he always considered himself as being a servant of the gods – as if he wanted to show that he never forgot the words that we read in the Arabic commentary:

We must seek divine aid to help us in our exertions, rather than act as those who say: "I do not need to pray or beseech, because I have already attained virtue". People who say this are misguided, since

94 Linley 1984, p. 93.

95 For a more comprehensive discussion of this text, see the introduction to its edition and translation: Saffrey & Segonds 2001, pp. IX–CLXXVI.

whatever derives its existence and its virtue from a source that is other than itself, must cling everlastingly and unceasingly to that other source, and because all except God needs Him for its perfection, even though it may have attained the acme of virtue. (108a–b)[96]

Furthermore, Marinus (17) devoted an entire passage of his biography to show Proclus as a perfect friend, almost an incarnation of the Pythagorean model of friendship. He writes that although he did not have his own wife and children, he cared for his friends and their families as if they were his own. He was always present when someone did not feel well and tried to help as much as he could. He was also very kind and caring towards his servants. Among his many friendships, the one with Archiades, the grandson of Plutarch of Athens, was exceptional and Marinus described it as belonging to the special category of "Pythagorean friendship" (*pythagoreion philia*).[97] Strikingly, this is one of only three places in the entire *Life of Proclus* where Marinus directly evokes the Pythagorean tradition (the second is in chapter 15, where he evokes the Pythagorean saying "live unknown", while the third is in chapter 28, where he writes about Proclus' dream that he had a soul of the Pythagorean Nicomachus). "Pythagorean friendship"[98] was certainly a well-known topos at that time.[99] Iamblichus, who devoted two separate chapters of the *Pythagorean Way of Life* (XXII; XXXIII) to friendship, writes that it was actually Pythagoras who "discovered" the philosophical idea of friendship and that his followers were so perfect an example of it that the notion of the "Pythagorean friendship" had become proverbial in his times.[100] Iamblichus concluded:

For they perpetually exhorted each other, not to divulse the God within them. Hence all the endeavour of their friendship, both in deeds and words, was directed to a certain divine mixture, to a union with divinity, and to a communion with intellect and a divine soul. (XXXIII, 240, trans. T. Taylor)[101]

The author of the commentary preserved in Arabic also devoted much of his text to the subject of friendship, as this topic occurs in verses 5–7 of the *Golden Verses*.[102] He gives advice on how

96 Linley 1984, pp. 82–83.

97 About Archiades and his special role in the Proclean Academy as its "public voice" see: Watts 2006, pp. 107–108.

98 Vogel 1966, pp. 150–159; Saffrey & Segonds 2001, pp. 124–125; Cornelli 2013, pp. 67–69.

99 See for example Damascius, 103.

100 "According to the general opinion it was Pythagoras who discovered it [i.e. friendship] and gave it legal form. He taught his followers a friendship so admirable that even today it is popularly said of people who are well disposed towards each other: they are Pythagoreans." (Iamblichus, *Vita Pythag.* XXXIII, 230, trans. C. J. Vogel) Vogel 1966, p. 151.

101 Taylor 1965, p. 123.

102 "Among others, choose as your friend
him who excels in virtue.
Yield to his gentle words and useful actions,
And do not hate your friend for a small fault" (trans. Thom 1995, p. 95)

one should look for a friend and how to care for friendship. Just like the late antique works on Pythagoreans,[103] the commentator emphasises that for them friendship was even more important than kinship. As he explains, it was voluntary and based on the communion of values higher than that of blood, these being intellect, virtues and the unifying connection with God:

Friendship was venerated among the Pythagoreans, who regarded it as a symbol of union with the gods. (95a)[104]

Then, the commentator explains why friendship should be based on the virtues of the soul and not on physical beauty, wealth, possessions, power, etc. Once again he evokes the unifying aspect of the friendship, this time quoting Plato:

In his prayers, Plato used to ask and call upon God to make hearing, sight, and senses common to all. The saying "I have, or I do not have, a share" is meaningless within the context of friendship.
(...) And the more abundant is the virtue, the more stable will be the friendship, and anyone who exhibits a genuine ardour for virtue will be a staunch friend." (96a)[105]

Similarly, Proclus connects friendship with virtue and describes it as the unifying force in the *Commentary on Alcibiades*:

Let those who are at peace observe another, greater and more perfect good, viz. friendship and unity. This is the aim of virtue as a whole, so the Pythagoreans assert and also Aristotle, who rightly observed that "when all people are friends we have no need of justice" and "mine" and "thine" are annulled, but "when everyone is just we still have the need of friendship to unite us." (221.18–222.2; trans. W. O'Neill).[106]

Proclus evokes here Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, more precisely its chapter devoted to friendship and the saying: "when the citizens, indeed, are friends, there is no need of justice; but though they are just they require friendship," (1155a26–9, trans. T. Taylor).[107]

The author of the Arabic commentary also seems to be influenced strongly by Aristotle's ideas. We see that in his passages commenting on the question of friendship. It is visible not only in the fact that he makes connections between friendship, virtue and justice, but also in how he perceives the three types of virtues: "those belonging to the soul, those to the body and those that are external" (95b). He also says that the "choice of a friend should be made from the standpoint of his virtue of soul" – which altogether reflects Aristotle's division into

103 For example, Iamblichus, *Vita Pythag.* XXXV, 257.
104 Daiber 1988, pp. 24–25.
105 Linley 1984, pp. 26–29.
106 Westerink 2011, p. 292.
107 Taylor 2002, p. 370.

three kinds of good (*Nic. Eth.* 1098b 12–14).[108]

Furthermore, in the above quoted passage from the *Commentary on Alcibiades*, Proclus wrote that "'mine' and 'thine' are annulled" in friendship. The Arabic commentary reads: "'I have, or I do not have, a share' is meaningless within the context of friendship." All these statements are very similar and point to the same source (if not the same author). They may be an echo of the famous Greek proverb "all things are common among friends" (*koina ta ton philon*) which is also quoted by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. This phrase appears in a chapter devoted to friendship, with a comment that it is right because "friendship consists in communion"[109] (1159b, 31–32), and again in the same chapter, together with other proverbs on friendship, that is "[friends] are one soul" and "Friendship is equality" (1168a, 7–8).[110] This classic Aristotelian *locus* seems to be reflected once again in the Arabic commentary, where the author writes that friendship "is sharing one's worldly possessions and placing one's friend on an equal footing with oneself" (96b, p. 29). This is also probably a reference to the question of alleged "communism" between the first Pythagoreans. Although *koina ta ton philon* is an old Greek proverb[111] it was also connected with the legends of Pythagorean friendship and treated by some authors as directly referring to the community of property between the Pythagoreans.[112] This shows that the author of the Arabic commentary was not only well educated in classical Greek *paideia* and was thinking within the framework of classical Greek philosophy, but he was also very well aware of all the Pythagorean legends and *topoi* circulating, especially in the Neoplatonic milieus of Late Antiquity.

Later on, the commentator offers an interesting explanation of the verses of the poem in which he recommends forgiveness for small errors when they are committed by a friend, but adds a warning that this forbearance has to end when there is something which "cause(s) alienation from God, and arouse(s) His anger" (97a). Therefore, his idea of Pythagorean friendship was basically the same as that of Iamblichus. They both underlined the same elements and both saw Pythagorean friendship as a way of becoming similar to One-God through unification of minds and souls among friends.

Proclus himself wrote about Pythagorean friendship several times. We read in his *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*:

Again we learn that souls are perfected by friendship and worthy associations. This was the rule of the Pythagoreans especially, who made the most sincere

108 Cf. Westerink 1987a, pp. 64–65.

109 Taylor 2002, p. 381.

110 Taylor 2002, p. 402.

111 See for example: Euripides, *Orestes* 735; Plato, *Phaedrus* 279c 6; Leges 739c 2; *Respublica* V 449c; Aristotle, *Ethica Eudemia* 1238a 16; 1237b 33; *Politica* 1263a 30; Plutarch, *De fraterno amore* 490e 4; Diog. Laert. IV, 53, 8–54, 1; VI, 37, 6; Clem. Alex., *Protrepticus* XII, 122, 3.

112 Minar 1944; Cornelli 2013, pp. 64–67.

friendship the end of life for themselves. (677)[113]

For the unity among the gods is not to be expressed in words and is hard for lesser beings to grasp; likewise the community of thought among good men escapes those not acquainted with them. Indeed the affection that unites them has a great affinity with the Pythagorean life (for the Pythagoreans made friendship the end of their life together and directed all their efforts to this end) and with the whole subject of this dialogue [*Parmenides*]. For unity and fellowship come to all things from the One, the inferior beings ever united with their superiors, being grouped together around their henads, and these around the One. (702)[114]

Proclus recalls the Pythagorean idea of friendship in some other commentaries as well,[115] but it is in the *Commentary on Parmenides* that his understanding of this subject is presented in most detail. True friendship is a union of good men, which is analogous to the union of the gods-henads with the One-God.[116] As such, friendship is another name for the process of unification that brings all hypostases and all particular beings back to the One. This is the idea shared by Proclus and Iamblichus, as well as our commentator, and probably also by Marinus, who shows Proclus as a perfect example of such a friendship. Moreover, the entire Arabic commentary shares a lot in common with the passage from Proclus' *Commentary on Parmenides* I just discussed. It is focused on the subject of the unity of man with God and on the theme of unity in general (for example, showing Empedoclean Love and Pythagorean friendship as important unifying forces). As such, it complements the other works of Proclus by showing the practical way to achieve this main goal of man and philosopher.[117] Marinus, in turn, shows Proclus as someone who actually fulfilled this Pythagorean model with his own life.

These are not the only common places between Marinus' *Life of Proclus*, our Arabic commentary and Iamblichus' *Pythagorean Life*. Most of these similarities are related to the practical side of the philosophical way of life. For example, Marinus (24) writes that Proclus used to sleep as little as possible, considering sleep to be "laziness of the soul" and that he used to wake up a way before the sunrise. And thus, we read in the Arabic commentary:

They used not to countenance sleeping at sunrise, so that the giver of light and life

113 Morrow & Dillon 1987, p. 60.

114 Morrow & Dillon 1987, pp. 78–79.

115 "But one should also bear in mind that the dialogue is Pythagorean, and one should make one's interpretative comments in a manner that is appropriate to them. You could surely derive from it Pythagorean moral doctrines of the following kind: those gentlemen made friendship and the life of concord the target of all their philosophy." (I, 15,27–30) Tarrant 2006, p. 110.

116 About Proclus' theory of gods-henads as participating in the One-God see Chlup 2012, pp. 112–136.

117 About Proclus' idea of unification of the human soul and the ways of obtaining it see Chlup 2012, pp. 163–184.

should not rise while they were asleep. (106b)[118]

This alleged Pythagorean cult of the rising sun is also attested by Iamblichus:

Conformably likewise to the precepts of their master, the Pythagoreans always rose from bed before the rising of the sun; (...). They also carefully observed to adore the rising sun. (XXXV, 256; trans. T. Taylor)[119]

The cult of the sun-Helios as a god is very well attested among the late Neoplatonists, including Proclus. We have Proclus' *Hymn to Helios*, as well as emperor Julian's hymn or oration to King Helios.[120] Proclus expresses his devotion to the sun as a god in several places of his preserved works.[121] According to Saffrey and van den Berg, the strong interest of the Neoplatonists in the cult of the sun emerged both from the traditional Hellenic religious practice and from Platonic texts (in particular the comparison of the Good to the sun in Plato's *Republic*).[122] Therefore, this is actually a description of a late antique Neoplatonic practice of waking up before the sunrise and praying to the rising sun, and it is a topos common to all three texts, which places the Arabic commentary in the same literary tradition.

In the same context, the *Golden Verses* exhort to moderation in eating and drinking, as well as in everything that affects the body (verses 32–35).[123] The author of the Arabic commentary explains how this moderation can be achieved. Food should always be moderated not only in terms of quantity, but also quality, and it should be as simple and pure as possible. He writes:

Pythagoras commands that we "reject the body", because to those who possess intelligence, a life of freedom from the body is sweeter than with it (...); one who rejects the life of the body is not readily envied but is rather praised (...). Good conduct is to be achieved through co-operating well with people, through moderation in dealings with them, good social comportment, courteous behaviour, grace of speech, and helpfulness towards others. (105a)[124]

118 Linley 1984, p. 75.

119 Taylor 1965, pp. 131–132.

120 See the translation of Proclus' *Hymn to Helios* with introduction and commentary in R. M. van den Berg 2001, pp. 145–189.

121 Saffrey 2000.

122 Saffrey 2000; Van Den Berg 2001, p. 146.

123 "You should not be careless about your physical health,
But you should practice due measure in drinking, eating and physical exercises.
By due measure I mean that which will not distress you.
Become accustomed to have a pure way of life, not an enervated one." (32–35, trans. J. C. Thom, p. 97).

124 Linley 1984, pp. 66–69. The same motif is repeated later in the text (112a–b, pp. 98–99): "The starting-point towards intellectual purity is the undertaking of practices such as will loosen the bonds attaching it to the body, and release it from its submission to the bestiality that is in it (...). We must not allow ourselves to be beguiled by variety or sweetness of foodstuffs, but should rely upon foods that are beneficial and those that are simplest and most delicate."

This is very similar to the way in which Marinus described Proclus in his eulogy and Iamblichus described Pythagoras in the *Pythagorean Way of Life*. Obviously, it was a mere topos, but again it is shared by these three authors. Interestingly, all three authors considered vegetarianism to be part of this topos of a moderate life (*Procl. Arab.*, pp. 66, 99; Marinus 12; 19; Iamblichus *Vita Pythag.* III; XXIV). Such a recommendation is not explicitly made in the *Golden Verses*, yet it had been connected with Pythagoreanism by late antique authors, starting with Porphyry, in his work devoted to vegetarianism (*On Abstinence* 2, 28).[125] The Arabic commentary is very clear about that precept:

[Pythagoras] advises that food be simple and pure. Most foods that are easily digested by the eater come from inanimate sources, and those who believe that we ought to nourish ourselves on food that is animate, are being foolish. (104b–105a)[126]

This is a very decisive voice in the late antique Neoplatonic debate on whether a man should or should not eat meat. The commentator uses the *Golden Verses* – which do not address this question – as well as the very authority of Pythagoras to promote his own point of view. This actually tells us a lot about his philosophical "affiliation". We can certainly place him very close to Iamblichus as well as to Marinus, and probably also to Proclus. They all agreed on the righteousness of vegetarianism, and the author of the Arabic commentary and Iamblichus both connected it with the authority of Pythagoras.

Finally, the *Life of Proclus* and our commentary show surprising affinity in matters of religiosity. Throughout his eulogy, Marinus emphasises Proclus' devotion to various pagan deities and his care for all the details of the practice of their cult (11; 19; 28–34). It goes along with the commentary, which addresses the question of the cult of goods, demons and heroes several times and gives some details concerning proper worship practices (92a–93a; 94a–b). At the same time, the commentary has a strongly monotheistic character and it is obvious that its author placed one God above the entire hierarchy of gods and semi-divine creatures. Also, Proclus himself strongly defends the monotheistic theology and monistic metaphysics against all dualist theories in his theology and in his theory of the cause of the evil.[127]

According to Marinus, Proclus' astonishing devotion to the cult encompassed even the worship of heroes and of dead ancestors and relatives:

Under no circumstances did he neglect to render the customary homages, and on fixed yearly dates he went to visit the tombs of the Attic heroes, those of philosophers, of his friends and acquaintances; he performed the rites prescribed by religion (...). After having fulfilled this pious duty towards each of them, he

125 Cornelli 2013, pp. 70–71.

126 Linley 1984, pp. 66–67.

127 Dodds 1992; Phillips 2007; Chlup 2012, pp. 201–233.

went to the Academy, in a certain particular place, and by vows and prayers, he invoked the souls of his ancestors, collectively and separately; and (...) he made libations in honour of all those who had participated in philosophy. (36, trans. K. S. Guthrie)[128]

Let us compare this passage with the Arabic commentary:

For these [the souls of the dead] the law prescribes celebration for one day per year; for the heroes, the regulation is for one day's celebration per month, while for the demons perpetual celebration is ordinated. (94a–b)[129]
Pythagoras held the heroes in esteem also, and we honour them by believing that they requite with evil or good whoever does harm or good to them. For them there are prescribed exaltation, incense and sacrifice on the twenty-fifth day of January.
Pythagoreans enjoined long journeys to visit the most virtuous dead, and to pray over their graves, and lay it down that God gives rewards for this and punishes those who do not do their duty.
(...) Pythagoras makes it a duty to honour good men (...) and to show affection to relatives, and to treat them with respect, since we have them through nature. We should honour them in a measure commensurate with their merits (...) We should give preferential treatment to our relatives as against those who are not related to us; we should also show greater honour to certain individuals because of the virtue which has made them good, and make them partners in our lives. (94b–95a)[130]

Thus, the commentary presents the Pythagoreans as people who observed the prescription to worship the "most virtuous dead" and Pythagoras (and the *Golden Verses*) as the authority who recommended this practice; the commentary also gives the reason for undertaking these practices. Likewise, Marinus portrays Proclus as someone who with great care and piety obeys similar recommendations in every detail, in exactly the same way as the ancient Pythagoreans did.[131]

Until now, I have been focusing on the numerous similarities between the Arabic commentary and Marinus *Life of Proclus*, as well as the writings of Iamblichus. However, there is one point in the matters of religiosity on which our commentary and the eulogy of Proclus disagree: whereas, according to Marinus, Proclus worshipped Hellenic and foreign gods on equal terms, our commentary recommends worshipping only one's "native" deities.

Thus, Marinus emphasises that Proclus used to worship as many gods as possible and celebrated religious feasts and fasts, not only Hellenic but also foreign. According to him, Proclus wrote hymns not only to the Hellenic gods, but also to several foreign gods ("without

128 Guthrie 1986, p. 53.
129 Linley 1984, pp. 19–21.
130 Linley 1984, pp. 20–23.
131 See also a commentary to this passage in: Fowden 2005, pp. 152–153; and Dillon 2007, 130–131.

exception"), such as Marnas of Gaza, Asclepius Leontouchos of Ascalon, Thyandrites, who was worshipped by the Arabs, and Isis of Philae (Egypt).[132] He was doing it according to his statement that "it behoves the philosopher to be no minister of any one city, nor even of any particular people's customs, but to be a sacral hierophant of the entire world in common," (19, 47–48).[133] Thus, in the image of Proclus drawn by Marinus, the actual religious practice is presented as extremely eclectic and embracing every possible cult from the entire *oikumene* and it is explained by Proclus' statement about the philosopher as the "hierophant of the entire world". However, this very statement does not seem to fit this context well, since it can be understood in a completely opposite way to how Marinus presented it in his eulogy. Garth Fowden, who commented on this passage by Marinus, referred to Porphyry's idea (*De Abst*. 2.49.1) that a philosopher as a priest "is responsible not merely for the statues of the gods, but for making himself into a statue".[134] It was probably Porphyry's allusion to the anecdote of Plotinus described by Porphyry (*Vita Plot.* 10.35–6). Plotinus being asked about participating in a religious ceremony replied that "they ought to come to me, not I to them".[135] Fowden quoted in this context Proclus (*In Parm*. 618) who described his teacher Syrianus in a very similar way, as someone who as a philosopher can "recompense for the statues, the temples and the whole ritual of worship" and that he himself was able to be "the chief author of salvation for men".[136]

Furthermore, thanks to the partially preserved *Platonic Theology*, as well as the *Elements of Theology*, we are very well informed about Proclus' theology and that he considered particular pagan gods as henads that were placed in his elaborated metaphysical hierarchy below the transcendent One (but at the same time somehow participating in it). In his *Platonic Theology*, Proclus managed to fit every single Olympic, Orphic and Chaldean (i.e., from the *Chaldean Oracles*) god, placing them on subsequent levels of the "Platonic" hierarchy of beings emanating from the One and at the same time being unified with it.[137] It is possible, therefore, to read this sentence of Proclus' about him being a hierophant of the entire world as referring to this universal character of his philosophical theology, hidden beneath the traditional pagan mythology and religious practices. This would be the actual meaning of the traditional religion that only a philosopher can truly comprehend.[138] Consequently, it

132 See the commentary to this passage and the information about those gods in Saffrey & Segonds 2001, pp. 132–133 and Edwards 2000, pp. 87–88.

133 Translation by Luz 2017, p. 146.

134 Fowden 2005, p. 154.

135 About this anecdote and more about Plotinus' and Porphyry's approach to traditional religion see van den Berg 1999; and Chlup 2012, pp. 260–261

136 Fowden 2005, p. 154; Morrow & Dillon 1987, p. 20.

137 Chlup 2012, pp. 112–136; Butler 2008.

138 This is how J.M. Dillon (2007, p. 133) understood Marinus' statement of Proclus as a hierophant of the entire world. According to him this statement was

is possible that Marinus added this sentence, which he might have remembered as something that his master actually had said and he referred it to Proclus' religious practice.[139] This hypothesis could be corroborated by the fact that Marinus was considered by others scholars from the circle of Proclus as lacking understanding of the intricacies of the Platonic philosophy which means basically metaphysics and theology.[140] In this context, it is striking that those hymns of Proclus that survive until today are only devoted to the traditional Hellenic gods.[141] Therefore, there is no trace in Proclus' preserved writings, neither religious nor philosophical, that would attest that he actually worshipped any foreign minor deities like those mentioned by Marinus. It is possible that Marinus described Proclus as a worshipper of every possible god because he himself was a convert from a foreign cult, so he did not mean to describe honestly the actual religious practice of his teacher. There is also a possibility that this list of foreign gods allegedly worshipped by Proclus, as given by Marinus, reflects domestic cults of some students in the Athenian Academy under Proclus. It would suggest that Proclus showed a welcoming attitude to all of them and to their religious and cultural background – rather than his own actual religious practice.[142]

However, there is no doubt that religious practice was important for Proclus and that he considered himself a philosophical and religious leader, obliged to preserve and guard the elements of Hellenic traditional cult that were seriously threatened by Christians.[143] The only question is how far his piety reached from the cult of the traditional Hellenic gods toward the gods of barbarian cities and nations, which is what Marinus claims about him.

connected with a concern of intellectuals like Proclus to "fit all local divinities into the system" it is to identify every local deity with one of the Hellenic gods. However, this syncretic approach described by Dillon is not consistent with Marinus' description of Proclus worshipping every single local deity possible (since there is no sense in committing to the cult of every one of them as they can be easily identified with Greek Olympic gods). M.J. Edwards, in turn, considered this statement to be "a variation on the notion that a philosopher should be a 'cosmopolitan' or citizen of the world, which is ascribed to Diogenes, founder of the Cynics". Edwards 2000, p. 88. Finally, R. Chlup (2012, pp. 264–265) understands this statement as an expression of "the burden of cultural responsibility the Neoplatonists were taking on their shoulders"; it is the responsibility of continuation of the traditional Hellenic cults (however, it does not really apply to the passage by Marinus in which he shows Proclus as devoted to cults of gods other than traditional Hellenic ones).

139 Van Den Berg 2001, pp. 29–30; Luz 2017, pp. 146–147. See more about Proclus' religious practice in Festugière 1966.

140 See. Damascius, *Philosophical history / Life of Isidorus* 97 (ed. Athanassiadi, pp. 237–239); Cf. Watts 2006, p. 113.

141 Van Den Berg 2001; Saffrey & Segonds 2001, pp. 131–132; Luz 2017, pp. 148–149.

142 I owe this remark to Peter Brown, whom I would also like to thank for his help and support in the process of writing this paper.

143 Fowden 2005, pp. 154–157; Chlup 2012, pp. 264–265; Dillon 2007.

It is in this context that we could probably understand the recommendations made by the Arabic commentary. We read:

Doing good varies according to the doer and his station, and so for each different rank there are differences in sacrifices, incense, the use of pigs and wine, and festivals, and so on, and in this matter ancestral ruling is followed; this is what is meant by "law" [in the poem]. The reason why the rulings of the law differ is that they conform to the difference among the minds, beliefs and habitations of men: the law of the Athenians was to sacrifice the pig and to make offerings of diluted wine, whereas the Egyptians refuse to sacrifice pigs. These are principles which were derived from Hermes, who commanded man to abide by the laws of his fathers and ancestors, and to avoid alien practices. In accordance with the disposition of each nation of mankind and its ancestral rule, the usages established by the wise men regarding sacrifice, festivals and incense vary, and they trace back these principles to the gods. This is why, if any nation transgresses against its own custom, it perishes. (92a–b)[144]

According to this passage, religious laws and practices of worship were given to humans by gods and they were adapted to the character of every nation. This idea brings the author to the point of religious conservatism and the opinion that every nation has to keep his own ancestral religious practices, and nobody should get involved in the religions of other nations.

This opinion stands in obvious contradiction to what Marinus presented in the *Life of Proclus*. However, according to Damascius, Marinus himself was probably originally a Samaritan from Neapolis in Palestine who later converted to Hellenism.[145] According to Menahem Luz, this conversion "was severely reprimanded by other members of the Platonic school".[146] This is not so clear, as this statement is based on a reconstructed passage from Damascius, probably mixed with other statements added by Photius to his description of Marinus.[147] The critique of Marinus' conversion might well have been added by the Byzantine scholar. However, it is very probable that he really was a convert from the Samaritan to the Hellenic faith and that he did abandon his ancestors' religion.[148] This would somehow explain why he tried to show Proclus as accepting all kinds of foreign religious practices. Furthermore, the surviving passages of Damascius *Philosophical history / Life of Isidorus* reveal that the

144 Linley 1984, p. 8–11.

145 This information is preserved in Photius' excerpt from the *Philosophical history / Life of Isidorus*, 97 (ed. Athanassiadi, p. 237): "Marinus, the successor of Proclus, originated from Neapolis in Palestine, a city founded near the so-called Mount Argarizos [Gerizim] (...). Born a Samaritan, Marinus renounced their creed (...) and embraced Hellenism."

146 Luz 2017, p. 145.

147 See a study of this passage of Damascius about Marinus' origins in Hult 1993.

148 See also Hult 1993; Schissel von Fleschenberg 1930; Saffrey 2005.

Athenian Academy at that time was not a homogenous community. There were different factions in the Platonic school after (or probably even before) the death of Proclus and there occurred disagreements about the succession in the school as well as philosophical and religious differences between scholars in this circle. Conservatism, as expressed by our commentator, would have been opposed to the eclecticism embodied in Marinus. Therefore, this difference in opinions could have originated in the philosophical and interpersonal controversies that were tearing apart the Athenian Academy in the late fifth century AD.[149]

In this context, it is striking that the question of the worship of foreign gods is the only point in which Marinus and the Arabic commentary disagree. The rest of Marinus eulogy shows several common elements with the Arabic commentary, as if Marinus had wanted to show Proclus as fulfilling the model of life that is described by the commentator.

In conclusion, the comparison between Marinus' *Life of Proclus* and the Arabic commentary shows a lot of striking similarities, common attitudes to many questions and the use of the same *topoi* and *loci* from the Neoplatonic Pythagorean tradition. Furthermore, there is also a number of similarities between those two texts and the works of Proclus himself as well as with Iamblichus' *Pythagorean Way of Life*. Studying those three texts together – Iamblichus, Marinus, and the Arabic commentary – is particularly interesting since they all present the same ideal of the perfect, happy, virtuous life of a philosopher. This is the ideal of the pagan holy man (*theios aner*), so important for the late antique Neoplatonic tradition and so closely connected with the Pythagorean tradition itself (as seen by the late Neoplatonists): Pythagoras was seen as the first and most important living example of this ideal.[150] The three authors speak in unison, even though they adopt three different points of view:

1. Iamblichus, in *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, presents a description of the life of the legendary figure of divine Pythagoras and of the community of his first students – who serve him as perfect examples of the way of life to be followed.
2. Marinus, in *Proclus, or On Happiness*, offers a eulogy of the recently deceased teacher who perfectly embodied this Pythagorean ideal of the pagan holy man.
3. The "Arabic" commentator describes the same model of the perfect way of life, but this time based on the *Golden Verses*, the poem considered to be a collection of the admonitions of Pythagoras, written down by his famous student Empedocles; the poem focuses exactly on what the proper philosophical way of life should be.

149 For the Athenian Platonic Academy at the times of Proclus as the *diadochus* and the years after his death, see Watts 2006, pp. 100–128; and the introduction of P. Athanassiadi in Damascius 1999, on pp. 39–48.

150 See Fowden 1982.

There is no doubt that all three texts were written by Neoplatonic authors who shared a similar education, the same literary and philosophical erudition, as well as a common philosophical system through which they saw the world, man and history. The differences in their opinions on specific matters, such as the question of the worship of foreign gods could be explained by the context of their creation, and they actually help us see the Neoplatonic philosophers of Late Antiquity as real people, who combatted and disagreed with each other. It is clear that we should look into this inner circle of Proclus' students if we are to find the original author of the Arabic commentary.

CONCLUSIONS

As I tried to demonstrate in the first part of this paper, the hypothesis of Proclus Procleius as the author of the Arabic *Commentary on the Golden Verses* in Ibn al-Ṭayyib's abbreviated version is very problematic and difficult to defend. Conversely, there is a strong affinity between this text and the preserved works of Proclus as well as the eulogy of his student and successor Marinus.

The surviving works of Proclus leave no doubt that he held Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans in very high esteem and venerated them together just as much as he venerated Plato and the Orphic tradition. This is visible, for example, in his famous statement from the introduction to the *Platonic Theology*:

> But we must show that each of these doctrines is in harmony with the first principles of Plato and with the secret revelations of the theologians. For all Greek theology derives from Orphic mystagogy, Pythagoras first learning from Aglaophemus the secrets concerning the gods, Plato after him receiving the complete science of the gods from Pythagorean and Orphic writings. (I 5, 25, 24–26, 9, trans. D. O'Meara)[151]

Marinus in the *Life of Proclus* (28) recalled that Proclus had a dream that the soul of Pythagorean Nicomachus lived in him. In turn, in the entry devoted to Proclus Diadochus, the *Souda* (Pi 2473) lists a text entitled *About the harmony of Orpheus, Pythagoras and Plato* among the writings attributed to him. If it had indeed existed, it would have probably been related to the same idea as the one expressed in the passage from the *Platonic Theology*, according to which the Orphic, Pythagorean and Platonic traditions are basically one and the same tradition. Moreover, it is possible to identify numerous Pythagorean elements in his commentaries to Plato's dialogues. In particular, Proclus considered the Platonic *Timaeus* to be Pythagorean in its very essence,[152] but he also made many references to the Pythagorean tradition while commenting on Plato's *Parmenides* and his other dialogues. As pointed out by Dominic O'Meara, Proclus continued the Iamblichean Pythagorean project, which is plainly visible in his commentaries, where he shows that Plato's entire

151 O'Meara 1989, p. 146.

152 See especially *Comm. in Tim.* I, III 8; cf. Baltzly 2016; O'Meara 1989, pp. 148–149.

work was based on Pythagoras.[153] O'Meara also expressed the opinion that from this point of view, the Arabic commentary attributed to Proclus actually "contains ideas characteristic of Iamblichus' Pythagoreanizing programme, which reappear in Syrianus and in Proclus. If then the precise authorship of the Arabic commentary cannot yet be determined with certainty, it can at least be seen as further evidence of the influence of Iamblichus' revival of Pythagoreanism."[154]

However, among his preserved writings there is not a single one devoted specifically to Pythagoras and his doctrine. Neither did Proclus write any work similar to Porphyry's and Iamblichus' lives of Pythagoras. Nevertheless, his interest in Pythagoras should have been substantial, as was his knowledge about him and his philosophy (inasmuch as it was available to a late antique author). Furthermore, there are many parallels between the Arabic commentary and the preserved writings of Proclus. Even though Westerink did not consider this enough to attribute the authorship of this text to Proclus himself, these similarities certainly place this text somewhere in the same philosophical milieu.

When we add to that the parallels between the Arabic commentary and Marinus' *Life of Proclus*, this leads us to the hypothesis that the Arabic commentary was written in the circle of direct students of Proclus. The text reflects very well the intellectual and interpersonal climate of this community, the opinions shared by its members and their familiarity with Proclus and his legacy, as well as the discussions that must have occurred within this group.

Furthermore, it is very probable that Proclus used to give lectures about the Pythagorean tradition and the *Golden Verses*. He believed that this poem had its origins in the very first stages in the development of the tradition that he saw himself belonging to, and that it was connected with Pythagoras himself. Neoplatonic philosophers also shared the opinion that this was a perfect propaedeutic text, ideal for a general introduction to philosophy and there is no reason to think that Proclus' opinion about it was different.[155] Therefore, he could have commented on it during some of his lectures and some of his students could have written these comments down in the form of notes. Later on, someone might have reviewed and presented them as a standalone commentary. This would explain the attribution of the commentary to Proclus and its affinity with his legacy on the one hand, and its relatively free form on the other (no lemmata consecutively commented). We know that some Neoplatonic commentaries were said to be "*apo phones*", that is notes from a lecture of someone else than the compiler of the actual text. Marcel Richard in his study of this kind of late antique literary works presents a number of Neoplatonic commentaries which are explicitly presented as "the

153 O'Meara 1989, pp. 146–149.

154 O'Meara 1989, p. 232.

155 See Hierocl. *Comm. Aur. carm.* 122, 1–5 Hadot 1978, pp. 162–164; Hadot 2004, p. 96; Schibli 2002, pp. 17–18.

oral teaching of ...", which is one of the most popular uses of the formula *apo phones* (although not the only one).[156]

Among the preserved commentaries attributed to Proclus there is actually one which consists of notes taken by a student who attended one of Proclus' seminars; it is the *Commentary on Plato's Cratylus*.[157] The form of this text is very similar to the Arabic commentary on the *Golden Verses*; it does not comment on every single passage of the text, it makes substantial digressions and it is not always clear how the commentary relates to the commented text.[158] Both texts are attributed to Proclus, and both comment on classical texts. There is no reason to reject the hypothesis that the Arabic commentary was – just as the commentary on *Cratylus* – not written by Proclus himself, but nevertheless comes from him and was actually written down by one of his students.

We must remember that medieval Arabic authors had access to a different source base of Greek philosophical texts that we have today – and different, perhaps even more comprehensive, than their medieval Greek counterparts (i.e. the Byzantines). Therefore, from the modern perspective, there is no reason not to treat the Graeco-Arabic tradition on a par with the Greek tradition that has survived until the present day. And whereas for obvious reasons every classicist is reluctant to announce the discovery of a lost work by Plato or Aristotle in Arabic, we should not give up on the idea that Arabic texts can improve our access to the ideas and heritage of the greatest philosophers of Classical Antiquity.

Therefore, I argue that the Arabic commentary on the *Golden Verses* attributed to Proclus should receive more attention than it has. First of all, it is a very good exposition of Neoplatonic ethics, and one that can supplement the Greek corpus of Proclus' works. Radek Chlup in his introduction to Proclus' philosophy begins the chapter about Proclus' ethics acknowledging that although "most of the abstract metaphysical principles" of his system "have a number of interesting ethical consequences", "most of the time Proclus pays comparatively little attention to them".[159] Then he writes:

His chief aim is to analyse things on as general a level as possible, so that the theorems arrived at in this way might subsequently be applied to any particular field of enquiry. Unfortunately, these particular applications are something Proclus rarely finds sufficient time for. As a result, modern readers, who only have access to Proclus' thought through his texts, may easily miss the fact that Neoplatonic metaphysics was not only

156 Richard 1950; Praechter 1990, pp. 43–45; see also the introduction by D. Baltzly & R. Tarrant in Tarrant 2006, pp. 13–14.

157 Van Den Berg 2008, pp. 94–95.

158 "[The *Commentary on the Cratylus*] appears to consist of a series of garbled notes. Even though they apparently follow the text of the *Cratylus*, it is by no means always clear how exactly they relate to the *Cratylus* or to each other. (...) The commentary thus consists of 'useful excerpts (*chresimoi eclogai*) from notes (*scholia*) taken by a student who attended Proclus' seminar on the *Cratylus*." Van Den Berg 2008, p. 94.

159 Chlup 2012, p. 234.

thought but lived and practised as well.[160]

The Arabic commentary to the *Golden Verses* ideally fills in this *lacuna* in our sources for Proclean ethics. It is also a perfect example of the idea to which Chlup refers, namely that in Proclus' system ethics are closely connected with metaphysics and theology. Therefore, this text – preserved in Arabic – provides a perfect example of exactly what Chlup assumed that Proclus "rarely finds sufficient time for". It is a description of Neoplatonic ethics as part of the entire coherent philosophical system emerging from metaphysics and theology. Even if Proclus found little time to describe this ethics in his core writings, he would have been explaining it to his students.

Furthermore, the Arabic commentary attributed to Proclus may also be a valuable source of knowledge about the Neoplatonic image of Pythagoras, his life and philosophy, as well as a fascinating description of a philosophical way of life that was believed to be "Pythagorean" in the inner circle of Proclus' students. As such, the Arabic text brings us a number of interesting elements that can supplement the surviving Greek works of Proclus and his students. This includes an extensive and very interesting description of the Pythagorean metaphysics of number, which gives us extraordinary insight into the so-called Neo-Pythagorean number theory and its connection with metaphysics and theology.

In general, the Arabic commentary is a very good example of the late antique version of Pythagoreanism which, whether we want it or not, constitutes so much of the modern source base for the reconstruction of any historical facts about Pythagoras and his followers, as well as his philosophical views. We may consider it all late, and full of legends and myths, but this is also the case with the biographies of Pythagoras written by Porphyry and Iamblichus. Both are still the main sources from which modern scholars try to draw information about the most archaic period in the history of Pythagorean tradition. Why not add this interesting Arabic text to this corpus, and use it to study late antique Neoplatonism in general and the circle of Proclus in particular?

160 Chlup 2012, p. 234.

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Plato's Three Forms of Impiety in Context: *Laws* X 884a-887c

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ABSTRACT

The article offers an in-depth analysis in the form of a close reading of the very beginning of Book X of Plato's *Laws*. It focuses on a passage where Plato defines three types of impiety which he claims to be the source of a wrong conception of the divine, the world, and human actions. To better understand Plato's seemingly conservative but actually uncommon and problematic definition of impiety, it is contrasted with partly similar reasoning of Xenophon's Socrates. By situating this key passage of the *Laws* within the context of the entire dialogue and within the relevant contemporary discussions, we arrive at a better understanding of the nature of Platonic revolution in a philosophical approach to traditional Greek religion.*

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The beginning of Book X of Plato's *Laws* (884a-887c), and especially the formulation of three types of atheism or impiety, against which the subsequent arguments are directed, plays a key role not only in the development of the dialogue but also in a broader context of Greek philosophical thought. This is why a careful analysis in a form of a close reading of this short section could help us understand how Plato gradually sets the stage upon which the subsequent theological and cosmological reasoning of Book X of his *Laws* takes place. To gain a better insight into Plato's last major philosophical endeavour, we should also consider its connections with and reactions to previous philosophical discussions.[1]

I: THE NEED FOR RELIGIOUS LEGISLATION (884A1-885B4)

Book X begins somewhat abruptly by continuation of an argument from the previous book, where various crimes which inhabitants of the best attainable city could possibly commit are discussed and appropriate punishments are set down (884a1-5). Now the Athenian Stranger turns his attention to offences against sacred things (ἱερά), committed by the young who are always the chief

1 The following exposition has been influenced by my study of the following overviews and commentaries upon Plato's *Laws* I had at my disposal: Stalley (1983), Steiner (1992), Cleary (2001), Brisson & Pradeau (2007), Mayhew (2008), Schöpsdau (1994), (2003), (2011), Bobonich (2018), see also an extensive discussion of Plato's *Laws* at various places in Van Riel (2013). The translation used with some modification is by Tom Griffith, with editorial revisions by Malcolm Schofield.

object of his concern, presumably because their more passionate nature can easily lead them astray.[2] Offences against piety which are about to be discussed are, according to him, the most serious ones (884a6-7) and indeed, Book X plays a key role in the legislation outlined in the *Laws*.

The subject in question is introduced already at the beginning (853a-d) of Book IX, where the Athenian Stranger wonders whether it is really necessary to determine, as a part of the laws of the best city they are trying to devise, also the punishments. Without a doubt, the best city should be established with the intention that its inhabitants excel in virtue more than is common elsewhere. On the other hand, the Stranger immediately adds, the ancient lawgivers devised laws for the heroes, sons of gods, and they themselves, too, were of divine descent. Already in Book V of the *Laws* (739b-e), it is explained that a city similar, at least in some traits, to the one presented in the *Republic* would be intended for the heroes, whereas the city outlined in the *Laws* is supposed to be the best that could be achieved in practice.[3] In the same passage of Book IX, it is further claimed that the contemporary lawgivers draw up their laws for 'the seed of human beings', which is why even among the citizens of the best city, there could always happen to be someone who would have to be corrected. At the same time, this perhaps also justifies the strictness of legislation that may be needed under the present circumstances. In other words, Plato seems to imply that humanity is no longer as close to the gods as the heroes were in the days of yore and this is why religious legislation is needed. For the time being, only this mythological reason is provided but further justification becomes apparent later on.[4]

Still in the same passage of Book IX, we find reference to temple robbery which, according to Plato, is a crime so serious it should be punished by death (853d-856a). But at the beginning of Book X (884a6-885a7), we also learn that most serious are the 'undisciplined acts of aggression on the part of the young' committed first of all in relation to the sacred things that are public (ἱερὰ ... δημοσία). One might well assume that what Plato has in mind are the temples and other places of public worship. After this, Plato lists other, more specific offences, such as offences against private sacred objects (ἱερὰ δὲ ἴδια) and tombs, as well as offences against parents. Then the Stranger mentions some apparently less serious crimes, namely theft or abuse by property officials, i.e., representatives of the state. And finally, there are offences against 'the rights of any individual citizen'.

At first sight, not all the crimes listed above seem to be of a religious nature. Nevertheless, in Book XI, parents are compared to religious statues (ἀγάλματα) of the gods (930e-931a).

2 Cf. Mayhew (2008), p. 90–91.

3 For a survey of the recent scholarly discussion about the relation of Plato's *Laws* to his *Republic*, see Bobonich (2018), par. 3.

4 For more detail on the nature of the utopian character of Plato's *Laws*, see especially Laks (1991), (2001).

With this taken into account, the only seemingly non-religious crimes are the offences against state property and individual rights. In preceding books, however, it was stated that the state is consecrated to the twelve gods (V, 745b-e; VIII, 828b) and, as we shall see, the whole legislation thus depends on the divine, including legislation pertaining to individuals and their lives. It seems therefore that in Plato's *Laws*, religion in its different forms embraces virtually all aspects of human activities.

In the following section (885a7-b4), the Athenian Stranger specifies the reasons why people tend to commit offences against the gods. He does so in an 'encouragement' (παραμύθιον) or preamble, composed – as stated before in Book IV (719e-723d) – in a way that would motivate acceptance and endorsement of the laws that are proposed.[5]

II: THREE FORMS OF ATHEISM (885B4-9)

We learn that offences against the gods are in fact products of the following three forms of impiety, or wrong opinions about the gods. Persons who 'intentionally' (ἑκών) commit an impious deed or say something impious (literary contrary to law, ἄνομον) clearly 'suffer' (πάσχων), as the Athenian Stranger puts it, from either of the three following views: (1) They do not believe in the existence of the gods 'as the laws require' (Θεοὺς ἡγούμενος εἶναι κατὰ νόμους). (2) They believe in gods' existence but do not believe that the gods care for humans (ὄντας οὐ φροντίζειν ἀνθρώπων). (3) They believe that the gods can be won over and persuaded by offerings and prayers (εὐπαραμυθήτους εἶναι θυσίαις τε καὶ εὐχαῖς παραγομένους) (885b4-9, cf. also XII 948c-d). These three types of impiety seem to cover the main types of the complex relationship between the gods and humans. The first opinion about the gods, the doubt regarding their existence, pertains to the gods themselves. The second, i.e. the doubt regarding their interest in us, concerns gods' relation to humans. And the last opinion, the doubt whether they can be won over and persuaded by offerings and prayers, touches upon human relations to the gods.

The term 'intentionally' (ἑκών) used here evokes the famous Socratic ethical conception according to which 'nobody errs willingly'. It appears in a number of Plato's other dialogues (*Gorg*. 509d-510a, *Meno* 77d-e, *Prot*. 352b-353a, *Resp*. II 382a, III 413a, *Soph*. 228c-e, *Tim*. 86d-e)[6] and in the *Laws*, it appears already in Books V (731c, 734b) and IX (860d-861a). At the beginning of the latter passage it is claimed that 'the unjust person (ὁ μὲν ἀδικός) is, I take it, bad (κακός), but the bad person is not such intentionally (ὁ δὲ κακὸς ἄκων τοιοῦτος)'. It implies that people commit unjust acts, including those of impiety, because they are motivated by the wrong opinions they hold.[7]

5 Cf. Mayhew (2008), p. 55.

6 Cf. also Brickhouse & Smith (2013).

7 See Bobonich (2018), par. 9, cf. a slightly different explanation proposed by Mayhew (2008), p. 56–58.

If we turn back to our passage from Book X, the Platonic doctrine that nobody commits unjust acts willingly explains why the Athenian Stranger says that the people literally 'suffer' from false beliefs about the gods or – according to the most recent English translation – 'do these things in one of three frames of mind' just mentioned. In the light of this explanation, it is thus clear why, as we shall see in more detail below, it is so important to support religious legislation by a rational explanation of what we should think about the gods.

This threefold classification of atheism is famous and influenced a number of later thinkers. To cite just one example, the fifteenth century Byzantine philosopher George Gemistos Plethon wanted to construct his ideal legislation on these three principles understood in the positive way and of all Platonists, he came perhaps the closest to introducing it into practice. Nevertheless, similarly to some other Platonists, he did not in the end implement his project, which was perhaps for the best.[8] As for Plato himself, of special interest is the contemporary parallel found in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (Book I, Chapter 4, and Book IV, Chapter 3). The importance of these passages has recently been noted by David Sedley, who maintains that what we find here is the first known instance of an 'argument from design' and it appears in these passages in a form so elaborate that we would search for a precedent in earlier Greek philosophical discussions in vain.[9]

The former occurrence in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (Book I, Chapter 4) is nonetheless the one which is more noteworthy. There Socrates tries to persuade his follower Aristodemus, best known from Plato's *Symposium*, that gods must exist since the world we live in is so well ordered and humans are privileged in comparison to animals. The whole passage is remarkable by its emphasis on the special status of human beings. Socrates claims that this aspect of the world, which makes it both perfect and favourable to humans, can only be explained by the fact that it was created by the gods and divine providence is present in it. According to Sedley, in the fifth and fourth century BCE, i.e. before the advent of Stoicism, such position was quite unique and the only other place where it appears is in the refutation of atheism in Book X of Plato's *Laws*, i.e. the passage we outlined above.[10] Interestingly, there is another motif which also appears in both texts. In Book X of Plato's *Laws*, the ultimate answer to the impious notion that the world was formed by chance –

8 Cf. Hladký (2014).

9 Sedley (2005), (2007), p. 75–95, (2017), cf. also Festugière (1949), p. 89–91.

10 Sedley (2005), p. 469; cf. Mayhew (2008), p. 62: 'An earlier version of the teleological argument, somewhat comparable to this one [in 886a2–4], can be found in Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 4.3. (There is another version, in *Memorabilia* 1.4, but it is more sophisticated than any of the appeals in *Laws* 10 to the orderliness of the universe.') Frede (2002), p. 90, however, claims that Plato offers a more complicated argument whose aim is to prove, as we shall see, that the rational order of the world is due to the work of the soul.

a conception which could probably be ascribed to the contemporary atomists Leucippus and Democritus – is to point to the ordering power of the soul, which has ontological priority and superiority.[11] Xenophon uses a similar argument but, significantly, limits himself to an affirmation of the presence of intelligence (τὸ φρόνιμον) and soul in the human body. The idea of a world-soul in a full-fledged form does not seem to appear here at all (I,4,8-9, cf. also I,4,17; IV,3,14). Nevertheless, even he claims that there is a divine intelligence (φρόνησις) present in the world which orders everything in the best possible way (I,4,9).

There is one even closer parallel between these two texts than their overall strategy of argumentation. Early on in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (Book I, Chapter 4), Socrates starts a long discussion with Aristodemus. Its aim is to convince him of the existence of the divine, since he, that is, Socrates, has learned that the young man does not sacrifice to the gods, does not pray, does not make use of divination, and mocks people who do all these things (I,4,2). After listening to a long series of Socrates' arguments from design (I,4,3-9), Aristodemus replies that he actually does not overlook the divine (τὸ δαιμόνιον) but believes it is too elevated (μεγαλοπρεπέστερον) to need his veneration (θεραπεία). To this Socrates responds that the greater something is, the more it must be venerated (τιμητέον). Aristodemus then tries another approach and asserts that he neglects the gods because he does not think that they care for humans in any way (ἀνθρώπων τι φροντίζειν) (*Mem*. I,4,10-11). This is of course an exact parallel to the second type of atheism from Plato's *Laws*, even including the use of the same expression, φροντίζειν ἀνθρώπων. (It should be noted that whereas throughout this chapter, Xenophon uses the term φροντίζειν, elsewhere, e.g. in IV,3, in a discussion about the divine providential care, he switches to ἐπιμελεῖσθαι and its derivatives.) Moreover, at the beginning of their conversation, Socrates seems to believe that Aristodemus suffers the first form of impiety, i.e. that he does not believe in gods' existence. In the course of the discussion, focus shifts to the second form of impiety. It thus seems that chapter I,4 of the *Memorabilia* is in fact built around the first two types of atheism discussed by Plato in Book X of the *Laws*.

The issue of relations between Xenophon's and Plato's Socratic writings is notoriously complex and it is often assumed that in a number of places, Xenophon reacts to Plato and is dependent on him. Here, however, it cannot be the case because Book I of the Memorabilia was written before Book X of the *Laws*. We know this because the Laws are most likely Plato's last work, published only after his death, while – regardless of detailed discussions about the exact dating of the *Memorabilia* – ancient sources inform us that Xenophon died nearly ten years before Plato. It does not necessarily mean that in this particular case inspiration flowed the other way around and in this book, it is

11 Cf. Cleary (2001), p. 131–132.

Plato who is dependent on Xenophon. We shall see that despite some common features, the context of the two passages and the general scope of the two texts are quite different. Furthermore, there is also a minor but important detail: the *Laws* is Plato's only dialogue where Socrates is absent, while in the *Memorabilia*, he is clearly the main protagonist of the whole work. And finally, it is unclear why Plato should pick up this motif from Xenophon and develop it in his *Laws*. He does not react to Xenophon's portrayal of Socrates anywhere else and if there was any literary influence between the two thinkers, it went rather other way round.[12]

There is no space to discuss Plato's portrayal of Socrates' piety here, especially the *Apology* where Plato defended his master against the charge of impiety which included also undue attention to natural inquiry into celestial phenomena (18b). Nonetheless, there is a more straightforward connection between the *Memorabilia* and a passage in the Republic which also outlines the classification of the different forms of atheism which appear both in Xenophon's Memorabilia and Plato's *Laws*, Book X:[13]

'What about the gods? Surely, we can't hide from them or use violent force against them!', [someone will object]. Well, if the gods don't concern themselves with human affairs (τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων μέλει), why should we worry at all about hiding from them? If they do exist and do concern themselves with us (ἐπιμελοῦνται), we've learned all we know about them from the laws and the poets who give their genealogies – nowhere else. But these are the very people who tell us that the gods can be persuaded and influenced (παράγεσθαι ἀναπειθόμενοι) by sacrifices, gentle prayers, and offerings (θυσίαις τε καὶ εὐχολαῖς ἀγανῇσιν καὶ ἀναθήμασιν). Hence, we should believe them on both matters or neither. (Plato, Republic 365d6-e6, trans. G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve, slightly modified.)

It is important to note the common features but also the differences between the three texts, i.e. Plato's *Republic*, the *Laws*, and Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. Compared to other two accounts, the passage from the *Republic* seems like a kind of preliminary sketch, from which a more extensive argument is developed in the *Laws*. Moreover, the various forms of impiety are mentioned here just in passing, whereas in the *Laws*, they appear at a crucial point and are followed by a long argument for an ordered nature of the world. Similarly, in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, the two types of atheism are attacked in a passage where the orderly nature of the cosmos is established, in this case by argument from design. The arguments from the *Laws* and the *Memorabilia* are thus also linked by a similar wider philosophical context. There is, however, also one obvious difference between Plato's and Xenophon's treatment of the types of atheism: the latter omits the third type of atheism,

12 See Vander Waerdt (1993), p. 8–12. It is, however, true that, in another passage of his *Laws* (694c ff.), Plato reacts critically to Xenophon and his portrayal of Cyrus the Great in the *Cyrupaedia*, cf. Dorion (2003) and Danzig (2003).

13 Cf. Steiner (1992), p. 107.

that is, the belief that the gods cannot be mollified and persuaded to change their mind by prayers and sacrifices.[14] Xenophon's Socrates, by contrast, reproaches Aristodemus for not praying and sacrificing to the gods as well as for not making use of divination. He does not actually consider such behaviour to be impious. The idea of this kind of atheism is thus absent from Xenophon, while the first two seem to be shared by him and Plato. It is mentioned only briefly in the *Republic*, but plays a more important role in somewhat similar arguments in the *Memorabilia* and the *Laws*.

Based on this comparison, one could hypothesise that the common source and inspiration of these arguments is the Socratic legacy shared by both Xenophon and Plato. In the *Laws*, we shall see that this legacy has been significantly transformed. In the *Memorabilia*, it seems more straightforward since it is apparent from its very outset that in this text, Xenophon's aim is to defend Socrates against the accusation of impiety, which he does somewhat awkwardly by showing that when it came to religious matters, Socrates was in fact very traditional (I,1). It is, nevertheless, rather striking that just a little further in the text (I,4), Xenophon presents an argument that was so innovative for his time. We could thus speculate that this argument was something that Socrates helped to introduce into contemporary intellectual discussion. Even Sedley ultimately ascribes the argument from design found in *Memorabilia* I,4 to the historical Socrates. He argues for this conclusion based on two prominent features of the reasoning. First of all, it is well possible that Socrates really reacted to the materialistic explanation of the origin of the world by chance proposed by atomists. Secondly, surviving testimonies clearly indicate that in contrast to earlier philosophers, he treated ethics – including piety – as independent of detailed cosmological speculations. This innovation is well illustrated by Cicero's famous saying according to which Socrates 'was the first to call philosophy down from heavens and set her in the cities of men and bring her also into their homes and compel her to ask questions about life and morality and things good and evil' (Cicero, *Tusc. disp.* V,4,10, trans. J.E. King). To Xenophon's Socrates, physical inquiry and religion indeed seem separate and piety, too, is not necessarily anchored in an understanding of the cosmos. Socrates can therefore develop proofs of the existence of divine providence without having to give a detailed naturalist account of the nature of the world. The purpose-like order of the world so emphatically revealed in the *Memorabilia* provides, so to say, only a general framework in which humans live and act.[15]

When thinking of Socratic piety, we are perhaps accustomed to focusing on his *daimonion*[16] and his command-

14 Cf. also Plato, *Eutyphr.* 14b–15b, *Resp.* II 364b–c.

15 Cf. McPherran (1996), p. 272–291, Sedley (2005), p. 466–468, (2007), p. 78–86, and Viano (2001).

16 The whole issue of Apeiron, 38.2, 2005, is dedicated to discussions of the *daimonion*, see esp. Brisson (2005).

ments, which make it a highly personal experience. On the other hand, however, one could also point to the famous passage from the *Phaedo* (95e-100) where Socrates speaks about his philosophical development and disillusion with the physical inquiry into the natural world. Even Anaxagoras' philosophy ultimately failed to convince him, although it seemed promising at first because it postulated a cosmic Intellect (νοῦς) that orders the world in the best possible way with respect to the good common to all (τὸ κοινὸν πᾶσιν ... ἀγαθόν). According to what Socrates says in the *Phaedo*, this explanation fails because Anaxagoras does not apply this kind of cause to an account of the origin and nature of the world and he does not say why, for what reason the world came to be (see also XII 967c). Such embryonic teleological conception of the world is compatible with another insight usually ascribed to historical Socrates, namely that the god is just and cannot be the source of any evil.[17]

Nevertheless, although the parallel that can be traced between Plato's *Laws* (Book X), and Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (I,4) is fascinating, we should bear in mind that when speaking about historical Socrates and his religious beliefs, we always skate on somewhat thin ice. But be that as it may, the various accounts of the forms of impiety towards the gods in Xenophon and Plato enable a useful comparison between the two thinkers, and in this way, we can reach a better understanding of the nature and scope of their projects. To start, we should notice that Plato distinguishes between three types of impiety, he actually offers a kind of classification of wrong views regarding the gods which covers all the main types of human mistakes with respect to theology, starting from the more serious and progressing to the less serious ones. In Xenophon, on the other hand, we find nothing so elaborate. His aim is just to portray Socrates as a defender of the two basic correct views about the gods.

17 Cf. McPherran (1996), p. 272–291, (2013), p. 270–272, Bussanich (2013), p. 289–290.

III: HEAVENLY BODIES AS DIVINE SOULS (885C1-886E5)

In the following part of the *Laws*, the Athenian Stranger claims that when people think that gods do not exist or hold the sort of wrong opinions about the divine described above, it is because of the influence of poets, orators, seers, priests, and many others who are considered to be the best ones (οἱ λεγόμενοι ἄριστοι), the authorities on truth (885d4-7). Certainly, poets, seers, and priests were in Plato's time viewed as champions of the traditional religion, while orators represented some of the more innovative trends in the Greek religion. Criticism in this direction is thus not surprising and in fact, we find such critical views not only in discussion above in Book IV of the *Laws* (719b-e) but also in Plato's other works.

To counterbalance their negative influence, lawgivers are not supposed to deter people from their views harshly (σκληρῶς), presumably by threat of severe punishments. Instead, as mentioned above, lawgivers should try 'to persuade and to teach' (πείθειν καὶ διδάσκειν) the

populace by the means of sufficient proofs (τεκμήρια ... ἱκανά). Already in Book IV (719e-723d), it is explained why each law should be supported by persuasion. Plato illustrates this need by giving a comparison with a doctor who treats the sick: Freeborn citizens are required to understand and accept what is beneficial for them according to nature (κατὰ φύσιν, cf. IX 857c-e). Doctors achieve this by persuasion and the same should hold for the lawgivers, who should thus provide a preamble to each proposed law which would support its content by the means of persuasion. Such preamble would then be followed by the text of the law as such.[18]

In Book X, the motif of persuading (πείθειν) appears several times, including the passage we discuss now (885d2, e3, 5) and just a few lines below, when the Stranger returns to it. In this latter case, however, it is claimed that – in contrast to the traditional representatives of Greek religion, and especially in contrast to the orators – this 'persuading' should take the form of arguments (λόγοι) and proofs (τεκμήρια). At this point, the proofs and arguments are further specified only by a claim that they should be sufficient, and little further it is said that what the lawgivers teach us about the gods should be 'at least better in terms of its truth' (885c5-e5). In a subsequent text, 'a reasoned demonstration' (τὰ μὲν ἀποδείξαμεν μετρίως τοῖς λόγοις) is mentioned again (887a4-8). Some scholars have noted that the only kind of preamble (προοίμιον) that should persuade the populace while employing some kind of rational argumentation is the one mentioned in the *Laws*, Book X, since other kinds would be based either on rhetoric or on myths.[19] The requirement that persuasive rational argumentation should be used opens the way to the rational theology developed in the remainder of Book X of Plato's *Laws*.

At this point, the Cretan Cleinias remarks that it is actually easy to prove that the gods exist. According to him, it can be proven by pointing to the existence of 'the earth, and the sun ..., the whole skyful of stars' or by observing 'the wonderful symmetry of the seasons (τὰ τῶν ὡρῶν διακεκοσμημένα), with their arrangement into months and years (ἐνιαυτοῖς τε καὶ μησὶν διειλημμένα)'. In other words, if the cosmos is indeed a reasonable world-order, the first proof points to the ordering of the heavenly bodies and the cosmos as a whole, while the second proof points to the regularity of its motions and transformations (886a2-4). Such arrangements must be ascribed to some rational creative cause, to some divine agency that orders our world. We may note that a similar argument had been proposed by Diogenes of Apollonia (DK 64 B 3) and by Xenophon's Socrates (*Mem.* IV,3).[20] The last proof added by Cleinias is a rather traditional

18 Cf. Brisson & Pradeau (2007), vol. II, p. 379–386.

19 Cf. Laks (1991), p. 427–428, Brisson (2000), especially p. 242–251, Mayhew (2008), p. 59–60, 169–170. On the persuasive function of preambles, see also e.g. Laks (2000), p. 285–290, Bobonich (1991), (2002), p. 97–119, Meyhew (2007), and Bobonich (2018), par. 5.

20 Cf. Mayhew (2008), p. 62, Schöpsdau (2011), p. 377.

argument to the point that not only all Greeks but also barbarians believe in gods (886a4-5).

At this point, the Athenian Stranger points out that it is not so simple. He explains that Cleinias must be mistaken about the motivation of people who hold either of the three types of atheism mentioned above, because he assumes that the sole reason for doing so is simply 'lack of self-control where pleasure and desire are concerned' (ἀκράτεια ... ἡδονῶν τε καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν). And while nothing in the text explicitly rejects the possibility that such personal failing may be one of the causes of atheism, the Stranger claims much more important is 'a form of ignorance (ἀμαθία), very dangerous'. According to him, this kind of ignorance is so grave because it seems to be 'the height of wisdom (φρόνησις)' (886a5-b8). In other words, not all Greeks actually believe in the gods properly and the traditional argument mentioned by Cleinias does hold. On the contrary, it is refuted by what currently goes on in Greece, i.e. by the fact that some people do question the very existence of the gods.[21] In this passage, however, most significant is the doctrine hinted at here, namely that aside from possible personal failings, atheism may have a deeper cause, namely a wrong conception of the divine.

Cleinias' unjustified optimism about the force of religious beliefs is therefore to be ascribed to his ignorance of the state of affairs outside his native Crete (886b4-5). According to the Stranger, he is very fortunate that thanks to the excellence of Cretan constitution, they do not experience this phenomenon which causes such problems in his native Athens. The problem in question has to do with written accounts of the gods (ἐν γράμμασι λόγοι κείμενοι ... περὶ θεῶν) that may be either 'in verse' (ἐν τισι μέτροις), or 'not in verse' (ἄνευ μέτρων), i.e. written either by poets or by theologically inclined writers of prose (886b10-c1).[22] With respect to the Cretan constitution, we can speculate that if these accounts did not circulate there, theology must have been determined entirely by the lawgivers, giving no room to such accounts.

Moreover, according to the Athenian Stranger, one should distinguish between 'the ancients' and the 'moderns' in theology. The most ancient of written accounts (παλαιότατοι) are obviously those in meter, since what seems to be meant here are the mythological narratives about the gods and the creation of the world, accounts which deal with the issue of 'the natural origins of heaven and of everything else' (ὡς γέγονεν ἡ πρώτη φύσις οὐρανοῦ τῶν τε ἄλλων).[23] They provide a theogony, that is, an account of the origin of gods in the form of a narrative about their birth from one another and their mutual relations. It is not at all certain, the Athenian Stranger says, that such accounts are of any use to the listeners. He admits it would be hard to censure them (ἐπιτιμᾶν) because they are ancient

21 Cleary (2001), p. 127.

22 Cf. Schöpsdau (2011), p. 378.

23 Cf. Brisson (2000), p. 252, n. 5, see also Hesiod, *Theog*. 117, Plato, *Symp*. 178b.

(παλαιοί), thus implying presumably that their authority and truth have been proven by time. In his view, the most disturbing feature of these writings are the relations between parents and children they describe, which – he adds – contain nothing that is useful or true. The Stranger of course seems to have in mind the oftentimes violent conflicts between the generations of gods described in traditional Greek mythology. Ancient myths were criticised for depicting gods as immoral already by earlier thinkers, especially Xenophanes (DK 21 B 11-16), while Plato's Socrates does the same in the *Euthyphro* (6a-c), and even more notably in the *Republic* (II 376e-412c). Nevertheless, according to the Stranger, such accounts still may be told 'in whatever way is pleasing to the gods' (ὅπῃ θεοῖσιν φίλον) (886c2-d2). It would thus seem that the traditional theological accounts perhaps need just a little emendation and correction and then they could convey the truth about the gods quite adequately.

More serious is the latter case, that is, the theology of 'modern thinkers' (τῶν νέων ... καὶ σοφῶν) who reject the notion that celestial bodies can serve as proofs (τεκμήρια) of gods' existence because they do not believe that the stars are gods (θεοί) or divine things (θεῖα). These 'modern thinkers' managed to persuade the young that heavenly bodies are nothing but matter, that they are made of earth and stones. Such lifeless heavenly bodies then cannot be expected to take care (φροντίζειν) of human affairs. These beliefs are so successful and persuasive because they are 'decked' with arguments (λόγοισι περιπεπεμμένα)[24] which make them more likely to be believed (886d2-e1).

This clearly indicates that while the accounts of 'the ancients' are only partly wrong and it is only the depiction of immoral behaviours that makes them impious, 'the moderns' are guilty of the first two types of atheism and the third naturally follows from them as well. We mentioned above that the preamble to law against atheism is the only one that is to be based on rational argumentation. This is possibly because the law would touch upon the nature of the divine and in Plato's view, the higher levels of reality, especially the Forms, are accessible through intellect. Moreover, because the arguments (λόγοι) of 'modern' theologians undermine the traditional accounts of the gods, they should be countered by arguments that would be stronger but as rational as those of 'the moderns'.[25]

The most prominent feature of this whole passage (885c1-886e5) is certainly the importance assigned to the understanding of heavenly bodies. This subject is at least hinted at also in Plato's other late works and developed especially in the *Timaeus* but at present, we must leave a more detailed exposition of this dialogue aside.[26] In the *Laws*, it appears already in Book VII which mentions three sciences (μαθήματα) which free citizens

24 Cf. Brisson & Pradeau (2007), vol. II, p. 342, n. 16.

25 Cf. Brisson (2000), p. 248–251, Mayhew (2008), p. 65–68.

26 For a discussion of the role of gods in Plato's Timaeus, see especially Van Riel (2013).

should study, namely the arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. They are supposed to have not merely a practical application: they are seen as necessary parts of general education (817e-818d).[27] At the same time, however, the Athenian Stranger complains about the deplorable state of knowledge of these sciences in contemporary Greece and proposes that they should be included in the legislation of the best city so that its citizens be better acquainted with them (818d-820e).[28] Astronomy, nonetheless, stands apart. As the Athenian Stranger says, some people believe that 'when it comes to the greatest god and the universe as a whole (τὸν μέγιστον θεὸν καὶ ὅλον τὸν κόσμον), we say these are not a fit subject of study' and it is pointless 'to go poking around looking for explanations (τὰς αἰτίας)'. He immediately rejects this view and goes on to claim that this is exactly what should be done because this sort of science is highly beneficial to the city (820e-821b). The target of his criticism is obviously the kind of astronomical studies which presuppose that the heavenly bodies are lifeless lumps of matter, a view ascribed to some Presocratics, especially Anaxagoras.[29] Astronomical reasoning is thus viewed in a clearly positive light – provided that what it promotes is the right kind of astronomy. In this, the Stranger seems to endorse the very opposite of the opinion championed by Socrates in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (apart from I,4, see also I,1,11–16; IV,7,4–5) or in Plato's *Phaedo* (95e–99c), where – in the famous telling of Socrates' beginnings and his youthful admiration for Anaxagoras – astronomical knowledge is considered profitable only to a degree and investigation of complex problems is regarded as misleading.

In Book VII, the Stranger continues by claiming that nearly all his Greek contemporaries are wrong in their opinions regarding the great gods (μεγάλων θεῶν), the Sun, and the Moon. He ascribes this state of affairs to the general ignorance of mathematical sciences. Plato's contemporaries thus hold that the abovementioned heavenly bodies, as well as some other stars, 'never move in the same path' (οὐδέποτε τὴν αὐτὴν ὁδὸν ἰέναι). This is why they are called planets (πλανητά), which simply means errant or wandering stars. According to the Stranger, people, including the young, should learn about the stars so as not to be impious with respect to them, for instance when it comes to sacrifices or prayers. Moreover, he adds, the basic conclusions of this science are so straightforward that anyone can easily learn them. It is thus wrong to think that the celestial bodies wander irregularly, because first of all, they in fact follow always the same path, secondly, there are not many paths they follow, just one, and finally, they move in a circle (κύκλῳ) (821b-822d).[30] We can leave aside other details supplied by the Stranger: the main points made here are that celes-

27 Cf. Schöpsdau (2003), p. 600–603.

28 Cf. Schöpsdau (2003), p. 617–623.

29 Cf. Schöpsdau (2003), p. 623.

30 Cf. Schöpsdau (2003), p. 623–624, on the place of Plato in history of astronomy see Dicks (1970), ch. 5.

tial bodies move in a regular fashion and to attain a proper knowledge of this, mathematical astronomy is needed. Now we can see why it would be impious *not* to study astronomy.

It should also be noted that Plato treats here the Sun and the Moon as eminent deities. In traditional Greek understanding, they were usually treated as much less important gods than in the Middle Eastern religions and they had hardly any cult at all. In Book X of the *Laws*, however, Plato claims that the Greeks and Barbarians alike venerate them by prostration both when they rise and when they set (887e). In the *Symposium*, he portrays Socrates as praying to the Sun (220d) and in the *Apology*, he writes that not considering the Sun and Moon to be gods was one of the charges brought against him (26d).[31]

In Book X, Plato then goes on to argue – against the atheists – that the cosmos is not the product of pure chance because it is ordered by the soul. Later on, in Book XII, the Athenian Stranger returns to the idea that there are two things that motivate our belief in the gods (περὶ θεῶν ... πίστιν). First of all, it is the belief that the soul is the principle of the universe. Secondly, it is belief that is was 'the – clearly regular – movements of the stars and all other bodies controlled by the mind (ἐγκρατὴς νοῦς) which has imposed order on the universe (τὸ πᾶν διακεκοσμηκώς)'. The conclusion that the study of astronomy could lead to atheism is thus clearly wrong, unless these matters are studied in a shallow or misleading way, which happens to those who believe that 'things happen through necessity (ἀνάγκαις)' without an intervention of reasoning will (οὐ διανοίαις βουλήσεως) which in the ordering of the world pursues what is the best goal (ἀγαθῶν πέρι τελουμένων) (966d-967a).

To sum up, Plato tries to show that to understand properly the motion of celestial bodies, what is needed is, first of all, proper knowledge of mathematical astronomy, which can reveal that they move in perfectly regular way. Secondly, what is needed is a correct metaphysical and ontological framework in which this knowledge is set, in this case the assumption that what happens, happens not by chance or blind necessity but because it is ordered by the art of some higher intelligent design (cf. X 887c-899d). Needless to say, the regular motion of the stars supports this latter claim.

This is Plato's response to the atheism of 'the moderns' who reject the conception of stars as gods and believe them to be lifeless objects. Their theories are said to be persuasive because – as Plato notes – they are 'decked with arguments'. According to this view, they are just composed of matter, that is, they are unthinking, lifeless things. We saw that, based on Book VII, the Stranger's response to these 'moderns' would be that when mathematics is applied to astronomy, it turns out that, although it is not evident at first sight, stars move in a regular and perfect fashion. This is therefore the sufficient proof required before. Moreover, according to Plato,

31 Cf. Morrow (1993), p. 445–448, Schöpsdau (2003), p. 623–624, (2011), p. 382, see also Burkert (1985), p. 174–176.

a calendar – including specified religious feasts – should also be devised for the best city. It would be arranged according to the natural order of the periodical cycles in the world. Once again, this would be accomplished with the help of mathematics (VII 809d, 818c, VIII 828c).

Another feature prominent throughout the entire discussion of astronomy and celestial bodies is of course their identification with gods. Nevertheless, it seems that these are not the only gods that appear in the *Laws*. In Book XI, the Athenian Stranger notes that 'traditional customs concerning the gods (νόμοι περὶ θεοὺς ἀρχαῖοι) are everywhere of two kinds (διχῇ)'. First of all, we should honour the gods we 'plainly see' (σαφῶς ὁρῶντες): by this, he clearly means the celestial bodies. In Book X, it is furthermore specified that the source of their divinity are the souls (898e-899c). On the other hand, it is claimed in the same passage of Book XI, that 'for others we set up likenesses as objects of worship (εἰκόνας ἀγάλματα ἱδρυσάμενοι)'. These images are lifeless, literally without soul (ἀψύχους), but they are venerated because it pleases the gods who are represented by them, and these gods are themselves alive, literally ensouled (ἐμψύχους). They then 'respond by feeling kindly (εὔνοιαν) and grateful (χάριν) towards us' (930e-931a). This kind of veneration may be viewed as close to the third type of impiety criticised by Plato, but we should note that such religious cult ultimately differs from the popular idea that offerings can change gods' decision. It seems that although Plato is critical of the depiction of traditional gods presented by poets, he does not reject them altogether. He merely notes that they must be understood correctly, meaning they ought to be placed within the framework of his metaphysics and cosmology. This is apparent from the *Timaeus* (40d-41a), where Plato *en passant* mentions certain older poetic stories about the birth of gods and cosmos within an explanation of cosmology which includes an astral religion. The heavenly bodies conceived as divine and the traditional accounts of the gods thus seem to coexist in some way.[32] The aforementioned passage from the *Laws* thus seems to establish a more immediate contact between the gods and people who venerate them properly, but that does not mean that someone could alter the divine will. The traditional gods, who according to Timaeus' saying 'appear only as much as they wish to' (41a), obviously give signs to people who are thus directed by them. Nevertheless, it is an invitation to further inquiry into the divine plan of the world, as illustrated by the example of Socrates.

It would be tempting to extend this distinction to the 'ancient' and 'modern' theologians from Book X. The 'moderns' give account of celestial bodies while not understanding properly the nature of their divinity, while the 'ancients' tell stories about the traditional gods of Greek mythology which are often the target of Plato's criticism. If these are identical to those whose statues are set up in Book XI, it means that they, too,

32 Cf. Karfík (2004), p. 103–104, and Van Riel (2013), esp. 32–34, 50 53–54, 58–59.

have a soul and exist no less than the former. We can also note that according to books V and VIII (745b-c, 828b-d), the city and its population should be divided in twelve parts, *phylai*, consecrated to the twelve gods of the Greek pantheon – Hestia, Zeus, Athena, and Pluto are mentioned in this context. It indicates that even in Plato's utopian city, the traditional gods would retain their function in the life of the polis.[33] The second passage furthermore claims that we ought to distinguish between the celestial gods (οὐράνιοι) and those who follow them (τὸ τῶν τούτοις ἑπομένων) and the chthonic ones (χθόνιοι).[34]

It thus seems that to Plato, stars and planets are not the only gods he is willing to accept as genuine. It shows, once again, that at least in the *Laws* he does not believe the traditional theology to be entirely false. This much is also indicated in Book X, where it is said that the theological accounts provided by 'the ancients' may, after all, be pleasing to the gods. Nonetheless, this libation to the more traditional notion of gods should not blind us to the fact that Plato actually pursues here a highly innovative theology which divinises heavenly bodies and develops a sort of cosmic and astral religion, such as became influential in subsequent periods.[35] One could argue, though, based on what Plato himself says, that he does not see himself as proposing a religious reform but rather as merely providing a deeper understanding of the true nature of the world and the gods who had been venerated by the pious since time immemorial. He says that the traditional picture of Homeric gods is clearly correct in presenting them as living beings, but he is critical of the poets who portray them as committing immoral and irrational acts or being swayed by the gifts offered to them by mortals. But even so, he concludes, this is a more adequate concept of the gods than that presented by the young theologians who claim that everything is the result of interactions of lifeless matter produced by chance and necessity.

IV: HOW SHOULD ONE CONCEIVE OF THE GODS THEN? (886E6-887C4)

In the following passage of Book X, the Athenian Stranger once more raises two important questions about legislation. Firstly, according to the impious, it may be wrong to devise a legislation based on the assumption that the gods exist (νομοθετοῦντες ὡς ὄντων θεῶν). In other words, it could be objected against the Platonic lawgivers that theology should not be presupposed, that it should not be the foundation of legislation. The second

33 Cf. Morrow (1993), p. 434–445, Schöpsdau (2003), p. 336–342, (2011), p. 169–172, Bobonich (2018), par. 8: 'It is worth noting that Plato holds that citizens, in virtue of their standing in the political community, may legitimately expect to have a share in the administration of justice (*Laws* 767E9–768B3)'.

34 Cf. Morrow (1993), p. 449–453.

35 Cf. Mayhew (2008), p. 64–68 for Plato's place in the history of Greek religion in general, see Burkert (1985), p. 325–329, 332–337, on astral and cosmic religion, see Festugière (1949).

question is whether it may not be more practical to focus just on the laws themselves because the preamble (cf. *Leg*. IV 722c-723b) to the law against impiety, whose purpose is to persuade the citizens, could get too long. This is because to achieve this goal, 'a reasoned demonstration' would be required. Both points are resolutely rejected by Cleinias who makes it clear that it does not matter if the arguments (λόγοι) about gods' existence and their goodness turn out to be lengthy as long as they 'carry some conviction (πιθανότητά τινα)'. Here again, it is made clear that lawgivers should not simply impose laws and specify the appropriate punishments for their transgression. They are also supposed to 'convert' (τρεπώμεθα) those who are willing to listen by instilling in them 'fear of the gods' and 'moving on to put the appropriate laws in place' (886e6-887c4). One of the tasks of the lawgivers is thus to make people understand the reasons and motivation of the laws. Moreover, to achieve this, the citizens of Plato's city must understand what they are supposed to do and attain some understanding of the nature of the cosmos which the best city is a part of. Indeed, in this very passage (887b5-c2) it is stated that the preamble to laws against atheism would serve also as a preamble to Plato's legislation as a whole.[36] In general, Plato holds that the principles of legislation must be in accord with the principles of reality, in other words, there must be an agreement between *nomos* and *physis*.[37] From this perspective, the legislation cannot be developed without a rational theology that would have to be elaborated beforehand. This explains why, in Plato's *Laws*, such large theoretical framework (developed in Book X), including theology and cosmology, is needed to devise a proper legislation.

At this point, the subject of argumentation (λόγοι) about the gods is thus restated in positive terms. The goal of the discussion is to show with reasonable certainty that (1) the gods exist (θεοί τ' εἰσὶν), that (2) they are good (ἀγαθοί), and that (3) 'they have a higher regard for justice than human beings do' (δίκην τιμῶντες διαφερόντως ἀνθρώπων) (887b6-7). These seem to be the positive answers to the three types of atheism we encountered at the beginning. The first statement, that the gods exist, is clear enough. The second, that they are good, is an obvious elaboration of the claim that they care for humans. And finally, the last one, namely, that they are more just than the humans, could just mean that the gods decide matters in the best possible way and their decisions never change, regardless of the possible pleas of humans. Already earlier in this section (885d3-4), it is claimed that the gods 'are above the lure of gifts, and that they will not turn aside from the path of justice' (παρὰ τὸ δίκαιον ... παρατρέπεσθαι κηλούμενοι). Justice, especially the divine and all-encompassing one, is understood here as giving what is due to everyone, which naturally implies that decisions and conclusions

36 Cf. Brisson & Pradeau (2007), vol. II, p. 342–343, n. 19.

37 Cf. Cleary (2001), p. 125, 140.

based on it cannot be modified by supplications. Having said all this in advance, discussion about the gods and the cosmos, which is the subject of the remainder of Book X, can commence.

It is interesting to note once again that Gemistos Plethon, whose name was mentioned already above, apparently derived his conception of fate, according to which all events in the world are predetermined, from the positive version of the third type of atheism he found in Plato's *Laws* X.[38] Moreover, if we were to make a comparison with Xenophon's *Moralia* (I,4), it is perhaps not so surprising that the third kind of atheism (or its positive form, the divine justice) does not appear in his text. To Xenophon, humans are more privileged than animals. In his view, they are close to being 'the crown of the creation' and it even seems as if the world was made because of them. Although at the end of the chapter (I,4,19), the goal of Socrates' speech is to make his associates abstain from things which are impious (ἀνόσια), unjust (ἄδικα), or shameful (αἰσχρά), the more general picture is actually optimistic and humans do not seem to have any duties at all. One might be even inclined to think that according to Xenophon, gods would change their decision if it promoted human wellbeing. This emancipation of the humankind may perhaps be the result of Socrates' anthropological turn, but on this point, we probably will never have a definitive answer.

In Plato's *Laws*, in contrast, humans are much more integrated into the overall structure of the world, including the non-human world which is absent in Xenophon's picture. They are an integral part of the world and their duties, laws, and ethics correspond to their place in the world as a whole, and that, in turn, is ultimately determined by their relation to the divine. The gods may be perhaps absolutely just, but they will not be moved by prayers and entreaties because they sustain the whole and set the rules according to which each gets its due.[39]

CONCLUSION

At this point, all Plato's cards are on the table. In the remaining arguments of Book X of the *Laws*, he tries to finish his task, i.e. to refute the three types of atheism. Nevertheless, we saw that Plato's definitions of impiety and thus conversely also of the correct ideas about the gods are far from the obvious and commonly accepted – and that was true already at the time when he wrote his dialogue. His initial definitions of what is and is not pious clearly demarcate the field on which the subsequent argument will develop and outline the concepts employed in the argument. The decisive moment comes with the proof of soul's priority over corporeal being. Analogically to human beings, the soul brings reason and order into the cosmos and, at the same time, it is responsible for its perfect circular motion. By this step, the traditional religion of a Greek city with its worship of gods is,

38 See especially Book II, chapter 6 of Plethon's *Laws*, cf. Hladký (2014), p. 51–52, 144–150.

39 Cf. Cleary (2001), p. 135, Frede (2002), p. 93–95, Mayhew (2008), p. 169, 172–174, 179.

so to say, suspended. Although it is still considered true in a certain way, the traditional mythological account is no longer the main source of our knowledge of the gods and can even be sometimes misleading. What Plato offers instead is a kind of cosmic or astral religion in which the gods and the planets play a key role. They are, however, still supposed to care about human beings, although obviously in a different and less personal way than the Homeric gods did.

In his innovative theology, Plato develops further some ideas he adopted from Socrates, for instance the famous claim that the god cannot be the source of any evil and, as we tried to show, the notion of the world organised according to a divine plan and providential care. Nevertheless, he shifts this notion considerably by abandoning Socrates' anthropological perspective in favour of a world order where each thing is integrated in its proper place and given its just due. Quite significantly, although the Athenian Stranger and Xenophon's Socrates share the conviction that the soul is higher than the body that is governed by it, Plato generalises this idea to the whole universe, whereas in Xenophon such an idea is not developed. Moreover, we can observe that Socrates' awareness of the limits of his knowledge, including physical investigations, is replaced by a more confident belief in the power of rational reason, belief in its ability to discover not only the structure of the sensible world but even the divine cause behind it. With Mark McPherran, we can thus perhaps conclude that at this point, philosophical reasoning about the gods moves away from Socratic 'Apollonian modesty' towards 'Platonic 'hubris'.[40]

40 Cf. McPherran (1996), p. 291–302, see also Burnyeat (2012), but also Van Riel's (2013) more moderate conclusions.

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Key Aspects of Moral Character in the Situationist Challenge

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ABSTRACT

Situationist Challenge in moral philosophy refers to the contemporary criticism of Aristotle's concept of moral character. It is based on a different area than the previous criticism, and thus presents a new challenge to the classical theory. Whether or not this critique is successful in challenging the empirical and normative adequacy of the Aristotelian concept, it is linked with an extensive discussion. I considered it important to explore what we can learn about the classical theory in the mirror of contemporary moral psychology. In this paper, I will introduce some of the aspects which constitute the Aristotelian concept of moral character, but have not been taken into account in the situationist criticism: the moral reasoning, the cultivation based on experience and the aspiration to self-improvement. These aspects are of course based on the general features of moral character (they are implied by them), and the argumentation which fails to appreciate them, fails in proper understanding of its object of criticism.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to outline three aspects of Aristotelian concept of moral character, which may prove to be quite important in its contemporary criticism led by philosophical situationists. As those aspects are routinely omitted from their description of moral character, it can be seen as an implication of the situationists' misunderstanding about the subject of the critique. Not all of these aspects are highly represented in the discussion between the situationists and the advocates of the Aristotelian concept, but still, the more important they may show themselves to be. The goal is then not to show whether or not the moral character is adequate and which of the parties has stronger arguments (more extensive works have been written on this subject). My intention is to point out that there are three important aspects of a moral character that have not (or at least not sufficiently) been taken into account in the situationist criticism, which has crippling consequences for some of the situationists' arguments. Consequences that are sometimes too obvious to imply anything else but misunderstanding about Aristotelian concept of moral character. I will start by clarifying important terms and by introducing both sides of the discussion. Then, one by one, I will introduce the three key aspects of moral character. And finally, I will explain, why exact understanding of the concept of moral character could be critical in this discussion.

1. SITUATIONIST CRITIQUE AND ITS CONTEXTS AND IMPORTANCE

The discussion that arises from situationist criticism is usually called the 'Situationist Challenge' and it focuses on a question whenever is Aristotelian concept of moral character adequate in the light of findings of contemporary psychology. The critique is based on empirical data (i.e. experiments) from the fields of social and cognitive psychology and it challenges empirical and normative adequacy of Aristotelian concept.[1] Whether or not it has sufficient arguments to introduce a decisive conclusion, it's aimed well enough to make a meaningful and important discussion.

By 'moral character' in this discussion I understand: A disposition (ἕξις) which is relatively reliable (that is temporally stable and consistent across situations) and ensure with sufficient probability relevant reaction (e.g. brave reaction) in all relevant situations (that is virtue-eliciting situations, e.g. danger) and in accordance with one's values and goals, despite situational factors which make this reaction difficult.[2] With this definition I aim to reasonably satisfy the wider understanding of Aristotelian concept of moral character represented in the discussion. That also means to stress those features which we can diagnose in empirical experiment, rather than focus strictly on prohairetic aspect of moral character.[3] Of course, with this definition I don't mean to shape the Aristotelian concept in any

1 Empirical adequacy is challenged simply by empirical data, should they imply that only a negligible number of people possesses a disposition called 'moral character'. Normative adequacy is challenged by empirical data indirectly on the ground of supposed impossibility of acquirement of moral character for most of us.

2 John Doris attaches another condition, namely, the evaluative integration (1998, pp. 507–8; 2002, pp. 21–3), which is based on *NE*. The familiar part of the sixth book (i.e. 1144b30–5a2) is often interpreted in such a way that if one has achieved at least one virtue (e.g. bravery), then he also has achieved all the others. Therefore, virtue in its perfect form cannot be isolated. Yet, this interpretation is hardly accepted by everybody (cf. Kamtekar 2004, pp. 468–9). But more importantly, despite of its explicit introduction by Doris, whether this condition is empirically or normatively adequate is not properly questioned in the discussion. The main reason may be that situationists' experiments are concerned with examining only one moral feature (i.e. virtue) at a time.

3 As reasonably required by Doris 2002, p. 26. Still, Doris in large part of the discussion considers overt behavior as an aspect of moral character and a part of its definition (e.g. Doris 2005), which I consider to be impossible to implement into a consistent concept of *Aristotelian* moral character. Thus, I use "reaction" in broad sense, including inner states. Also, the expression "sufficient probability" should put aside the objection that moral character is a rare disposition (cf. *NE* 1109a29). It may be true for a fully virtuous character, but moral character considered in this discussion should be a more common (in various degrees). What overall probability (same as reliability) is sufficient is intentionally vague, simply because there is no explicit agreement on some statistical degree. What is important is that whenever the degree is reasonable high for us to conclude that we can use the psychological findings to improve the cultivation of our moral character rather than to abandon it and focus on a different method to ensure a correct behavior in difficult situations (e.g. Doris 2002, pp. 146–9; Harman 2003, p. 91; Merritt et al 2010, pp. 389–91).

way, Aristotle's definition of moral character should be still applicable, just less convenient in the discussion.

Situationists argue that moral character is too unreliable (concerning its consistency across situations) and too weak (i.e. the probability of relevant reaction in relevant situations is too low) to devote our resources to its development.[4] Supposedly because people are usually unable to overcome various factors such as social pressure, momentary mental settings or even just something as routine as bad weather. According to situationists, moral character does not guide our behavior to such an extent as situations do. Temporal stability of moral character is not a subject of criticism, since we commonly call some people courageous or merciful because we are witnessing countless situations in which these people behave bravely or mercifully. Situationists do not want to question our everyday experience. However, according to John Doris these situations we are witnessing are, in the strict sense, the same (or relatively similar). In another case of danger, the courageous person would fail as everybody else. Doris calls this fragmented character "local".[5] The Aristotelian concept, however, presupposes fully reliable "global" moral character.[6]

Among advocates of Aristotelian moral character are two leading tendencies. First, accepting situationists' warning about unexpectedly strong influence of some situations as an opportunity to improve our understanding and cultivation of the concept of moral character (since overcoming difficult situations and do the right thing is what moral character is about).[7] Second (prevailing in later discussions), accusing situationists of "Mischaracterization", that is accusing them of introducing a simplified or inaccurate concept of Aristotelian moral character (usually reducing the role of inner states).[8]

Arguments within both camps are at least compatible if not similar. However, making a too strict distinction between the two rival groups in the Situationist Challenge may be misleading and should not lead us to the belief that we can identify two consistent parties without any internal conflicts. There are quite a few approaches on how to reconcile the concept of moral character with psychological findings and many of them are actively advocated by various authors. While leaving aside the discussion between situationist criticism and non-Aristotelian ethical theory, i.e. different philosophical traditions

4 E.g. Doris 1998, pp. 512–3; Doris 2002, pp. 110–2; Doris & Stich 2006.

5 Doris 2002, pp. 25–6; 62–6.

6 Despite several concrete examples, the general tone of Aristotle's expression he used to describe individual moral virtues is evident (*NE*, book III.–V.). Accordingly, man of practical wisdom is described as "to be able to deliberate well about what is good and expedient for himself, not in some particular respect, e.g. about what sorts of thing conduce to health or to strength, but about what sorts of thing conduce to the good life in general." (*NE* 1140a24–8.)

7 *NE* 1109a24–b26; Annas 2005, pp. 641–2; Kamtekar 2004, p. 461; Swanton 2005, p. 33.

8 E.g. Annas 2005, p. 637.

like Humean, early Confucianism or Stoicism, there are still contemporary theories responding to situationists' objections (e.g. CAPS, i.e. cognitive-affective personality system) as well as authors like Hagop Sarkissian, Robert M. Adams, John Sabini and Maury Silver who bring interesting arguments to the discussion but do not particularly pick either side.

2. THREE ASPECTS OF MORAL CHARACTER

THE MORAL REASONING

The first aspect of the moral character which makes moral character arguably resistant to situationist critique and which was omitted from the situationists' description of moral character is its substantial dependence on practical wisdom (φρόνησις), the aspect of moral reasoning. Moral character is then understood as a *disposition to act for reasons*.[9] That is the reason for action which follows our reaction in a virtue-eliciting situation. In Aristotle's terms we can understand this reason simply as "reason" (λόγος) or "right reason" (ὀρθὸς λόγος) in the case of correct reasoning.[10] The right reason, of course, is sometimes difficult to achieve. Aristotle warns us, that there are two ways how we can we fail in moral deliberation: we can be wrong about the universal or the particular. Being wrong about the universal means being wrong about what is ultimately *good* or *right* and what good man should do. Being wrong about the particular means being wrong about the fact, that *this* is the situation which demands a certain reaction.[11] But there is also another way to fail in practical wisdom, that is while searching for the best means towards a specific goal.[12] In these three ways we can succeed or fail and each of them produces *a reason* for action. Thus, we act as we act, because we have certain understanding of what is right and wrong (and what is preferable), because we have certain understanding of given situation and because we consider certain means as most fitting to fulfill what is preferable.

However, like in the most of associated experiments, situationists in large part of the discussion assess only overt behavior and mostly ignore inner states (including all reason for displayed behavior). And so, they conclude that experiment participants have responded poorly simply based on their displayed behavior.[13] This approach to moral character raised an objection (i.e. Mischaracterization response): if we want to assess moral character of other people, we need to analyze their reasons for acting to assess their *reaction* to the situation.[14] True, if our reasoning is right, but our behavior is not, then there is

9 Annas 2005, pp. 637–8.

10 E.g. *NE* 1144b20–5.

11 *NE* 1143b21, 1142a22.

12 *NE* 1144a6–9.

13 Some of the situations reflect this problem by consider overt behavior to be sufficient evidence (e.g. Doris 2002, pp. 16–7, 86–9; cf. Doris 2010, pp. 140–4), others don't see this as inconvenient at all (e.g. Badhwar 2009, p. 261).

14 Sreenivasan 2002, p. 58; Annas 2003, p. 24; Kamtekar 2004, pp. 470–1.

a problem. It would simply mean that we are incontinent (ἀκρατής) and our moral character fails to ensure relevant reaction to the situation. Still, it's safe to say that the behavior of the participants wasn't simply and one-sidedly wrong, because situations introduced in the experiments were arguably ambiguous, and the participants could have good reasons for their behavior, whether the reasons were about preferable goals, particulars, or means. When situationists do not appreciate an interpretative variability of the situations and assess moral character of other people simply based on their own understanding of what is relevant and important in given situation (and, indeed, in human life), or even how to ultimately deal with difficult social situations, then their interpretations will be flawed. Even if participants failed in "moral test", if we ignore their reasons, then there is no telling to what extent they failed (choosing inappropriate means due to lack of experience is not the same as disregarding what is the right thing to do due to situational factors).

For example, in Milgram's experiment there was a participant who was causing electric shocks to a person in a second room step by step with an increasing intensity, until that person stopped reacting, presumably being dead.[15] The experimenter, a professor of Yale University, only sat and repeated to the participant that he *needs to* continue the experiment.[16] Situationists argue that obedience to authority (i.e. situational factor) makes participants to act with an incredible cruelty regardless of their moral character.[17] But beside the screams there was no other sign of anything wrong. The experimenter, surprisingly, did not react to screaming at all, he didn't ever *try* to convince the participants not to worry. By using sentences prescribed for his role he might even sounded quite bored or apathetic (see note 16). *And* the participants knew very well that this experiment had taken place several times before. Surely the Yale university did not commit a mass murder unnoticed.[18] So maybe, there were good reasons to believe there was no real harm at all. Or at least it was a very difficult situation to read, perhaps too difficult for most people, arguably causing severe confusion.[19]

Doris for a significant part of the discussions argued, that overt behavior is a justified condition for the attribution of moral character, because it is

15 Milgram 1963, pp. 371–4.

16 Experimenter spoke with firm voice using phrases: "Please go on.", "The experiment requires that you continue.", "It is absolutely essential that you continue.", You have no other choice, you *must* go on.". If a participant asked or protested, he briefly reacted and finished his answer with "... so please go on" (Milgram 1963, p. 374).

17 E.g. Doris & Stich 2006.

18 Sabini & Silver 2005, pp. 550–3.

19 While Doris refused to interpret this situation as difficult (Doris 2002, pp. 39–42, 49–50; 2005, pp. 657–8), Milgram himself described participant's behavior as nervous and extremely tense, they were observed to "sweat, tremble, stutter, bite their lips, groan, and dig their fingernails into their flesh" and even to laugh bizarrely; only to (in few cases) apologize rather politely and indicating that they wish to leave (Milgram 1963, pp. 375–6).

supposedly supported by Aristotle's own claim and the concept of moral character without it would be unfalsifiable.[20] However, in the first case Doris refers to *NE* 1098b30–1099a5 which is ambiguous to say the least. Critical part about activity (ταύτης γάρ ἐστιν ἡ κατ᾽ αὐτὴν ἐνέργεια) probably refer to virtue rather than to happiness. Few years sooner Doris refused generally accepted interpretation of another part of *NE*, which supports statement that activity is not the most reliable indicator of moral character.[21] The second objection is probably too rash. The concept of moral character cannot call into question any empirical observation, the problem of falsification is only present if experiments are not sophisticated enough to avoid similar objections. Such experiments would have to be financially more expensive and more complex, as Doris himself suggests.[22] But that makes it worse for situationism rather than Aristotle's moral character.

Later for the sake of the argument Doris acknowledged the relevance of inner states, particularly practical wisdom, as a part of moral character. But at the same time he refused that something like practical wisdom could have a sufficient influence on our behavior, because our reasons for action are, as Doris and other situationists argue, prone to be shaped by situational factors.[23] To support this statement, they presented the impact of various cognitive biases on our reasoning.[24] At this point the discussion turns to be more psychological than philosophical and questions about self-control, emotional regulation or reappraisal of situations (i.e. cognitive change) are gaining more importance. While Aristotle has something to say about these problems,[25] the answer to this objection was very aptly formulated by Gopal Sreenivasan: "[it] proves too much and also proves too little". It proves that our ability to reason in moral situations is seriously crippled, which could have serious impact on any ethical theory, *or* it proves that moral reasoning can be in some situations challenging (so we need to put more effort to a proper moral education).[26] Either way, without more specific and convincing argumentation it seems this line of critic misses its point, i.e. whether or not is the Aristotelian concept of moral character flawed (in comparison with alternative concepts).

THE CULTIVATION BASED ON EXPERIENCE

Another aspect of moral character may seem quite simple and obvious, but it is important nonetheless. Moral character is (or should be) cultivated through experience during our life.[27] Still, there is one of the most quoted and particularly large experiment introduced by situationist critique, an experiment

20 Doris 2002, p. 17; Doris 2005, p. 664; 2002, p. 26.

21 I.e. *NE* 1111b 6–7; Doris 1998, p. 523, n. 25.

22 Doris 2002, pp. 38, 71.

23 Doris 2010.

24 Merritt et al 2010, pp. 360–3; Doris & Stich 2006, Doris 2010, pp. 142–4.

25 E.g. *NE* 1108b19–26, 1109a35–b24, or the parts related to continence and incontinence.

26 Sreenevasan 2014, pp. 309–10; Kamtekar 2004, p. 491; cf. Doris 2002, pp. 107–8.

27 *NE* 1142a12–21, 1095a1–4.

with more than eight thousand participants, which examined *honesty* as a moral trait of character.[28] The experiment is unique in more than one way with respect to the discussion, but the most important thing is that these participants were children aged from eight to sixteen years. This fact of course presents a problem, because in the case of *Aristotelian* concept of moral character even a "good" and well-behaved child has somewhat incomplete virtue (ἀρετὴ φυσικὴ), because it lacks experience as well as understanding of moral concepts like honesty or justice.[29] Not only a child has no practical wisdom it neither has any moral virtue. At first, due to lack of time. This is especially true for practical wisdom as one of the intellectual virtues that is formed by learning and experiencing things. But even moral virtue, while cultivated as a habit, undoubtedly requires time for a habituation. At second, as Aristotle clearly repeated several times, there is no moral virtue without practical wisdom.[30] Thus, a child is simply unable to act virtuously or even to choose (προαίρειν).[31] As Julia Annas appropriately noted, children obtain just fragmented moral views, the unification of which is enabled only by wider understanding later in life.[32]

Surprisingly there is only a single mention of this obstacle in discussion relevant to the Situationist Challenge.[33] Some other authors mention the age of the participants but see no serious trouble in it.[34] Yet, the main conclusion of this experiment is *just* that the moral behavior of participants is fragmentary. Therefore, this experiment might as well represent a support (rather than a criticism) of the Aristotelian concept.

THE ASPIRATION TO SELF-IMPROVEMENT

The third and final aspect of moral character that I want to present is the aspect of an improvement. Moral character is (or should be) constantly improving. The starting position on this question is similar as with the previous one: moral character is cultivated through experience during our life. When aiming to virtue, we begin with choices which are far from perfect (missing in preferable goals, particulars, or means), in time we improve our understanding of what is good and bad, and with enough experience later in life we come to practical wisdom.[35] But the problem in this case is different. Almost all experiments

28 Hartshorne & May 1928. Experimenters examined honest behavior of the same participants in various situations concerning stealing, lying, and cheating. Their conclusions were quoted as relevant for this discussion for example in Doris 2002, pp. 62–4; Sabini & Silver 2005, p. 540–1; Prinz 2009, pp. 119–20; Alfano 2013, pp. 38–9.

29 *NE* 1144b 1–16.

30 *NE* 1103a14–6, 1103a26–b2, 1144b24–32, 1139b4–5, 1178a16–9.

31 *NE* 1100a1–3, 1111b7–9.

32 Annas 2006, pp. 516–9. Latter Annas elaborates on this question (2011, pp. 21–6).

33 Kamtekar 2004, p. 466, n. 30.

34 E.g. Ross & Nisbett 1991, p. 98; Sabini & Silver 2005, p. 540, n. 19. Doris concludes that regardless, this study does "provide limited basis for conclusions regarding consistency in adult behavior" (2002, p. 63).

35 *NE* 1109a24–b24, 1098a20–2, 1142a12–6.

introduced by situationists put a single participant into a single situation and mark the result. The only exception to this is the experiment examining honesty, the rest of them never put a same participant again into a similar situation.

But the great advantage of moral character and virtue consists not only in dealing with unusual situations, but also in the effective improvements based on repeated experiences. That means being able to deal with them better next time. The improvement is not as apparent and characteristic aspect of Aristotelian moral character as the previous aspects, but I think it is justifiable. It may come as no surprise that the key role in the Situationist Challenge is played by practical wisdom, as a disposition to (among other things) *correctly* recognize moral features of a situation. But at this point I argue that the emotional part of virtue is also important. The effort to improvement is arguably implied by strong feelings for doing the right thing, while those feelings have its origin in value-like traits of moral character. Aristotle on several places notes that virtue and virtuous activity relate to pleasure and pain (ἡδονή, λύπη).[36] Also, virtue (as well as vice) is based on our conviction (πιστεύειν) about right and wrong, which we acquire when we get older; in the meantime we are not *convinced*, we just follow what others say.[37] Similarly, Aristotle suggests that to become truly virtuous (not only continent or incontinent) we need to accept what is right *as a part of ourselves* (συμφυῆναι).[38] This concept has some similarities, at least in the case of self-improvement, with intrinsic values and motivation: if we are having certain intrinsic or internal value concerning virtue, we are strongly convinced that virtuous life really is good and worth our time without any additional reward; when doing what is virtuous, we are happy and satisfied.[39] So, if the values (in the above-mentioned sense) are part of the moral character, then a (virtuously) kind person with a strong aversion to cruelty will more likely and with much greater concern reason about past situations, should he find out that he himself has acted cruelly due to situational influences. And through this reasoning he should improve his moral character.

Aristotle himself might point out this conclusion: the reasoning of an incontinent and more so a virtuous person about poorly resolved situations is likely to be accompanied by remorse (μεταμέλεια) and therefore the incontinent state is only temporary (unlike vice).[40] If the aspiration to self-improvement really is a significant aspect of the moral character, then it remains an open question, how relevant can be the evidence about adequacy of moral character which is based on singular observation.

And again, this aspiration as an aspect of moral character is mentioned

36 E.g. *NE* 1104b4–16, 1121a3, 1105a4.

37 *NE* 1151a11–26, 1142a15–21.

38 *NE* 1147a22–3.

39 E.g. Reeve 2009, pp. 128–35.

40 *NE* 1150b29–35, 1121a1–3, 1111a15–20.

only few times in the Situationist Challenge, it is mostly ignored.[41] Doris reflects this objection, but only briefly: the more we insist on moral character as a disposition to improve our reaction *after* a moral conflict, the more we lose the notion of moral character as a disposition capable of responding adequately in every situation.[42] But vice versa: the more we insist on moral character as a disposition to immediately solve any moral conflict, the more we lose the notion of moral character connected with strive for self-improvement, with regret of failures, and with joy of simply being a good person.

3. UNDERSTANDING OF MORAL CHARACTER

There are, of course, other relevant experiments, as well as objections to situationist criticism.[43] But I consider these three points to be the most significant for my conclusion, that there arguably is a misunderstanding about Aristotelian concept of moral character, and also I consider them the most important for further discussion. The first aspect (i.e. the reasoning) relates to an extensive discussion about the capabilities of practical wisdom. The other two aspects (i.e. the cultivation through experience and the aspiration to self-improvement) are mostly ignored, but they are no less important, because they also include a wider understanding of the concept of moral character. And the understanding of moral character is crucial to the Situationist Challenge. For 'how do we understand it' without doubts implies 'what do we expect from it'. Do we expect immediate or contemplative reaction to a situation, or both? How resistant do we expect moral character usually is? To whom is this disposition available? And what are its main advantages? Answers to these questions should be a starting point for any discussion about moral character. Unfortunately, these answers are missing in the situationists' approach or they are considered intuitive (i.e. presented as unproblematic statements and without further discussion).

If there really is a different understanding of moral character in the Situationist Challenge, there is little we can do but start over with these questions.

41 Annas 2006, pp. 523–4; Magundayao 2013, p. 98.

42 Doris 2005, pp. 658–9.

43 For brief introduction see Kamtekar 2004, pp. 462–6.

ABBREVIATIONS

NE	*Nicomachean Ethics*

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On Aristotle's Conception of Fear

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ABSTRACT

Aristotle had not treated autonomously the subject of fear and he had not formulated an independent theory for it. Instead, he chose to handle fear within the differentiated framework of four of his treatises: *Poetica*, *Ethica Nicomachea*, *Rhetorica* and *De Anima*, so as to illuminate the varied aspects of it. In *Poetica*, fear is a singularly emotional situation, aiming at the production of sentiments on behalf of (every kind of) an audience. In *Ethica Nicomachea*, the emotion of fear is related to acts of violence and is defined as the anticipation of the fearful and the evil. In *Rhetorica*, it is defined as the thought, feeling or even instinct of an imminent evil, damaging or able to bring up sorrow, being a product of our fantasy. In *De Anima*, Aristotle elucidates the nature of the physical conditions of fear and classifies it among the passions or affections of the soul. In his scattered references in these works, Aristotle treated the subject of fear as a mental, a psychological and, even, a physical condition – as an emotion, a passion, an act and an action. Aristotle's obscure argumentation in the last two works can be examined and reformulated, so as to reduce the possible inconsistencies and some incomprehensible points found in each case.

In our everyday life, we normally tend to think of fear as the sensation of agony someone feels in the presence or thought of a real or a hypothetical danger. It is the intense concern and penetrating worry for reprimand, criticism and the ultimate deeds of countermeasures or even retaliation, targeting in our adaptation of more submissive performances of behaviour and slowly leading to a life of permanent anxiety, distress and even cowardice. Indisputably, the primary or over-all foundation of all fears is the irrational fear of death being on the lookout every time and everywhere for people, also related to the acknowledgment of God.[1] This ultimate fear of death was alleviated successfully, within the entire philosophical tradition, by Epicurus, when detecting that the irrationality of this horrifying occurrence is ascertained by the fact that while death does not occur as an event throughout the duration of our life, this last is always acknowledged as a past event from the very first moment following our death.[2] This

1 «Ὅτι μέγας ὁ φόβος τοῦ Θεοῦ», Basilii Caesariensis 1681, p. 53; «...ὅτι μέγας ὁ φόβος τοῦ Θεοῦ...», Precationes sive orationes (e euchologio Goari), 20.2.85–86.

2 «οὐθὲν γάρ ἐστιν ἐν τῷ ζῆν δεινὸν τῷ κατειληφότι γνησίως τὸ μηθὲν ὑπάρχειν ἐν τῷ μὴ ζῆν δεινόν· ὥστε μάταιος ὁ λέγων δεδιέναι τὸν θάνατον οὐχ ὅτι λυπήσει παρὼν ἀλλ' ὅτι λυπεῖ μέλλων. ὃ γὰρ παρὸν οὐκ ἐνοχλεῖ προσδοκώμενον κενῶς λυπεῖ. τὸ φρικωδέστατον οὖν τῶν κακῶν ὁ θάνατος οὐθὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ἐπειδή περ ὅταν μὲν ἡμεῖς ὦμεν, ὁ θάνατος οὐ πάρεστιν· ὅταν δ' ὁ θάνατος παρῇ, τόθ' ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἐσμέν. οὔτε οὖν πρὸς τοὺς ζῶντάς ἐστιν οὔτε πρὸς τοὺς τετελευτηκότας, ἐπειδή περ περὶ οὓς μὲν

is actually the reason why our primitive and rudimentary fears cannot be considered, for most of the times, as well-grounded and are considered, every now and then, as phobias by the specialists, able of becoming obsessions, or at least acknowledged as that, easily leading to panic[3] and effortlessly being exploited by individuals and states.[4]

In the Greek lexicography, Fear (Φόβος) was complemented with the Dread (Δεῖμος), a personification of terror. By this association[5] and in the form of fear addressed towards the Gods and the Daemons (δεισιδαιμονία) a sense of piety, of being ashamed of and of reverence[6] was attributed to the semantics of fear, even from the years of Homer.[7] In their mythological status,[8] Fear and the Dread were considered as the two brothers, charioteers[9] of Mars and sons of himself with Aphrodite, escorting their father in the battlefield and occasionally joining Eris, the Greek goddess of chaos, strife and discord.[10] The affinity between the religious and the mythological conditions of Fear and the Dread and their relation to Mars account for the particular worship of them within the civil framework of the Spartan society.[11]

The philosophical perspective of fear was noticed by early Greek philosophers. For the Presocratics, errors should be avoided not because of fear but in a sense of duty (δέον);[12] fear, despite nurturing adulation, cannot necessitate good will;[13] its reciprocity derives from one's inability to be longed for;[14] it may stand as the cause of losing one's mind, calling off judgement and leading even to illness and madness.[15] While fearless was thought as a condition able to match the majestic[16] and as a fitting countermeasure versus the fearless behaviour of the others,[17] fear stands in opposition to our customary associations[18] and, as also sorrow, is ceasable by reason.[19] In its overall perception, it generates terror[20]

οὐκ ἔστιν, οἱ δ' οὐκέτι εἰσίν. ἀλλ' οἱ πολλοὶ τὸν θάνατον ὀτὲ μὲν ὡς μέγιστον τῶν κακῶν φεύγουσιν, ὀτὲ δὲ ὡς ἀνάπαυσιν τῶν ἐν τῷ ζῆν <κακῶν αἱροῦνται», Long 1964, 10.125,1–126,1.

3 «Πανικοῦ φόβου λύσις», Melber & Woelfflin 1887, 26, 2.

4 «ὡς δ' ἀπήλθομεν,χρόνῳ βραχεῖ στραφέντες, ἐξαπείδομεν τὸν ἄνδρα τὸν μὲν οὐδαμοῦ παρόντ' ἔτι, ἄνακτα δ' αὐτὸν ὀμμάτων ἐπίσκιον χεῖρ' ἀντέχοντα κρατός, ὡς δεινοῦ τινοςφόβου φανέντος οὐδ' ἀνασχετοῦ βλέπειν», Dain & Mazon 1960, p. 1651–52. Apart from these psychological parameters relating fear and the concise notion of state, cf. Nock 2001 and Robin 2004.

5 Cf. Democritus, *Testimonia* (Diels & Kranz 1951–1952), fr. 1, 108–9.

6 It is characteristic for the conception of fear as the means of achieving social order that in ancient Sparta there was a special temple devoted to Fear.

7 Cf. Mühll 1962, ξ 389 and χ 39.

8 It is noticeable that Φόβαι are the curled hair, snake looking Gorgons (δρακόντων φόβαι); Maehler 1971, 10, 75.

9 Kerényi 2012, p. 400.

10 Allen 1931, Δ 440, N 299 and O 119.

11 Cf. Epps 1933, pp. 12–29; Lipka 2002, p. 120.

12 Democritus, *Testimonia*, op. cit., fr. 41, 1–2.

13 Ibid., fr.268, 1–2.

14 Ibid., fr. 302, 15–17.

15 Gorgias, *Fragmenta*, (Diels & Kranz 1951–1952), fr. 11, 106–10.

16 Ibid., fr. 19, 6–7.

17 Ibid., fr. 6, 23.

18 Ibid., fr. 11, 103–6.

19 Ibid., fr. 11, 52.

20 Ibid., fr. 11, 56.

and, together with pain and danger, it outlines a state of affairs that we should keep ourselves away from.[21] Within this general scope and in order to confront with one's own fear(s), someone requires the undimmed wisdom (ἄθαμβος σοφίη[22]) and the science of nature.[23] The religious parameter of fear and the affinity of it with piety, primarily noticed from the time of Bias of Priene,[24] was attended by Plato,[25] who, several times, refers in his works to the fear of death. In his own wording Socrates says that to fear death is to think one knows what he does not.[26] While in *Protagoras*, within a discussion on virtues, fear is defined as an expectation of evil or dread,[27] in the *Laws*, and within an appraisal of temperance or modesty as the right attitude towards pleasure and pain, fear is defined as that which preceeds pain.[28]

21 Ibid., fr. 11a, 110–11.

22 Democritus, *Testimonia*, op. cit., fr. 216

23 Cf. Arrighetti 1973, XII & XI.

24 Cf. Diels & Kranz 1951–1952, op. cit., v. 1, fr. 6, 12.

25 The well-known quote, usually attributed to Plato, according to which *we can easily forgive the child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy is the adult who is afraid of the light* is not a quotation of Platonic works but rather a modern approach to the Socratic conception of light. The real source of the phrase quoted is the book *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari. A Fable About Fulfilling Your Dreams and Reaching Your Destiny* of Sharma 1997.

26 Plato, *Apologia Socratis* (Burnet 1900), 29: "to fear death is no other than to think oneself wise when one is not, to think one knows what one does not know. No one knows whether death may not be the greatest blessing for a man, men fear it as if they knew that it is the greatest of evils. And surely it is the most blameworthy ignorance to believe that one knows what one does not know", translated by G. M. A. Gruber.

27 Plato, *Protagoras*, 358 d 8.

I.

The information about Aristotle's conception of fear can be found in four of his treatises, in the *Poetica*,[29] *Ethica Nicomachea*,[30] *De Anima* and *Rhetorica*. In the Poetica, fear is considered as a singularly emotional situation, related to the production of sentiments and leading with pity progressively to the *katharsis* in tragedy.[31] It is considered as one of the emotions aroused in the audience – namely suggested to the readers, the auditors and the viewers – of a tragedy. This fear results, Aristotle suggests, when the audience understand that they, as human beings bound by universal laws, are subject to the same fate that befalls a tragic hero. The most influential reference to fear found in Aristotle's *Poetica* is found in his definition of the tragedy,[32] where Aristotle mentions the pleasure men take in such "imitations" of the tragic hero, i.e., in make-believe.[33]

On the other hand, nowadays, and on this issue of Aristotle's treatment of fear within the framework of his *Poetica*, one has to bear in mind additionally the political parameter of the audiences

28 Plato, *Laws*, 644 c 10.

29 Aristotle, Poetica, 1452 a 26, 1452 b 1, 1453 a 4–7, 1453 b 12 and 1456 b 1.

30 Cf. Bywater 1894, Γ, 1115 a 6–1116 a 9.

31 Cf. the first of the extracts following this paper.

32 Ibid. 1449 b 27.

33 Cf. Daniels & Scully 1992, pp. 204–217.

involved in the emotion of fear – as also, of course, of pity: being actually citizens of the State – both of its national depiction and of it as considered on global terms as an Hyper-State, the audiences are susceptible to the state-policies of fear and the widely imposed upon them of fear as a tool of motivation and manipulation.[34]

II.

In *Ethica Nicomachea* and within the discussion of moral virtues,[35] Aristotle, treating fear as an emotion, classifies it within anger, confidence, envy, joy, friendship, hatred, longing, jealousy and pity.[36] He refers to the relative character of its nature and implicitly relates it to acts by which violence is imposed[37] and by which the non-compulsory nature of courage emerges.[38] He refers to the calculative fashion in which fear evolves in our everyday intercourse and economy of life, relating it to the notions of illiberalisms, of excess and of deficiency.[39] He admits of the affiliation between fear and modesty (αἰδώς), basing it on the affinity between them, when considered as passions.[40] In his discussion of the appropriateness and justice of reciprocity and of the law of analogical retribution, we may observe that fear, as a fear for the consequences, may occur in the form of the incidental (κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς) both the justifiable and the non-justifiable performances of life and intercourse.[41] Fear is the means to achieve discipline and, in this sense, it opposes nobility in morals for most people.[42] In its ethical conception, according to Aristotle, fear and confidence (θάρρη) stand as two contrasting opposites facilitating courage (ἀνδρεία) as their mediating virtue (μεσότης)[43] – a virtue more particularly displayed in regard towards the objects of fear.[44] Within this conception, fear is defined as the anticipation of the fearful and the evil (προσδοκία κακοῦ), such as disgrace (ἀδοξία), poverty (πενία), disease (νόσος), lack of friends (ἀφιλία) and death (θάνατος), being considered separately on each occasion[45] and differentiating, in some cases, from man to man in magnitude and in degree.[46]

34 This line of thought, and its interrelation with the *Poetica*, is based upon the connection of politics with myth – a subject well elaborated in Aristotle's *Poetica* and related with the function of metaphor – as evolved within the contemporary framework of life; cf. Chris Erickson, *The Poetica of Fear. A Human Response to Human Security*, London, Continuum, 2010. The ultimate foundation of this connection is to be found on Aristotle's conception of *ὑπόληψις*, a term, which Simplicius, commenting on *De Anima* 427 b 21, described rather eloquently: φοβεῖται γάρ [τις] καὶ θαρρεῖ κατὰ τὴν οἴησιν, ἐπειδὴ ἐν πίστει ἡ οἴησις, Hayduck 1882, 11. 207, 3–5.

35 Cf. Aygün 2017, pp. 134–136 & 140.

36 Bywater 1894, op. cit., B, 1105 b 22.

37 Ibid., Γ, 1110 a 4.

38 Ibid., Γ, 1116 a 31.

39 Ibid., Δ, 1121 a 29–b 28.

40 Ibid., Δ, 1128 b 10–13.

41 Ibid., E, 1135 b 2–6.

42 Ibid., K, 1179 b 11–12.

43 Ibid., B, 1107 b 1. Cf. Dimmock & Fisher 2017, p. 53.

44 Ibid., Γ, 1117 a 29–31.

45 Ibid., Γ, 1115 a 4.

46 Ibid., Γ, 1115 b 7–11.

III.

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle investigates fear as cases or instances performed within the circumstances of life; thus, he refers to fear indifferently as a psychological, a mental and, although not mentioned straightforwardly, a physical occurrence. Fear is defined as the thought, feeling or even instinct of an imminent evil, damaging (φθαρτικόν)[47] or able to bring up sorrow (λύπη). It is a product of our fantasy (ἐκ φαντασίας), a possibility (ἐνδεχόμενον) of something near at hand, in the meaning of danger (κίνδυνος), described in the colors of imminence and of anticipation of the terrible.[48] He differentiates between fear itself and the preliminary signs that instigate it, being mainly preoccupied by them. These preliminary indications of fear and of things redoubtable about it can be restructured in the form of the following cases:

(a) the case of sensing the hostility or the anger of those having the tendency or the will, and therefore being about to have the ability ("ίκανότης) and the power (δύναμις), to do harm;
(b) the case of sensing the inclination to injustice or such intention of the other (ἄδικος τῷ προαιρεῖσθαι) accompanied by the power for it;
(c) causing fear on behalf of the people and in the form of fear as a reactionary behavior or as an act of retaliating, the case of the virtuous man, when, while continuously insulted, is coming in the power of doing harm;
(d) the acknowledgment to people of their own ability to impose harm and evil onto the others, which is a state of affairs preparatory of harmful deeds;
(e) the awareness of most people of the fact that, because of their interdependency with one another, when they yield to profit or cowardice while confronting danger, they will breach their affiliation with their accessories;
(f) the overbalance in power between people as potential subjects or objects of harmful deeds;
(g) the belief or the awareness of being treated in a harmful manner, as it makes people seek the right opportunity to retaliate and counteract;
(h) the constant rivalry for things that cannot be possessed at the same time by both opponents;
(i) the fear imposed to one by the awareness of the capacity of others to cause fear to someone mightier than the first;
(j) the fear of those feared by one mightier than them;
(k) the consideration of weaking of greater people;
(m) the consideration of people confronting people weaker than themselves as potential opponents; and finally,
(n) the consideration of fraudulent people, by those being mistreated and being done injustice.

47 Ross 1959, B,1382 a 21–22 and b 30.

48 «τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι κίνδυνος, φοβεροῦ πλησιασμός», Ross 1959, 1382 a 31–32.

The special conditions of fear are: (a) the impossibility of reparation, (b) the case in which any chance for reparation lies within the opponent, (c) the lack of any possible help and (d) the excitement of compassion by things that occur or are to occur to others. On the overall setting of fear, relating to the parameters of persons involved, of time occurred and of the objective resulted, fear lies within the unreliability, the unsettledness and the doubtfulness of hope on one hand and the definitiveness of the unexpected and the unforeseen on the other. It contrasts also with both the subsistence of any hope or expectation for recovery and of the conviction that nothing worse can happen to the individual.

IV.

One may say that in the above mentioned three treatises Aristotle gives complementary exemplifications of fear. That one should not reflect upon it solely as an emotion, a pathos or a mental state,[49] but one should also include in its perception the psychological and the physical implications of fearful events in the expectation of reason (λόγος ὀρθὸς) to resolve the anxiety caused by them. On the other hand, in his treatise *De Anima*, Aristotle elucidates the nature of the physical conditions and embodiment of fear. There he classifies fear among the passions or affections of the soul, such as anger, gentleness, pity, courage and joy. Through a vague according to himself,[50] argument, Aristotle tries to show that passions, fear included, have also a materialised feature; the way in which fear derives from imagination (φαντασία) as also its physical parameterisation become evident as follows:

i. in most cases the affections (of the soul), whether active or passive, cannot exist apart from the body;
ii. if thinking is a kind of imagination or, at least, is dependent upon it, it follows that thinking cannot exist apart from the body.
iii. if the affections of the soul, in which fear is included, are associated with our mental process, it follows that these passions should be considered associated with the body.

The interrelation between thinking and imagination, which this argument seems to lack, is clarified later by Aristotle in the analysis of imagination: imagination of things perceptible seems to be a blend (συμπλοκὴ) of perception (αἴσθησις) and opinion (δόξα).[51] It is actually an intermediary or intercessor between perceiving and thinking (νόησις), always implying perception and being itself implied by judgement;[52] it is also a motion of the soul caused by sensation, a process that presents an image which may persist even after the perception process disappears. Under

49 The differentiation between these interpretations of fear is evident in the reference καὶ τίνας πῶς ἔχοντες of *Rhetorica* B 1382 a 20 in relation to B 1378 a 20. On these variations in interpreting fear, cf. Garver 1982, p. 228–233 and Ferrari 1999, pp. 181–198.

50 Cf. Ross 1961, A, 403 a 3–6.

51 Ibid., Γ, 428 a 29–30.

52 Ibid., Γ, 427 b 16–17.

this approach this obscure argument could be rephrased as follows:

(a) since the soul considered separately from the body can not suffer any passion or activate one, it follows that sould should always be considered as either inseparable from the body or, at least, as associated with it;
(b) and since, or if, our thinking process or mental activity (νοεῖν) is a special (ἴδιον) or a pre-eminent (μάλιστα) characteristic, a part of or, at least, something associated with our soul;
(c) and since our imagination (φαντασία) can be recognised as either a part of our thinking activity (νοεῖν) or, at least, as something associated with it;[53]
(d) and since the process or movement of the affections of the soul, namely the passions of it including fear, is affiliated with or is a kind of our imagination,
(e) it follows that the affections of the soul cannot exist apart from the body or at least are associated with it;
(f) therefore fear, as one of the possible affections of the soul evolves specific physical conditions and is in its conception an inseparable (ἀχώριστον) trait of the soul, as all passions are formulae expressed in matter (ἔνυλοι λόγοι).[54]

In this series of sentences the third one could also be rephrased as follows and the whole argument could again be reshaped analytically:

1. a soul without a body cannot have or cause any passion;
2. thinking is a formal trait (ἴδιον) of the soul;
3. if thinking is some kind (εἶδος) of imagination or is associated with it;
4. it follows that imagination is associated or may be a part of the body;
5. if the affections, active or passive, belong to the special/formal part of the soul (ἴδια) and are not something common (κοινὸν) between the soul and the being having the soul;
6. it follows that soul could exist separately and independently from the body;
7. since this (6) may not stand;
8. it follows that affections of the soul belong to the common part (κοινὸν) between the soul and the being having the soul.

Offering a simplified form of this whole argument, Aristotle reorganizes his thought in the following, admirably direct and concise mode:

1. since the body is also affected when the affections of the soul appear,
2. thus, all the affections of the soul are associated with the body.[55]

On the subject of Aristotle's assessment of passions as movements of the soul, it becomes evident that while we have the sense of a movement of the

53 Cf. «καὶ γὰρ ὀρμῆς καὶ φόβου καὶ ἔρωτος αἴτιον αὐτοῖς ἡ φαντασία ποιητικόν», Hayduck 1883, 120, 2–3.

54 Ibid., A, 403 a 3–27. Cf. Miller 1999, p. 318.

55 «ἅμα γὰρ τούτοις πάσχει τι τὸ σῶμα»: ibid., 403 a 18–19.

soul, the last is only a mediating device whereby we do the things implied by our passions. Thus the subject of fear is not our soul but ourselves[56] or our heart,[57] while our soul is only the apparatus of this motion; it is not our soul that fears,[58] the movement does not take place in our soul, but sometimes penetrates to it and sometimes starts from it, quite analogically as the power of thinking (νοεῖν) and speculation (θεωρεῖν) are affections not of the mind but rather of the individual possessing the mind.[59] It is evident on this, that underneath the awkward and challenging character of the statements 3 and 4 of Aristotle's analytical version of argument, as also in the abbreviated form of argument that follows, the notions of ἀλλοίωσις as change and of ὑπόληψις as opinionated discernment[60] are realised so that we could better appreciate the kind of "association" or kinship between thinking (νόησις) and imagination (φαντασία) as also between δόξα, ἐπιστήμη and φρόνησις.

Reassessing all the above-mentioned constituents of Aristotle's thought and suggestions one may compile an account, as concise as possible, of his approach to fear and to its aspects. It would definitely be unfair to expect that he would have come up with a concrete theory of fear, as such an enterprise would, obviously, exceed the expectations of his general scope. This is the reason for a certain degree of inconsistency that has been attributed to problematic passages of his treatise *De Anima*.[61] As for the contemporary reader, it would also be unfair to trick him with the manifold dilemma on whether fear should be defined solely as an emotion, a passion, an act or activity. The more comprehensive treatment of the issue, according to which fear should be treated as a mental state, seems fairer, especially if one is to relate it mostly to Aristotle's approach in *De Anima* and, specifically, with the analogical mode employed in explaining it.[62] It is in this view and in this spirit, that Themistius, in his own paraphrasis of *De Anima*, treats fear, among the other passion of the soul, as rules of

56 Ibid., A, 408 a 34–b 18.

57 Ibid., Γ, 433 a 1.

58 On this Hayduck 1897, vol. 15, 154,19–155,35.

59 Ibid., A, 408 b 22–29. On the issue of fear and on the relation between imagination and thinking, cf. Beardete 1975, pp. 612–13.

60 Aristotle prefers at this point not to extend his analysis as for the notion of ὑπόληψις; cf. Aristotle, *De Anima*, 427 b 24–25. Ammonius defines ὑπόληψις as vague and uncertain knowledge, Busse 1895, 79,10.

61 On the inconsistency of certain passages of Aristotle's *De Anima*, cf. Hamlyn 1968; Schofield 1978, p. 129; Watson 1982, pp. 100–113.

62 On this analogical mode, cf. the following observation: "It is doubtless better not to say that the soul pities, learns, or fears, but that the human being does this with his soul"; *De Anima* 2.4.408 b 11–15. Although the soul is a cause of change it is not the subject in which these changes occur. Rather the acts are performed by the natural substance which has the soul. Similarly, on the modern emergence view, a human being (or a human brain) performs certain mental acts because it has a macro-state of consciousness, but the human or the brain is still the agent performing these acts"; Miller 1999, op. cit., p. 329.

engagement (ὅροι συμπλοκῆς) between the affections of the soul and the affections of the body.[63]

63 Heinze 1899, 5.3, 8, 35–37.

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