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Abstracts (12.3.23)

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11:00-13:30

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Glowacki

Matera

Monticini

Colizzi



Duarte Anjos <duarteanjos@campus.ul.pt>, University of Lisbon, “Gregory of Nyssa and the poiesis of contact with the divine”

14th June 16:00-18:00

In this paper I begin by establishing Gregory of Nyssa’s perception of reality as a hierarchical scheme composed of multiple ontological levels. This hierarchical perception of reality has a long tradition and is shared among Platonic philosophers, like Plotinus, as well as Christian theologians like Gregory of Nyssa. This perception of reality allows for the possibility of contact between different ontological levels. For example, in the philosophy of Gregory the ideal of life is to ascend as much as possible upwards, to the divine and intelligible realm. Fundamentally, the mechanism that allows for this ontological mobility is mimesis, a concept that, in a hierarchical perception of reality, links all ontological levels together. By which I mean that all ontological levels are related to each other through a relationship of mimesis, i.e. the material world is an image of the intelligible world. As such, in this paper I will delve into the concept of mimesis in the thought of Gregory of Nyssa.

I have previously defined mimesis as a mechanism composed of two parts, *theoria* and *poiesis*. Contemplation and creation. Mimesis is fundamental for Gregory’s metaphysical scheme, as well as contemplation. Both themes have been sufficiently studied and expounded upon by recent scholarship. In this paper, however, I will focus on the *poiesis* side of mimesis. I will argue that all contemplation of the intelligible/divine world implies a subsequent creation of a “poetical” object. This object, which, I will demonstrate, can both be a form of *logos* or a form of *ethos*, will have the power to express something of one’s divine vision. This object, in turn, will help whoever contemplates it to achieve a higher vision of the divine world. As such, I argue that *poiesis* is part of a fundamental mechanism of contact between ontological levels within Gregory of Nyssa’s perception of metaphysical reality. And inasmuch as contact with the divine level is mystical goal of Gregory’s thought, *poiesis* is a fundamental piece to understand Gregory’s idea of mysticism and soteriology.

Nikos G. Charalabopoulos <ncharalabopoulos@upatras.gr>, University of Patras, “John Chrysostom plays Plato (Homily 3 in 1 Corinthians, 20C-E Field=PG 61 27-28)”

14th June 16:00-18:00

While commenting on St Paul’s statement in his 1 Corinthians that he was sent by Christ to preach the Gospel by focusing on the importance of the Crucifixion and not relying primarily on rationalistic wisdom (οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου 19B), John Chrysostom elaborates on how Christians are supposed to confront their opponents so that they may win them over. He stresses that they should refrain from attributing to the Apostles any argumentative skills, lest the omnipotence of Christ’s grace were lost to the uninitiated. He claims to have been himself an earwitness to a heated exchange of arguments between a Christian and a pagan, each claiming victory in matters of intellect for their own champion, St Paul and Plato respectively. His main point is that arguing for Paul’s superiority over Plato in these terms is a mistake: he goes as far as to call their confrontation a ‘ridiculous debate’, given that the Christian defends a position more likely to be adopted by his opponent - and vice versa.

Interestingly, all three elements of Chrysostom’s criticism (reversal of roles, self-defeating argumentation, and reproachable performance) are to be found in the denouement of Plato’s Protagoras: there the personified conclusion of their reasoning pokes fun at both Socrates and Protagoras accusing them for abandoning their original theses on the teachability of virtue (δοκεῖ ἡμῶν ἡ ἄρτι ἕξοδος τῶν λόγων ὥσπερ



ἄνθρωπος κατηγορεῖν τε καὶ καταγελάειν 361a4-5). When therefore the Greek Father says that the Christian argued in a ridiculous manner (*καταγελάστως διαλεγομένου* 20C), he may have Plato in mind - the more so since one of the Platonic Socrates' guises is that of the archetypal 'ridiculed debater' (Lys. 211c1-2). Similarly, his denigration of human wisdom (20D), echoing the Pauline original (1 Cor. 2.13.1), has a solid Socratic-Platonic pedigree.

My paper comments on the subtle way John Chrysostom appropriates Plato's rhetorical sleight of hand for the purposes of undermining (the pagan supporters of) Plato.

Paolo Colizzi <paolocolizzi10@gmail.com>, Università Vita-Salute San Raffaele, "De pace Procli et Dionysii. The Neoplatonic Sources of Cusanus' Henoteistic Approach to the History of Religion"

17th June 11:00-13:30

The Neoplatonic Sources of Cusanus' Henoteistic Approach to the History of Religion

The aim of my paper is to analyze the influence of Proclus' *In Parmenidem* and Dionysius the Areopagite's *De coelesti hierarchia* in Cusanus' *De pace fidei*. More specifically, I will focus on chapter six of Cusanus' text. Here, Cusanus recounts a dialogue between the Word of God and an Islamic sage. In answering the sage's questions, the Word (expression of Cusanus' perspective) deals with the problem of finding a common framework in which one can consider not only 1) the Religions of the Book, which share the idea that there is only one God (the "unam absolutam sapientiam [...] quae est unus Deus" – VI, 16, p. 15, 12-13); 2) but also the Pagan traditions. In fact, the Arab asks to the Word: "quaeso cultores plurium deorum, quomodo cum philosophis in uno Deo concurrunt?" (VI, 17, 1-3) – how can it be possible to reconcile the idea that God is only "one" with a polytheistic approach? To solve this problem – essential to make a theoretical peace between all religions – Cusanus reveals a systematic approach to the history of religion that, being characterized by an henoteistic methodical principle, goes beyond both the ideas of monotheism and polytheism. In his perspective, there is no real polytheism: in fact, venerating the individual gods of the pantheon, the Pagans were conscious of venerating the only divinity in its various manifestations – "omnes qui unquam plures Deos coluerunt, divinitates esse praesupposuerunt. Illa enim in omnibus diis tamquam in participantibus eandem adorant" (VI, 17, p. 16, 6-7). Also, there is no real monotheism, since even in Christian theology there is not only the pure one God, but also the saints who must be considered as His manifestations: "cultus igitur confitetur divinitatem. Et qui dicit plures deos, dicit unum antecedenter omnium principium; sicut qui asserit plures esse sanctos, unum sanctum sanctorum, cuius participatione omnes alii sancti sunt, admittunt" (VI, 17, p. 16, 10-13). In this sense, the common framework between Paganism and the Religions of the Book consists in the fact that each of these traditions have thought of the Divine as at the same time One and many – One in its pure nature and many in its theophanies. As I will argue, this way of conceiving Christian theology and Pagan theology must be considered as a result of the influence of Dionysius the Areopagite and Proclus.

First, to build the pacification between the different cults, in the passages quoted above Cusanus uses a Platonic strategy, conceiving the unique God as the paradigm that is participated by every specific divinity or saint. As scholars have shown, the most important Neoplatonic sources for Cusanus are precisely Proclus and Dionysius. But, even looking at the critical edition of the *De pace fidei* (ed. Klibansky – Bascour), we can see that a possible Proclian or Dionysian influence on Cusanus on this topic was not noticed. Cusanus started reading intensively Proclus' *In Parmenidem* from 1450; so that during his writing of the *De pace fidei* (1453) he had it clearly in mind. And, in different marginalia that he wrote



on his own manuscript of the Proclian text, he underlined Proclian ideas that are very close to that conception of Pagan theology as henoteism that is represented in the *De pace fidei*. In fact, Proclus – while systematizing the Pagan pantheon in his metaphysical structure of reality – recognizes that the true God is only the One, and that the different divinities must be considered as the way in which it appears at the levels of being. This idea can be seen for example in *Parm. VI, 1096-1097* (ed. Luna): not by chance, in his own manuscript, Cusanus shows to be very interested in this very passage, underlining in the margin of it the idea that the One is “simpliciter deus” (Cusanus-Texte III. 2.2. *Expositio in Parmenidem Platonis*, ed. Bormann, p. 118, n. 474). Since he was young, Cusanus was also very well familiar with Dionysius. The Dionysian Christian angelology is heavily dependent on Proclian Neoplatonic philosophy: in fact, it is characterized by a Proclian triadic structure, in virtue of which the angels are conceived as different aspects of an intelligible realm manifesting the unique nature of God. As R. Roques said, “Proclus et Denys ont donné pour fonction au monde intelligible de faire sortir Dieu de son silence” (Introduction, in Denys, *La hiérarchie celeste*, pp. V-XCV: p. LXX).

Summing up, we could say that Cusanus inherits his henoteistic approach to the study and comparison of religious traditions from these two Platonic sources, and more specifically: 1) for Proclus for what concerns the Pagan side; 2) for Dionysius for what concerns the Christian side.

Viktoria Theodora Achillev Gaitana <victoriagaitana@hotmail.com>, Greece, “Aristotelian Categories: Christianity and Commentators. The cases of Saint John of Damascus (Damascene) and Saint Photius the Great”

16th June 14:00-16:00

“Aristotelian Categories: Christianity and commentators. The cases of Saint Damascene and Saint Photius the Great”. It is divided into three parts. In the first part there will be a presentation of the personality and work of Aristotle. The aim of this section is to highlight the work of the philosopher and the way he dealt with various aspects of life and science. Aristotle is characterized/regarded by scientists as the incarnation of the intellect. His teacher, Plato, uses the term “ο νοῦς” when he is referring to him. Although most of his treatises haven’t survived so far, they are considered a milestone in the history of philosophy. Hence, that is the reason many philosophers/scholars have been studying and annotating his works for centuries. The second part concerns the Christianity in Byzantium referring to the ways – if any – in which Greek philosophy and intellect may have influenced Christianity in the course of time. The Byzantine period is characterized by spiritual progress. Great works, written by scholars and thinkers, are considered to have a vital impact in the course of science and intellect. In the Byzantine era we have the termination of the philosophical schools and the birth of a new form of philosophy, which has also been called Christian philosophy. After a thorough study of the sources, we have decided to approach the Byzantine texts not as Christian philosophy but as the theology of Christianity which seems to be deeply influenced by the philosophy as it was expressed accordingly by the great ancient Greek philosophers. This new form of thinking, that is undoubtedly well-grounded in the Christian teachings, appears to have borrowed terms but not any meanings. In fact, what we observe in the representative writings of the time is an attempt of enriching them with meanings and thoughts of the past. In the third part we aim to study the Aristotelian thought influenced Christianity and philosophy through the texts of the time. More specifically, in our presentation we will try to examine and scrutinize the works written by: Patriarch of Constantinople Photius the Great and John of Damascus (Damascene). A typical example clarifying the



above can be found in the work «Πηγὴ Γνώσεως» by John of Damascus (Damascene). Here we will try to present and contrast some works with the Aristotelian writings. The authors of these works are great ecclesiastical men and intellectuals of the time who have been well versed in Aristotelian philosophy, as it is evident by the apparent use of the Aristotelian thought or its annotations that are broadly found or stated in their treatises. During the writing of this presentation along with the secondary bibliography, we have mainly used and studied the text of the treatises in ancient Greek language, so that the subject under discussion could be accurately and fully illuminated. Concluding the summary of our presentation after the detailed study of both the works and the relevant bibliography concerning the authors under study, we think that Aristotle's contribution to the Christianity should be considered of utmost importance, since it is obvious that the thought of the philosopher (of Stagira) Stagirite has offered a supreme guidance for a great number of scholars through the ages.

Marc-Thilo Glowacki <>, University of Adam Mickiewicz Poznań, “The Platonic notion of Light and its reception in Medieval mysticism in the writings of Aniela of Foligno”.

17th June 11:00-13:30

Light has been a very important element of various Platonic doctrines in antiquity. In his dialogue Republica, books VI and VII, Plato depicted light as the primary symbol of the divine. After him, other Platonists such as Plotinus or Proclus made the same thing. Also, Christianity absorbed the idea of merging divinity with light, either on grounds of the biblical texts, or Platonic notions. Medieval theologians, more or less conscious of being dependent on Platonism, elaborated their own concepts of light. In the mystical writings of Aniela of Foligno, each revelation is preceded by a divine light shining from above on the mystic. The aim of this presentation is to show, how contemporary theological ideas of light, based on Platonism, had an influence on Aniela of Foligno's mystical writings. It also aims to show in a broader perspective, how Platonic notions of light were mirrored in these mystical writings throughout medieval theological systems, especially those of St. Thomas of Aquinas and St. Bonaventure.

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Tamar Khubulava <tamar.khubulava@gmail.com>, Ilia State University Tbilisi, “The Love toward the One in Ioane Petritsi’s Philosophy”

17th June 11:00-13:30

The aim of my presentation is to explore the meaning of the love towards the One in Ioane Petritsi’s Philosophy. Petritsi is a Georgian translator and commentator of the ‘Elementatio Theologica’ of Proclus. All we know about Petritsi’s biography is that he lived around the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries. It can be assumed that he was educated in Constantinople by Michael Psellos and/or John Italus and then lived in the monastery of Gelati, the center of Georgian culture in the Middle Ages. He received his nickname ‘Petritsi’ from his intermediate stay at the Petritsoni Monastery (today’s Batshkovo Monastery in Bulgaria). Petritsi may also have been the author of several philosophical works. There only two works have survived: the translation of ‘Peri physeos anthropou’ by Nemesios of Emesa and of ‘Stoicheiosis theologic’ by Proclus. Petritsi also wrote a detailed commentary on the second work.

Petritsi can be described as a faithful Platonist and Proclian. He understands the One and the Good as the same, similar to Proclus. How does Petritsi characterize the One? He describes the One as lacking, pure and superior, as well as ‘Self-One’. The first One is something that can not be expressed and stands beyond the multiplicity. Nothing can be said about the One, since it is above all words and above all perfection. But it can be loved. Petritsi speaks about ‘the love towards the One’ as a path of ascent back to the One. According to Petritsi, the soul looks upward and desires the spiritual realm and the first cause of everything. The looking of the soul describes the state of the soul in which it enjoys what it sees. This state of soul is expressed in Georgian as *trpoba* (ტრფობა), i.e. the love and enjoyment of what the sighted person sees in what is seen. The love of the cause is the ‘return love’, *ukutrpoba* (უკუტრფობა), which is expressed in Greek as *ἐπιστρεπτικῶς*. Although the term ‘return love’ seems to have been invented by Petritsi himself Proclus also speaks about love and return in Commentary on the first Alcibiades of Plato. The term *ἐπιστρεπτικῶς* also appears in Dionysius Areopagite. Dionysius’ name does not appear in Petritsi’s commentary, but Petritsi should know the works of Dionysius from Greek and Georgian translations. It could well be that Petritsi, like Proclus, uses a method of harmonizing different methods and doctrines in order to combine the different doctrines, and in this case Christian and Platonic doctrine, together.

Petritsi understands love as the power and motivation of the soul to turn back to its causes and to know itself.

Bogna Kosmulska <bkosmulska@uw.edu.pl>, University of Warsaw, “Mirroring the Correct Teaching and Virtues. Two Mirror Metaphors in Maximus the Confessor’s Mystagogy”

15th June 9:00-11:00

The paper aims to present and contextualize two passages in Mystagogy where Maximus the Confessor uses a metaphor of a mirror. The first of them, from the introduction, treats a mirror as a figure of a teacher reflecting in a perfect manner (yet not mechanically) the correct teaching of the Church. The second, from the concluding part of the text (ch. 23), refers to the human soul and its virtues as reflecting God. Both metaphors are particularly interesting in the Christian Neoplatonic context (the latter being the explicit yet not quite faithful reference to Pseudo-Dionysius). They are also good examples of how the perspective of the text changes from theory to practice, from Christian doctrine to Christian theurgy.



Frederick Lauritzen <Frederick.lauritzen@scuolagrandesanmarco.it>, Scuola Grande di San Marco Venice, “Plotinus the Egyptian”

14th June 13:30-15:30

Plotinus was from Egypt and most probably from Lykopolis. The *Vita Plotini* does not mention the city or area of his origin. Recent studies have indicated that his spelling mistakes (pointed out by Porphyry) reflect contemporary usage in Egyptian papyri. His *Enneads* reveal that some ancient Egyptian doctrines are present in his thought. The *Vita Plotini* explains the origin of *Ennead* 3.4 as the result of the conversation between Plotinus and an Egyptian priest in Rome. This *ennead* reveals points of convergence with traditional Egyptian religion. With such a starting point the presentation will explore other doctrines in Plotinus which echo Egyptian ideas. Moreover, where there is an agreement between Egyptian doctrines and Plotinus, there is a disagreement with Proclus on the same points. These are numerous enough to indicate a probable Egyptian provenance of Plotinus.

Smilen Markov <smilenmarkov@gmail.com>, Bulgaria, “Logic and Eschatology in Aretha’s Commentary of the Apocalypse”

16th June 14:00-16:00

Arethas of Caesarea is Byzantine philosopher and theologian who lived in the late 9th/early 10th c. He is known for his commentaries on Aristotle’s *Categories* and Porphyry’s *Introduction*. In his *Commentary on the Apocalypse* Arethas demonstrates that this is neither a mere narration of the events that will mark the end of the world history, nor a messianic instruction for the political precursors of the Kingdom of God on earth. Although he follows the interpretative patterns of Oecumenius and, to a lesser extent, of Andreas, Arethas escapes the dilemmas caused by literal, moralistic or strictly dogmatic interpretations of the *Apocalypse*.

In his commentary on the *Apocalypse* Arethas uses four logical antinomies stemming from the neo-Platonic commentary tradition on Aristotle, namely: ‘unity-totality’, ‘particularity-universality’, ‘stability-change’ and ‘repose-movement’. These structures are used by Porphyry for describing the taxonomy of species and single beings. For Arethas particularity and universality, unity and plurality are fundamental categories, which have real existence and none of them is secondary. However, and this is a novelty, the unique single being is the bearer of these categories. The individual existence is a manifestation of unique ontological content, but it also reveals the generic principles of nature. Hence, single things do not form a fixed and unchangeable objective reality. On the contrary, every single thing possesses an intrinsic existential dynamism. And humans, being endowed with will, are able to restructure the reality they live in; their existence has a historical dimension. The paradigm of this dynamism of the single human existence is the person of Christ, who not only manifests the generic human nature, but transfigures and enriches the ontological potential of the latter.

Through the above mentioned logical antinomies Arethas reconstructs the meaning of the *Apocalypse* as symbolic representation of the movement of history towards the end, i.e. towards the second coming of Christ. Just as every single being, every historical event has the ability to manifest both the generic meaning of history, and the unique content of an indispensable episode of the history of salvation. Every moment in history is an irreproducible episode in the dialogue between God and humanity. This historical



symbolism plays an important methodological function in Byzantine theology. Arethas manages to express it through certain structures of Aristotelian logic and to apply it in the context of bible exegesis.

Aurelia Maruggi <aurelia.maruggi@outlook.it>, University of Jena, “Neoplatonic readings of Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics between the Byzantine and Latin worlds. Eustratius of Nicaea and Albert the Great.”

16th June 14:00-16:00

Neoplatonism deeply influenced the medieval interpretation of Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics (NE) in the Byzantine and Latin worlds. Between the 11th and 12th centuries, Eustratius of Nicaea and Michael of Ephesus commented on Aristotle’s NE in Byzantium. In the mid-13th century, the entire corpus of Byzantine-Greek commentaries on the NE circulated for the first time in the Latin West through Grosseteste’s *translatio Lincolnensis*. Eustratius’ commentary became one of Albert the Great’s central sources for reading, understanding, and interpreting the NE. While Eustratius of Nicaea’s commentary on the NE is well known in the current debate to be the expression of the Neoplatonic revisitation of the Aristotelian philosophy, only a little attention was paid to the discussion on its philosophical impact in the Medieval Latin world. In this paper, I will discuss the philosophical influence of Eustratius’ reading of Aristotle on Albert the Great’s *Super Ethica*. The textual analysis, discussion and interpretation of the two comments will show that Eustratius was a central filter for the Neoplatonic interpretation of the NE by Albert in two directions. On the one hand, following Eustratius, Albert integrates the Aristotelian theory of happiness into a complex Neoplatonic architecture, which understands the intellectual perfection of man as the outcome of an ethical path, culminating in the noetic perfection of the human soul. On the other hand, Eustratius became the Neoplatonic source by Albert for understanding the Aristotelian theory of contemplative happiness. In this regard, Albert recognizes, on one side, the affinities between Eustratius’ theory of Intellect and the doctrine of the *Liber de Causis*. He integrates, on the other side, Eustratius’ interpretation of the nature of the human soul and the limits of contemplation in his understanding of contemplative happiness in *Super Ethica*.

Margherita Matera <margherita.matera@mail.uni-goettingen.de>, Göttingen University, “Il commento alle Epistole 7 e 10 dello Pseudo Dionigi Areopagita tramandato del manoscritto palinsesto Parisinus graecus 1330”

17th June 11:00-13:30

Una delle unità codicologiche antiquiores del Parisinus graecus 1330 si compone di 139 fogli che trasmettono il Corpus completo degli scritti dello pseudo Dionigi l’Areopagita, anche se con considerevoli lacune, scritto in maiuscola ogivale e databile tra la fine dell’VIII e l’inizio del IX secolo d. C. In questa unità il testo è accompagnato da un commento intercalato da attribuire a Giovanni di Scitopoli (ca. 536–550), vi sono inoltre delle note marginali in maiuscola antica che tramandano un’esegesi riferibile ad Andrea di Creta (660–740).

La trascrizione delle pergamene palinseste, eseguita grazie a delle immagini multispettrali ad altissima risoluzione, oltre a dimostrare l’importanza del Parisinus nella *constitutio textus* del Corpus Dionysiacum (CD), ha permesso di accertare che il palinsesto condivide delle varianti, più o meno significative, con un gruppo ristretto di manoscritti.

Il mio intervento si concentrerà sull’analisi del commento alle Epp. 7 e 10 sopravvissuto nel Parisinus in una forma differente rispetto alle edizioni a stampa.



Nella storia testuale del commento al CD, l'esegesi di Giovanni di Scitopoli si è fusa con quella di Massimo il Confessore (580–662). Questa esegesi “mista” è tramandata dalla maggior parte dei testimoni manoscritti greci e si trova, in questa forma, anche nell'editio princeps del commento a opera di Guillaume Morel (Parigi, 1562) che attribuisce la paternità degli scholia al CD solamente al Confessore; l'editio princeps di Morel sarà poi ripresa da Balthasar Cordier (Anversa, 1634). Nel 1857, Jacques Paul Migne ristamperà una riedizione riveduta dell'opera di Cordier, datata 1755, nel IV volume della sua *Patrologia Graeca*.

Rispetto al testo della PG 4, edizione alla quale si farà riferimento per comodità, il palinsesto parigino tramanda – solamente per queste due lettere – delle porzioni di commento differenti e rinvenute, invece, in quei pochi codici che condividono con il nostro un numero notevole di varianti.

Questi scholia saranno presentati a conferma dello stretto rapporto tra il Parisinus graecus 1330 e uno specifico gruppo di testimoni greci del Corpus, molti dei quali deriverebbero da un iparchetipo comune, il cosiddetto Codex merus (Suchla 2011). Tale approfondimento cercherà di mostrare quale posto spetta nella tradizione manoscritta al palinsesto, il più antico testimone greco del Corpus degli scritti areopagitici a includere il commento di Giovanni di Scitopoli.

Francesco Monticini <fazenda9@gmail.com>, Università Roma Tre, “In Search of God: Nicephorus Gregoras' Commentary on Synesius' On Dreams”

17th June 11:00-13:30

At the beginning of the 5th century AD, the philosopher-bishop Synesius wrote to his old teacher – the Neoplatonic philosopher Hypatia – revealing that in his unpublished treatise about dreams he had put forward doctrines entirely new to Hellenic philosophy. Nine centuries later, in the 1320s/1330s, the Byzantine scholar Nicephorus Gregoras wrote a commentary on Synesius' *On Dreams*. This paper addresses this Palaiologan-era exegetical work. Firstly, it deals with the matter of the person who commissioned Gregoras' commentary, whose identity still remains unknown. Secondly, it discusses the reuse of Synesius' Neoplatonic accounts in the early Palaiologan era. While it seems that Synesius' main goal was to provide Neoplatonism with a doctrine about the survival of the person after earthly death – partially in agreement with Christianity, but also as an alternative to it – Gregoras and his cultural context seem to have been interested in Synesius' treaty because of epistemological reasons. Especially focusing on cosmological, psychological, and magic (demonological) issues, Gregoras examined that late antique work in search of a response to the following dilemma: what can the human being actually know while still alive? In other words: what is the relationship between the incarnated soul and Truth, between man and God? In the period of crisis that followed the Fourth Crusade, when the Eastern traditional historical model explicitly came into conflict with contemporary events, the Byzantines tried to redefine the exact place of man in nature and pinpoint its relationship with a divine realm that increasingly appeared as incomprehensible.

Tomáš Nejeschleba <tomas.nejeschleba@upol.cz>, Palacky University Olomouc, “Transformations of Augustine's Soliloquies in Middle Ages (Bonaventure) and Early Modern Philosophy (Valerian Magni)”.

14th June 16:00-18:00

According to the definition of Isidore of Seville, soliloquy is a figure in which we answer a question to ourselves, in other words, it is a dialogue in which we are our own partner, i.e. it is an inner dialogue. We



already encounter soliloquy in earlier ancient literary works, but it is not until Aurelius Augustine, who established a certain tradition of "soliloquy" literature, that we find soliloquy in the true sense of the word. Augustine's goal, in short, is to know himself (gnothi seauton) and to know God through personal inner dialogue.

In the Middle Ages the method of soliloquy changes, as the Soliloquium de quattuor mentalibus exercitiis of St. Bonaventure shows. In his dialogue, which follows Hugo of St. Victor, Bonaventure does not delve into his own concrete past and thought content, as in Augustine, but in his soliloquium the non-concrete soul speaks to the non-concrete inner man who teaches it how to perform the spiritual exercises that are meant to bring salvation to the mind.

The Soliloquium changes again in the early modern period, which can be illustrated in the work of Valerian Magni. This Capuchin made introspection the starting point of his philosophy, and he makes extensive use of the principle of soliloquy. Magni thus intends to create an alternative to scholastic Aristotelianism, and it is explicitly Bonaventure and Augustine who are to underpin the construction of his philosophical-theological system. He himself wrote a text entitled Soliloquia of the Soul with God (Soliloquia animae cum Deo), which has not yet been analyzed and evaluated in the literature. In contrast to Bonaventure's impersonal soliloquy, it is again Magni himself who performs introspection and seeks God in his own soul, that is, through a personal "gnothi seauton".

The paper will analyze Bonaventure's and Magni's conceptions of soliloquy as two ways of transforming the principles of Augustine's soliloquies.

Silva Petrosyan <silva.petrosyan@ysu.am>, [Yerevan State University](http://www.yerevan-state-university.am), "Armenian Neoplatonic Philosophy and Christological Debates"

14th June 16:00-18:00

The proposed paper will focus on the problems of Christological debates and the Armenian philosophy of the time. Armenian Neoplatonic Philosophy is represented at least by 4 eminent medieval thinkers, saints of the Armenian Apostolic Church; Movses Khorenatsi (Moses Chorenensis), Yeghise (Elise), David the Invincible, and Gregory of Narek, who continued the neoplatonic tradition in the X century. Gregory was declared a Doctor of the Universal Church by Pope Francis in 2015. Moses, Elise and David earned their education in the Greek cities and, especially, Alexandria. In "History of Armenia" Moses describes their educational trip to Alexandria, and in "History of Vardanants' war" Elise calls himself and David as people who travelled a lot in pursue of wisdom. David was a lecturer in Alexandrian school, and there are several extant works "apo phones David" in Greek.

After Chalcedon Moses and David joined the Christological debates, arguing in favor of the unified essence of the God-man, insisting that in Him the imperishable essence of God was combined with the human essence in an unspeakable way. Thus, they defended the Miaphyzite position of the Armenian Church, using the arguments based on the philosophy of the Neoplatonism. In a polemic with the Chalcedonian "pseudodox" (Armenian - "charapar") dyophysites, they insisted that "down-to-earth" (Armenian - "getnakokh") human being can hope for god-likeness. In his "Prolegomena" David states that perfect philosophers truly acquire a likeness to God as a result of caring for the soul. In "Panegyric to the Holy Cross", David speaks of the ascent of human to higher entities. And in the dialogical text of "Questionings Against Pseudodox Dyophysites," he and Moses passionately defend the pristine optimistic essence of the Christian doctrine concerning the unified nature of Christ.



Marta Przyszychowska <przymarta@gmail.com>, National Library of Poland, “The Neoplatonic roots of Anatolian monasticism – Eustathius the Philosopher/Eustathius of Sebastea”

16th June 14:00-16:00

In 2009, Federico Fatti published a hypothesis that Eustathius the Philosopher, described by Eunapius, converted to Christianity and became bishop of Sebastea (and master to Basil the Great). I shall present Fatti’s hypothesis and solve two important problems that he left unclear: the place of birth of two Eustathiuses and the mystery of the year 358, when Eustathius of Sebastea was already bishop and Eustathius the Philosopher is believed to have been sent by the emperor to Persia despite his Hellenic faith. When the two issues that could challenge Fatti’s thesis have been clarified, his claim, I think, will gain plausibility close to certainty. The identification of two Eustathiuses helps explain certain mysteries in the life of Eustathius the Philosopher and some peculiar features of the movement initiated by Eustathius of Sebastea. It is also a milestone in understanding the teaching of the Cappadocian Fathers as it provides us with a direct link between them and Neoplatonism and more specifically its Syrian branch initiated by Iamblichus – as Eustathius was a disciple of Aedesius, who in turn had been a disciple of Iamblichus.

Denis J.-J. Robichaud <drobichaud@nd.edu>, Notre Dame University, “Marsilio Ficino and the Emperor Julian’s Hymn to King Helios”

14th June 13:30-15:30

I propose to analyze Marsilio Ficino as an interpreter of Emperor Julian’s Hymn to King Helios. Ficino’s studies of Julian are not confined to the late 1480s and early 1490s while he worked extensively on Iamblichus, Priscianus Lydus, Plotinus, and the Corpus Dionysiacum. Julian is mentioned in a few of Ficino’s earlier works, especially in the 1470s when one finds Ficino acknowledging Julian’s hostility to Christianity while drawing inspiration from Julian’s Hymn. The basis of this research is my study of Ficino’s annotations on Julian’s Hymn to King Helios in a manuscript of his that contains several Byzantine Platonists, including Synesius, Psellos, and Pletho. I will explain Julian’s place in Ficino’s commentaries on the aforementioned Platonic philosophers and in Ficino’s own treatises on light.

Dionysios Skliris <dionysios.skliris@gmail.com>, Hellenic Open University, “The notion of impassibility in Saint Maximus the Confessor as an evolution of Proclean monism”

15th June 9:00-11:00

The presentation will examine how Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662) is using the terms *ἀπάθεια* and *ἐγκράτεια* in order to denote impassibility in contradistinction to a domination of passions (*ἐγκράτεια*) which is not altogether free from passion. Even though both terms might have a positive meaning, denoting the mastery over one’s desires, they are not totally interchangeable in the Maximian corpus. The term *ἐγκράτεια* might also signify a form of weakness, since the one who has to dominate someone or something is somehow affected by the dominated. On the contrary, true love is linked only to impassibility, which signifies a deeper overcoming of the dominated passion. Maximus’ thought presents thus some tensions, since it emphasizes the affection of the dominator by the dominated and a possible shifting of roles in a vicious circle. But it also aspires to confirm the Plotinian and Proclean monism, since the goal



is absolute freedom from the dialectics of domination (ἐπικράτεια). In this Saint Maximus is following the ontological project of Plotinus and Proclus for the fullest possible articulation of a monistic philosophical system that would refute Gnostic dualism. We will examine this topic in the consideration of desire where freedom is achieved through transformation (μετατροπή) rather than through domination and power over passions and compare it with the Platonist notion of σωφροσύνη.

Tomasz Stępień <t.stepien@uksw.edu.pl>, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University Warsaw Poland, “From ousia to physis. Differences and similarities of the terms in Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology”

14th June 13:30-15:30

In the second half of the 4th century, during the controversy between the Anomeans and the Cappadocian Fathers, we observe an extended use of philosophical terminology. In that period, especially the term ousia, which had been rarely discussed immediately after the Council of Nicaea, started to play important role since Eunomius had used it to defend his position. Although in answering Eunomius the Cappadocians were very careful in setting the proper understanding of ousia, they also very often used it interchangeably with physis. Ousia and physis seemed to have a similar meaning which designated divinity as common for the three divine persons. When discussing what the Trinity has in common Gregory of Nazianzus often says that it is substance or nature (Or 29). J. T. Lienhard notices that Nazianzen even preferred physis over ousia.

In the case of Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, we observe more interesting usages of ousia and physis because of the famous “social analogy” of the Trinity. It can be described similarly to the distinction of human nature (divine substance) and individual men (persons). However, Gregory of Nyssa seems to push this analogy even further. The term physis plays a more important role, and J. Zachhuber states that Gregory’s preference of physis over ousia is clearly stronger than in the case of his brother Basil. Examining the usage of those terms in Ad Ablabium J. Maspero notices that Gregory prefers physis because it renders the dynamic aspect, while ousia refers to the static aspect of the being of God, and by doing that Gregory of Nyssa develops his own ontological thought which can be no longer classified as belonging to any philosophical school.

The meaning and usage of both terms in the works of Gregory of Nyssa has been extensively analysed by many scholars (Maspero, Zachhuber). But it remains unclear what was the reason for the leap towards abandoning ousia in favour of physis. Was it a consequence of the extended use of the former by heterodox thinkers, an attempt to forge new metaphysical ideas, or rather to use the concepts already worked out on the philosophical grounds to express different aspects in describing the Trinity? The goal of this paper is to re-examine the relation between those terms and try to answer these questions.

Anthony Thomas <thom5398@umn.edu>, University of Minnesota, “The Power of Beauty: The Construction of Identity through Neoplatonic Rhetoric in Ambrose of Milan’s De Isaac vel anima”

15th June 9:00-11:00

Scholars have been aware of the dependence of the ending of Ambrose of Milan’s De Isaac vel anima on Enneads I.6 since the publication of Pierre Courcelle’s Recherches sur les “Confessions” de Saint Augustin (1950).¹ This has, moreover, received attention recently with Volker Henning Drecoll’s “Neuplatonismus und Christentum bei Ambrosius, De Isaac et anima” (2001).² Due, however, to the particular research foci



of these scholars, little attention has been given to the rhetorical ends to which Ambrose puts his adaptation of *Ennead I.6*. It is this rhetorical use of *Enneads I.6* that I consider in this paper. In particular, I demonstrate that Ambrose utilizes the Neoplatonic language describing Beauty, which he identifies with the second person of the Christian God/the One, so as to further his own theological and ecclesial political agenda. In doing so, he takes over the rhetorical power of Plotinus's language, as well as the cultural and intellectual capital of Neoplatonism, in order to create in his audience an identity inextricably bound to love for Christ. In this way, he moves them to have such a totalizing love for Christ that they will be willing to resist the imperial court, even at great personal risk.

Ambrose, a Christian bishop of Milan in the final quarter of the fourth century, was embroiled in the controversies of that century concerning the exact relationship between the persons of the Christian Trinity. Specifically, Ambrose believed that the persons of the Trinity were all equally God, without any subordination in their mutual relationships. Contrarywise, the "Arian" position tended to present the Son (and Holy Spirit) as in some way less fully God than the Father and subordinate to Him. As a bishop whose predecessor was an "Arian" and whose election to the episcopacy occurred amid great factional strife in Milan, Ambrose's episcopal career was marked by internal and external struggles concerning his theological opinions. Ambrose's *De Isaac vel anima*, a work arising from homilies given either in the 380s or 390s, provides an interpretation of the first meeting of the Hebrew patriarch Isaac and his bride Rebekah that examines their relationship through the lens of Christian interpretation of the *Song of Songs*, an erotic poem in the Hebrew Bible. Isaac is presented as prefiguring Christ (the Bridegroom of the *Song of Songs*) and Rebekah, the soul (the Bride).

In this paper, I demonstrate how Ambrose's adaptation and, at times, direct translation of *Enneads I.6.7-9* in the peroration of the *De Isaac* attempts to move his audience with desire for the Son, presented as Beauty and as worthy of greatest desire, so that they will assent to his theological propositions about the Son, without him needing to convince them with further rational proofs. Ambrose, borrowing from Plotinus's theme of the purification of the soul in its ascent to the One, uses the totalizing love for the Son that his language evokes and the Neoplatonic imagery of the Son as their true homeland. This allows him to lead his audience to see their true identity as found in spiritual goods and ultimately in God, so that they will place their commitment to the Son and to his divinity above their duties to other aspects of their lives, whether these concern family, business, or the state. Ambrose, relying on Plotinus, accomplishes this by presenting all other goods as contingent and dependent on God, who is not contingent. He thus creates an overpowering identity for his congregation that can overrule any other element of their identity. We can see that Ambrose was successful in this endeavor by the fact that, when his theology apparently caused a conflict with the imperial court in the mid-380s (around the time that the homilies that the *De Isaac* is based on may have been delivered) he was able to muster sufficient popular support that Emperor Valentinian II and Empress Justina were forced to back down and, effectively, concede supreme authority in Milan to Ambrose. This paper thus demonstrates the rhetorical power that Neoplatonic language was capable of having in Late Antiquity and its potential for adaptation by Christian theologians and rhetors.

1 Pierre Courcelle, *Recherches sur les "Confessions" de Saint Augustin* (Paris: De Boccard, 1950).

2 Volker Henning Drecoll, "Neuplatonismus und Christentum bei Ambrosius, *De Isaac et anima*," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 5 (2001): 104–30. See also Pierre Hadot, "Platon et Plotin dans trois sermons de saint Ambroise," *Revue des Études Latines* 34 (1956): 202–20; and Goulven Madec, *Saint Ambroise et la philosophie* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1974).



Sarah Klitenic Wear <swear@franciscan.edu>, Franciscan University Steubenville Ohio, “Neoplatonic Imagery and Mary in the Byzantine Reception of Nous”

15th June 9:00-11:00

In the Akathist hymn, Mary’s intellect moves from this realm, to the celestial world, to a purely noetic realm where it remains with Christ. Mary acts as the supreme recipient of divine light which she then transmits to noetic beings receptive to this noetic light. As transmitter of divine light, Mary, called “the illustration of the angels’ life” (13.173), has the metaphysical position of a Dionysian angel who receives divine light without intermediary that is then used to enlighten the noetic beings below. Divine light has a similar function in the thought of Proclus. For Proclus, divine light illuminates the soul of those who have turned towards Nous; noetic illumination fills the soul, enabling it to contemplate the forms. Proclus attributes human access to this illumination in the Platonic Theology (PT I 25, 113, 5-10) to theurgic power which is “higher than human wisdom and knowledge, embracing the goodness of divinization, the purifying powers of initiation, and in a word all the operation of divine possession.” The Akathist hymn uses similar language to describe Mary’s intellect, which encompasses Procline theurgic power. Gregory Palamas uses the Akathist hymn to secure Mary as the holder of the highest theurgic wisdom; in Homily 14.14-15 he describes Mary as the mediator of divine light using imagery found in the Akathistos hymn. Likewise, in Triads 2.2.1, Gregory Palamas cites stanza 17 of the Akathistos hymn in his argument against Barlaam the Calabrian when he says that Mary has wisdom beyond Neoplatonic metaphysics and theurgy. This paper will look at the Dionysian reception of noetic power and Mary, particularly with respect to Proclus’s language of noetic illumination and theurgy.

Anna Zhyrkova <anna.zhyrkova@gmail.com>, Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow, “Beyond Substance: Philosophical Import and Novelty of Plotinus’ Account of the First Principle Viewed through the Lens of Its Christian Reappropriation”

14th June 13:30-15:30

The discourses developed by Christians in order to put forward an elucidation of the very being of Divinity, are built, both in their philosophical and theological varieties, on and around one pivotal metaphysical assumption: that God is absolutely different from any kind of created beings. He is not deemed a being, an entity or a substance, but One who is beyond any being, entity or substance. Such notion of God was espoused by many influential theological and philosophical authorities throughout centuries. Probably the most obvious, but also most crucial among those authorities is Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. His apophatic stance does not result, however, from an analysis and interpretation of the text of Exodus 3:14 (i.e. the very famous “*הֵנָּה אֲנִי וְאֵין אֲנִי*,” “Ego sum qui sum,” “*Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὄν*”). Rather, he simply embraced a philosophical argumentation developed and elaborated in much more detail already by Plotinus and by some of his Neoplatonic followers, reappropriating in particular Plotinus’ elucidation of the First Principle in terms of what is “beyond substance” and “not-entity.” This Christian embracement of Plotinus’ views creates a unique analytical perspective. Perceived through such lens, Plotinus’ doctrine of First Principle reveals its originality and shows its novelty with respect to the proposals of his Platonic, Medioplatic, and Neopythagorean (or even Pythagorean) predecessors that have been pointed, in some recent studies, as possible sources for, and influences on, Plotinus’ idea of the First Principle.