



Jesus and His Gnostic School

*Dionysios to Plethon
to Giordano Bruno*

Stefan Grossmann

JESUS AND HIS GNOSTIC SCHOOL

Much has been speculated on the cruel assassination of an early scientist, Giordano Bruno, who lived in the Renaissance. The assassins were church people from the Vatican. Their motive is no longer clear. This book digs into obscure antiquarian subjects and presents a plausible motive: Bruno was a member of a secret society, an early form of the Rosicrucians, that the fanatic killers branded as “heretic”.

The killers, apparently, had reason to be very afraid. This book illustrates for the first time the background through connections running back into the Byzantine empire, which fell to the Turks in 1453, through the late Byzantine philosopher George Gemistos Plethon, and running back all the way to the Gnostic teacher Jeshua, who was renamed Jesus probably several decades after his death. This book also points out that the Gospels are literary forms of ancient Egyptian Gnostic spiritual knowledge. The entire connection amounts to a secret school of Jesus. During the Renaissance, the Pope and his spies apparently tried to uncover and kill the members of Jesus’ secret school, a school whose knowledge placed the Church in mortal danger; but it looks like they left their job unfinished.

A story that needs to be told to open people’s eyes to the nature of the Catholic church to this day, especially the Jesuit Order. A story that needs to be told, also, to make people aware of the nature of the spiritual teachings that the Church believes will kill it. The “thriller” elements of history only appear in the sidelines of this book. This is a scholarly work in the history of philosophy dedicated to philosophical aspects of the teachings of this old Gnostic school.

The central concept used in this book is William James’ “noetic state”. It is identified with Byzantine Hesychasm, i.e., the widespread phenomenon of Byzantine mysticism. The noetic state is explained primarily in the third and sixth Essays, but is developed running throughout all six essays and through the concluding part at the end. A related concept is the “henosis” of Plotinus, the Neo-Platonic School and Dionysios Areopagita, through the latter of whom the noetic state became the key focus of Orthodox Byzantine Christianity, in a covert conflict with surviving pagan hold-overs that to this day still dominate Vatican Christianity of the west.

The last great Byzantine philosopher, George Gemistos Plethon, is identified as the secret head of Christian Gnosticism, the preservers of the noetic mystic state since Jeshua (Jesus Christ). At the end, radical scholarship is lined up to unveil the Gospel and New Testament myths, drawing into question the key texts of religious Christianity, in an effort to usher in the ancient spiritual science that has always lingered behind Christianity since its great founder.

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Dionysios to Plethon
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STEFAN GROSSMANN

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There is a short summary at the end of each Essay.

Part 7 is not an Essay but is a synthesis.

Key Feature Overview

The Notion of the Noetic State (Henosis) throughout this Book:

People who work, who are family householders, who live the life that people normally live, are unaware of the noetic state in their lives. The term was introduced and used by William James. This page outlines how the term is developed in this book:

The first Essay (On Ideation) explains the noetic state using classical philosophy. Classical philosophy does not explain states but explains processes. This is the second most difficult essay in the book.

The second Essay (Heart of Light) provides an appropriate ambient surrounding for the explanation of Daniel Merkur of Gnosis, an ancient esoteric tradition. The relevant theme of metaphorology is introduced (Hans Blumenberg), together with the mental “seeing” of knowledge, named “understanding”. Swedenborg’s analysis of key symbols is presented. This could be subtitled: a philosophical seminar on beginner’s Byzantine philosophy.

The third Essay is one of two feature essays around the concept of the noetic state, here: using a text of Plethon (On Fate) and its counterpart by Giordano Bruno, developing five layers of understanding. This is a continuation of the “philosophical seminar”, demonstrating that the integral secular-sacred holistic Byzantine philosophy can lead up from “philosophy” (processes of consciousness) to Gnosis (states of consciousness, personal knowledge and practice of the soul, etc.).

The fourth Essay digresses; the subject (proof of Jeshua/Jesus through the Turin Shroud) is foundational for proposing a secret school of Jesus.

The fifth Essay (Symeon and the Kingdom of GOD) is a confrontation with a master of heavenly vision from late middle Byzantium, on a higher level than Swedenborg.

The sixth Essay is the second of two feature essays around the concept of the noetic state, here: using details of the Renaissance from Plethon to Giordano Bruno, with a Jungian analysis for symbols in the dream state, transposed for the (waking) noetic state. This sixth essay, ranking before the first Essay, is the most difficult essay in the book.

In the concluding part (seventh part of this book), the notion is traced to a level of symbols beyond words.

Preface

I submit to the opinion written to me by a specialist that this book fails to establish clear historical evidence that a School of Jesus did, in fact, exist, joining Dionysios the Areopagite, George Gemistos Plethon, and Giordano Bruno. I do not feel that that makes this book, the product of long gestation, worthless, however.

Looking back, it has not been my primary aim to put together, with all due respect, relatively trivial historical details, such as lineages of teachings, that one would normally expect from a scholarly book. Certainly, I did try, and possibly I have made such connections a bit more plausible than they would be without the dots that are connected in this book. I submit that aspect of my efforts to the elite group of specialists on these themes, with the hope that some new questions of interest may have been raised.

In terms of evidence, I have mainly attacked the notion held by a number of scholars, that the last great philosopher of the Byzantine empire, George Gemistos Plethon, was a “pagan”. I am afraid that that theory is too speculative for me. I have shown with a plethora of alternate plausible explanations that we really do not know, or have particularly good words for, what G.G. Plethon actually was. I come out of these labours with the conclusion that Plethon was many things, among the least of which is a qualification as a “pagan”.

Further in terms of evidence, going to the founder of the secret School - so secret it is beyond evidence in a certain way of understanding that word - I have gone to the evidence that we have for Jesus. That effort is focussed in the fourth of the six Essays in this book. As the Essay shows, there is today a mass of evidence. The result is, nevertheless, such that there remains an opening to believe whatever you, the reader, deep inside you, wish to believe. That is a basic principle that I like.

For people who are not specialists who deal professionally with the intellectual history of Byzantium and of the Renaissance, there is much more evidence in this book, however, than I just outlined: There is evidence of a secret school of Jesus not so much in the historical record, as in the mind itself. I intend that statement as descriptive, not as provocative. The difficulty of evidence that this book is dealing with is typical for mental facts. Their observation is always subjective.

There are two subjective observations that I submit to the reader:

Firstly, the secret School of Jesus significantly changed the mind in history from the sixth to the sixteenth century. Tracing that change through the centuries is a laborious task because so much of the documentation has been lost. It is a detective’s work with many possibilities of going amiss.

Secondly, the secret School of Jesus can significantly change the mind of the reader. I call the history of the School, as far as I was able to record it and to outline it through the course of history, an open textbook of the lost Christian Gnostic teachings of Jesus, a textbook that I have tried to reconstruct, in an at least halfway readable form, in this book. Maybe you will agree, and maybe not. There is nothing in this book that will, or tries to, force you to believe or not to believe the subjective evidence in the mind. A strong motive that I had was simple curiosity.

The, subjective, evidence for the second aspect is outside of the timelines of history. Speaking for myself, I have discovered that at the heart of the secret School, it teaches the right forms to deal with the Spirit. There is knowledge, but it is purely formal. Plethon says that the highest philosophy cannot be written down. As the example of emblematic shows, on the background of ancient myth and its rationalizations by philosophy, there can develop in the mind an inner language of images and of mentally visualized symbols. That is, a semiotics of the inner light, which develops through noetic states of extensively practiced mystical contact.

The greatest revolutions in history are media revolutions. Professor Marshall McLuhan elucidated this in his writings. He coined the phrase, “the medium is the message”. A secretary while typing his manuscript inadvertently changed McLuhan’s phrase into the famous “the medium is the message”. The message of the secret School of Jesus is the medium. The medium is the mind, free from restrictions of ego: the inner light, rising like a sun in a universal language of symbols, of archetypes, of spaces, of worlds, of mystical contacts in the waking consciousness. That is Utopian, and it is happening today. The Pope and his spies will not be able to stop it. The popes in history have already murdered enough three-digit millions of people in history in their frenzied efforts to keep the lid on this ancient secret of divine simplicity.

To the extent that people have written about the secret language of the inner light the evidence grows a bit less subjective, because people communicate about it, about their inner experiences of the Spirit relating to oneself. That can be “proven” as little as a religion can be “proven”, except if you prove it to yourself, following from an inner search for the truth.

The secret School is set apart from merely being a religion, since the School is primarily knowledge-driven. There are extensive teachings how to work on oneself, like training to become a runner, but here not to become a runner, but a spiritual person with mystic abilities. The spiritual knowledge, or spiritual science, is the meaning of the word, Gnosis. Gnosticism is a set of various diverse movements of spiritual knowledge, experiential for the practitioners through real, even though personal, spiritual encounters. Due to the one-sided definition of science through papal materialism rabidly enforced during the Renaissance that spirituality has been wrongly excluded from the possible fields of scientific endeavour.

In the spectrum of spiritual movements that are knowledge-driven, I have identified a particular strand that originates from the Gnostic Jesus of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and runs through Church history in the Byzantine empire through the lead figures of: Dionysios the Areopagite, St. Maximos the Confessor, St. Symeon the New Theologian, and St. Gregory Palamas, together with many more lesser figures. Western scholarship today is just in the progress of discovering and developing the overall subject of the intellectual history of Byzantium. There is no mature authoritative book, or opinion of authors, about this overall subject yet. My book does not claim to be such, either.

I claim that there is a specific development away from the Christian Gnosticism of the early centuries, running through the refinery of the philosophies of classical antiquity as studied in Byzantium, and leading to a transformed version of Gnostic spiritual knowledge, a knowledge that returns to what Plato called the forms, or the ideas. My thesis is that, as a result of this millennial process of inner refinement in the melting pot of Byzantium, a mental language developed, that was operated through emblematic figures, usually named after deities and supernatural beings from Homeric myth, such as Zeus, Poseidon, Hera, Pegasus, etc.

In brief, the secret School of Jesus, to give it a handle, gradually evolved a mental language that operates the inner light, the inner light being a big subject in spirituality in the Byzantine Christian empire. That mental language is the result. The entire process leading to it is not that important. The mental language, which is emblematic and ideographic, translates the inner light into a mental space, which can explain, for example, a phenomenon such as the striking use of central perspective in Renaissance painting.

Giordano Bruno, remembered mainly as an early scientist, was also, perhaps foremost, a master of this figurative myth-like inner language of the mind. Prior to Bruno, Plethon, the last great Byzantine philosopher, in a secret manuscript, the “Laws”, and other writings, also emerged as a master of this figurative myth-like inner language of the mind. Plethon in the east, in late Byzantium, used this language for his philosophy. Bruno, in the west, became the first to apply this mental language to philosophy, like Plethon had done. That establishes a linkage between Plethon and Bruno in a brotherhood, the secret School of Jesus, a school that transmits key spiritual teachings of Jesus. The Church burned Bruno at the stake as a heretic. The material popes are scared of the masses learning Jesus’ secrets. Mass enlightenment will kill their pagan self-worship, and end their treacherous stranglehold over the mass mind.

JESUS HAD SECRET TEACHINGS AND ARRANGED FOR THEIR TRANSMISSION:

Jesus, whose real name was Jéshua, promised to his closest followers that his teachings and his knowledge would not be lost to the world. The Church tried to cover up this evidence by persecuting the gnostic movement. “Gnostic” is a word that means, “knowledge”, or, “relating to knowledge”. The Church wanted a belief system (as opposed to “knowledge” which is much more than just belief) so it could perpetrate a fraud religion based on fear. Based on that, the greedy pigs who control the Church planned to take the people’s money away. They were deadly afraid that the secret knowledge of Jesus might become known to the people, and that the people would become free through the secret knowledge of Jesus.

Some gnostic documents were rediscovered in the first half of the twentieth century. In one of them, the “Apocryphon of James”, the promise of a transmission that Jesus made was written down, before the custodians, who feared for their lives, had to place the documents in hiding.

See:

Thomassen, Einar; *The Valentinian Materials in James (NHC V,3 and CT,2)*; in: Elaine H. Pagels; Eduard Iricinschi; Lance Jenott; Nicola Denzey Lewis; Philippa Townsend (editors); *Beyond the Gnostic Gospels: Studies Building on the Work of Elaine Pagels*; Tübingen 2013; pp. 79-90

Williams, Francis E.; *Introduction to the Apocryphon of James (I,2)*; in: James M. Robinson (general editor); *The Nag Hammadi Librari in English*; 3rd completely revised edition; San Francisco 1990; pp. 29 f.

The Apocryphon of James (I,2); translated into English by Francis E. Williams; in: James M. Robinson (general editor); *The Nag Hammadi Librari in English*; 3rd completely revised edition; San Francisco 1990; pp. 30-37

Schoedel, William R.; *Introduction to the Apocryphon of James (I,2)*; in: James M. Robinson (general editor); *The Nag Hammadi Librari in English*; 3rd completely revised edition; San Francisco 1990; pp. 260-262

The (First) Apocalypse of James (V,3); translated into English by William R. Schoedel; in: James M. Robinson (general editor); *The Nag Hammadi Librari in English*; 3rd completely revised edition; San Francisco 1990; pp. 262-268

The text: “Apocryphon of James (I,2)” was most likely written before 150 AD (Williams). The author of the text, called James, which, according to Williams is a pseudonym, reports of a “secret book” that Jesus revealed to him and to Peter. There is an injunction not to release that text to many.

He mentions another secret book which Jesus revealed to him. The surviving text is slightly corrupted. The statement reads that the twelve disciples sat together and wrote that what Jesus had told them “in books”. The book, and the other book, that “James” gave to the receiver of this opening letter of the Apocryphon, are books containing the teachings of Jesus. They are not the only books, since the other Apostles wrote books, too.

The text of the “(First) Apocalypse of James V,3) is now confirmed by a better preserved copy in the Codex Tchakos (Thomassen, p. 79). A section in this text is virtually identical to a section of a tract by Irenaeus, “Adversus haereses” (“Against Heretics”), Book I, chapter 21 (21.5). As it turns out, what the criminal moron Irenaeus, a so-called “church father”, held to be “heretic”, is actually a secret gnostic (knowledge) teaching of Jesus.

The section describes the survival of the soul after death. From the Valentinians (Gnostics) we know, through Irenaeus, of a ritual during which they gave this knowledge to initiates. Further, the section explains that Powers ask the deceased person questions. These questions, and their right answers, were also imparted in the Valentinian ritual.

In the “(First) Apocalypse of James”, it is made clear that the material was originally part of a revelation discourse held between Jesus and his brother James. It is one of the secret knowledge teachings of Jesus. Thomassen analyses very carefully that the James text was not written by a person with Valentinian affiliations. That means, that the secret teaching was reported independent of any Valentinian lineage, as coming from Jesus, given to his brother James (cf. supra, p. 84 and passim). The scenario that Thomassen develops, that the compiler of James got ahold of a Valentinian text and recast it, is entirely speculative (not based on evidence) and should therefore not be used to form conclusions. Thomassen points this out himself, saying that the James text under review here is clearly not Valentinian (p. 89).

According to these texts, Jesus knew beforehand that the Jews would kill him through the Roman court system. Taken together with the proof of his secret teachings and his arrangement of books being created, this allows only one conclusion, namely that Jesus arranged during his lifetime for his secret knowledge to be transmitted so that it would eventually become known.

This book follows up on that evidenced assumption. Coming as no surprise, Jesus’ knowledge that he imparted in his teachings to his inner circle for purposes of transmission is a science of spirituality – not a belief system. As such, it is not unique, but matches with other spiritual science systems, such as Buddhism. Jesus’ secret School is unique, however, in its profound depth of intellectual and emotional transformation.

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On Ideation

An Essay in Eight Parts

by: Dr. jur. Stefan Grossmann, Hanau
July 24, 2015

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Part Eight: Remarks on Plethon

Summary

Ideation, Plethon and Byzantine Method

by: Dr. jur. Stefan Grossmann, Hanau

July 12, 2015

*The other night there was a shipwreck
out by the rocks. The tide spread wreckage
from the "Constantinople" all the way
to our times.*

*Most of what we call "Greek philosophy"
is actually the heritage of the Byzantines.*

*Byzantine philosophy is a motley palimpsest
of what was great or what otherwise survived.
Dreams scramble similarly (Freud).*

*At last, however, he had a change of heart.
So, at dawn one morning, he rose, and he,
George Gemistos Plethon, stepped out of his cave
and into the sun.
After Nietzsche, Zarathustra's Prologue*

A. INTRODUCTION

Greek philosophy is the historical foundation of all western philosophy. The ancient texts through the classical and Hellenistic periods have been thoroughly inventoried, studied, edited and written about by classical scholars for centuries. It is unlikely that anything groundbreaking will still come to light in this field, based on the existing sources.

There is still much uncharted ground, however, concerning the philosophy during the Byzantine millennium. There is a new emergent discipline that is styled, Byzantine philosophy. The time period of Byzantine philosophy corresponds to the Middle Ages; but Byzantine philosophy is distinctly different from the medieval philosophy that formed to the west of Byzantium in Europe, such as, Scholasticism. Dealing with Byzantine philosophy is, today, an undertaking of explorative nature.

At the end of the Byzantine millennium, during the Renaissance age, stands a philosophical giant, George Gemistos Plethon, a Platonist, and perhaps of similar stature as Plato. As of recent, we are provided with good information about Plethon, through the works of Woodhouse, Siniosoglou, Hladek, and a number of other

researchers who have compiled the disparate sources into a picture that has come into a good and clear focus. That is not to say, however, that all questions about the elusive and mysterious thinker, Plethon, have been answered. In fact, the work has enabled us to start asking informed questions, and to depart from foundational work and to move to the fine points and to make sense of some mighty strange words of Pletho.

Since finishing a book size framework analysis of Byzantine philosophy in late 2014, I have had on my mind a profile of the most salient strangenesses in the body of Byzantine philosophy. Initially, not much of it really made sense. More and more, however, the strange features of Byzantine philosophy have fallen in place into structures of understanding. For example, strings of arguments can be presented why a major philosopher standing at the end of Byzantine philosophical developments, would generate writings of the very strangeness that we find in Plethon.

In other words, Plethon summarized the major achievements of Byzantine philosophy. He was the first, actually, to have a privileged perch point enabling him to do so; and he did very well. In particular, I mean that the major achievements of a long philosophical development are of methodical nature. The key issue summed up in Plethon is the Byzantine philosophical method, the method of Byzantine receptions. A premise behind Byzantine receptivity is that man is not an independent and self-reliant being (Nikos G. Pentzakis).

I wish to show that the story of Plethon being a latter day pagan is a misunderstanding. Plethon makes extensive use of allegorical figures from ancient myth. That does not make Plethon a mythographer, and does not make him a pagan. There were other reasons in the Greek Middle Ages to deal with the pagan gods.

The Byzantine philosophical method is perfectly well known to students of the Byzantine Orthodox Christian faith; but it is identified as a religious dogma, not as a philosophical method. The method is the method of the essences and the energies, otherwise known as the dogma (not: method) of same. To explain this insight, requires to go into a number of issues, such as the origins of philosophy from myth. The origins of philosophy from myth, when reversed, explain the path of philosophy into mythological forms that we find in Plethon. The mythological forms are, to use a concept of Erwin Panofsky, iconological markers. They stand for essences and energies (tacitly replacing the Platonic forms in Byzantine Christian philosophy), but not for polytheistic gods in the ancient pagan sense.

Philosophy as we know it, in the west and in the east, is structured by concepts. Concepts are used to write down the philosophy; they provide the traditional notation of philosophy.

Philosophy in that sense was not always with us, but was created during the early centuries of ancient Greek history. Plethon returns back to the beginnings, which we may call Homeric, and goes back before the concepts. Plethon investigates, like a historian, the exploratory movement backwards in time from the logos to the mythos. In doing so, when we follow Plethon, we step out of the conceptual into the pre-conceptual. That is where concepts end, and allegories must stand in.

I suggest that the subject matter of Plethon is the pre-conceptual basis of Greek philosophy. Plethon is the apex of Greek philosophy by exposing the path to the pre-conceptual origins as a method that is philosophical. He thus picks up on long-evolved symbols, not concepts, that enable us to identify essences and energies of which the Byzantine tradition so prominently speaks. In Pletho, these symbols are brought from religion, that is, Byzantine Orthodox Christianity within its very own Hellenic cultural setting, into philosophy as operable instruments. That is the ending point of major Byzantine philosophical development.

Plethon's symbols are operators of the pre-conceptual that generates philosophy. They evolved along the wayside of the Byzantine millennium, eventually to power the Renaissance. This is indeed a hidden strand of tradition that Niketas Sianiosoglou postulates, contradicted by Vojtěch Hladký. The cultural transmission line is by no means a tradition of paganism, however. I would like to develop this and some other quite hidden aspects in the following presentation.

I developed these ideas while dealing with literature that I mention at the end of the text. In the apparatus at the end below, I also include updates and addenda for my 2014 framework analysis.

B. OUTLINE OF THE ARGUMENT

First, let me mention the twelve main captions that structure my argument. This serves as an outline. Below, I would like to evaluate this argument under Vygotskian aspects of social and semiotic philosophy-psychology.

1. Functional gods gave birth to an abstract philosophical concept system.
2. Plato gives the likeness of the individual mind trapped in a cave.
3. Likely, the individual mind was not always trapped.
4. In ancient Utopian tradition there is a yearning to escape the cave.
5. The cave is a precise description of the ego and its defence walls.
6. Outside of the cave, the mind is connected with spirit energies.
7. The basic energies are darkness (melancholy) and light (wisdom).
8. Byzantine philosophy is an extension of ancient Utopian tradition.
9. The Utopias are visualized realms of the pre-conceptual.
10. The pagan gods survived through Euhemerism (Jean Seznec).
11. The functional gods in Plethon and some energies represented.
12. The theory of the spheres shows a pre-conceptual structure.

The first eleven of these captions refer to topoi that are already known, or, in the case of Jean Seznec and the *Survival of the Pagan Gods*, were known in the 1950s and can be reclaimed from writings of that time, or, in the case of caption eleven, the functional gods in Plethon and some energies represented, refers to some rather standard interpretations of such known topoi, such as, which god has which function, which energy.

The twelfth caption presents us with a novel way of classifying Plethon, namely as an esoteric Aristotelian with a Platonic shell. I come, down below, to the conclusion that the so-called pagan gods in Plethon have to do with the Aristotelian strangeness of, final causes. Final causes are a term gained from a lost perception of man, lost through the closing of the mind into a cave-like ego structure of precise psychoanalytical contours. The hope and motivation behind the philosophical quest is to undo that closing of the mind, what may be labelled a liberation and awakening of the developmentally closed cocoon mind of ego, of separate fragmented unit consciousnesses regaining their freedom from separateness, regaining their birthright of participation in the objective mind of the interconnected quantum reality. That hope and motivation comes, below, under the heading of, Utopias, originating in history from the Olymp and other worlds of the gods, and unfolding as a literature of interaction fiction, or contact fiction, especially since Hellenism.

The starting point in Hellenism might well merely indicate that far older, oral as well as subjective-mental, traditions of interaction and contact only then started to be written down, after a sufficient infrastructure of literary genres had evolved to incorporate such material of the subjective in myth, and subsequently of the subjective in philosophy. The latter aspect flowered not so much in Hellenism as in Byzantium, a millennium prior to Descartes, still little known today.

For the first eleven captions, a broad and extensive treatment would be called upon to present and discuss the majority of insights and arguments that a long philosophical tradition has generated concerning method. I thus avoid a broad and extensive treatment of the first eleven captions, and rely in a summary brevity on presentations given in the existing literature, to be found in the notes at the end of this text.

For the twelfth caption, I chose a somewhat different treatment, since novel aspects are developed. In my search for pertinent literature, I found two recent innovative books that may relate most interestingly to the issue, namely one book from the Cambridge University Press on western philosophical tradition that discusses the sensitivity principle in epistemology, and a second book from the Harvard University Press querying into the philosophical tradition of southern India that goes into what we may abbreviate as causative imagination

yoga – a foundational theory of magic akin to what likewise circulated in the Renaissance in Europe (Lynn Thorndyke and others).

1. Functional gods gave birth to an abstract philosophical concept system:

It is a known thesis, often traced back to Max Weber, that the Greek Pantheon of Olympian gods resembles a philosophical category system in allegorical form. It has been claimed frequently, and never disproved, that this, as an (Olympian) parent, gave birth to (Greek) philosophy as (humanly) rationalized myth.

2. Plato gives the likeness of the individual mind trapped in a cave:

Plato apparently knew it long before Freud: Man has an ego, and this is described precisely by Plato's likeness of the cave (in Plato's "Republic"). The "walls" of the dark cave are the most striking illustration of the difficult ego defence mechanisms (EDM) that exist in literature. Plato is understood, in modern "cave" analysis, to mock the ignorant human (Sokrates speaking) and to point to enlightenment as the way out.

3. Likely, the individual mind was not always trapped:

See Julian Jaynes and related discussion. This topos also is used in the study of palaeolithic cave art. Human psychology outside the cave is transpersonal. Transpersonal psychology can no longer be considered a mere speculative venture, after its massive body of research, and after its acceptance, however grundgingly, into large mainstream publications. This is a large issue and has been recognized as more complicated than in Jaynes.

4. In ancient Utopian tradition there is a yearning to escape the cave:

This is my reading. The fundamental structure of Utopianism is the schamanic travel beyond, which means as much as, outside the cave.

5. The cave is a precise description of the ego and its defence walls:

This merely restates what I already mentioned very briefly. More about the ego and its defining ego defence mechanisms (EDM) can be found in volume 1 of my Framework Analysis.

6. Outside of the cave, the mind is connected transpersonally:

Plethon would agree. This follows from what has already been said here.

7. The basic energies are darkness (melancholy) and light (wisdom):

This is traditional spiritual wisdom. Melancholy is actually an ancient topic in the four humor pathology and pre-modern medicine. The spiritual light is spirituality, especially in the Christian sense, based on, but exceeding, rational understanding. It is a strong and transformative experience outside the cave

8. Byzantine philosophy is an extension of ancient Utopian tradition:

This is my reading. I believe it to follow from what has already been said.

9. The Utopias are visualized realms of the pre-conceptual:

This is my reading. The Utopias originate, after all, in the worlds of the gods.

10. The pagan gods survived through Euhemerism (Jean Seznec):

Jean Seznec shows, to the satisfaction of critical reads in the 1940s and 1950s, that the pagan gods survived in the west (scholastic zone) and in Byzantium through Euhemerism, not through any crypto-pagan tradition. There was a movement since later antiquity of rationalizing myth, much in the same vein that shaped Greek philosophy in the first place. This is connected, in particular, with the late Roman commentator of myths as incredible stories, Palaephatus.

Jean Seznec, who deals with the western development and not with Byzantium, relies on mythographical treatises from the Renaissance. For Byzantium, a research notice on the web informs us that, according to Greek Studies Leuven, there are only two known mythographical texts from Byzantium (on the labours of Hercules). However, the Byzantines, unlike the west, had a unique repository of the ancient source texts. Further, absent a major mythographical literature in Byzantium, future research should look to Byzantine commentators of myth source materials. Additionally, as Seznec points out, much of the mythological set of ideas was a living tradition due to mythological imagery that was at least tolerated by the medieval church. Jane Chance in her recent three-volume study of western medieval mythography subscribes to the Euhemeristic interpretation of Jean Seznec without placing Seznec in a critical light.

In summary, starting before the Byzantine period, classical myth and its gods were gradually religiously discharged, in particular under the influence of Christianity. Classical myth and its gods survived due to this as secular Hellenic identity markers that were recognized and accepted by mainstream society. Over time, in the west as well as in Byzantium, the secularized pagan gods were recharged with freshly found philosophical meaning, which lacked adequate means of expression otherwise. This recharging of myth as philosophy reached its peak with Plethon and the Renaissance.

In a purview, Plethon's recharging of the Pagan gods is not entirely unique on the intellectual horizon of the Renaissance. A similar tendency, using angels from the biblical context, is the Christian Kabbalah. Bern Roling interprets the pertinent writings of Reuchlin in Reformation Germany as Christological theurgy.

11. The functional gods in Plethon and some energies represented:

Poseidon: water, creation. Saturn: melancholy. Zeus: undivided fullness, divine light. Not necessarily founded in Homer, but altered considerably through the course of tradition since Homer.

12. The theory of the spheres shows a pre-conceptual structure:

After passing through the thicket of convolutions, we still have not yet cracked the nut of Plethon's innermost strangeness. That nut, when cracked open, reveals the following:

Verily, Plethon is no pure Platonist. Plethon is an esoteric Aristotelian with a Platonic shell. The seemingly neo-pagan symbolic operators of Plethon are Aristotelian in content. When man perceives outside of the cave, a plurality of deific forces is apparent. These occur in Aristotelian physics, and metaphysics, as final causes. They are true causes in nature, in the objective mind, to which humankind in its fall has become oblivious. One might argue that this may have its basis in Plato's late work, the *Nomoi*, at the end. What Plato says there, however, is greatly expanded by his pupil Aristotle into an entire ancient natural science.

Aristotle's theory of the spheres builds on this, and Plethon teaches it. The gods in Plethon's manifest henotheism are structured in functional spheres. The kernel is the subjective ego, the starting point of human experience, and of human self-transformation. The great European Renaissance age, precursor of more recent movements towards enlightenment, came close to exiting the cave and regaining a spiritually receptive mind. The precedent stands to this day as highly informative. The mass of Byzantine philosophy, in its late stages as transmitted through Plethon and others, goes far in its explanation how that came about.

All this and more can be expanded vastly by adding materials and depth of analysis. I hope to have shown an outline for a more satisfactory understanding of George Gemistos Plethon, and thereby of all Byzantine philosophy in its methodical striving for the lost spiritual wisdom of omni-interconnectedness. The barrier of transcendence is a subconscious construct that becomes necessary when a human being has her or his mind organized in the developmental cocoon form of the ego. The inner-personal key for dissolving transcendence is thereby given.

These are some novel aspects that cannot easily be backed up by reading existing texts. I would therefore like to add, at the end of the research paper, two special topics from recent publications to illustrate these novel aspects somewhat more in depth. Both special topics have a common denominator, namely reclaiming the objective mind, and also, especially in the south Indian example, establishing individual subjectivity in the objective, or divine, mind, as the Indians would name it, Brahma.

12.1. The sensitivity principle in epistemology

The first special topic to illustrate these novel aspects is the sensitivity principle in epistemology. I refer to the 2012 edited book by Kelly Becker and Tim Black with its essays by various authors. The sensitivity principle is an obvious foundation of epistemology, so obvious that it apparently has not yet caught the attention of philosophers. For example (my example): If, in linguistics, theorists bring such languages as English, French, German, Mandarin, etc. under the heading of "natural languages", then this strikes one not as incorrect but as insensitive, namely insensitive to the fact that such languages are not at all natural since they are cultural. Will economists next start discussing "natural money"? It may sound absurd, but the euro crisis may yet make it possible.

12.2. Causative imagination yoga in south Indian tradition

The second special topic to illustrate the novel aspects of Plethon as an esoteric Aristotelian who is centered on the strangeness of final causes is the causative imagination yoga in the south Indian tradition. I refer to the at-length treatment by David Shulman in his book, also of 2012. The title of his book actually says quite a lot, because it is as follows: *More than Real: A History of the Imagination in South India*. The book deals with classical south Indian spiritual poetic imagery. In that literature, the aspect of discursive wisdom steps totally into the background, leaving only the poetic visions of the divine to stand in the fore.

C. SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT

The discussion shows that Byzantine philosophy is no mere dead letter, and dealing with it is not merely an archivist's passtime. The wealth of insight reposed within Byzantine philosophy represents the mature stage of Greek philosophy. The historical foundation of western philosophy is being expanded considerably by the ongoing discovery of the medieval wisdom of east Rome, of the Rome that persisted to the threshold of the modern age.

The late stage of medieval Greek wisdom literature, following a developmental pattern, presents us with yet another linguistic turn, after Alexandria, and predating the linguistic turn in the twentieth century. The search for a perfect language, or mental language, or as the Germans say it, a *Natursprache* or natural language, is helped forward by this third example of a linguistic turn.

The late Byzantine linguistic turn is the only one of the three historical exemplars that includes a potential for future development. I mentioned Plato's cave and its psycho-analytical meaning. When philosophers so far have been searching for natural meaning inside the cave, it is not actually surprising that they have found nought. The reason is that, outside of the cave, there is much more mind than inside the cave. Plato, in his Utopian text nearby the likeness of the cave, likens this to the sun.

Natural reason is something that human intuition unstoppably will search for. To find it, however, necessitates that the person who is conducting the search must undergo a significant personal awakening and transformation to spiritual enlightenment outside of the cave. Only then are the lost and missing fractions of our perception regained, those fractions that reveal the natural starting points of meaning in the essences and energies that the Byzantine tradition focusses on. That is a formal, analytical aspect behind everything else that Plethon has shown us. That aspect is perhaps his most enduring.

D. A VYGOTSKIAN PERSPECTIVE

Lem Vygotsky, the Soviet philosopher and psychologist of language, is well fit to join the Byzantines. Both he and the late Byzantines are approximately equally difficult to understand. Further, both Vygotsky and the late Byzantines address related issues, but in significantly different ways, in such a manner that they can mutually elucidate each other. I will therefore present my efforts to reach a Vygotskian perspective for our complex subject matter. I will use the above structure of a twelve-fold argument as my backdrop.

A Vygotskian analysis, as far as I am qualified to undertake such, would single out two main vistas within the complex subject matter:

(i) The first vista explains the development of higher mental functions as a result of social organization and processes. This way of perceiving it results in a quite astounding result for the classical Greek mythology, namely, that Greek mythology is far removed from the type of mythologies that field anthropologists have identified with indigenous societies. Instead, this approach of perception suggests that Greek mythology was the residual product of a now vanished highly evolved society that may have been more advanced than our own society today. With that suggestion, I jump from volume 1 of my Framework Analysis to volume 2 of my Framework Analysis. In some way, the prickly question is addressed why Greek philosophy did not evolve from Amazonian myth, or from the spiritually very interesting Australian Aboriginal myth. There is something with Greek myth from the very beginning that makes it, and only it, compatible with philosophical development. It is, in that sense that we can chart today, not a normal type of mythology as mostly found. Greek myth is an exceptional type of mythology, reflecting a highly evolved, even Utopian, society. That is found in a somewhat related ways only in India and in Buddhism. Greek philosophy did not generically develop from mythos to logos, as Wilhelm Nestle wrote, but grew from a very specific and exceptional type of mythos. For example, if we westerners want to understand Buddhism better, this is an important but hidden aspect to note by means of intellectual cross-pollination.

(ii) The second vista traces, with Vygotsky, the development of higher mental functions - in which we may include Greek philosophy - through signs that enable such a development. Again, this helps us to realize the unique nature of the seedbed of Greek philosophy and science, namely Greek myth. Greek myth again is unique, in a global comparison of mythologies, in its presence and wealth of a reflected signage in the logosphere itself. In the main source texts of Greek mythology, it is, with a pinch of salt, as if the gods speak and become audible to us, bypassing the ancient closing of the human mind that Julian Jaynes laid open for

further research and discussion. Byzantine wisdom may have been quite informed by that, especially in its historicly latest major stage, in Plethon. That is the main point that I wish to delve into below.

1. The first Vygotskian vista: Olympian myth as model of a super-high Utopian society:

Christianity would have no place in the hearts of man unless the ground had been plowed fertile by the Olympian myth. Without it, without a figure such as the virgin Athena Parthenos, figures such as Mother Mary and Jesus could not be put into relation with things human. Scholarship today tends to be rather more on the affirmative side of the reality behind the Jesus myth, purely mythical details such as the changing of water into wine which was also ascribed to Dionysos notwithstanding. In the 2800 years since Homer I, humans have developed, at least technologically, forward in a striking way. Human society today is certainly not an Olympian society, but can understand such an Utopia in a much more realistic way than a bronze age Greek could have at the time of the Homers. During the long march of working up to this, a phenomenon such as local genealogies of the ancient and medieval worlds linking families and tribes with Homeric heroes played a formative role for the rising human identity. That was largely congruent, during the era marked by the Byzantine millennium, with Euhemerism, a concrete rationalization and historisation of ancient myth, accompanied by its internalization and imitation.

By virtue of the content, Christian faith is closely related to the Utopian ideal of the Olympian gods. The Olympian gods are humans, not necessarily in all the details that Euhemerus proposed. While being human, compared with humans such as you and I, the Olympians are transhuman, not in their looks and basic desires but in their outlook and in their abilities. Mother Mary, a key figure in Christian faith, is an adaptation of Athena Parthenos of high fidelity. It was after all the Hellenic eastern part of the Roman empire that became the first Christian empire. Christianity is, after Greek philosophy, the second flower of the Olympian myth.

A mythology and philosophy arriving from somewhere, endowed with an incomprehensibly highly evolved social model, simply cannot present an asocial spiritual world. Its social model will inescapably reflect in the spiritual consciousness of a pertinent civilization. That is why, for example, the Christian church from earliest times on had strong henotheistic traits through the cult of the many saints. That, again, is an Utopian social model, namely a community of saints. Was that merely a late antique and medieval metamorphosis of the ancient Olympian Utopia? That is one of those questions that can probably be debated endlessly.

What stands is the shift from an older social Utopia (the Olympians) to a newer social Utopia (the saints). The Greek notion of deification, theosis, is common to both, at least in the eastern, Orthodox understanding. In social analysis that is the ascension of an individual person into a higher society. This may be Utopian, but for the Byzantines that did not preclude that it could become real. In this sense, Byzantine Christianity had many ties and commonalities with the older, so-called pagan, forms of Hellenic spirituality. To the extent that Byzantine Christianity is philosophical - and it is so to a rather large extent - it, too, originated from the Utopian myth of the Olympian realm. Jesus was like an Olympian. The figures from Olympian myth and the Christian saints were appreciated by the Byzantines and by their clerical establishment as parts of one and the same grand pageant of human-divine contact, in Christian times as mediated by the Church. The very name that the Greeks used, and use, for God, deos, sounds strikingly similar to the Olympian name, Zeus, as the Greeks would have pronounced Ze-us with separate vowels.

Outside of the Neo-Platonic schools that likely informed Islam, early Christianity, especially of the masses, was an anthropomorphic religion of the "father", a description that is given in the gospels. Neo-Platonists and Muslims would point out that God (the One God, spelled with a capital G) is not a human. Many people alive today would tend to agree. This notion comes from the philosophical monotheism of antiquity, not from the Bible, and certainly not from the perception of the Christian masses.

The early Byzantine church fathers used an ancient Egyptian device, the trinity, to project a mental object of worship beyond anthropomorphic forms. The Oneness inherent in Islam strictly refutes this. The trinity is also alien to ancient Olympian myth. The Biblical roots of the trinity are doubtful. Methodologically, most of the Christian religion can well be understood as a philosophical wisdom system. When it comes to the trinity, however, there is a distinct clash with rationality, since the trinity can be, and theologically is, explained as supra-rational, namely provided by divine revelation. In philosophical criticism, that falls by the wayside. In Vygotskian criticism, the trinity appears as an instrument of social repression, a persecutorial instrument, used by the clergy to cow the believers into obedience, opposed to a free society, thus in contradiction with the Olympian Utopia of deified beings who have stepped out of human bondage. Jesus did not mention the trinity even once, in all of what is known of his sayings. George Gemistos Plethon lived at a time when the ancient so-called pagan gods were long discharged of religious meaning. In recharging them with philosophical meaning and semiotic functionality, Plethon did omit, however, the trinity; he actually cut it out of the original Oracles (Hladký). That is the one charge that an Orthodox Christian can level against him.

2. The second Vygotskian vista: higher mental semiotics:

With Vygotsky, we may venture to identify in the Utopian myth of the Olympians a wealth of higher mental semiotics. This would actually tend to validate the rational, Euhemeristic notion of the particular exceptional Greek type of myth, a perspective that apparently essentially informed Plethon, especially in his *Laws*. The analysis of higher mental semiotics is collected in the sixth and last volume of the English edition of his collected works to which I refer.

Under these auspices, Greek myth, coming from an immensely highly developed society as an afterimage, at least as a consequential Euhemeristic view would suggest, bestows a gift, namely a philosophical substance of inner alchemy. The semiotic operators in Plethon as briefly outlined above are operators of this substance. The substance comes to us in diverse luminous mental objects. These include, without limitation, Homer's "golden chain" (*Iliad*, 8.18-27) and his "shield of Achilles" (*Iliad* 18.458-608), furthermore the substance of the luminous procession in the didactic poem of the Presocratic philosopher Parmenides. From the latter, Plato mainly deducted his philosophical dialectic in his dialogue that is likewise called, *Parmenides*.

When one reads Plethon in an intelligent one-volume digest such as Hladký has recently presented, the impression is that the eyes of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, German poet and researcher of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, are particularly apt to read Plethon's most hidden meaning. Goethe considered his most important achievement his massive tome on the physiological colours, the "Farbenlehre". I have long held the opinion, which is very well demonstrable, that Goethe's other most important writing, the long poem "Faust part 2", is a poetical example of his theories of subjectively perceived colours. Symbols in the poem are, for example, the rainbow early on, and the entire plot of the poem which is a sunrise and, at the end, the ascension of Faust in the mountains amidst heavenly beings.

Seen with such eyes, the Plethon digest that Hladký provides, including summary charts etc. of Hladký's good editorial making, instals in us a complex optical device of prisms and lenses for the mental luminosity of Greek myth. The monochromatic golden light of the three examples that I just mentioned is, in Plethon's notation, "Zeus", the undivided divine light, perched at the top of the device. Downwards there are refractions of the light, just as in Goethe's experiments with physiological colours. We thus gain from the divine light a diversity of energies, as mentioned earlier herein. All this and more is higher mental semiotics in the Vygotskian sense. In its absence in world myth outside of the myth of classical antiquity, that is a good and plausible explanation why Greek philosophy did not, and could not, arise from just any myth.

The refracting device is, by the way, symbolic of philosophy herself (to use the gender given to philosophy by Boethius). If philosophy is thus depicted as refracting, it is not by itself the source of the light, Zeus.

Plethon thereby delineates the place of philosophy in the division of intellectual labours in Byzantium, which again disproves the assumption that he was pagan, or crypto-pagan. His cryptic nature, cryptic to the exoteric audience, is as a Christian alchemist of the Renaissance.

Zeus can at the same time be identified with a term introduced by an earlier alchemist, Aristotle, namely the unmoved moving. That is the source of the light. It is not a human. It is, in my interpretation, the God presence that is like a projector at the center of our local universe (see in volume 1 of my Framework Analysis). That is the sun rising in human consciousness that Goethe prophetically has as the true protagonist of Faust part 2.

From Homer to Parmenides of Elea, we can witness a certain evolution of the philosophical substance. It changes from static, anecdotal and metaphoric, becoming dynamic, didactic and systematic. In early Greek philosophy, Parmenides of Elea became the first specialist; his field was, as far as the extant fragments of his work tell, the field of what Plethon later signified as Zeus, that is, the esoteric theology of the mythical light, not anything near paganism even at that early stage.

We can trace that progress - progress is a questionable but not impossible term - via the three great examples mentioned: the golden chain, the shield of Achilles, and the luminous procession in the poem of Parmenides of Elea. Let us get a feel of the transformative mental alchemy of the three examples by way of the plasmatic luminous mental substances that we encounter – which is all that we need to do here:

2.1. The golden chain in Greek myth has a counterpart in Indra's web. Both indicate pervasiveness and participatory nature, that is, spiritual qualities. Spiritual qualities, to which Byzantine philosophy opens, have their foundation in an alchemical mental luminous substance that Plethon signifies as Zeus. In my Framework Analysis volume 2 (hyperlink at the end), this is described in technical terms as a complex web of higher self connections. For the personal reading experience, read the source text mentioned above in an English translation suitable for you.

Luc Brisson instructively presents the commentaries of Michael Psellos and two other Byzantine scholars to the golden chain in:

Luc Brisson; *How Philosophers Saved Myths: Allegorical Interpretation and Classical Mythology*; Chicago, London 2004, pp. 107-125 (which is, chapter seven: Byzantium and the Pagan Myths.)

Brisson's Byzantium chapter is a singular inquiry that carries over the ideas that Jean Seznec began into the Byzantine territory. My conclusion is that the Byzantines had an advanced understanding of the higher mental semiotics that are the most productive part of the legacy of ancient Greek myth.

2.2. The shield of Achilles is particularly low on the rationalized explanatory side, and particularly high on the experience side. Turn your ego and its looped mental babble off and experience the luminous mental fluidum - if you like take it as a fiction - by reading the source passage cited above.

2.3. Read the poetic vision of Parmenides of Elea and seek to experience before your mental eye the plasmatic luminous substance of which it is made.

2.4. Byzantine intellectuals did not remain inactive concerning the Olympian luminous golden mental substance. I refer to the passages, in my Framework Analysis volume 1, concerning the "Johannine turn" of Byzantine philosophy (a discussion that is continued in my Framework volume 2.) Also note the Byzantine predilection for the Tabor light, intimately linked with this (more on that, also, in my Framework volume 2.)

2.5. The Vygotskian perspective can be built through the thought of John Searle, who newly (2015) has highlighted the intentionality of the perceptive experience, mediated through the social and the semiotic. Intellectual methodologies are there to train the intentionality of perception via the sensitivity principle. The dated notion that philosophical method has to do primarily with mental production (writing, thinking) is, once again, questionable and fallacious, an insight deriving from Byzantine philosophy and its predominantly receptive emphasis.

2.6. Business people struggle with a fascinating resources. Business author William Duggan in a book uses a lead concept of “flashes of insight”. Such flashes are, he indicates, rarely realized or remembered within a lifetime. When a flash comes, it comes spontaneously like a discharge, albeit often as the ending of a search for an idea, for a key for a business challenge. Duggan says that accounts of human achievement unduly omit this subject.

A philosophical term for passive receptivity towards ideas is, ideation. The method of mentally perceptive Byzantine receptions is altogether favorable to ideation. To my knowledge, the overall concept of Vygotsky of higher mental semiotics (as I understand him to say) is a viable approach to ideation.

Ideas relating to difficult business situations are not elemental but can be surprisingly complex and can fit like a key for surprisingly complex social puzzles. Ideas are plan elements. They are, for business people, precursor blueprints for solutions.

The example of a business person looking for a complex solution is one example. Other examples are an inventor of a technical innovation, and an artist, for example, a musical composer. They all essentially thrive off the resource of ideas. The dismal science of economics falls far short of even recognizing this greatest natural, or call it supernatural, resource of man. I grant that, so far, it has not been possible due to restrictions inherent in our misguided knowledge society to explain the out-of-the-cave process of ideation.

It is understood that ideas are not made of the matter that our hands touch. The effective reality of ideas is mental. It is also understood that finding good ideas can be difficult. The process of ideation cannot be forced directly. It can, at best, be supported indirectly. The ancient philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle, had a method that, in these or other words, is described as a mental vision that is open, through the lifetime efforts of a philosophers, to an intellectual realm of ideas. Unfortunately, ideas, upon which all depends, have no place in a matter-only ideology.

2.7. I anticipate objections that no realm of ideas has ever been described by any philosopher. My reply to such an objection would be, that philosophy itself is a project to describe the realm of ideas, that is, the source realm of ideation.

Plato during his long life pursued an evolving theory of ideas, also called the theory of forms. That has been much debated, certainly without coming to any final conclusions to this day. Plato was never the empiricist to the extent that his great pupil Aristotle was. However, Aristotle’s empiricism never was able to connect with Plato’s theory of ideas.

Or perhaps this aporia is just a misunderstanding. Aristotle gave to the world syllogistic logics. His logical writings were organized under the collective name, Organon, in the Middle Ages. There are conditions under which logics, such as described in the Organon, can function as a finder of ideas to materially facilitate ideation, that is, to generate flashes of inspiration (see my Framework volume 2). Logics in this understanding is not a tool, a cudgel of proof (ego says: I am right and you are wrong!); logics is a tool of discovery, used in a posture of receptivity outside the cave.

The god of lightning, of flashes, was Zeus. Zeus occupies the top place in Plethon’s system. The Plethonian Zeus would, by virtue of his position, send flashes of insight. Already above, the question: what is Zeus in Pletho, was answered. Here, the question: what does Zeus do in Pletho, is being answered: Zeus is the chief maker of keys for humans, keys that are inscripted in light, in mental luminosity that first comes to us in Olympian myth, the fire of the gods coming to man. Plethon’s Zeus is the divinity of ideation. Knowing that, we may reread Homer and discover our newly gained insight reflected in the mirror of that ancient bard. The true inventor of the lightning rod was the esoteric Aristotelian in Plethon, drawing on the ancient and medieval Greek achievement; but his lightning rod was not made of material stuff.

2.8. Well, now the cat is out of the bag, I guess. The “lightning rod” is well known in eastern systems such as yoga, Buddhism, Daoism, etc. It is the Shushumna nadi (spinal canal) which can be activated by meditation to permit the flow of Kundalini Shakti, a cosmic energy in man. Tibetan Kalachakra Tantra, uncannily similar

to Aristotelian metaphysics, lets it flow from the unmoved moving (Tibetan concept: supreme unchanging). The refraction of the undivided inner light in Plethon's device addresses the various chakras in man. Plethon's system in this sense is a chakra control panel. Plethon had very good reason to keep that aspect hidden from the persecutorial church who wanted to monopolize all truly liberating knowledge of such nature.

2.9. When an adept attains astral awakening (ability for astral travel with retaining memories upon return), and advanced abilities permit leaving our planet into outer space, an organization structure of concentric spheres is encountered that is mixed into ancient and medieval cosmology as "celestial spheres". Celestial spheres are nothing of the material world. They are, however, a reality of the plasmatic astral world. Better descriptors might be, onion rings, layers around our planet that the astral traveller encounters, layers and rings, spheres worlds or dimensions of heavenly and dark (proto-hellish) character, with spirit inhabitants of a vastly populated universe.

The American advertising executive Robert A. Monroe discovered such astral travel abilities. He wrote three books, appropriate sections of which corroborate what I just said. Moreover, Monroe established a research institute, the Monroe Institute, in Virginia, U.S.A., for research of this. Under conditions of a sleep laboratory, experimental data are collected of brain wave patterns indicating the start and end of an astral travel. Efforts were undertaken to weigh the bed with sleeper precisely so as to determine the slight change of weight when the astral body (fifth body, soul) leaves the physical body, and when it reenters. This can be collated with the times of the brain wave indicators. Astral travel is well established through these parameters. A subjective element remains through the first person narratives of the astral travellers. The ability for astral travel is hard-wired in every human, and is activated during sleep automatically. For many, conscious astral travel will remain out of reach for the time being, probably due to psychological factors such as the fear of the unknown, and due to natural protective mechanisms in our human system. If you do not want to go there yourself, study the astral painter Vincent van Gogh.

E. RAMIFICATIONS FOR RENAISSANCE SCIENCE: FROM DIVINE SIGNALS IN MAN TO NATURAL SIGNS AROUND MAN

Ideation is the basis of creativity and genius, both so abundantly, even singularly manifest in the Renaissance. It is an interesting and novel venture, after the aforesaid, to situate Plethon, the Renaissance philosopher at the apex of Byzantine philosophy, in his contemporary context of the emergent science of the Renaissance. Within the humanist tradition of Renaissance science, we may thereby trace a millennial evolution from divine signals in man to natural signs around man, always flanked by the human effort of understanding such semiotics. Philosophically, that is Spinoza ante portas; but scientifically, does it have anything to tell us beyond the boundaries of mere philosophy?

I would like to insert here a paragraph of channelled critique (cf. Framework vol. 2, p. 248): Scientists on Earth claim to pursue a "quantitative" agenda. Such a self-assessment is full of delusion. What scientists are doing today is, actually, to suppress quantitative investigation, a mockery of science. The idea of quantitative science is that of counting. Okay, count: HOW MANY CAUSES ARE THERE? – That question is the key to the befuddled agenda that human scientists falsely declare to be quantitative. The question is not even asked, let alone answered. It is not unknown, however, since Aristotle, the ever-famous founder of western science, and of logic, based his system of knowledge on that question. So-called science today is a materialist fakery and denial of knowledge – mere belief. The question has several answers: First Answer: The correct answer is, zero. In divine timelessness, there is no cause-and-effect duality, hence no cause at all. There are no beginning and end, either. Second Answer: The correct answer is, one. In time, there is a prime cause, dubbed the Big Bang. Seen out of time (in timelessness), that is the Great Unity of the Creator Spirit. Third Answer: The correct answer is, four. This is an answer that Aristotle gives in the Physics. Precisely, however, what

Aristotle calls the four causes are not truly causes, but are generalized types of causes, or four forces. There are Four Forces, personified as deities, but they are hardly that what we would understand as causes (in [a] temporal cause-effect duality/ies.) Fourth Answer: There are many causes; and they cannot be counted. For that reason, no human scientist has ever counted causes. The number, and the phenomena of many causes, is something that is transfinite (non-countable.) So-called human quantitative science proceeds to count effects but not causes. It is therefore not a viable science, but a mockery of true science – a false and misleading venture altogether. It leads away from the acausal (non-causal, non-countable) Prime Source of All, and is, thus, blasphemy. Creation comes about through changes to Vision. Pristine Vision is that of the transfinite One, the Akanthus number, a . When a divine spark enters Creation to become human, its Vision changes from what was said in the foregoing sentence. The labyrinth of many causes is entered, ideally, but not in every case, in order to regain Vision of the One. For those who have lost Vision, illusion is their fate.

Let us now go into some details.

1. For the movement suggested in the caption of this section (E), see the two texts by Brisson (Sokrates and Divine Signal, 2005) and MacLean (in classifier: Lynn Thorndyke ...). One way of understanding that in terms of general classical and Byzantine philosophy is the Euhemerist realism of the divine which is present not only in man (Sokrates, the daimonion etc.) but also in its objective Creation, nature.

2. Does Plethon offer a general theory of discovery and invention? At least, Plethon does not speak to us in exactly those words. His meaning, I believe, does come close to that. He communicates in secretive means, which might be an important ingredient in a theory of discovery and invention itself. The spark, or flash, of inspiration, of ideation, occurs in the inner world of a human being in solitude. It is not a normal human communication, like talk over dinner, as nice as that may be.

3. Right away, we see by the foregoing example that ideation has certain social strictures and prerequisites. In a checklist of such, apparently, the creative artists of the Renaissance (the community that Vasari describes, part fact, part fiction) lived in a free and unbound socialization to score significantly higher than average. This paper is not the place to expound a social theory of creativity. In a distinction, such a theory is not identical with a so-called sociology of knowledge. Knowledge is important, but secondary and derived, not source itself.

4. Artists are practitioners of a craft. Sokrates was a practitioner of an art trade craft, namely masonry. The aspect of striving in an art craft trade much later gave rise to a social organization, freemasonry. The manic and consuming striving of a successful artist or craftsman/craftswoman towards technical perfection in the productive ways of her or his trade is seldom acknowledged in philosophical methodologies, even though Plato does so occasionally, inspired by his teacher Sokrates. The aspect is not logical or otherwise related to mental processes directly, but focusses directly on manipulating with one's hands certain classes of material objects or substances. This can be sculpting, painting, or the physical act of writing. An inventor in a workshop will, over the years, become savy about how to do things with the physical materials that she or he is working with. That is an underdescribed aspect of creativity, perhaps since it is so obvious, and since it is so impossible to summarize with words. This is the physical aspect of creativity.

5. Compare that with university science today: It discourages the practical bent. It is full of dogma that is counterfactual. It is too often mind over truth, having lost touch with the ways of its trade. Its very identity is, not a trade, not a craft, but a specialized subset of purported knowledge that has matured from the moorings of wisdom. The craft or trade that it is connected with is to defend its validity as absolute beyond wisdom. That is one way of understanding the contrastive legacy of the Renaissance. George Gemistos Plethon does not dish out knowledge, to a point of being highly recondite.

6. We live in a world of natural signs that surround us. To the detriment of our living quality, the divine signals in us have been turned off. That disables us from reading, or even perceiving, the natural signs around us.

7. The obvious step is to enable the divine signals in us. The best that a human can become is as a medium for ideation, which comes to us in flashes of inspiration. It is necessary to form communities of ideation, and to exit other communities that are not geared to this purpose. Corporate forms such as nation states and powerful church organizations are social forms that are hostile to this purpose. They should become a thing of the past. The natural religion of man is the religion of the free will. Inspiration is the guidance that enables us to become free and to remain free in sustainable ways. It cannot be limited to production of gadgets and consumer goods. The first victim of its change is a set of false ideals, such as, poverty, wealth, and comparative goodness. All that is bunk. It is time to destroy the restriction of ideas.

F. IDEATION AND INVENTION

The flow of ideas is facilitated by the principle of visualization. In our case, Renaissance painting may serve as an appropriate example. More specifically, visualization as a form of mental representation is to the point. In major ways, such is the result of literacy, since reading and writing use a visual medium. It is a qualitative shift from a sound medium to a light medium. That rubs off on the style and nature of the mentally perceived. The groundwork for higher mental semiotics is thus laid, semiotics using quasi-visual abilities of the mind. More than just “seeing”, however, the mind is imaginative. When the mind “sees” that easily entails a creative seeing of objects, structures and scenes that reframe the old question of solipsism, whether my reality depends on me. There is a certain oracular slant in this, to which the ancient Greeks apparently were prone.

1. The principle of visualization:

The very expression “flash of intuition” suggests a visual percept of the mind, or with another telling idiom: a “bright moment”. When intuition flashes, a bright moment comes through channels of inner visualization, albeit not, or not primarily, through our physical eyes. The principle of visualization is known and has been described. A particular case group that is relatively well studied is the ideation of designers, by its very nature strongly visual. In design studies, we find another important principle, namely reinterpretation (repeatability). The following is a brief synopsis of the visualization principle.

The most momentous example of the principle of visualization is the advent of reading and writing. Reading and writing, or literacy, is a visual medium for language. This medium is physically visual and uses the sensory channel of our physical eyes.

Mental representation can undergo a similar metamorphosis. Mental representation can grow acutely visual. This I call quasi-visual to distinguish it from the sensate perceptions of our physical eyes. Descartes’ ideal, *clare et distincte*, clear and distinct, of more *geometrico* inspiration, uses this sub-principle of mental quasi-visualization, to be precise. In literary criticism we encounter the term “double vision” which plays on these two types of the principle of visualization. I would like to propose that during a flash of intuition, during its bright moment, the second, mental vision (quasi-vision) for a very short time, blots out and displaces our first vision of the physical eyes. In terms of the physical visuality, we are briefly absent in such a rare moment.

In eight-limb Kriya (Raja) yoga, that is known as *pratyahara*, or, sense withdrawal. It can be trained over many years as a meditative state, a highly advanced technique. That is still not equal with a bright moment because withdrawal is merely one element of the idea flash, the other element being, of course, the idea. The yogic term for the idea is, *samadhi* (see in my *Framework*, both vols.) The idea is, thus, a spiritual contact phenomenon well out of the cave.

A Christian author in the medieval west wrote that God comprehends everything simultaneously, and the human soul also has abilities of simultaneous comprehension (Gilbert Angelicus, *Compendium Medicinæ*, recited after p. Kurdzialek, p. 243). In Aristotle, this is a function of Plato’s sun and its light (Eli Diamond).

2. *The older term, intellection:*

An older philosophical term for, ideation, was, intellection. There is a most enlightening article by Antoine Côté, *Intellection and Divine Causation in Aristotle* (2005). I refer to that. The article starts out with a famous distinction in Aristotle's *De Anima* (On the Soul) between man's passive intellect and active intellect. Côté argues that, according to Aristotle, intellection mirrors sense perception, in particular such of the visual type, with which I agree. By placing this discussion in a work on the soul (astral body), Aristotle (or his informed transcribers) constructively agree(s) that intellection is not an act, active or passive, of the physical brain; it is thereby indicated that intellection takes place on the level of the soul (astral level). I refer to the materials in the bibliography below.

The nice metaphor of the verb "mirrors" rightly indicates that ideas are metaphorically equivalent to mental light falling directly into our mental perception, versus ambient light. Plato's sun would be a primary source; a mirror, a figure popular in medieval philosophy, a secondary (i.e., reflecting) source. Plethon's Zeus is thus none else than Plato's sun in a playful period disguise.

There is a book-length argument that creative genius is based entirely on ordinary (active) thought processes (Weisberg, *Creativity*, 2006). According to Weisberg, anybody could do what Picasso and Edison did, perhaps along the lines that other people are just unwilling to do it. He concludes that there is nothing to explain, but the reader is not smarter for it. Genius is an exceptional and rare thought process. Weisberg is correct that nobody has ever found an "activity" (a "doing") behind it. The reason is, as indicated, that genius is a form of our receptive intellect, which is culturally blocked in over 99% of mankind. The book in no way disproves the ingenious function of the receptive intellect because the book fails to see it, let alone to deal with it. The book shows that Byzantine philosophy, as strongly characterized by a receptive intellect, an emergent field of study today, has a critically important message for our times.

F. MODERN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH RELEVANT TO HIGHER MENTAL SEMIOTICS

There is ongoing empirical research that is relevant to higher mental semiotics, i.e., to that what in caption E2 above was metaphorically circumscribed by the verb "mirrors". This research is on a path of discovery and has not come to any final conclusion or conclusions. It would require a paper all on its own to do justice even superficially to this exciting science endeavour. I would like to conclude this paper with some remarks to introduce this research field, a specialized cognitive-linguistic refinement of Gestalt psychology.

In my discussion above, I used an abbreviated terminology, such as, mental objects, and, higher mental semiotics. To be more fully descriptive, the terminology should reflect that the word "objects" is, per recently verified reality, supplemented by words such as "auditory" and "visual", meaning, in my terminology, "quasi-auditory" and "quasi-visual". The objects at issue are mental constructs, but the art & craft techniques of such construction are sounds, light, signals, and their interpretation in our cognitive apparatus. We find, for example, the descriptor "auditory object", and "visual object" (i.e., "quasi-auditory mental object", and "quasi-visual mental object"). The senses involved are not the senses of the physical body (physical ears, eyes) but are the senses of the astral body (astral senses, including a cross-modal *sensus communis* of understanding such as in languages.) These constructive mental objects are more than just reminiscent of the Platonic "forms".

There are apparently ways of handling this that change the permeability factor, in the sense of Homeric mind interface engineering. All this and more is a new and confusing emergent field. Findings may change on short notice. See the very selective bibliography below.

BIBLIOGRAPHY, INCLUDING ADDENDA TO MY FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS,
WITH SOME NOTES INTERJECTED

In addition to finishing the two volumes of my Framework Analysis (see below), my main work leading up to this research paper was, to read, if I remember right in late 2013, the Plethon study of Niketas Siniossoglou, and, just a few weeks ago, another treatment of the difficult philosophy by a particularly studious author, Vojtěch Hladký, who describes himself in his book as a “happy positivist”. Studying Plethon from the remaining sources remains extraordinarily difficult, as the pertinent remarks of Hladky indicate. The book by Siniossoglou is more on the interpretative side. There are interpretative differences between both books, in particular regarding the survival of the pagan gods, and their function in Plethon.

Niketas Siniossoglou; *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*; New York 2011

Vojtěch Hladký; *The Philosophy of Gemistos Plethon: Platonism in Late Byzantium, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy*; Farnham, Burlington 2014

The idea for this paper came shortly before I discovered, more or less by coincidence during research for books, the 1953 English translation of a renowned French book:

Jean Seznec; *The Survival of the Ancient Gods: The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*; New York, 1953 (original French 1940), republished 1961

The interpretative differences between both books (Siniossoglou and Hladký), and an important question that is ultimately left open by both books, thereby seemed to have found a well researched answer. Seznec focusses on the western (Scholastic) tradition where the ancient gods also survived, but there is also mention of the Byzantine situation here and there. In a footnote late in the massive book, Seznec briefly mentions that Plethon influenced Ficino.

The Framework Analysis that I mention can be found by going to archive.org, a large internet repository, and searching for: Stefan Grossmann, *Byzantine Philosophy, Framework Analysis* (in the Community Books section, full title and full title of volume 2 in the pdf there). The web addresses of the two pdf volumes are:

volume 1:

<https://archive.org/details/StefanGrossmann1ByzantinePhilosophyFrameworkAnalysisCRC>

volume 2:

<https://archive.org/details/StefanGrossmann2AtlanteanPhilosophyNineBodiesOfManCRC>

Since publication on November 6, 2014, I have been collecting bibliographical addenda. That process led to this paper in late June and early July 2015. The psycho-analytic seed idea about Plato’s likenesses of the cave and of the sun came to me out of the blue on June 25, 2015

There is a very good introduction to the emergent field of Byzantine Philosophy, in form of an outline of its research history:

Georgi Kapriev; *Byzantine Philosophical Treatises*; in: Albrecht Classen (editor); *Handbook of Medieval Studies volume 1: Terms – Methods – Trends*; Berlin, New York 2010, pp. 185-194

The two examples mentioned towards the end are:

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SUBJECT TAGS

Byzantine philosophy; method; ideation, intellection, Byzantine receptions; essences and energies; Tabor light; Johannine turn; Platonic forms; Platonic sun; George Gemistos Plethon; Jean Seznec; survival of pagan gods; Euhemerism; ancient Utopias; rationalization of myth; Renaissance; Erwin Panofsky; Lem S. Vygotsky; mental semiotics; John R. Searle; Homer; golden chain; shield of Achilles; Parmenides; Plato; Proclus; Proklos; Michael Psellos; Olympian myth; Lynn Thorndyke; magic; functional gods; theory of the spheres; Johann Wolfgang von Goethe; Faust; comparative study of mythology; ego defence mechanisms EDM; Plato's likeness of the cave; Plato's likeness of the sun; sensitivity principle in epistemology; causative imagination yoga in south Indian tradition; Indra's net; Brahma; conceptual – preconceptual; darkness (melancholy) and light (wisdom); formation of concepts.

related subjects 1: reception of Plato and Aristotle in medieval, Islamic and Jewish philosophy; Islamic light metaphysics; Iranian theology; philosophies of India; Sri Aurobindo; German Idealism (incl. Schopenhauer); Schelling's philosophy of myth

related subjects 2: linguistic and literary structures of ancient Greek mythology; double vision (Northrop Frye); cognitive linguistics; theories of space; inner space; sacred space; Platonic geometry; geometry of Lemuria and Atlantis (Tomo Perisha, see in Framework vol. 2, link to free study site online)

related subjects 3: monism; henotheism; rough set theory; transfinite; absolute infinite (Georg Cantor)

Part Two: Byzantine Philosophy and the Olympian Mind

by: Dr. jur. Stefan Grossmann, Hanau

July 15, 2015

The two Russian books on Byzantine philosophy by Professors Lurie (2006) and Petrov (2007) (see in my Framework vol. 1, p. 38, bibliography on p. 199) explain in great detail that the methodological turning point of Byzantine philosophy was Hagios Maximos (Saint Maximus the Confessor) in the sixth century. Pursuant to the first part of this extended essay, this gives us the following situation to work with: The methodological turning point puts the intellectual development on a two-track path of dialectical unfoldment. On the one hand, the Olympian mind is exemplified, in the Christian vein of the Byzantine empire, by Jesus Christ of Nazareth. On the other hand, Jesus Christ of Nazareth is included in the Olympian myth basis of Greek philosophy, which thus enters into its mature stage, in which it evolves until the end of the Byzantine empire. This aspect was not mentioned in the foregoing part, and shall be explored here. To study the methodological turning point, we now have a marvelously informative tool, the Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor.

First, a clarification is required of what is meant by the expression, Olympian mind. I am not aware that this expression has been used previously as a term with a technical meaning. The Olympian mind is one of many configurations of consciousness that are available to humans. The Olympian mind designates a very high-end version of such mental configuration. The Olympian mind is the superhuman mental configuration that is used by the Olympians in classical Greek myth, first and foremost set forth in the two epics of Homer (Homer I and Homer II), the Iliad and the Odyssey. The two epics transmit to humanity essential rudiments of the mental configuration of those beings, who are thereby communicating with us in an educational and coaching effort. The Olympian myth is a seed package that grows through emotional and intellectual strands of development starting in the eighth century B.C. (the Iliad). The overarching bridge of humanity's growing understanding is embodied in the expressive spectrum that is generated by the long-term philosophy project. The Olympian mind is thus outlined as man's longest standing developmental project towards maturing out of the stage of duality and separation from the Divine ("the fall"). The closest companion project on the planet is that of Buddhism, especially Theravada Buddhism as transmitted by practice in Myanmar. The seed of the Olympian mind was the start of a string of twenty-nine contactee authors (see my Framework, vol. 2, p. 198 f.). For Byzantine philosophy, note especially the authors number 12, 13, and also 24 in that list.

In the expanded myth basis, there is a dialectic of progressing sensitivity of the mind:

(i) The methodological turning point, in the wake age of the anti-pagan Justinian, finds its inception with Saint Maximus the Confessor, who laid out a grand space of internal cosmology, a setting for the Pantokrator Christ. The empire submitted to that as a state religion, engendering a formal and pervasive sacred culture, with stylized iconic visualizations. If this is the Hegelian thesis, or dialectical inception, of the movement, then

(ii) the antithesis came within several centuries as exemplified by Saint Symeon the New Theologian. In Symeon, the grand cosmological vision of Maximus fades away into full internalization. Symeon is no longer a macrocosmic architect, but works on the microcosmic, namely on the very fabric of mental visualization, what we call the mind. Symeon is, in his sermons, pure sensitivity beyond vision of something. No longer the

lighted but the light itself is his realized theme. Sensate or quasi-sensate “being” unveils itself as energetic “presence”, projecting an extra-pyramidal cross-modal hologram. This adds to Maximus’ cosmic vastness in establishing an inner cosmos of the mind, and thereby to defining an inner world filled with non-localized, non-centric spread-out awareness, not point-shaped but spatially mapping and expansive. In the finer energies, time itself is altered, or even vanished out of awareness, in realms of the non-temporal.

(iii) The synthesis was reached in Saint Gregory Palamas of Hesychast Controversy fame. In him, we find both the cosmic vastness as well as the bliss to fill it out. The doctrines of the essences and energies bear this out from mental experience, subjective and also, connective (transpersonal). The disjinder of the Hesychast Controversy occurred at that point.

The foregoing dialectics so far has been hidden outside of Orthodox Christianity, even though it has a distinct philosophically rationalized underpinning (see the cosmology section in my Framework, vol.1). It fleshes out the program of the Johannine turn of the Olympian-Tabor light emerging. The Tabor light strikes very specific cords in the Hellenic mind, as part one above reminds us of. Its protagonists are the Christian expanders of the Olympian myth, on whose tilled and fertile ground the individual finds the means of inward transformation through rationalized Byzantine philosophical receptions of the Olympian faith in its Christian expansion, promising mastery of the Creator mind by the individual, the true domain of human freedom.

In his main writing, the “Laws”, wisely kept secret during his long lifetime, George Gemistos Plethon picks up the semiotic problem of the Palamite synthesis. For what he is seeking to achieve, even the revised myth basis of Byzantine philosophy since the Justinian age is insufficient. Accordingly, Plethon thus seeks, and must seek, a second revised myth basis. In pursuing that effort, he goes to radical and extreme intellectual lengths. Still, however, his effort remains incomplete. That obscures Plethon’s philosophy to the point of making it unintelligible.

Plethon’s unfinished myth is a freedom that overcomes our human limits by advanced inner organization, what Vygotsky would have called, higher semiotics. How strong a material for an expanded Olympian-Christian myth does that provide? A meaningful critique of Plethon and of his apex of Byzantine method must answer that question. A part of the answer is in the dialectics that I just outlined, since it marks the situation of Byzantine intellectual history at the end of which Plethon worked.

Specificly, how do Byzantine philosophers (including philosopher-theologians) prior to Plethon relate to the issue of higher semiotics in the Vygotskian sense? The question, at least, is not exactly inherent in the mainstream of Byzantine philosophy, as far as I can tell. The question that Plethon thus develops - if one chooses to see the essence of his work as an open question - is thus a very difficult one. If Plethon had found adequate words for this, his writing may not have been so strong on the figurative and allegorical.

The ball of strings, as Plethon rolls it over, is not merely his personal business. It is an eminent problem complex of the entire New Testament faiths, which are, Christianity and what is in many way its spin-off, Islam. The New Testament builds on the narrative of the gospels, which in their early time were ardently consumed as miraculous fairy tales, that is, as mythical narrative. It was understood by the clerical editors of the New Testament that an opening, a final extension is needed for it to “work” in a religious-doctrinal sense. Such a functional opening may be circumscribed as, the message and the dialogue.

For that reason, at the end of the New Testament, a Christian symbolic narrative in the Jewish apocalyptic genre was included, the Book of Revelation (The Revelation of Saint John of Patmos). In a structural parallel, Plethon provides Byzantine philosophy, the philosophy of the world’s first Christian empire, with a similar ending that is likewise an opening. In that sense, Plethon’s “Laws” are the apocalypse of Byzantine philosophy. The narrative-symbolic content of the structure is, revelation (the meaning of the Greek term, apocalypse). Plethon, like later Schelling the philosopher of myth, had a final focus on revelation, a manifest showing of the spiritual and divine to man. Plethon thereby is not so much a critic of Christianity as, of the New Testament, a radical philosophical Bible critic, or if you wish, covert philosophical Bible commentator.

Plethon's "Laws" are his attempt of a thoroughly Hellenized version of the New Testament Apocalypse. In comparative terms, the apocalypse at the end of the Bible stands outside of the Greek strands of tradition. It is Byzantine philosophy's most unconquered territory of narrative sacred myth. It would have been insightful of Plethon, a particularly insightful writer, to consider this a worthwhile project. Since a Christian fanatic burned the "Laws" of Plethon, existing in only one single manuscript, we have been given the liberty, of necessity, to fathom out Plethon's program through the reports that have come upon us, using interpolations. I propose this to be a key interpolation for grounding Plethon's authorial motives. I am not claiming that these motives would have been set forth in his text, due either to Christian censorship, or the subconscious nature of creative motives, or both. It was the mission of Plethon the philosopher to get out the message and the dialogue in a rationalized version, as seen from the viewpoint of a radical philosophical critic of revelation, of the conceptual opening at the end of the Bible, an opening that is in many ways mythical, occluded and prephilosophical.

We thus know, by such reconstruction and un-disguisement, the nature and direction of Plethon's ultimate quest, which lies exotically beyond the central dialectics of the unfoldment of Byzantine philosophy, as the last theorem of the Byzantine intellect. We also know that Plethon's ultimate quest remained, and remains to this day, unfinished. Perhaps he is telling us that, to hold a dialogue, it takes at least two.

To look once again in the times before Plethon: During the times of Justinian, who banned paganism, the head of the Platonic Academy at Athens was Damascius. Justinian's ban had the effect of closing his school. Arguably at that time, an anonymous author alias Dionysius the Areopagite introduced a henotheistic branch of Neoplatonism, which survived Justinian's ban. It subsequently was assimilated by mainstream Byzantine philosophy-theology and thus became the intellectual backbone of eastern orthodoxy. In my Framework vol. 1, I conjecture that that is the plausible answer to the question, who was behind the Dionysius the Areopagite alias, namely Damascius who the government had made the ex-head of a famous philosophy school.

Then the middle dialectic (Maximus – Symeon – Palamas) set in, assimilating Dionysius, a complex large-scale reception movement. Plethon, at the other end, with his unmistakable henotheism, quite obviously (for lack of any other plausible explanation) replicated the mainstream Dionysian hierarchies in his overtly pagan symbolism. Plethon the difficult trailed spirituality to its semiotic detail, which for us today is somewhat hard to grasp. In the age of Renaissance humanism, Plethon brought Dionysius the Areopagite's spiritual hierarchy henotheism to state-of-the-art linguistic, semiotic reflection of the spirit communications that are, in mythical visualization and by logical deduction, essential to same. Plethon thus singled out the function of mental spirit communications in the Byzantine apocalyptic tradition, a tradition which expanded the last book of the Bible into a genre, late due for philosophical rationalization. Hesychasm was intimately linked with apocalypse, revelation, through reputed visionary states, which horrified Barlaam of Calabria.

The foregoing paragraph mentions, "mental spirit communications". Within Olympian myth and within the Byzantine apocalyptic genre, such communications form the second revised myth basis of philosophy that Plethon was, implicitly, working with. I propose this not because Plethon, whose main writing is lost, writes this, but because it matches what he was trying to achieve, and what his figures and allegories hint at. It is we who have a difficulty comprehending that that is what Plethon was trying to achieve. I have come to the conclusion that that actually is what Plethon was trying to achieve.

The topos of mental communication is actually hidden in ancient myth from the very beginning. It took a late developmental turn towards the semiotic and linguistic to unveil the secret. The discovery is in its way as utopian as the later invention of the telephone. Plethon was a spiritual linguist. His secretive semiotics are a specialized rationalization of this formal aspect of myth.

Plethon as a radical rationalist rightly understood revelation, taken seriously, as spirit communication with man, a mediumistic, telepathic venture, Under late Byzantine Orthodox auspices of the hesychast controversy, that was not a priori heretic or pagan, even though Plethon succeeded to radicalize that already radicalized sore point even more.

A popular ancient philosophical question was, what is/are the distinguishing element/s of man? The restatement of this question in Plethon might be: what is the distinguishing element of the gods? That would be, the Olympian mind. What, then, is the distinguishing element of the Olympian mind? To answer that, we must study Plethon and the set of philosophies that he builds on. The answer stands in the context of the Renaissance quest for the perfect language. The Platonic response can only be, ideas as mental language.

If ego-man, the separate being with a separate, purely individual unit consciousness is monadic life, then the gods through their Olympian mind are multi-monadic life. The difference is the permeability of language, reaching beyond the cave and into the sun, reaching out of the unit mind into the connecting light. A starting point is set when one understands that the “hierarchies” are not (religious or other) “content” but, ideally, can be seen formally, as forms, as structures of a categorial encyclopedic lexicon for a great mental device. In that sense, the Byzantines installed the Organon as collective mind, the One, over reality, as Plethon summed up.

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Part Three: Plethon the Christian Gnostic

by: Dr. jur. Stefan Grossmann, Hanau

July 15, 2015

There can be no doubt that the mythology that Plethon uses is vintage Christian Gnostic. The Gnostics were a persecuted sect. They had all reason to camouflage themselves. Samael Aun Weir, in the twentieth century, provided information (much of it on <http://gnosticteachings.org>) that permits us to identify Plethon's strange "Zeus", his strange "Poseidon" as Christian Gnostic. "Zeus", for example, is a cover name for the Gnostic Jesus Christ. If "Zeus" symbolizes the light, this fits Jesus as witness of the creator light (John 1, 9 f.). The Gnostics strove to move beyond belief to (divine-counterfactual) knowledge. Plethon is an example of such knowledge. Given his high position at the court in Mistra, he was likely the leader of the Gnostic movement during the last years of Byzantium. Patriarch Gennadius would have recognized this in the single manuscript of Plethon's "Laws" that he was given after Plethon's death, and did not hesitate to burn the manuscript.

What I mention in my Framework vol. 1 as the "Johannine turn" of the philosophy and philosopho-theology of Byzantium, displays unmistakable cues of gnosticism, namely the drive to know. I would identify the saying of the evangelist John, that the truth will make us free, as one such example of clear gnostic orientation. The movement was organized through history in "white lodges" (Weir). It was not a continuation or rebirth of classical Graeco-Roman paganism, merely using a mimicry of ancient paganism's names. The Gnostics did have many ties to later Platonism, however, as modern scholars have noted. This goes a long way to explain the features, as compared with Homeric myth, of subtly transformed Renaissance mythology at large. One tough major question hence arises, namely, to what extent Byzantine philosophy and theology were informed and influenced by Gnosticism, branded as heretic by persecutorial church folk. This is a new subject in the study of the remoter sides of Byzantine philosophy, and would extend to book length if more fully explored. Faustian key traits of Byzantine philosophy, such as its more feminine receptivity, harmonize well with gnostic attitudes – in this example, the high esteem of the feminine principle by the Gnostics.

This discussion, I believe, is eye opening to a strong current within Byzantine philosopho-theology that is Gnostic, or truth-driven, to the point of seeming a bit over the top today, which merits closer investigation. An important function of mythology is to transmit knowledge in oral cultures. While Byzantium was a literate culture, a heretic sect such as the Gnostics would definitely have profited from such a confidential oral and symbolic medium of transmission for its secrets. If so, what was the knowledge the pseudo-pagan figurative symbolism in Plethon was designed to preserve and transmit? The readings that I give in parts one and two above are, in light of the Gnostic content, by no means final. They are my own paraphrase of what I read but are not the primary source meaning that the transmission symbols had in Plethon's time, and that they still have today in the eyes of initiated Christian Gnostics who are in the know.

As we see from the bibliography, Plethon's pseudo-pagan figurative symbols that we are able to reconstruct despite the pious book arson's rash deed hold an entire library of ancient sacred knowledge. Even one entire book could merely outline and condense that from what is already known in general. To mention Dionysius

the Areopagite once, his system looks and feels as if a bucket full of Gnosis found its way into it, tell-tale especially: the theologies of the name.

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Part Four: The Hidden Teachings of Jeshua

by: Dr. jur. Stefan Grossmann, Hanau

July 16, 2015

The Christian Gnostics lay claim to be the preservers of the hidden teachings of Ieshua (Jeshua, Yeshuah), also called the Christ, the Nazarene, distorted inexplicably into a scramble of Iupiter (JeZeus). The Gnostics had a critical philosophy of divine names. One may understand this better given the renaming of Jeshua by a hostile environment. Myths world-wide have a key function of transmitting traditional knowledge in oral cultures. Byzantium was a literate culture, but how welcome would a confidential medium of transmission, such as mythical figuration and other symbols, have been to a persecuted sect branded as heretic? How welcome would the hidden teachings of Yeshua a/k/a Jesus have been to an established church? To my mind, any and all hidden teachings of Jeshua pose a mortal threat to the established church and to the governments it backs.

Curiosity is a sign of intelligence. Cats, therefore, have been noted as quite intelligent animals. The noetic drive in man is a sign of curiosity, the curiosity to know. Scholars have known of ancient gnostic currents for centuries. The sensational discovery of several troves of ancient documents around the Dead Sea (today known as the Dead Sea Scrolls) caused a big commotion in the twentieth century. It became clear that gnostic (or call them, noetic, so as not to stick to just one label) sects were much more widespread at the time of Jeshua than had previously been known, but that those sects met with extinction level events.

Prior to the discovery, in the nineteenth century, of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the most important single textual source for Christian Gnosticism was the Pistis Sophia. The Coptic text is in the Codex Askewianus probably of the fourth century A.D., discovered in 1773. The text itself may be somewhat older. The teachings in the text may be considerably older.

At its beginning, the text mentions that Jesus instructed his disciples only in the first level. The text then sets forth additional, higher teachings that the transfigured Christ gave to his disciples and to his mother and to Mary Magdalene via communications over a period of eleven years. It may be noted that, in the twentieth century, the Gnostic reviver Samael Aun Weor, author of over sixty books, near the end of his life summarized his Christian (Neo-)Gnostic teachings in an extensive commentary to the Pistis Sophia. I would tentatively conclude that the hidden knowledge that Plethon intended to transmit through his "Laws" as encoded in mythical figurations and other symbols would in all essential ways have been congruent with the Pistis Sophia commentary of Weor, albeit Plethon in the fifteenth century may have had more extensive and authentic information at his disposal than Weor had in the twentieth century prior to the internet age.

The hidden teachings of Jeshua-Jesus-Christ amount to ancient spiritual sciences that are starting to become known again generally today since the beginning of the internet age in the late twentieth century. Spiritual sciences supersede religious belief. They are teachable, and learnable, knowledge that enabled Jesus to work those (authentic) miracles that are ascribed to him (discounting fictional miracles such as changing water to wine, not impossible but not factual.) The sciences threaten churches, governments, and medicine as we know it. Perhaps their strongest initial implications are, thus, social. In the long term, the spiritual sciences as known to Jeshua, a grand master, lead the way for humans into an Olympian type of free higher life.

Ritual is a, usually complex, purely formal act of the inner will (intent) that changes consciousness. A well-known and especially powerful example are the postures of traditional Indian yoga (Raja Yoga, or Kriya Yoga, in the Ashtanga). Mantras are rituals. Mudras are rituals. Ritual helps a practitioner understand and inwardly "see into reality" the change. Initiation can be given by another person, or can be self-initiation (which means, with the help of spirit guides who are invisible to our physical eyes). Ritual is for spiritual manifestation what the syllogism is for logics. In higher mental semiotics, syllogism is Gestalt ritual of "gods". Ideation outside the cave is fully identical with spiritual manifestation. Divine ideas, being constitutive forms of reality, create automatically. Spiritual manifestation is always about manifesting the divine simplicity of ideation-creation.

A very selective reading list for part four:

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- Robinson, James M. (editor); *The Nag Hammadi Library: The Definitive Translation of the Gnostic Scriptures Complete in One Volume*; San Francisco 1990
- Parry, D.W.; Tov, E. (editors); *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader*; volumes 1-6; Leiden 2004, 2004, 2005, 2004, 2005, 2005
- Fitzmyer, Joseph A., S.J.; *a guide to the dead sea scrolls and related literature*, revised and expanded; Grand Rapids, Cambridge 2008
- Dimant, Devorah; Parry, Donald W. (editors); *Dead Sea Scrolls Handbook*, volumes 1-2, Leiden Boston 2014
- Lange, Armin; Tov, Emanuel; Weigold, Matthias (editors); *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Context: Integrating the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Study of Ancient Texts, Languages, and Cultures*; volumes 1-2; Leiden, Boston 2011
- Lim, Timothy H.; Collins, John J. (editors); *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*; Oxford 2011
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- Thomassen, Einar; *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the "Valentinians" (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, Volume 60)*; Leiden, Boston 2006
- Williams, Michael A.; *review of E. Thomassen*; in: *Numen*, Vol. 53, Fasc. 3 (2006), pp. 396-401
- Pleše, Zlatko; *Pistis Sophia*; article in: *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, First Edition. Edited by Roger S. Bagnall, Kai Brodersen, Craige B. Champion, Andrew Erskine, Sabine R. Huebner; Blackwell 2013, print pages 5338–5339
- Mead, G.R.S.; *Pistis Sophia; A Gnostic Miscellany: Being for the Most Part Extracts from the Book of the Saviour, to which are Added Excerpts from a Cognate Literature, Englished (with an Introduction and Annotated Bibliography)*; London 1955 (first: 1896). pdf of Celephais Press 2007, online
- More editions see the Wikipedia article.
- Horton, Fred L. Jr.; *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews*; Cambridge etc. 1976
- Weor, Samael Aun; *The Pistis Sophia Unveiled: The Gnostic Bible: The Translated Coptic Text and Accompanying Explanation of the Gnostic Doctrine*; Thelema Press 2005
- 44 books and 84 lectures of S.A. Weor (English) can be downloaded as pdf in one zip file at:
http://samaelaunweor.ro/1%20download_eng.html
- A summation is in two books, online pdf at <http://www.gnosistr.com>, written by two of his disciples:
- Vargas, Rafael; Casan, Javier; *Gnosis Tradition and Revelation*; 2008
- ; *Gnosis Tradition and Revelation: Encounters with Samael*; 2009

Part Five: An Example: Theosis/Ascension

by: Dr. jur. Stefan Grossmann, Hanau

July 17, 2015

If I were asked to give an example why the foregoing discussions are relevant to the research of Byzantine philosopho-theology, I would point to a hidden body of ancient teachings behind the key concept of the spiritual wisdom of the Byzantines, namely, theosis (deification). In Gnostic teachings, that what is behind theosis, and is thus beyond a mere belief system, is ascension. Ascension means, quite literally, to rise from our world into higher worlds. Christian Gnostics to all appearance held extensively developed but rather concealed systematic views on this subject. Without this information, a history of Byzantine philosophy cannot achieve much more than merely scratching at the surface, without gaining an informed insider's view. If historiographical fairness merits discussing this, the question to what extent a reader may personally draw benefit from this can remain entirely open in my author's opinion. I am not trying to peddle any sectarian view. The example demonstrates, central for any scholarly understanding of Byzantine philosophy, that the contact zone, with its melting pot, of "ancient philosophy" and "Christian theology" lay on a third ground, namely that of Gnosticism, an active zone of the noetic drive.

There are readings in my Framework vol. 1 that are helpful to prepare this presentation, see there:
pp. 23 ff.: Chapter 3, theosis and related topics
pp. 90: theosis in Hesychasm
pp. 93 f.: Jane Baun, in her beautiful book, on the Celestial Journey of Byzantium

The Apostle Paul can fittingly be screened by Gnostic exegesis (Elaine Pagels). Indeed, one of his passages in the New Testament is a point of departure for Gnostic ascension, the spiritually practised yoga-like wisdom behind the theosis concept, which by no means remained purely theoretical, but which could become, in the initiates, practical-meditational. While truly profound meditation descriptions and prescriptions are hard to come by even in our overflow of information today, the techniques at issue here strike me as truly profound, and informative in the way that they lend themselves to a learner's understanding. They are at least up to par with leading eastern techniques. After years of pondering over some of them, I come to the conclusion today that only an extraordinarily towering master would have been able to give them. On p. 242 of my Framework vol. 1, list nr. 002: Ishaya Ascension Techniques, I ascribe them to Sananda/The Council of Seven Lights (Governing Council of our local cosmic central object, the unmoved moving).

It is clear that in all Byzantine philosopho-theology, the two concepts, namely: theosis, and, ascension, are inseparably and essentially linked with each other, dating back to Pre-Christian developments of these notions, a linkage that one author brings under the clustered "theosis ascension" (John F. Nash, p. 19). I have reviewed pertinent literature extensively, and there is nowhere any counterindication to this. Russell (p. 297) mentions, for the differentiated system of the "monastic synthesis", three close synonyms, which in English are: advance, ascension, and, assumption. Horujy sees Hesychasm largely as an "own specific conception" of Byzantine theology, with its beginnings forming as early as the fourth century A.D. in ascetical ascension. He makes it

amply clear that Hesychasm is chiefly a system of ascension per the “Ladder of Ascension”. Its goal is theosis, but the actual working process of theosis is, ascension. I need not elaborate this further since this known point is not in dispute.

To cut a long and difficult discussion short, the Christological consequence is, logically, that Christ, through his ascension techniques, had variable, navigable levels of humanity/divinity, which are also available to the followers of Christ. This theological bombshell, usually overlooked, was perhaps most clearly framed in a “Sermon on the Ascension” by Leo the Great (see Green, pp. 186 f.). The potential fusion of any Christian man or woman with God further obliterates any and all logical coherence behind the fraudulent “trinity” schemes of the belief-only control Church (cf. again, Sanchez-Áscobar). Henotheism, as mentioned earlier, strong in Dionysius, Neoplatonism, and Plethon, in essential ways rebels against the trinity. That may have been why some years ago, one scholar suspected Plethon of being a Crypto-Muslim.

The learned article by Brad H. Young (1988) traces the ascension motif in Christian mythology using a New Testament passage from the writings of Paul. It is about ascension and man traversing the celestial spheres. At risk of sounding obstinate, that reminds me of the esoteric side of Aristotle’s theory of the spheres, again. The fact that there is a Christian mythology is often forgotten, pointed out by Alan Watts in a book in 1954. See, more specifically for the ascent motif, Martha Himmelfarb’s book.

The ascension techniques today can be found, revived and somewhat Indianized, in form of the “Ishaya(s) Ascension Techniques” in five books of Maharishi Shivadasi Ishtar (MSI); information can be found on the internet. There is no Wikipedia except a Portuguese page, including all seven “spheres” and twenty-seven “attitudes”, with “thunder” in the titles of three of the books (symbolic meaning: word of God). The page can be machine translated. The teachings seem “light” but are, for advanced initiates, very potent visualizing tools in form of Gnostic ascension fiction, dramatizing the “spheres” and “attitudes” from our archetype level.

A very selective reading list for part five:

- Nash, John F.; *Theosis: A Christian Perspective on Human Destiny*; in: *The Esoteric Quarterly*, Spring 2011, pp. 15-33
- Sánchez-Escobar, Ángel Francisco; with Iohannes (Monk); *Theosis: Fusion of Man/Woman and God? (A Patristic, Orthodox Perspective)*; Winston-Salem 2008; pdf of 69 double pages online at: http://www.stephenhardingseminary.org/documents/THEOSIS%20_FUSION_OF_MAN_AND_GOD.pdf
- Russell, Norman; *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*; Oxford, New York 2004
- Using Russian scholarship in his notes:
- Horuiy, Sergey; *Hesychast Formation of Theology and its Modern Prospects*; 6 p. pdf (2010) online: http://synergia-isa.ru/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/hor_phil-theol2010_eng.pdf
- Green, Bernard; *The Soteriology of Leo the Great (Oxford Theological Monographs)*; Oxford, New York 2008
- Cook, Roger D.; *How Deep the Platonism? A Review of Owen and Mosser's Appendix: Hellenism, Greek Philosophy, and the Creedal "Straightjacket" of Christian Orthodoxy*; in: *Farms Review of Books* 11/2 (1999): 265–99
- DeConick, April D.; *Seek to See Him: Ascent & Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas*; Leiden etc. 1996
- Himmelfarb, Martha; *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*; New York 1994
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- Watts, Alan W.; *Myth and Ritual in Christianity*; New York 1960 (first 1954)
- Wikipedia article (Portuguese): *Ascensão Ishayas*; https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ascensão_Ishayas
- Indick, William; *Ancient Symbology in Fantasy Literature; A Psychological Study*; Jefferson, London 2012

Parts Six and Seven: Plethon's World Soul Lacuna

by: Dr. jur. Stefan Grossmann, Hanau

July 18, 2015

The idea of two is one. That is where the present interlude of a mathematized (but not, mathematical) treatment of the nature riddle finds its limits. Countability has its limits where causes are concerned, which come from the spirit realms. There is a phenomenon known as inconclusive mathematics, which is key to this conclusion. The ancients, and the Neoplatonists and the Byzantines, knew this from a section of Plato's *Timaeos* (*Timaeus*), namely, the creation of the World Soul, a text passage named, *Psychogonia* (*Timaeos* 35ab). There is not the One and the Many, but the One that is the Many. This is resolved when reality is subjectivized, as the sages of India know it (and Arthur Schopenhauer translated it into the west).

In traditional Platonism, including until Michael Psellos but not counting Plethon and then again counting Marsilio Ficino after Plethon, the mechanics of subjectivized reality (which is the mechanism permitting individual ensouled life) is summarily brought under a little understood concept, the World Soul. In Plato, *supra*, the World Soul is the explanation of evil and separation from the One.

Plethon does not have this. That is Platon's World Soul lacuna. The lacuna is not Platonic, but is Aristotelian, since Aristotle did not accept Plato's World Soul into his system of encyclopedic knowledge as the base of his philosophy (a non-mythical base as far as Aristotle's times and circumstances permitted).

Different than Aristotle, Plethon, departing from the Platonic myth of *Timaeos*, presents a rationalized functional equivalent of Platonism's traditional world soul. That is exactly, Plethon's henotheism. The World Soul, functional equivalent in Plethon, is a henotheistic community of spirits united by the light, telepathy, and spirit communications. While Michael Psellos still adheres to the Platonic World Soul doctrine in a commentary not on the entire *Timaeos* but on its *Psychogonia*, Psellos already departs from the merely mythical-dogmatic structure in his descriptive dialogue on the *Operation of Demons* that was influential until the late Renaissance.

If Plethon's realm of gods (with a small "g") has embedded in it higher semiotic functions, as has been suggested at the outset of this paper, then an Aristotelian view will consider that as the great mental device that is mentioned above. Plethon, far from being a purebred Platonist, is Aristotelian in his semiotic turn. His gnostic gods are, singularly, a rationalized version of the traditional Platonic World Soul, namely, an aggregate collective soul in voluntary joinder, society of connected spirits in aspiritual Kingdom of Light, thus, the multi-monadic life form of the flowing golden Tabor Light. The essences that constitute the World Soul are many in a henotheistic sense, under One God who is not human, and not a human-like spirit, but is ineffable in the sense of Dionysian negative theology.

The World Soul as realized rationally is the Organon as a great mental device, the key tool of multi-monadic life, and the distinguishing feature of the Olympian mind. The Oversoul (modern expression) is a participatory Over-Mind and a realm of human freedom for spiritually enlightened and liberated beings. It is the truth behind the Christian salvation myth.

A very selective reading list for parts six and seven:

- Robinson, T.M.; *Demiurge and World Soul in Plato's Politicus*; in: The American Journal of Philology, vol. 88, no. 1 (Jan. 1967), pp. 57-66
- Phillips, John; *Plato's Psychogonia in Later Platonism*; in: The Classical Quarterly, New Series, Vol. 52, No. 1 (2002), pp. 231-247
- Lauritzen, Frederick; *Psellos and Plotinos*; in: BZ 2014; 107(2): 711–724
- ; *Psellos the Hesychast. A Neoplatonic reading of the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor (Theologica I.11 Gautier)*; in: Byzantinoslavica Revue internationale des Etudes Byzantines (Byzantinoslavica Revue internationale des Etudes Byzantines), issue: 12 / 2012, pages: 167179
- Linder, Carolus Guilielmus (editor); *ΤΟΥ ΨΕΛΛΟΥ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ Εἰς τὴν Ψυχογονίαν τοῦ Πλάτωνος Michaelis Pselli In Platonis de animae procreatione praecepta Commentarius nunc primum ex codice bibliothecae acad. Upsaliensis edidit emendavit latine reddidit commentariis et prolegomenis persecutus est*; Upsala 1854. This is not a modern text-critical edition since it misses at least two Vatican manuscripts, but it is annotated.
- Collison, Marcus (editor); introduction by Stephen Skinner; *Michael Psellos on the Operation of Daemons*; Singapore 2010
- Hayton, Darin; *Michael Psellos' De Daemonibus in the Renaissance*; in: Charles Barber; David Jenkins (editors); Reading Michael Psellos; Leiden, Boston 2006, pp. 193-215

ADDITIONAL SUBJECT TAGS

(further to end of part one above)

- (2) Olympian mind; methodological turning point of Byzantine philosophy; Maximus the Confessor; Jesus Christ of Nazareth; Symeon the New Theologian; Gregory Palamas; Dionysius the Areopagite; Damascius; Neoplatonism; Hesychast Controversy; Orthodox Christianity; apocalyptic; apocalypse; Book of Revelation; New Testament; Bible criticism; Plethon's Laws (Nomoi); mental spirit communication; telepathy; multi-monadic life; Organon; mental language;
- (3) Christian Gnosticism; Samael Aun Weor; Johannine turn; Tabor Light; Zeus; Poseidon; divine feminine principle; Jew-Zeus; Yeshua; Jeshua; divine names;
- (4) hidden teachings; Pistis Sophia; Dead Sea Scrolls; ritual; spirit guides; divine simplicity; ideation-creation;
- (5) theosis; ascension; ascension techniques; variable humanity/divinity; Christology; fraudulent trinity; Ishayas; Maharishi Shivadasi Ishtar;
- (6, 7) Plethon's World Soul lacuna; Timaeos; Timaeus; spiritual Kingdom of Light; collective soul; soteriology

Part Eight: Remarks on Plethon

by: Dr. jur. Stefan Grossmann, Hanau

July 24, 2015

1. In reply to an e-mail that I sent, Professor John Monfasani write back that he is “in the skeptical camp concerning Pletho and Hermeticism.” That and some additional information that he sent precisely answered the question that I had asked him. Apart from that, he gave no comment whatsoever on the foregoing text. I would like to thank him again for the information that he sent me.

I come to the conclusion that, unlike in the Renaissance thought of Florence, Hermeticism is not an issue for Plethon the late Byzantine philosopher of Mistra. See, additionally, Woodhouse, Plethon, p. 60 for a brief discussion leading to the same conclusion.

Vice versa, where protagonists of the Florentine Renaissance utilize Hermeticism, such as the *Corpus Hermeticum*, this indicates that there is at best an indirect and remote influence of Plethon and the strange and secretive sect that Plethon appears to have represented.

2. In saying the foregoing I rule out that Plethon developed the system of his “*Nomoi*” (Laws) all on his own. I do not find it plausible that an entire religious (or noetic) system would be developed in such details either by a single person, or for a single person (namely, the author of the system).

Hermeticism has no entirely sharp and clear border demarcating it from Gnosticism. If Plethon merely was a curious, scurious collector of ideas, that is, some nostalgic antiquarian, then it would strike me as strange that he would totally ignore Hermeticism.

A second important general observation, by no means new, is the fact that the “Pantheon” of “ancient” gods that a reader finds in Plethon, in particular in his “*Nomoi*”, is, contrary to assertions in the literature, no revival of any known religion, in particular not a revival of classical Graeco-Roman pagan worship. Classical affiliations of ancient Greeks and Romans tended to be with particular “gods” (with a small “g”). While Rome does have a building named the “Pantheon”, a lump-sum worship of the entire Pantheon was rare and exceptional. A defining feature of paganism was personal relation with a god, as is still the case in India today. Indians (Hindus) might not hesitate to worship in any Hindu temple, but they will have a preferred mode and relation of worship, running through a lifetime, a family, a neighborhood.

Also, in classical mythology which describes ancient paganism, Poseidon was not the “son” of Zeus, nor was Hera (in my reading, the feminine principle) the consort of Poseidon, etc. Zoroaster (Zarathustra) is not part of Hellenic religion of any kind, but is (a set of) ancient Iranian priest(s). All that is very clear and throws an “ancient pagan revival” out of the window by merit of just this one argument alone.

A third weak point of those who argue, with a shifting range of arguments, is, that the only clear evidence that could point to Plethon as a “pagan”, namely the unique manuscript of his “*Nomoi*”, was burnt. We have a rather good reconstruction of what the text said. In my reading, Plethon was a Christian with philosophical, noetic interests, not a pagan. Some scholars have held similar opinions; scholarly opinion is not clear-cut here. James Hankins, eminent scholar of Platonism in the Italian Renaissance, thus approaches Plethon with an

alternative formulated in a dichotomic question: “Pletho: pagan or heretic?” (vol. 1, pp. 193 ff.) The second part of Hankins’ question is usually not discussed, but on questionable grounds.

If Plethon was pagan, where was his pagan community? The evidence of absence is clear that there simply was none. Speculation has made Plethon a lone one-man pagan, of a singular novel syncretistic (philosophy of?) paganism of his own creation set forth in an unpublished philosophical manuscript modeled after an ancient philosophical book, not in any way a going concern of a church or temple.

An adversarial expert, Scholarios, having assumed the monastic name Gennadius, was so horrified by the apparently dangerous content that he burned the single existing manuscript. If the content had not been dangerous, but merely lunatic, I am certain that Gennadius would have published it in triumphant calumny to prove that his then dead enemy, Plethon, had gone over the brink. Gennadius did not do this but kept things so quiet that Plethon’s pupil, Cardinal Bessarion, was able to whitewash Plethon’s name for the rest of the Renaissance.

I do not buy into Plethon’s alleged “paganism”. There is more to this. I believe I have stumbled, per above, over clues that open an issue.

3. I acknowledge that, in the foregoing conclusion (Plethon was not a “pagan”, but [possibly] a [so-branded] “heretic”), I diverge from John Monfasani, and from other researchers, probably from the majority opinion today. I do not necessarily believe in deciding such questions by vote, however.

I actually feel encouraged by highly specific information that John Monfasani very kindly sent to me (see in bibliographical notes below). There are contradictions that he has had the great knowledge and art to record, at least as to their factual basis, if not in interpretation.

a) In a catalog of world religions, there never has been a religion “Platonic paganism” of the outline that we find in Plethon. I object to that descriptor to the extent that it shall assist to construe the social reality of a religion, in the sense of a cult with members and an organization. There is no shred of evidence for that, neither archaeological nor textual. I sense, of course, that there is a real urge for such a construct, but that must not be confused with viable evidence. If Middle Platonism and Neo-Platonism are to be adduced as evidence, I believe that the differences to Plethon are so substantial that they need not be listed here. Apart from that, the majority argument so far has been a “pagan revival” of Plethon, not a “Neo-Platonic revival”. Zarathustra and the Chaldean Oracles (in Plethon) do not fit the descriptor “Platonic”, either.

As Plethon left it, we can really make neither head nor tail of this. It is on the face of it a jumble of nonsense, which is just about as strongly apposite to the presentation of any religion as things can get. Where is the charisma, the magnetism, that any religion must have? Gennadius, however, when he lit the manuscript, apparently not at all agreed with such a simplistic assessment. He would probably not tell us because his lips were sealed in fear. What was said in the manuscript was – “it”, that what must remain concealed under all circumstances. As I would read out of the apparently scared witness (Gennadius), the danger was not a pagan religion (posing what threat?); but it was Plethon’s knowledge in the manuscript. Such threats do not come from a vastly different, new, bizarre and highly intellectual religion. They arise from heresies, that is, variants in a single religion itself. Reading the witness, Gennadius, in this proposed interpretation leads to a tentative assumption that, in the sense of James Hankins’ above dichotomy, Plethon was not “pagan” but was “heretic”. Plethon was a Christian philosopher of a different kind, formed by millennial developments along the rift lines of Byzantine philosopho-theology, as indicated above, and in my Framework vol. 1 cited above (with URL).

Above, I described how I came to discovering for myself the well-reasoned theory of survival of the pagan gods through Euhemerism (Jean Seznec), in published knowledge since 1940 (French) and 1953 (English). A jumble of once pagan figures such as in Plethon is indicative of philosophical rationalization ala Euhemerism, slanted strongly away from myth, paganism, and uncritical “belief” methodology (that methodology that Shakespeare described). To declare Plethon a “pagan” is no insult, but could become one if one makes clear to oneself what that means for a critical genius such as Plethon.

I am not aware of prior consideration of this quite hidden issue in this specific context. Plethon may have used the deities we find in him in a mythographical vein, rationalized in the sense of shifting them from mythos to logos. That is a thumbnail version of the reading that I actually propose above. I am not aware of counter-arguments. In drawing the conclusion of Plethon the pagan, this alternate explanation so far, to my knowledge, has been missed.

Additionally, there is an argument from the propriety of words, against a term: “Platonic paganism”. Western culture owes a lot to the philosopher in classical Athens who was named, Sokrates. Sokrates fought bravely in the Athenian army to defend his home city-polis. Then, he haunted the public places of Athens with his wit, as known through the writings of Plato and Xenophon. When Sokrates was old, a court of his home city gave him a judicial murder for a barbarian cause, namely the cause of mocking the pagan gods.

The most famous pupil of Sokrates was Plato. Practically all philosophy of Plato comes through the mouth of the Platonic first person, Sokrates (except in Plato’s last book, Plato’s “Nomoi”). In adopting Sokrates as his literary alter ego, Plato demonstrates to this day his negative relation to ancient paganism: Plato distinctly was not a pagan. What, then, is the piety of a term: “Platonic paganism”? I propose to avoid such a descriptor as indelicate to the valuable memory of Plato and his immortal teacher Sokrates. The composite term, “Platonic paganism”, is, hence, a contradiction of terms.

b) When contemporaries of Pletho, such as George of Trebizond, in the ongoing polemics of the time, levelled accusations of “paganism”, it can be very misleading to assume that the word, “pagan”, was used in an informed sense. John Monfasani shows examples of how loosely the word was used prior to 1450 (Monfasani, *Prisca Theologia*, pp. 48 f., also Monfasani, *Plethon and the West*, p. 33).

In *Prisca Theologia*, p. 50, Professor Monfasani recites Plethon’s overt self-advertisement in his *Nomoi*, as presenting the theologies of Zarathustra and Platon. One has to be careful with such a self-advertisement. It could have the purpose of disinformation, namely, to prevent the reader from realizing the true nature of the theology that Plethon put into his text. If indeed Plethon had an important secret to hide, we may assume that he had the intelligence to hide it in a professional way. That would include at least one level of camouflage.

A clue is given by the title of Plethon’s *Nomoi*, which means, “Laws”, if translated into English. Which theology would have its natural place in a book of laws? Is there a theology of laws? It would be a philosophical theology, that is, a rationalized theology that operates without beliefs on an empirical basis like the somewhat later emerging natural sciences.

The historical Plato had practically nothing to do with Zarathustra or with Iranian influences. The major references to Zarathustra by Plethon in the writings of his late, or latest, stage, have nothing to do with the historical Plato. They point the reader to Iran. For example, Monfasani, *supra*, pp. 50 f., mentions a relevant exchange from 1443 to 1448. Initially, Scholarios, later named Gennadius, did not refer to Zarathustra when he was refuting Plethon in a lengthy way, defending Aristotle. Scholarius Gennadius did not know that there is a considerable esoteric Aristotelian vein in Pletho, as I point out above. Monfasani assumes, and I readily agree, that Scholarios would have used Plethon’s Zarathustra connection as an argument in his refutation, written 1443-1444, if Scholarios had known about the connection at that time. So, Plethon remained safe from such an argument.

Then, in 1448, we find, as Monfasani points out, that Plethon himself responded to Scholarios, thereby informing Scholarios about his (Plethon’s) Zarathustra connection. That looks on the face of it as if Plethon was intentionally shooting himself in the foot (modern metaphor) vis-à-vis his old adversary, Scholarios.

That is a very important piece of forensic-type evidence. We could assume, for example, that Plethon was a very stupid person and could not control his mouth, or his pen. That is totally implausible. We could assume, that Plethon wanted Scholarios to believe that he, Plethon, had a Zarathustra connection in his, Plethon’s, writings. That is overwhelmingly plausible, or even self-evident.

Next, we need to address the question, why Plethon would want Scholarios to believe that Plethon had a Zarathustra connection. My answer is: That was a cover, a decoy, for disinformation purposes.

The Zarathustra connection in Plethon is interesting at a certain level of understanding, but it is essentially worthless to understand Plethon's inner meaning. Zarathustra is just part of Plethon's elaborate wrapping.

However, as a decoy, Plethon's Zarathustra is most relevant: By pointing to Iran, Plethon draws away attention from his true connection, namely Egypt. Gnosticism, which I trace in the text above in Plethon, originated around the time of Christ in Alexandria, Egypt. It clearly bears the stamp of much older Egyptian wisdom segments, for example the Ogdoad, a numerical arrangement of the oldest and earliest Egyptian set of deities. The Ogdoad as a numerical arrangement figured, centuries before Plethon, prominently in Valentinian Gnosticism. While Zoroastrianism was not among top heresies in late antique church history, Gnosticism, the proposed secret of Plethon, certainly was.

Historically, this connection is not necessarily, "Hermeticism", which also stems from Egyptian pedigree. A plausible explanation why Plethon shunned Hermes is that Hermeticism, again, would have flagged Egypt, which is what Plethon painstakingly wanted to cover up. By pointing Scholarios to his Zarathustra connection in 1448 as John Monfasani has recorded, Plethon was setting up his opponent to bark up the wrong tree. Indeed, here are higher mental semiotics at play!

The trusty Scholarios, once he was thus informed, wrote Plethon a letter complaining about Plethon's efforts to stitch together a patchwork theology using Zarathustra, Platon, and the Stoics. That play of higher mental semiotics demonstrates that Plethon was proficient, and quite likely trained, in the fine arts of espionage. The guardians of ancient secret wisdom would be candidates for his masters. In my Framework vol. 1 I touch upon several instances of such a secretive mind war in late antiquity and throughout the Byzantine empire. It has its foundations as I explain in my Framework vol. 2.

In an incredible feat of scholarship, Monfasani, on pp. 51-55, recounts, and critically dismembers, the explanation that Scholarios came up with to explain the source of Plethon's ostensible Zarathustrianism. In 1460 in two letters, Scholarios blamed Elissa the Jew for setting Plethon on the Iranian track. As Monfasani shows, Scholarios' explanation cannot be, and is not, correct, however – I concur!

That leaves us without any "normal" explanation how Zarathustra found his way into the late/latest stage writing of Plethon. In fact, Zarathustra only starts to be mentioned in Plethon at a time late in Plethon's life when things started heating up and Plethon had to prepare a plausible facade for what he was doing. At that time Zarathustra conveniently slipped in. That reminds us that Plethon led, as is well documented, a double life, namely (i) as a late Byzantine sage of Mistra, and (ii) as the writer of an entirely secret manuscript, his "Nomoi", which became known only after his death, the content of which reflects on a much different, far more radical person than his lifetime public persona.

c) In his third essay that I rely on here, John Monfasani (Plethon and the West) mentions (p. 24) François Masai and Anastos Milton. Masai connected Plethon with a putative "pagan" fraternity almost everywhere in Italy. Milton discovered a role of Plethon in Columbus' (re-)discovery of America. The opinions of these respected scholars underscore that the secret half of Plethon's life may not have been limited only to writing, clandestinely, his "Nomoi". If I am correct in what I explain above, Plethon was an avid collector of "heretic" information that he could not have gained from open information in Byzantium, or anywhere in Europe or the Near East, at that time.

We may interpolate, but have not the slightest evidence, that Plethon talked extensively with Nikolaus von Kues (Cusanus, Nicholas of Cusa) from 24 September 1437 to the second half of 1438 (old calendar). Plethon impossibly could have missed the opportunity of speaking with the leading Florentine humanist, Leonardo Bruni. Again, there is not the slightest evidence that any meeting took place. This type of observation can be made for Plethon and a number of other Italian humanists. Monfasani, if I understand him rightly, seems to be suggesting the possibility that these people interacted in a stealth mode, covering their tracks. Strangely,

there is evidence of contact between Plethon and a humanist (Francesco Filelfo) who was a correspondent of Scholarios, thus, an inconspicuous person. According to Monfasani (supra, p. 30), much evidence shows that Plethon kept at his distance from, and was rejected by, contemporary Byzantine scholars.

All this supports the importance of the secret half of Plethon's life, details of which, naturally, remain off record. "Prisca theologia" was arguably the insider's code name of the Renaissance age for the same teachings that Plethon consigned to his secret manuscript, the "Nomoi", at the time of death of Byzantium.

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ADDITIONAL SUBJECT TAGS:

Platonic paganism; George Scholarios (Scholarius); Elissa the Jew; prisca theologia

SUMMARY:

George Gemistos Plethon lived in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Constantinople and Mistra in Byzantium, the eastern part of the Roman Empire that fell only in 1453. Plethon lived to nearly a hundred years old. He was very scholarly and knew more about the intellectual life, the philosophy and the theology of Byzantium than any other known person. I have found evidence that Plethon was more than just that, namely, the head of a secret brotherhood. They transmitted secret teachings related to Jesus. Related conclusions have been voiced by other scholars, too, mainly in context of a “paganism” of Plethon which I refute. I have tried to put the available information together. Like any writing about Byzantine philosopho-theology undertaken today, as distinct and apart from purely historical scholarship, the essay is of an exploratory nature.

The essay includes elements of original philosophy penned in the effort to understand what Plethon was talking about in his now lost but largely reconstructed private manuscript, the “Nomoi” (“Laws”). Since, shortly after Plethon’s death, his manuscript was burned by a Christian fanatic, and we have to rely on drafts and summary reports, methods of creative reconstruction are presently the only way to seek our way into the inner meaning of the late Byzantine sage. I use modern information from the Neo-Gnostic movement of Samael Aun Weor to identify the non-ancient Pantheon of “gods” in Plethon as encrypted semiotic markers of apparently extensive teachings of an advanced Christian Gnosticism. I epitomize my findings about the teachings in my notion of ideation, which shows a strongly Platonic influence that is authentically present in Plethon himself. The teachings are a secretive *prisca theologia* strongly rationalized by philosophy. Their level reaches extremely high. They are more than mere theory in that they enable mind-altering meditative practices in an initiate representing a decade or longer of profound systematic spiritual self-improvement.

I thank Professor John Monfasani for the information that he gave me. It is reflected in Part Eight above. The writing, and any mistakes, are entirely my own.

2

Venues Into the Heart of Light

An Essay in Nine Parts

*by: Dr. jur. Stefan Grossmann, Hanau
August 20, 2015*

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The Dialectics of Ascension

The Lucid Mirror Plan is an Imperative of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. It overarches and ennobles the separated self-will of ego when the ego opens to spiritual Enlightenment. Freedom and Salvation are Transfinite Self in God. The Transfinite Self directly encounters the Imperative, Light.

That is the operation of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is Light, Light that connects all. It uplifts man in ascension. Ascension is dialectic in the Imperative: beyond the Good, beyond the True, and into the Beautiful. Suhrawardi the Persian Illuminist found the border in intellectual illuminism. Beyond it is the creator art of the lucid mind.

Ascension brings to man her and his deification in the Good. After that comes the deification of perception. Then arises the deification of the perceived. At the end, the world is revealed as God's Paradise of Light. There is no other being.

In the Renaissance, a Hermetic, Giovanni Mercurio da Correggio, wrote in a sonnet: about the First Heaven, a Sphere above the First Heaven, motionless, governing, revolving as in a book of Aristotle, where resides the true Mind. It is a happy place. None unworthy can enter. Here stands the Empyrean of the Highest Good. It is to this place that the great Creator draws us to stay. (Tobias Churton, *Golden Builders*, p. 94.) We may safely assume that by the time of the Renaissance, the Gnostic brotherhoods were in possession of a similar art of constructed vision of the mind. Over and above any single source such as Dante in the west, Byzantium was the glorious representation and inwards visualization of paradise by the mainstream civilization of an entire empire. When Byzantium fell, that merely shifted the dialectics of ascension into higher gear.

That was necessary, it seems in a Hegelian vein, so that we may regain Byzantium, the visualization of paradise, as a spiritually awakened state of mind. As Hegel would explain, the pendulum that synchronizes such dialectics is a powerful planful cause of human history. Looking back to the materialism that was harshly dictated to man's emergent natural sciences during the Renaissance by persecutorial forces of the surviving western church, the pendulum swung deep into the darkness, and is now on a path of swinging back to the side of a spiritual awakening to the inner Light. There are certainly many ways of describing and framing this. The currently ongoing rediscovery of the lost Byzantine mind is, thus, altogether, part of a major dialectical swing of Hegel's pendulum, no mere coincidence. We are thus regaining a strange part of our own past.

Dialectics, developed by Plato, is triadic. That is a strange connection. It relates to the major shift of Byzantine philosophical method that Professor Lurie in his book (Russian) notes through Maximus the Confessor (see above in my essay “On Ideation”). I would like to annotate to Lurie’s momentous finding that a bit more can be said:

The feed to Maximus was via Dionysios the Areopagite. There is an interesting textual argument why Dionysios was an alias of Damascius (Athenian School). The argument is triadic.

John M. Dillon remarks (p. 118 f.) that Scripture does not warrant a triadic system for the heavenly realm. He finds it out of the normal that Dionysios the Areopagite saw fit to propound it. Dillon, an expert for such a question, explains that we may imagine that Dionysios was moved by the elaborate structuring of the spiritual realm that the School of Athens developed (with its last head, Damaskios). Dillon surmizes that Dionysios matched that structure, bringing into a triadic order the chaos of angelic entities who surround the Christian God.

Proklos, informing Dionysios, had been a member of the Athenian School. Damaskios, who I find the likely candidate for being the real person behind the alias, (Pseudo-)Dionysios the Areopagite, was the last head of the Athenian School, originally founded by Plato, at the time when Emperor Justinian closed down all “pagan” activities in Byzantium, including Plato’s school in Athens. It is very likely today that, whoever the real person behind the Dionysios alias was, was a Neoplatonist acting covertly to escape being persecuted by the Byzantine state.

This gives me the working hypothesis (working in a tricky, difficult, and easily mistaken field) that there was a secret group behind the triadic element. It originally points to ancient Egypt. In Alexandria, Egypt, around the time of Christ, this group formed the movement of Gnosticism. Emperor Constantine banned the Gnostics through edicts. The Gnostics then hid in the wings of Neo-Platonism. Then, Emperor Justinian closed down Neoplatonism. The Gnostics, among them very influential and sophisticated people, cleverly went mainstream “hidden in plain sight” through Dionysios, Maximos the Confessor, Symeon the New Theologian, and Gregory Palamas, and then, lastly, most furtively during his lifetime, Plethon.

The triadic element rose into mainstream through Dionysios, into Maximos the Confessor, was again prominent in Palamas, in his victorious defence tract, aptly titled, “Triads”, in the Hesychast Controversy. In Plethon, we find a triadic structure (not the “trinity”) at the top of his system, namely in the Un-Homeric grouping of “Zeus” – “Poseidon” – “Hera”.

The hidden teaching of the Gnostics behind this symbolism of higher mental semiotics is dialectics, a key element of classical Greek philosophy developed by Sokrates and his pupil, Plato, in ancient Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries. In Byzantium this was not at all an Anti-Christian movement. It was an attempt, very dangerous to the church, to rationalize Christian belief itself, belief being that invisible rope by which the Church controlled the masses, and enabled a military state to exist. To a surprisingly large extent, this attempt was successful, as we find it reflected in mainstream Byzantine Orthodox theology, such as the theology of the leading Byzantine theologians Maximus, Symeon, and Palamas (and many others of lesser stature). Greeks were thus the inventors of democracy not merely in the state, but also in the church.

That is the social and intellectual underpinning of why the Hesychast Controversy had the outcome of refuting Barlaam of Calabria, and of confirming Hesychasm, a system of direct mental contact for spiritual practitioners with Jesus without intercession by a pope or priest, as a legitimate mainstream practice. In light of the persecutorial practices of important parts of the Church establishment, in particular the Vatican in the west, that was a revolutionary breakthrough for the spiritual freedom of the individual, on the same level of major historical events such as the Reformation, the American Revolution, and the French Revolution. The only difference is that it is not as loudly celebrated as these events today. The great importance of the spiritual freedom of the individual is returning to the memory of the west in our time.

The Gospels - more of them than are just in today's Bible - were written quite some time after Jeshua's assassination. The guild responsible for their writing used a secretive alias name for Jeshua: Jesus. That has stuck with Jeshua to this day. Without these writings, Jeshua would be totally forgotten today.

Do we have authentic source material proving that the name was "Jeshua Bar Joseph" (Jeshua son of Joseph preceded by a large cross mark, or spelled "Yeshua") and not "Jesus"? Yes, historians have established this from source material. The most direct textual evidence for the name of the person called "Jesus" in the Gospels as "Yeshua" is the inscription on his ossuary. (See: photo of the inscription with transliteration and explanation in the photo inserts in: Jabovici, Pellegrino; *The Jesus Family Tomb*, p. photographic insert.) The "Jeshua" ossuary 80/503 contained bone samples that were subjected to DNA testing (supra, pp. 168-172).

I have a problem with the alleged bone fragments that were subjected to DNA testing. On p. 4 of the book it says that the ground where the tomb was found was scattered with brown ridges and chips of fractured jaws. Two skulls are mentioned that shattered when kicked by playing children. Skulls and skull fragments were collected from the gravel bed, put in pastic bags, briefly stored until given to archaeologists.

The alleged Jesus bones, however, from that location, and their storage are described thus: The grave, an important family grave, was carved from the "solid rock" of the Jerusalem hills (p. 9). Flood tides had not overflowed the tops of the ossuaries. Despite signs of looting in the grave, the lids of the ossuaries were undamaged and perfectly in place. That is most unlikely. The book itself calls this "self-contradictory". My basic credulity of the discovery of the grave screeches to a halt here.

The Jesus/Jeshua bones were fragmented into tiny bits. The bits were encapsulated in crystals. (p. 167) That does not match well with what was said on p. 4 with entire skulls intact, not encapsulated. An additional question is, how the crystal-forming minerals were washed into the family ossuaries with their tops intact, the tops not having been flooded. Quote: "the lid fit perfectly into its grooves, forming a very snug seal" (p. 192).

Also (supra), beneath the Jeshua bone fragments in crystals, "lay shreds of cloth, or shroud". We will get to the Shroud later, which is not in the ossuary but is in custody in Turin, Italy. The spin of the narrative thus seems to indicate a different, second shroud for the bones alone, which is not credible.

Further (p. 160), the bottom of the "Jeshua" (Jesus) ossuary contained far less organic debris than the directly surrounding family ossuaries, for which there is no explanation. The story pp. 161 f. how the Jeshua ossuary, while being filmed in HD as personnel loaded it into a crate, imploded (because of a slight crack on one side only of the carved limestone ossuary), shows that things don't happen by themselves in life.

There is serious direct and indirect evidence for the tomb of a "Jesus" in a rural area of Japan (A. Morrow, section on the Takenouchi documents). The documents are also called Takeuchi documents. The information is on the internet (Jesus, Japan, Aomori district, Shingo village (Herai), village, "Michel Desmarquet", "Tom Chalko", "Thiaoouba Prophecy"). The subject has been treated in at least one scholarly article (Palmer). In Byzantium, there was a "Johannine" tradition, but modern scholarship now recognizes that the tradition was formed by at least three different, anonymous authors. This may be the same with "Jesus". We already know that a person of such a name did not exist. There was a (?) Jeshua, or Yeshua. It is possible that this was in reality two people, the first "Jesus" who was born by Mary, and the second Jesus, not connected in time, due to a long silent interlude in the scant record, who claimed to be the son of God, who never claimed to be a son of Mary. By the way, the bestselling genetic analyser above never established or tried to establish from the Jerusalem family grave material that "Jeshua" was the son of "Mary" (not the "Mary Magdalene" who was compared).

Christianity, and the Christian Church (then: Churches) came about in the name of Jesus, a man who was written about under this name, Jesus, since after the middle of the first century A.D. There is a particular body of teachings associated with the name of Jew-Zeus ("Jesus"). This is a great secret. It is wrapped in another great secret, namely, that the name, Jesus, was taken from the very ancient Egyptian myth of Iusa or Iusu the

Savior and his Resurrection. Similar information about the long Egyptian literary history of the Gospel cliches has been republished since Gerald Massey I do not know how many times (Massey, vol. 2, book XII).

The meaning of the name, Jesus, is: "Jew-Zeus". That is a cipher for the Tabor Light. The Gospel of John is the closest to this hidden meaning. Let us forget about the content about these hidden teachings for now. The problem to deal with first of all is to establish beyond reasonable doubt that there are hidden teachings that were formerly associated with Jesus. Then, much later, we can go into the questions relating to the nature and content of the teachings, and their relevance for us today. This much can be said here, that the teachings are still available today, if one knows where to look in the right place. They are, specifically, teachings for our time.

One of the first to see the existence of such hidden, concealed teachings was a German Biblical scholar, Wilhelm Wrede. On p. 57 of the English translation of his book (which was published in German in 1901, decades before the Dead Sea Scrolls were published), Wrede states that Jesus conceals his teachings from the people by parabolic language. According to Wrede, Mark is clear that Jesus has two types of teachings, namely, (i) exoteric teachings for the outsider (for the general public), and (ii) esoteric teachings (in other words, secret teachings) that he gave to his disciples. The secret teachings of Jesus hold the secret of the Kingdom of God. In other words, the secret teachings of Jesus are a secret theology.

World history since Jeshua a/k/a Jesus is a war between the forces of Good and Evil over the secret theology of Jesus. The Secret Theology is the Holy Grail, namely, the cup from which Jesus drank.

The Second Coming of Jesus is the awakening of our collective mind, enabling us to form a peaceful and solidaric society of spiritually enlightened and God-realized beings. For those who reach the threshold of spiritual enlightenment, the Holy Grail will be present to drink from.

Churches in their present form will be dissolved. At present, churches are organizations of religion. Religions are belief systems. They are spiritually very ineffective. Spirituality is a scientific matter. The secret theology of Jesus is a spiritual science of a gigantic scope. What was just said makes it clear that the world's greatest powers (which are, churches, especially the Vatican) have vested interests on the side of evil to cover up and destroy the secret theology of Jesus. They will not prevail. The time of their dominance has ended.

I believe it can be established that a person, Jesus (Jeshua), did exist. He was crucified (Y-type) and was buried in his family tomb. He probably was married to Mary Magdalene (inside the Vatican, this is taken very seriously today).

Jesus did have "hidden sayings". The entire Dead Sea Scrolls issue (hundreds of publications) demonstrates this amply today.

Jesus' hidden sayings, today, are categorized as "gnostic" (Elaine Pagels, et al.). The sayings are teachings.

While the document troves of the Dead Sea scrolls are wonderful, there is no evidence that this represents everything that existed concerning Jesus, Gnosticism, and their sayings and teachings. It may be that the Byzantines had knowledge that related to this, possibly even more than what we know today.

Gnosticism was eventually persecuted and was shut down.

Would there have been interest to transmit "Jesus' secret teachings" despite state and church persecution? Doubtlessly. There was no holocaust of the people themselves.

How was this done? In secret. That is where the problem starts, to write a documented history.

Dionysios Areopagita apparently switched terminologies, from "intellect" to "Sophia" (a verbal gnostic link, also note the strangely gnoseological name: Hagia Sophia, for the great church in Constantinople built by Justinian; the woman wisdom in Proverbs 1-9 shows ancient Jewish traditions of Sophia.) Gregory Palamas, in his winning defence tract during the Hesychast Controversy, used the word "Triads" as the title. That is a Dionysian, and thus probably also "secret theological" hint of a gnostic elite knowledge system.

And, that is moreover a program: Palamas' Triadology (taken from Kapriev's German term, "Triadologie", p. 282, with discussion ff.) is a powerful cruncher of the persecutorial crypto-pagan doctrine of Athanasius and

his faction, designed to resolve and rectify their tritheist abomination of the Athanasian Church's fraudulent "trinity" into its proper, Neo-Platonic-Buddhist (see in my Framework vol. 1, on Ammonios Sakkas teacher of Plotin, p. 65, on McEvilley's monograph: p. 53 f.) unicity, that, is, monotheism of the One (nonsubstantial One, i.e., the Light). Moreover, Palamas' (and his long list of predecessors') teachings of essences and energies clarifies that the essences represented in the "trinity" are fraudulent for the simple reason that only energies are accessible to human knowledge, or any type of human relation. That enforces epistemological limits of revelation as a fundamental church critique, coming from the Hesychast camp of mystical union. Now you know what is really going on – Akhenaten, a replay of an ancient Inner-Egyptian conflict between good and evil!

Plethon, the greatest strangeness, stands next to Dionysios, the second-greatest strangeness. Dionysios cannot be well explained from the Patristic tradition alone, nor well explained from the ancient philosophical tradition alone. From a writer's view of planning a coherent historical treatment, I feel that a third element (beside the ancient philosophical, and the Patristic source pools of Byzantine philosophy) is called for.

Such, and much related, information, is in the service of the dialectics of ascension. Collapsing the forces of evil at this time will have a beneficial effect on the future development of mankind on a kinder, more loving version of planet Earth.

This section is not fully developed yet, though. It still calls to point out more clearly that into the midst of the Byzantines was tossed an apple of discord. That was the "trinity". In order to recognize the trinity as a problem, it is not enough to follow the endless futile Intra-Church discussions of the Byzantines themselves. It is necessary to go back to ancient Egypt to trace the problem to its roots.

For example, even in Egypt, in the confusing and utterly pointless trinity systems in Egypt, there was a One God at the top above. Only in Byzantium did persecutorial theologians succeed to cut God out of the picture. The resulting "trinity" is suspended in mid-air. It is not only a triune pagan abomination; it is, in addition to that, a form of systematic atheism. Of course, that is a subtle point, and comes into focus only through a distance in time and perspective. It would have required a subtle Gnostic to spy that point during the Byzantine era.

That is why Plethon, eagle-eyed, singled out exactly that point for one of his sharpest criticisms of Church paganism. That is his text on fate. In classical Greek mythology and religion, there was an ultimate power over the gods, even the Pantheon of Zeus and his companions. The ancient Greeks did not call this by name, God. They called it, fate (ananke). We may interpret Plethon's strikingly strange text "On Fate" as a raging critique, cleverly protected, of the Byzantine atheist version of the triune pagan trinity. Taken in a Hellenic cultural context, Plethon's text "On Fate" means as much as: Greek religion has a power over the pagan gods: fate (ananke); and that power is omnipotent.

What uninitiated readers of Plethon's text "On Fate" notice primarily is, that Plethon seemingly transfers God's omnipotence to fate. That is correct, but it has a subtext that reverses that meaning, namely, equating his word, fate, in substance with the One God that the atheist trinity dumps. The Church had done away with that, done away with the One God, had become a place of worshipping a mental circuit breaker of rationality. That positions Plethon as a monotheist and as a critique of trinitarian irrationality so cutting yet subtle that it shows he was standing on the ground of a secret knowledge, a man with a mission, a defender of faith against the faithless atheism that sent Byzantium to the dogs at the hand of knowing Christians, called Muslims, who painstakingly removed the crooked trinity from their faith from the very start of their faith. That is to my mind a side theme of Plethon's choice of words in his text "On Fate". His concern was verily the true Church and the truth that gives it a right to exist. I may be exaggerating in my paraphrase, but I believe that Plethon must have had an extremely radical intellect. I derive my views from my foregoing essay "On Ideation" based on Plethon. The trinity is the heart of ignorance and darkness.

A study of Egyptian trinities and triads shows much confusion and no clarity nor concept. Whenever I deal with this, I am reminded of drug abuse. There are traces of drugs in ancient Egypt imported from America, a subject not to be elaborated here (mentioned in my Framework vol. 2 with quotes). See te Velde, a good overview, not a comprehensive study.

There is a paper online by Revrend Ferret tracing the pagan, Babylonian, Egyptian etc. roots of the allegedly Christian trinity. Rabbinic Judaism considers the trinity blasphemous, as does Islam. Jewish scholars agree that the trinity dogma did not come out of Judaism. Ferret does not find any evidence otherwise. Bargeman, in her chapter on Egyptian trinities, concludes that the trinity's origins are with Egypt, and trinities clearly evolved in Egypt at a very early time (p. 19). The allegedly Christian trinity is without doubt a cultural debt to Egypt (Nash). It is, of course, a platitude to point out that ancient Egypt was in no way Christian. When the trinity is pronounced or implied to be a "revelation" of Christianity that is thus proven untrue.

In a modern view since the mathematician Georg Cantor (German spelling), the absolute infinite forms a transfinite one (transfinite means, not countable). God is not countable. The light is not countable. God's divine Love is not countable. To count God in threes or in any other numbers is patent nonsense. It falls under an esoteric reading of the tale of Jesus expelling the money changers from the temple. As a side effect, trinitarian views, of which there are many because they are arbitrary, not revealed, and not intuitive, always come hand in hand with limiting views, in particular the plague of incurable anthropomorphism (Rea). That is one of the strongest signals of pagan idolatry. Note that Cusanus, close to Plethon in time, possibly in secret teachings, engaged in mathematical theology and circling this context, wrote of it as an "Enfolding of infinite simplicity" (Albertson p. 237).

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Divine Light in Byzantium, Some Notes

George Hart (p. 5) summarizes an important Egyptian prequel to Byzantium. In New Kingdom Egypt, while the Egyptians were fully at ease with their polytheism, the cosmos was viewed as a continuous proof that a transcendental sun-god was behind all other deities. A papyrus in Leiden Museum extols the creator god, hidden but omnipresent, the One God manifesting through a trinity (Amun-Ra-Ptah).

Akhenaten became Pharaoh in 1352 B.C. During his reign of sixteen years, the One God of divine light became the Only God. The imagery was most contentious with the ruling priest class of Egypt. After the reign of Akhenaten, most of the reliefs and other pieces of sacred art of the Only God were destroyed.

In Plato, very likely through his Egyptian connections, we find the sun of the good in the famous metaphor in the “Republic”. The method that Plato promulgated was not trinitarian but triadic, namely the method of dialectics.

What the Athanasian Church implemented in late antiquity, which may be counted as the early Byzantine age, was the Egyptian manifestation of God, a trinity, as the One God itself, now construed as triune. The intuitive notion of God that man is is as unity. The construction of God as trinity breaks up man’s spiritual intuition. Additionally, the trinity, when visualized as a triangle, pushes the mind into a primitive low mode of moving in angles. That is a theology of descent. Its mindset is paranoid. The sunlike One God, on the other hand, liberates the primitive mind from the limitation of objects into the light. That is a theology of ascension. Its mindset is ecstatic bliss. Ancient Egyptian spirit technicians were savvy about this bifurcation. The core knowledge, which in our system falls under the classification of transpersonal psychology, not a “religion”, migrated to Byzantium from Egypt, together with its conflict between people with different architectures of mind. If we translate that into the terminology of the Christian era, there was a rift in the elite knowledge systems of Gnosticism itself.

One thing is perfectly clear: the “trinity” is originally not of Biblical origin. The “trinity” and the “triads” are of Gnostic origin in New Kingdom Egypt, with roots reaching back to the Old Kingdom, spin-offs of the old fight between Horus and Seth. Trinitarian and triadic figures can be found in many traditions of the world. The knowledge is elite knowledge, not within exoteric systems that are spread as religions to the masses. Christianity as a religion sponsored by the texts we know as “gospels”, not sponsored by Jesus except in the legend of handing the keys to Peter, is a religion of the light, as the Johannine gospel shows, not a religion of the trinity and its paranoid mindset. Jesus came to dissolve the latter (“Salvation”).

The point is that the trinity is a matter of “no understanding” (Bernard Lonergan, cited after Letham, p. 1). That reminds us that the opposite of “belief” is not so much “knowledge” but, in a perceptive and methodological sense, “understanding”. Belief is spiritual blindness, instrumentalized in the interests of the second oldest trade, which is temple fraud, regardless if the temple is called a church.

However you turn it, the trinity is of heretic matter. It was used to cancel out other heresies. At the elite level, there was no orthodoxy, since knowledge (gnosis) was higher than belief, belief being the absence of essential elements of knowledge, stripped of understanding, something like an unhinged door. The millennial struggle of Byzantine philosophy-theology was a covert war among competing secret elite groups of knowledge in the sense of spirit engineering, essentially a fight for the mental architecture either of good and altruistic service to others (light, Oneness), or evil and egotistic service to self (darkness, fragmentation).

That said, the Light is actually at the heart of the Byzantine inner development, streaming through the ancient corridors of philosophy. It is figurative, as we know it of ancient from the Homeric gods. Important Homeric gods, which come to us first of all, before being anything else, as poetic figures, are figures of the Light, such as, Zeus, Apollon, Athena, or of the darkness, such as Hades and Ares. In ancient myth, the Light thereby comes to us in stories of genealogy and interaction, stories that are strangely broken in Plethon, quite obviously not due to negligent reading of the ancient sources, but due to authorial intent.

The Light gradually grows functionalized, intellectualized; it develops in its relation with us humans. With this pervasive Hellenic cultural background, the reader's or listener's imagination, the stage for Byzantine receptions, is both receptive, and at the same time is performative, such as in the epic meaning of that word, passive yet originating from an active subconscious, flashing signs of an invisible higher cause unfolding and manifesting in vertical agency of the Olymp. This is pointed out by Andrew Louth – our first venue into the heart of Light:

Andrew Louth on the Light in Byzantium places his focus on the monastic Hesychast tradition of the divine uncreated Light. He calls this the “light mysticism” of the Hesychasts. The tradition was very developed Byzantium, and remains so in the Orthodox world to this day. This starts with care in the use of natural light, for which the Hagia Sophia church is an outstanding example. Light is symbolic of God, and in particular of Christ, as rising over the world – Christ, the “sun of righteousness” (p. 86). In the Hesychast tradition, the divine Light can be experienced through intense extended prayer. It is not at all clear how old that tradition is.

Maximus, equipped with Dionysian triadic instruments, interprets the Transfiguration through progress of the Christian towards knowledge of God and mystical union with God, made possible by the Incarnation, Jesus (p. 91), an interpretation standing firmly within the Gospel of John. The Transfiguration is linked without any question to spiritual progress, indicating a teaching of personal spiritual self-improvement, a type of teaching that in the west is withheld from believers, where the main obligation is towards the Church, not towards oneself in spiritual self-responsibility.

On pp. 95-08, Louth presents Symeon the New Theologian, a difficult figure to place. According to the sources, Symeon was a Christian visionary of Heaven comparable, much later, to Emanuel von Swedenborg. Much of the visionary material is probably simply reporting by nature, but the reader will automatically focus on the question on a possible symbolic meaning. Going even beyond Swedenborg, Symeon reports that his consciousness during visions was not split between this world and Heaven, but went all the way out of this world and into Heaven, not well comparable to an astral travel, either, since that takes place in the astral realm that is not Heaven but something like a great corridor of worlds. The experience of Light in Symeon is not so much explicit as understood.

Symeon's experiential visionary reports of Heaven as the highest state of being epitomize what Byzantine philosophy-theology faced in its quest of rationalization. At the peaks of the Byzantine experience, the heart of Byzantine philosophy is Light. In closing, Louth points out that Symeon was not simply exceptional. He shared with much of the Byzantine tradition an “open heaven” mysticism. Alexander Golitzin called this an “interior apocalyptic” closely related to sacramental experience (p. 101). What will always strike modern readers is the personal directness of many Byzantine encounters. The obvious question is: What factors made them, as compared to us, so different and so open to the Spirit?

The answer is known. Westerners, except for specialized Jungian psychologists, cannot simply take it out of their shelves of knowledge, but first have to learn about it. Doing so considerably erodes resistance against my novel thesis of Plethon the Gnostic. There is a specialized knowledge behind this, namely, Gnosticism. The knowledge is transmitted through texts, but importantly also by personal instruction through teachers and through practice. That is the most important thing to keep in mind when taking a closer look at this. The key to keeping the knowledge alive is, apart from transmitting the texts, an unbroken chain of live teacher-student

relations for the practical transmission. We see those circumstances playing out in Plethon, and less clearly in his main pupil Cardinal Vissarion (Bessarion), at the end of Byzantium. The key evidence is not “symbols”.

The best general introduction is by Daniel Merkur. In order to recognize and appreciate the millennial intellectual history of Byzantium as an open book of extremely high practiced Gnosticism outside of the mere story-telling context, hence as massive telling evidence in its own right, it will be necessary to delve into some of the details of this complex multi-disciplinary field.

Before turning to Merkur, it will be helpful to go through an example from the Dead Sea Scrolls. A suitable example is the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas (translation in Robinson). The Gospel that was only discovered in the twentieth century contains secret sayings of Jesus. The first saying explains that he who is able to interpret the sayings will not die. That indicates the highest level of spiritual truth, namely finding immortality after the precept of Jesus. You shall seek until you become troubled. That means, when you finally can change your inside nature, your outwards life will automatically change. Everything you so far have relied on will drop away because it hinders you. That is a timeless truth of all spiritual practitioners. You will rule; and the kingdom is inside of you and outside of you.

When you know yourself (awaken to your true self, which is awareness), then you will be known (will be part of a spiritual community in communion). You are a son (or, daughter) of the living father (God, through the spiritual network of Higher Selves, see in my Framework vol. 2). If you fail to reach this you will be your own poverty – the fate of an ordinary person.

A grown-up will ask a newborn about life, and will live. This refers to the spiritual openness of children, especially when they are younger than three years old. In grown-ups, the vision of the spiritual world is strongly blocked, and was much more strongly blocked in Jesus’ time than today. Children can actually transmit a loving energy that counteracts the blockades of grown-ups.

To recognize what is in your sight means approximately the same. Remember that things are in plain sight of Heaven. I might add: Whatever we do in life, even the slightest thing, is always the most important thing in our life. Why? Because whatever we do is a manifestation of our free will. Especially “little” symbolic things.

The “lion” is our wild nature which we must tame. This addresses discipline.

Jesus said that he has cast fire upon the world, and will guard the world until it blazes.

Jesus asks his disciples, and they compare him to a righteous angel and a wise philosopher.

If there is light within you, you light up the whole world.

The keys of knowledge (gnosis) have been taken by the pharisees and scribes and have been hidden. Be wise and innocent.

In Acts of Thomas 39, Thomas is described as a recipient of secret mysteries of Jesus (DeConick, p. 87).

The passages indicate that Jesus has given knowledge (gnosis) about immortality, discipline, spirituality, inner perception, mindful behaviour, spiritual self-improvement. Such knowledge would have been considered priceless by his gnostic community, and they would have undertaken every effort to apply and to transmit Jesus’ knowledge. The text may date back as far as the first century A.D. That is an important piece, not the only piece, of evidence for the beginning of a secret knowledge/secret theology tradition, originating in Jesus. In Buddhism, such spiritual knowledge teachings formed lineages of transmission and schools that let the knowledge endure over two and a half millennia, typically in closed monastic organization forms, not in form of churches. There is no reason to assume that the teachings of Jesus were treated with less care and respect in terms of transmission and teaching.

I currently entertain the working hypothesis that Plethon was a master in the lineage of Thomas. I do not assume a direct link of Plethon with Sethian or Valentinian Gnosticism. The elaborate formal apparatus that we encounter in Plethon serves temporal purposes in the situation of his times. Their purpose was to preserve the teachings as he had received and built them. We are far from able to produce a detailed history of the lineage from Thomas to Plethon. A powerful knowledge manifesting can be traced, however.

According to Tony Bushby, the “lineage of Thomas” is part of a huge secret society complex dating from Pre-Christian times essentially of ancient Egyptian origin. This paragraph is merely a bibliographical reference to that author. More comments on Tony Bushby are below in the concluding (seventh) section. I withhold any opinion to Tony Bushby here, apart from being grateful for his work. Kuhn (1944) explains the impact of the Rosetta Stone for pulverizing the Christian myth: It was the key to discovering that “every doctrine [of] Christianity is Egyptian” (p. ix).

From today’s information, original Christianity was Gnostic, as evidenced by the Dead Sea Scrolls. Church Christianity, on record clearly only in the later second century A.D. and thereafter, is a deviant and degenerate residue of Jeshua’s teachings, hoaxed through massive document fraud of the entire New Testament, especially under Emperor Constantine. The Bible is toxic garbage!

Now that an ancient source example (Thomas material) is present, let us return to Daniel Merkur. Merkur does not use the term “noetic state” of William James, but uses the competing term “active imagination” that was coined by Carl Gustav Jung in 1913. The concepts behind both terms have a large overlap of meaning in common. Jung’s concept is influenced by his experimental method to induce waking altered states. I have used the concept above of an “active subconscious”. Both the “noetic state” and the “active imagination” do not sufficiently highlight that the key feature is the change of medium, more importantly even than the change of content (knowledge, vision), the altered medium being a different level of the mind than is present normally. The “active subconscious” is practically the same as what Jung meant. James’ “noetic state” terminologically disregards the activity of the alleged “state”, namely, a flow (not just “presence”) of knowledge. The “state” or “static” aspect is, precisely speaking, not so much an aspect of the deep mind, as an aspect of the normal surface mind having come to rest and no longer interfering with, and blocking out, the deeper mind. The “state” in that respect is, partly “state”, and partly “process”. For the multi-layered mind to come to full rest, or permanence, is a difficult to reach goal that involves many lifetimes/incarnations. The “permanence” (from Buddhist terminology), or “state” aspect designates the lucidity and luminosity of the mind medium when appearing in individual human consciousness; it is probably not “light as such” (we do not know, and cannot know, what it is “as such”, I. Kant).

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Byzantine Philosophy as Theory of Mental Vision

I have encountered rather often that explanations of the nature of Byzantine philosophy like to look into the proximate fields of Byzantine visual art and aesthetics. This indicates a relation of Byzantine philosophy, a strongly receptive field, to (implicit) theories of mental vision. I would like to present this general observation here using four examples of such cross-border discussions (Niarchos, Arabatzis, Strezova, and Antonova). Insofar as Byzantine philosophy, a holistic philosophy, is mystical (oriented to spiritual contact), it deals with, and uses, mental vision, that is, quasi-visual non-sensate differences of luminosity in the mind in the sense of darkness and light, in its cultivation a powerful means of seeing and visualizing through the third eye, the pineal gland, the sixth chakra (Ajna). The cross-border discussions make use of its natural but usually dormant abilities, as also does scientific mental model formation in a very specialized and limited way.

When the third eye is no longer totally asleep, there is a bright spot (white, in Heavenly visions: golden) in the front center of the mind. That is an individual person's dedicated "Higher Self", who is another individual person in a higher world. The white spot is a person's network connection in the connector force, which is the Holy Spirit (Fourth Force of Creation, also named Divine Love). That is "out of the cave" and is the same as, "Plato's sun". That is the same being that is encountered extremely lovingly and blissfully in many Near Death Experiences.

Paganism is a situation where an individual person is linked to spirits who are not the dedicated Higher Self, such as the Vatican Popes and the Black Pope behind the present Pope, Francis. This is the primitive state that Julian Jaynes describes primarily, Pre-Homeric, and still in Homeric times, with "voices in the mind". The danger here is drifting off to lower self connection with the separate network of the First Force of Creation (also called the Atomic Force, or "Satan", through clerical manipulations a very fear-laden name, needlessly, the being is a most loving Seraph, even though one whose Force must not be abused). The lower self connection leads to "false surrender" (to the First Force instead of to the Fourth Force), and thus, to perdition in the realms of spiritual darkness.

Establishing the Higher Self connection is a person's first major step into scientific spirituality, one of the names for which is, Gnosis. That is the same as, in Patanjali Yoga, the eighth limb of the eight-limb Ashtanga, which is: samadhi. (There are a total of nine hierarchies of Higher Selves in the system described by Master Horlet to Thoth in Atlantis, see my Framework Analysis vol. 2.)

Byzantine philosophy, unlike the philosophies that are studied in the materialist and spiritually ignorant west, is a philosophy that leads to establishing the Higher Self connection, and to taking further steps into the spirit realms. The overall purpose of this system is purification, getting away from the haunting "voices" that Jaynes describes, and returning to the light and lightful mind realms whence man originated. What was said so far also illustrates the dangers of the pre-astral barrier that a person must pass through prior to reaching astral enlightenment, namely, that the psychic forces lurking one level before the astral body can take a person over and turn her or him to the dark side and thus, eventually, perdition.

Byzantine philosophy is related to theories of mental vision. That relates, (i) historicly, to a proximity of visualization methods in Byzantine philosophy, such as sacred spaced, etc., to methods in Renaissance art, as also described by Renaissance theories of vision, and, (ii) analytially, to a modern specialized sub-branch of philosophical language and concept analysis, namely, metaphorology (study of metaphors). Metaphorology

has become one of the most fruitful heuristic concepts of contemporary German, and not only German, philosophy through Hans Blumenberg. Blumenberg published in his works in the twentieth century an advanced philosophy of how philosophical concepts are generated from out of the pre-conceptual and the metaphorical. In the understanding that Blumenberg implies, myth and philosophy should not be seen on their own but, instead, as something like intellectual twins that condition and relativate each other. Metaphor can be the first form of sign for a new and unprecedented meaning. That is important especially, such as was the case in later Byzantium and during the Renaissance, where different specialized intellectual traditions exist contemporaneously but cannot speak to each other for lack of a sufficiently differentiated cross-cultural sign system. Metaphors can fill such a gap, especially in Plethon's situation where entire concept systems from the lifetime of a large empire assemble together. They will resort to a language that they all can speak, namely, to the pre-conceptual metaphorical language of their common origins.

Plethon in his age encountered a vast and ancient intellectual heritage of the Hellenic world with origins not only in the Hellenic world. One way of seeing him, wearing this particular hat, would be as a librarian. We have no evidence, however, that he was a book collector. He was, apparently, a collector of knowledge and wisdom, not of the books. At least we have no evidence, direct or indirect, to assume otherwise.

Another way of seeing Plethon, wearing this particular hat, is as a museum curator of the vast Byzantine intellectual heritage. If the museum had very few visitors, at least Plethon himself was the one who knew it all. In that situation, from a curious philosopher's perch point, it would have been, naturally, of the highest interest for the curator to gain a unified understanding of it all, without committing torts of intellectual deformation against any of the parts of his heritage collection. A good suggestion for him would have been to use the (modern) Blumenberg method of a metaphorological approach. In fact, I believe that is what he did, centuries prior to Hans Blumenberg.

Going through this exercise of a Byzantine intellectual heritage curator obviously would have had an added advantage for Plethon: Being forced to trace each of the competing concept systems to its pre-conceptual metaphorical and usually mythical roots, an unusually large effort would become engaged in a profound working knowledge of concept, and concept system, formation. Concepts as part of the philosophical level will thus no longer stand alone, but concepts will stand face to face with their metaphorical pre-concept, like in a bilingual dictionary for translating from "concept" back and forth to and from "pre-concept". If such a venture is pursued consequentially for, let us say, a long lifetime, such as Plethon's, the process of back and forth between "concept" and "pre-concept" will generate a gigantic amount of ultra-subtle meanings, shades and connotations, forming a subtle mental dictionary of the infinite spirit realms that surpasses imagination. The applications of this mental dictionary include, precise and finely calibratable mental model formation which is a primary requirement of any science of nature, at the current time still being substituted solely by mathematical models that are by their very nature fully, but by now questionably, deterministic.

The human life energy system as integrated with the mind has a device that is made to cope with such an ultra-complexity, namely the "crown chakra" (Sahasrara) that becomes active under certain rare conditions. It permits the mental perception of understanding through conceptually unfiltered dictionary of the awakened subtle mind. – This discussion thread will be continued in the sixth Essay below.

Suffice it to say here that a renowned, somewhat later, great practitioner of the pre-conceptual/conceptual transition, the leading Swedish scientist of his time, Emanuel von Swedenborg, left in his writings information about this very nexus. It comes in the context of a philosophy of nature, but it boils down to an analysis of mentally visual key symbols of the transition phase. This arcane Swedenborg information of the transition phase has recently been compiled by Dunér. It provides building blocks for a very dense theory of mental vision beyond the astral barrier, and even beyond the matter barrier into Paradise.

Dunér's book covers the pre-visionary Swedenborg, Swedenborg while he has still a scientist, during his early mechanistic period, up to 1734. What is little known is that the pre-visionary, early Swedenborg was a

visionary. He envisioned things in this world, which is, according to him, a big machine. For him, the early Swedenborg, everything was geometry in motion. For him, the early Swedenborg, the world-machine consists of parts: space, signs, waves, spheres, points, spirals, and infinity. That's it.

Well, there must be a bit of design in it, too.

Swedenborg envisioned metaphors (p. 21). That was at least partly due to baroque literary style (pp. 23 f.). Apparently, what Swedenborg saw in nature comes out of his visionary mind (my comment SG). He never actually discovered geometries in the external material nature. He "applies" geometry to matter (p. 238). He uses "metaphorical thought" based on the "mechanics of geometrical forms" (p. 244). He thus builds an "advanced particle mechanism" (supra).

He progresses from "large and perceptible" to "small things" (p. 256). Creation is the point set in motion (p. 301). The spiral is the perfect geometrical figure (p. 303). For Swedenborg, the spiral means perfection, dignity, beauty, reason, goodness (supra). Swedenborg, the book says, "saw spirals" (p. 308). He based circular paths on his vortical theory; but they needed not be exactly circular (p. 314). Mathematical calculations were not important (p. 315). In his "Principia" of 1734, the spiral is the basic figure of motion in nature. As a recurring sign, it links all the mechanical parts of the universe. It is "supersensual" (p. 329). His colleague scientists were not convinced. Neither he nor they knew what he had discovered. It was not his time yet.

If, as I am quite convinced of, Giordano Bruno is a later version, philosophically speaking, of Plethon, within one covert school lineage (see in this entire book, *passim*), then Leo Catana (pp. 35-62) gives us valuable insights into the systematic position of Bruno in the history of philosophy, and about Bruno's/ Plethon's conception of philosophy that is significantly different than that of a rationalistic "system" in a modern sense. (To test this assumption, an interested reader may additionally compare Bruno and Plethon with Cusanus, who I believe is very close to both of them in content and secret school affiliation, concerning the nature of philosophy.) Bruno, at least, is well described by seeing philosophy as transrational and intensely imaginative, the latter trait developed so extremely that it is almost beyond description.

We certainly find a key for Bruno in the intensity of his mental and mnemonic visualization, the "Lullian art", which an eighteenth century historian of philosophy, Brucker, among the first to use the "philosophical system" notion, finds unbecoming, and very different in the world of philosophers. Catana notes that Brucker readily categorized Bruno as an eclectic, not fitting into any known school. Assumedly, Plethon, in Brucker's time still an unknown, would have given Brucker the same impression as Bruno did. Plethon, doubtlessly, was likewise an eclectic like Bruno, and with striking similarities to Bruno, such as the presence of mythical names. (In the test case, Cusanus, he is, on a Neo-Platonic basis, also an eclectic, touching upon original questions, antinomian centered around the coincidence of the opposites, and visionary in the sense of visualizing, seeing concepts and their ideas, personally an extremely highly developed being which can only be considered an acquired trait from long personal cultivation practice with access to pertinent secret cultivation knowledge.)

To round off this first impression of Bruno, a likely model for understanding Plethon, at the end of his *Triginta Sigilli* (Thirty Seals), he proposes a new religion of love, art, magic and mathesis. In its dedication, he claims to be a "waker of sleeping souls", a "tamer of (...) ignorance", and a sponsor of "general philanthropy". (See Encyclopedia article by Yates.)

As far as the secret school program goes, another philosophy of its philosophy is in Pico della Mirandola's syncretism (see Encyclopedia article by Kristeller). Pico, too, includes an allegorical interpretation of the ancient Greek myths. Ancient Stoics and Neoplatonists had developed the myths for reconciling pagan religion with philosophical truth. The medieval grammarians in the west continued this interpretation of the ancient myths, minimizing the pagan religious element in them, and emphasizing the Christian truth that these authors were justified by in bringing it out. The humanists and Ficino in Florence further elaborated this method. Pico is a philosopher in this vein, especially in a commentary on a Platonic love poem by Benivieni. There, Pico mentions that he plans to write a treatise on poetic theology, probably never written, though. The

plan that Pico had for such a treatise apparently was to set forth the theology that is merely implied by the ancient Greek poets in their myths, and to then adopt this theology into his universal syncretism.

We may impute that the programmatic statements both of Bruno and of Pico reflect back to Plethon. From Cusanus, who as a Cardinal of the Roman Church had reason to be cautious, no such programmatic statements are known, not even from his early years.

Tentatively, one connecting feature of the secret school is that they were visualizers with abilities in that respect that are clearly paranormal. Their poetic theology, as Pico indicates, was a strongly visualized theology, in its scope going far beyond the visualization of the late Middle Ages by Dante Alighieri in his “Divine Comedy”. By the time that Plethon and, then, especially Ficino, Pico and Bruno entered the stage, the efforts were dedicated to integrating such a visual theology with science. The only explanation for such a vision-heavy knowledge approach is an occult opening of the Third Eye chakra (Ajna) through secret initiate practices, and an accompanying esoteric knowledge system. To make it clear, the abilities in this respect especially of Giordano Bruno defy any other explanation. This aspect will be discussed more in the sixth Essay below.

In Byzantine philosophy, if I am piecing the surviving evidence together correctly, the arts of visualization were not at all uncommon, either. The Byzantine visual, especially iconic arts, of Heaven, and the spiritual contact system, prominent in later Byzantium, but developing from early on in the Egyptian desert, of mystic Hesychasm (Jesus prayer) are, likewise, of occult origin and presuppose the opening of the Third Eye to a degree that goes distinctly beyond that what is normal. It is not normal but is schooled, obviously in secret in an occult school that clearly must have had a contiguous tradition of long standing.

Other historians and philosophers of Byzantine philosophy, while unable to use these same categories, have also noticed this strange fact. Indeed, it is noteworthy!

In this book, I argue that there was a Secret School of the later ancient gnostic teacher Jeshua (Jesus), who has been disfigured into a fetish of religion, i.e., of the proto-spiritual developmental insanity of man. The most important link system in such a Secret School is the nexus, during the Byzantine empire and into the Italian Renaissance, from Dionysios the Areopagite to Plethon to Giordano Bruno. Within that Secret School nexus, one important early member of the school in the west, in Italy, was Nicolas of Cusa. Jasper Hopkins (2002) sees the writings of Cusanus as containing important cues ushering in modernity.

If Cusanus stood in such a school context, which is unexplored outside of this book and is additionally subject to definitions of concepts such as that of a “school”, then his treatise “On the Vision of God” (*De visione dei*) is one of the focal points to retro-illustrate Byzantine Philosophy, in particular late Byzantine philosophy, as a theory of mental vision. Michael Edward Moore uses “*De visione dei*” by Cusanus as anchor point for his book. Cusanus’ treatise on divine vision (*visio dei*) with its elements of latest Byzantine Secret School philosophy was to become prominent in twentieth century debate, showing there are deeper currents behind the present attempt to open a new chapter in the history of philosophy, named, Byzantine Philosophy.

The debate on modernity as it was shaped by Ernst Cassirer, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Hans Blumenberg arises from the hope that modernity, a most complex concept, could lead humanity to a gnosis, that is, as Moore explains, a “special way of knowing, standing above all earlier ways of knowing” (p. 6). Interestingly, a significant part of this debate centered on a Renaissance text, namely, Cusanus’ “*De visione dei*”. Can such a promise of vision and knowledge as made in its title be fulfilled?

In “*De visione*”, Cusanus theorizes on the many perspectives on and on the world. The many perspectives illuminate the connections between God and the many individual human beings. (p. 10) They move away from a dictated single perspective of only a single person (such as, the Pope). They underline the freedom of a human to exist as individual, which includes, as different. Kurt Flasch notes that the writings of Cusanus were definitely not popular and did not circulate, but that Cusanus entertained relations with Italian scholarly circles (Flasch, p. 219-225) that could not be clarified to date.

Did Cassirer, Gadamer, and Blumenberg, three giants of twentieth century philosophy, see Cusanus as a gnostic? Moore makes it sound like, functionally yes, but not in total directness and with qualifying statements contextual to the twentieth century debate. Any historian of late Byzantine and Renaissance philosophy who sets out to categorize Cusanus, and his putative Secret School colleague Plethon, is well advised to consider the judgment of philosophers of such international stature as the three named. The bottom line is, that the label “gnosis” has been stuck to Cusanus by very knowledgeable masters of philosophy, albeit in contexts to which that issue was more or less tangential.

One interesting such exchange is reported in Moore (p. 68): Karl Löwith argued that modernity merely echoed things much older. Blumenberg retorted with a rather general gnostic argument, thus: The modern age is something new and legitimate, and it breaks totally with the past. Christianity in the Middle Ages failed. Its conundrum that it failed to solve was the “Gnostic dilemma” (supra). Translate this into simple English as: “knowledge dilemma” (of belief-oriented pre-scientific medieval society). Blumenberg continued with two more important points to this argument: The modern age broke, specifically, with that past, and opened the possibility of a humanized world wherein humans can thrive. That is a momentous becoming-worldly, or in German: *Verweltlichung*. Additionally, the *Verweltlichung*, a synonym of the Latinizing “secularization”, implies that the attention of man turns away from the afterworld, and turns to this world and solving its problems. That, to sum up, is a categorical break of modernity with the Middle Ages. At the core of that break is knowledge as the king of the human intellect, displacing the medieval principle of belief and blind faith. “Gnosis” is merely an older word for “knowledge”. To find a short formula for what Blumenberg said, one could coin the expression: from faith to knowledge, or: “gnostic turn” at the outset of modernity.

In my interpretation, figures like Plethon, Cusanus, Bessarion, Ficino, the two Picos, and Bruno were torch-bearers for the major intellectual principles of such a gnostic turn during their age. This was, in fact, the greatest defining element of the Renaissance, the age of discoveries. I additionally say that there was a secret Gnostic school of long and ancient tradition behind this, reaching back to Jesus (Jeshua the Gnostic of the Dead Sea Scroll material), with an emancipatory drive.

The hottest point about the undoubtedly authentic source material is that Jesus (Jeshua) was a knower not a believer. People imagine Jesus as a believer because the Church has lied to them. Jesus was a most advanced knower, a scientist of the spirit, who came to visit this dark and backward world. That is what his Secret School is about; it can be learned. Jeshua’s Gnosticism is science of the spirit.

A major part of the spirit-science is, mental vision. Byzantine philosophy, which was still closer in time and circumstance to Jesus than we are today, reflects that. To a considerable part, Byzantine philosophy is a theory - not of “thinking” but - of mental vision. Mental vision is astral sense perception. The English verb “to understand” refers to that. Understanding (like when reading a book) is a form of “seeing knowledge”. You do not use your eyes directly to “see knowledge” (but you use your eyes to read letters printed on a page). Einstein told us that the world is made of energy. Quantum physics, if you push it to its consequence, says that the world is made of information.

The knowledge that you can learn to see with your astral senses is the information that makes reality. That is just one small step away from changing that information, and, thus, reality, like when walking on the water (like Criss Angel in Las Vegas demonstrates on Youtube. That is not unknown in the east but has become unknown in the west through physics castrated by the Vatican, such as, by burning the Secret Gnostic Giordano Bruno at the stake. It can be shown freely because people’s brains block what is happening.)

In what way was Byzantine philosophy a theory of mental seeing? This is a collective review of several books. The first is a long modern Greek book (Niarchos, Νιάρχος, ISBN: 978-960-266-252-6, 346 p.). It makes a difference if a Greek scholar talks about Greek philosophy, or a Non-Greek scholar. In a way that is hard or impossible to analyze, a lot of philosophy is embedded in one’s mother tongue. The least is that there is a difference in speaker identification with the respective philosophy. Greek philosophy apparently always

was a strong focus of Hellenic identification for Greeks. It does not come entirely dispassionate; it is to a certain extent passionate. A passion, by no means unique, in the book of Niarchos, is, that non-philosophical parts of Greek culture are strongly supportive of philosophy. The main fields that will typically be mentioned are, classical myth, and, perhaps less frequently, Greek visual art: architecture, sculpture, and, preserved since Hellenistic times, painting and mosaic painting.

Can looking at a classical Greek sculpture be philosophy? The answer would not clearly be a “no”. There is a component of philosophy, which became strongly dominant in Byzantium, namely, passive receptivity, that is served by looking at a classical Greek sculpture, or being in the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul and looking around at its marvelous, pronouncedly decorative, art and embellishments. The mosaic icons are no mere embellishments; they are highlights of mosaic painting in all of art history. The Pantokrator has the small mouth of the shroud (see below, fourth Essay).

Niarchos wrote a book on Byzantine philosophy that is to a large part a book on the beautiful in Byzantine art. Intelligence, metaphysical and transcendent reality are visualized by the beautiful, especially in Byzantine art. Ethics and political philosophy find a goal in that, likewise. The classical notion of “telos” (life goal), to be pursued by conscious thinking and following the same, can be signified best as the beautiful in art. This long book, full of material, functionally argues that philosophical concepts are not all that is to it for philosophy. Philosophy remains unfulfilled, unless it additionally uses means of artistic expression. The most difficult notion under such aspects is “telos”. It is not a having, not a becoming – it is something visual of eternal value, obviously, something of the higher mind, something divine. That is the message that I get out of this book.

A similar argument is, functionally, presented by Arabatzis (Αραβατζής) in his book. (I am indebted to the reviewer, Katelis Viglas, for this section.) Greek philosophy is co-dependent (not on myth, see first Essay above, but) on art and the beautiful in art. The author, Giorgios Arabatzis, is a researcher of the Academy of Athens. His book is a philosophical study of imagery. Imagery is figurative and philosophical anthropology.

There is an “imaginary setting“ for a given mental representation, in a historical period, in a social setting, of the external world (Arabatzis, p. 20). The Byzantine iconographic tradition is priestly and transcendental. Iconography gives a visual perspective to theological issues (p. 45). Nikolaos Matsoukas (to whom below in an own section concluding this Essay) initiated the moral-aesthetic in his “History of Byzantine Philosophy”. Matsoukas develops a dual theological methodology of lived experience and knowledge.

In his sixth chapter, Arabatzis shifts to an ontological understanding of figurative Byzantine aesthetics. There is a type of mental imaginary space of the visualizing mind beyond representation that is a presence through communion. In that space is non-philosophy [or post-philosophy SG], in the sense of pure awareness, leading to spirituality. In the seventh chapter, based on the Platonic imagination (Plotinus, Proklos), it is shown that the figurative ideal that was dominant in Byzantine aesthetics causes reflexion [in the sense of mental reflexivity SG].

The ending note of George Arabatzis’ book is a “proto-typology of Byzantine iconological intellectualism” (expression as translated from Katelis Viglas’ review). That is, in summary, the key concept that is analytically brought into the foreground by Arabatzis as a distinguishing characteristic aspect of Byzantine philosopho-theology, or at least of one important form of Byzantine philosophy, especially the Dionysios line. The “figurative” elements that Arabatzis shows are, functionally, present as reflective archetypal intermediaries of divine vision, a critical insight that sounds deep in the foundations of classical Greek culture and civilization in Homer.

Precisely that most significant functional insight is brought back to life in the Plethon-Bruno axis straddling the end of Byzantium and the Renaissance, interpreted by some scholars today in an oversimplified fashion as a merely one-dimensional “paganism” revival and nothing more. I object to the “and nothing more” implication of their interpretation, and find the paganism revival aspect, actually, the least important of the spectral signatures of the complex phenomenon. My primary objection is that the figurative is a technique, not

a content. It is a mere technique of Gnostic poesis for the “visio dei” (to use Cusanus’ expression). It is not a “religion” paganism, because the ultimate goal is God, not the gods.

The same visionary function that was in Homer through the gods as intermediaries of “vision dei” occurs in Christian Church religion, Orthodox and Catholic, through the many “saints”. The saints are not identical under religious aspects with the ancient pagan “gods”. The saints are identical in visionary function with the ancient pagan gods, albeit in a more purified, lightful form. The sacred ancient statuary of the pagan era most prominently depicts goddesses and gods, which have specific theurgic functions (cf. *Corpus Hermeticum*, the “Asplecios”). That theurgic function of “divine vision” (visio dei) is received into Christian Orthodox and Catholic church religion through the saints. The phenomenon now could be re-termed “saintly vision”. Church Christianity could never have ascended to dominate empires over millennia without that, since it is the key charismatic element of theology. That element is not inherently “pagan”. I declare the interpretations of that phenomenon to the contrary as incomplete and misleading for that reason, mainly.

This, finally, brings us to the very interesting findings of Antonova and Strezova. Their variegated subject of Byzantine intellectuality is, as Antonova expresses it: “seeing with the eyes of God”. That was a major driving factor, perhaps the most dominant single factor, in Byzantine philosopho-theology throughout, in my abbreviated words: divine vision, the highest imaginable initiated viewpoint behind reality.

Clemena Antonova (2010 article) presents a specialist question from artistic perspective used in Byzantine visual art, namely, “reverse perspective”. That is, essentially, a perspective different from three-dimensional central perspective, that is, the perspective of presence through communion, as Arabatzis/Viglas call it above in this section. Antonova, from her specialized studies, adds technical details from the Byzantine tradition to that notion.

She cites Rudolf Arnheim (on Leonardo, who additionally uses central perspective), Erwin Panofsky and Pavel Florensky. “Reverse perspective” is how Byzantine and Byzantine-style paintings organize space, which is distinctly different from western linear central perspective. My explanation is that western central perspective is ocular (from the center of the human eye) while Byzantine reverse perspective is peripheral (surrounding the center of the human eye); peripheral vision is for sensitive people the method of training to see luminous auras around people, and also around animals, plants, and in nature (“prana” etc., which can be directly perceived by the human eye). The theory of reverse perspective has been written about in the twentieth century. The article provides an informative overview within the field of Byzantine and Neo-Byzantine aesthetics. We may take along, of course, that “visio dei” in the Byzantine tradition would use a reverse perspective as organizing principle. That would include not the Scholastic “central concept” approach but the “concept network”, or “framework” approach that I use for introductory purposes early on in my *Framework Commentary* vol. 1, a major principle of Byzantine receptions.

Antonova (in her 2010 book) takes us from such an insight to “seeing with the eyes of God” as a major constant in the intellectual history of Byzantium. The book is an expansion on “reverse perspective” as just explained in the bare bones. Whoever is looking for more depth and detail should refer to this book.

Anita Strezova specifically includes Byzantine Hesychasm in the wake of this discussion, since it is a form of mental seeing. Late Byzantine visual culture is interpreted as supportive for mystical union and awareness of the spiritual realms around us.

Resources:

metaphorology, Blumenberg, Swedenborg, etc.:

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- Blumenberg, Hans; *Ästhetische und metaphorologische Schriften*; Auswahl und Nachwort von Anselm Haverkamp; Frankfurt am Main 2001
- ; *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*; with an Afterword by Robert Savage; Ithaca 2010
- ; *Shipwreck with Spectator: Paradigms of a Metaphor for Existence*; Cambridge (Mass.), London 1997
- ; *Work on Myth*; Massachusetts Institute of Technology 1990
- Brown, Harold I.; *Conceptual Systems*; Abingdon, New York 2007
- Burkett, John Walt; *Aristotle, Rhetoric III: A Commentary*; doctoral thesis, Texas Christian University 2011
- Catana, Leo; *The Historiographical Concept 'System of Philosophy': Its Origin, Nature, Influence and Legitimacy*; Leiden, Boston 2008
- Dunér, David; *The Natural Philosophy of Emanuel Swedenborg: A Study in the Conceptual Metaphors of the Mechanistic World-View*; Dordrecht 2013
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- Yates, Frances A.; *Bruno, Giordano*; 1967 article in: Donald M. Borchert (editor in chief), *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, volumes 1-10, v; 2nd edition, Farmington Hills 2006; volume 1, pp. 570-574
- elements of a philosophy of Byzantine philosophy as mentally visual:*
- Hopkins, Jasper; *Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464): First Modern Philosopher?*; in: *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 16 (2002), pp. 13-29
- Moore, Michael Edward; *Nicholas of Cusa and the Kairos of Modernity: Cassirer, Gadamer, Blumenberg*; Brooklyn NY 2013
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- Flasch, Kurt; Nikolaus von Kues: *Geschichte einer Entwicklung, Vorlesungen zur Einführung in seine Philosophie*; Frankfurt am Main 1998
- Νιάρχος, Κωνσταντίνος; *Η ελληνική φιλοσοφία κατά τη Βυζαντινή περίοδο*; [Greek Philosophy during the Byzantine Period; Greek]; Αθήνα 1996
- Αραμπατζής, Γιώργος; *Βυζαντινή φιλοσοφία και εικονολογία*; [Byzantine Philosophy and Iconology, Greek]; Αθήνα 2012
- Viglas, Katelis; Review (Greek) of Arabatzis; pdf online at: <http://www.philosophica.gr/critica/2012-09.pdf>
- Antonova, Clemena; *On the Problem of "Reverse Perspective": Definitions East and West*; in: *Leonardo*, Vol. 43, 2010, No. 5, pp. 464-469
- ; *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon: Seeing the World with the Eyes of God*; Farnham, Burlington 2010
- Rev. Maximos Conostas; review of the 2010 book by Antonova; in: *Religion and the Arts* 18 (2014), pp. 713-717
- Strezova, Anita; *Hesychasm and Art: The Appearance of New Iconographic Trends in Byzantine and Slavic Lands in the 14th and 15th Centuries*; Canberra 2014

A Digression: Renaissance Central Perspective

Since space is running low, I put it into the discretion of the reader to inform herself or himself about Renaissance central perspective. This is an important externalization of the “theater of memory” that will be discussed later in the sixth Essay below.

Renaissance central perspective is a theurgical instrument that attracts, expands and uplifts the soul.

Resources:

- Carman, Charles H.; *Leon Battista Albert and Nicholas Cusanus: Towards an Epistemology of Vision for Italian Renaissance Art and Culture*; Farnham, Burlington 2014
- Merkur, Daniel; *Gnosis: An Esoteric Tradition of Mystical Visions and Unions*; Albany 1993
- Denery, Dallas G. II; *Seeing and Being Seen in the Later Medieval World: Optics, Theology and Religious Life*; New York 2005
- Edgerton, Samuel [Y.]; *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective*; New York 1975
- ; *the mirror, the window, and the telescope: How Renaissance Linear Perspective Changed our Vision of the Universe*; Ithaca, London 2009
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- Foa, Michelle; *Georges Seurat: The Art of Vision*; New Haven, London 2015
- Greene, Richard; *Determining the Preferred Viewpoint in Linear Perspective*; in: *Leonardo*, volume 16 issue 2 (Spring 1983), pp. 97-102
- Hendrix, John Shannon; Carman, Charles H. (editors); *Renaissance Theories of Vision*; Farnham, Burlington 2010
- Hirst, Paul H.; *Literature and the Fine Arts as a Unique Form of Knowledge*; in: *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 1973, 3:3, pp. 118-132
- Hoffmann, Volker; *Giotto and Renaissance Perspective*; in: *Nexus Network Journal* 12 (2010) 5–32
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- Maiorino, Giancarlo; *Linear Perspective and Symbolic Form: Humanistic Theory and Practice in the Work of L.B. Alberti*; in: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Summer, 1976), pp. 479-486
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- Schmeiser, Leonhard; *Die Erfindung der Zentralperspektive und the Entstehung der neuzeitlichen Wissenschaft*; [The Invention of Central Perspective and the Rise of Modern Science; German] Munich 2002
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- ; *Cognitive Iconology: When and How Psychology explains Images*; Amsterdam, New York 2014

George Zografidis on Byzantine Philosophy

One main reason why scholars in the west, outside of the Orthodox lands, when they write on Byzantine philosophy, concentrate so much on the historiography, not, however, on the philosophy itself, is that in order to penetrate into the Heart of the Light, one needs a special philosophical key – a philosophical key to the philosophy that the Byzantines developed. In the balance of this second Essay, I give my best efforts to provide just that: a specialized philosophical key to Byzantine philosophy, a summary of the traditional philosophy of Byzantine philosophy. It is in significant points and in its emotional layout different from the philosophies of philosophy that the west has developed.

I would like to begin with Zografidis' chapter on Byzantine philosophy in a recent history of Greek philosophy published in Greek. The significant points are there in implicit form, suitable to begin such a discussion. While undertaking this, of course, we may learn about Byzantine philosophy, still an understudied subject.

The word “philosophy” comes from classical Greek, where it meant: “love of wisdom”. In the Hellenic tradition, that has always included, influentially, “sacred wisdom” Plato's corpus, together with Aristotle's encyclopedic system, gave us the first and greatest rationalization of that. The metaphysical, sacred aspect was shaped, honed and augmented during the Byzantine epoch. Its philosophy looks at us in the same strange way as its icons do. Byzantine philosophy is iconic, the eastern counterpart of Descartes' rationalistic request, “clare et distincte” (clear and distinct). Later emblematics are a development of the formal suprarational iconic aspect entering through the Greek medium, early-on for example in Petrarch, from Byzantium to the west, reaching inclusively beyond rationalism to visualization, the key function of the higher mind, to which the intellect is just an adjunct, discovering the mind's inner light and its ways.

Since, unlike nearly all other forms of philosophy world-wide, Byzantine philosophy is still practically unknown, and there is no unanimously accepted modern standard textbook on the history of Byzantine philosophy, it is necessary for student and more advanced scholar alike to get organized concerning the basics of such a history. Vasilios Tatakis (Tatakis) wrote a groundbreaking book in French in 1949 which has been translated into many languages, I believe: Spanish, Greek, English, and now also Romanian. The book no longer lives up to standards of modern research, however. The thorough modern book, available in German translation, by Georgi Kapriev, *History of Philosophy in Byzantium*, has been criticized for over-emphasizing the more immediate Dionysios lineage and under-emphasizing all the rest, including figures like Photios, Psellos and Plethon (critique by Arabatzis). Apart from such issues, the source materials for writing a history of Byzantine philosophy in the standard manner of histories of philosophy is not all in place yet, with at least one major gaping lacuna, namely concerning the Byzantine commentators of Aristotle, a gap gradually being closed with no end in sight anytime soon. Additionally, scholarship of Byzantine philosophy is spread over a diaspora of many languages: Greek, Russian, Serbian and other Balkan languages, English, French, German, Spanish, and, last but importantly, Italian, to name the most important (as far I can see). That does not count languages of the diverse primary source materials, especially of the Medieval Middle East and Balkan regions, and Ottoman Turkish, languages of Islamic influences such as may be important for a figure like Plethon through Elissaeus, etc. As far as I have seen on the internet, Russian-language “gray” literature (theses, articles) is particularly numerous and, in terms of a forthcoming doxography of Byzantine philosophy, differentiated and advanced.

George Zografidis wrote an informative and balanced half-chapter on Byzantine philosophy in a recent two-volume Greek history of Greek philosophy and science. It still struggles with basics such as, mentioning names of Byzantine philosophers which other scholars may not have seen yet. The major names of Byzantine intellectuals are in place; but there were, over the Byzantine millennium, many writers, including without limitation epistolographers, whose output is of relevance. It is very unlikely that all such second and third tier names would already be fully known to the expert communities, not counting the phenomenon of anonymous authors and authors using a *nome de plume*. The format of the two-volume history includes questions about the key information to be answered by the student.

The key questions in Zografidis are, for example: main characteristics of Byzantine philosophy and their development; positions of a Byzantine philosopher in central questions: existence of God, God's relations with world and man, human freedom, relation ancient philosophy in general and with Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, Byzantine and ancient solutions compared, body-soul, God-man, Creation, role of speech, justification of a label "Byzantine philosophy". Zografidis also includes "theology", with particular aspects: Latin theology, reason, mysticism, nominalism, likeness to God, Patristic thought, faith, Platonism, Christian philosophy, Christianity, soul. That gives a good roundabout view of what subjects Byzantine philosophy likes to deal with.

What is not mentioned in that set of questions is the methodological profile of Byzantine philosophy. Gibbon and other have noted its uncreative and stagnant nature. I have applied the notion of "receptivity" (in my Framework Analysis vol. 1). The highlight of receptivity is, as this book shows, the fifteenth century, which is the end part of the Byzantine development, with its syncretistic-unifying tendencies in a curatorial and scholarly vein that carried over into the Italian Renaissance and early modernity (Ficino, the two Picos, Bruno, also, less pronouncedly, Cusanus). That forms an important contrast, with similarities of course, *vis-à-vis* René Descartes in French rationalism that was remote from the Byzantine-Italian Renaissance hotspot.

Since the next item under review is an entire book on Byzantine philosophy, I would like to end this section without going into the historical narrative that is outlined in Zografidis' half chapter. Suffice it to say that the cluster of different schools and traditions poses an organizational difficulty to anyone, or any team, who want(s) to put together a contiguous narrative. The best organizational schematic that suggests itself is: a general introduction, followed by a mixed systematic-chronological approach with epochs and then breaking the narrative down into different schools standing next to each other in any given epoch (Neo-Platonism, Aristotelianism, theologians, mystics, and other headings to be developed). The concept of a "philosophical system" that is the major organizing principle for writing the history of western philosophy, is probably in many cases more of a hindrance than a benefit for writing a history of Byzantine philosophy. Creative approaches are thereby favoured, unless a historian wishes to proceed strictly on a chronological basis, which especially for the early centuries has difficulties of its own. In my Framework vol. 1, I have tried to structure the material not only chronologically (by now I know that I have not been able to include fully all names under discussion today), but also under certain systematic aspects. That may prove helpful for others but is certainly nothing final. These remarks apply to a general history, not to a monograph of just one school.

Resource:

Ζωγραφίδης, Γιώργος; *Ενότητα 7.2, Η Βυζαντινή φιλοσοφία*; in: Ιωάννης Καλογεράκος, Παναγιώτης Θανασάς, Χλόη Μπάλλα, Βούλα Τσούνα, Πάνος Δήμας, Βασίλης Πολίτης, Παύλος Κόντος, Κατερίνα Ιεροδιακόνου, Παύλος Καλλιγιάς, Σπύρος Πάγγκος, Ηλίας Γιαννάκης, Γιώργος Ζωγραφίδης, Στέλιος Βιρβιδάκης; *Η Ελληνική Φιλοσοφία από την Αρχαιότητα έως τον 20ό αιώνα*, τόμος Α; Πάτρα 2000, ISBN: 960-538-290-3, pp. 348-384

Pavel Revko-Linardato on Byzantine Philosophy

When, above, I mentioned that there is no accepted modern textbook of a general history of Byzantine philosophy, I did not count the short Russian textbook (137 not very large pages) written by Pavel Revko-Linardato. I do not want to judge if it is “accepted” since it only appeared in 2012. It is the result of state-of-the-art modern research by a young scholar; and it tries its best to put everything between its two book covers. That definitely merits taking a closer look.

My personal thesis for a reading dialogue with this book is the following: In my late 2014 Framework Analysis vol. 1, I identified as a general overarching movement of Byzantine philosophy the “Johannine turn”. Giving that one methodical twist of reflection: The overall unifying criterion of Byzantine philosophy is the development of the visual imagination that is active in Byzantine receptions. A particular question is that of the figurative intermediary of divine vision (mental vision of the divine, key element of human freedom). That leads up to the Plethon-Bruno axis of spiritual knowledge (gnosis) at, and a bit after, the end of Byzantium.

That is, strangely, decisive for human well-being. Why? Human freedom is to a significant extent the freedom and the autonomy of one’s own mental imagery. Whatever is relegated to the subconscious through sublimation and other ego defence mechanisms (EDM), is disturbing to one’s peace of mind. Such material is not, however, under one’s control. It is unwanted, usually traumatic. Under certain circumstances, it may intrude into the conscious I (ego). That is dangerous for mental health in terms of neuroses, and in the extreme even psychoses. Such mentally visual material is laden with: anger, despair, hate, fear, and other dark and overpowering emotions that strive to take over a person. In Jungian terms, they are a person’s “shadow”. Freedom as sanity, and additionally as peace, of mind, is freedom from the shadow. Spiritually, the sum of such dark material of the shadow is “karma”, synonymous with “sin”. Freedom in its universal spiritual definition is liberation from karma (from sin). The goal and the result of liberation is, thus, hygiene of one’s mental imagery, the expulsion of its darkness, and the rising of the spiritual Light of the divine, of God’s full infinity. As a largely supra-rational philosophy, Byzantine philosophy is highly aware of this, and provides remedies through its lightful visualizations, including the power techniques of figurative mediation. It is quite evident by now that Plethon, at the end of Byzantine philosophy, was a past master of this entire field.

An example for the power technique of figurative mediation is the first Areopagitan Triad of Plethon: Zeus – Poseidon – Hera. That is on a deep archetypal level that can only be experienced (i) in dreams without autonomy of the individual, and advanced (ii) in waking trance states (yogic term: turiya, the “fourth state”) with meditatively willed control feedback. The purely visual “meanings” thereof are: Divine Light (Zeus) – the water (Poseidon) – the Creation. Read that way, a reading that is not in any way doubtful, Plethon’s first Areopagitan Triad is obviously a figurative commentary on the beginning of Genesis. The method we see in the Plethon-Bruno axis is an otherwise not openly known figurative Cabbala, in their case, a Christian Cabbala (which is: including also the New Testament).

The “Byzantine philosophy” that is on the books is quite far removed from such secret knowledge. One scholar who has seen at least the principle of the connection is Georgi Kapriev, who has been criticized for being one-sided in his “History of Philosophy in Byzantium” for placing the emphases accordingly. Byzantine philosophy is yet another example of the perennial phenomenon of the “Secret Teachings of All Ages” (Manley P. Hall) with all their layers of veils (Maya). What balance does Pavel Revko-Linardato propose in his presentation for writing the history of the Byzantine example of this phenomenon today?

The movement towards mental visualization depends on certain psychological factors. (i) A long-standing tradition of reading texts, in a small elite clique, of cliques, will increase the visual use of the memory, simply because reading is a visual activity. A reading load, like students have, intertwined with learning and memorizing, is a good foundation for visualization. There is also a personal issue of, either aural, or, visual type. Hellenes seem to have a high percentage of visual types, as their visual art shows. The rhetoricization of philosophy since Michael Psellos, and particularly in the latest phase (Palaiologan age) additionally enhances visuality since rhetorics uses visual-mental mnemonics. Even finding texts in a Greek archive system such as the libraries of Constantinople is a challenge to the visual memory, as far as I know.

(ii) Reading texts from different manuscripts with slight differences of the text is visually enhancing. Dealing with, approximately four (Platonic, Aristotelian, Dionysian-Palamite, and secret Hermetic/theurgic/Gnostic) major traditional strands (plus other traditions not considered in this model simplification) is, further visually enhancing. The comparative method, that leads to comparative knowledge, lets vocabulary grids break down. An auxiliary natural system jumps in for the fine points, which is visually comparative on a holographic mental level. This latter issue favours not only visualization but, visual symbolization and metaphoric images.

Considered together, these factors indicate that the Byzantine millennium of intellectual development had a certain automatic tendency for overcoming not only myth but also the myth-derived philosophical notion concept of the rational mind. That part of the mind that steps in to take over in the complexity overload is a transrational, higher part of the mind, at the same time intensely visual. From that transrational level of the mind, the additional step into the transpersonal mind (awakening form of Jung's "collective unconscious") of higher intelligence is close (Hesychasm example, earlier: Iamblichus's theurgy, earlier: Hermetic magic).

The accepted method for constructing a large-scale epochal synthesis of a philosophical development is Hegelian. The intellectual events roll out in triads (dialectical three-steps) over time, reaching an apex at the end of the chapter, at the end of a book. The driving force is mental, namely, contradictions of a given stage, resolving (thesis), and letting new contradictions on a higher level form (antithesis, in the third prong of the triad: synthesis). Hegel, thus, interpreted the history of philosophy as philosophy itself unfolding first in history, and then, thanks to the efforts of the historian, again, before the inner vision of the reader. On a smaller scale, the life and works of an individual philosopher, and of a particular school of philosophers, can be rolled out triadically, likewise. The materials usually can be arranged in triadic sets without violating historical realities, since the author of a history has rather broad organizational discretion.

Hegel, in absolute idealism, presented this as the mind (a high level, apparently) striding through human history. Author and readers undergo a mental ascension process from the low mind (rational mind) to a higher level (transrational mind) to a spiritual level of the mind (transpersonal level, mystic contact). In his "Science of Logic", his most difficult work, Hegel explains that ultimately, the mind will open to God, the Absolute, the One, which is the end point of the entire triadic development.. We have no reason to assume that that is essentially different from Neo-Platonic thinking and the Corpus Dionysiacum of the Areopagite during the Byzantine millennium.

Hegel as a historian of philosophy covered pretty much the entire ground of western philosophy in more than just an outline. He touches upon Byzantine philosophy (vol. 2: first part; third section; Neoplatonists; 4. Proklos: pp. 466-485, 5. successors of Proklos: pp. 486-489). The captions that I just mentioned are typical of his categorization system in motion.

Shortly before transitioning to Proklos, on pp. 464 f (my translation SG), Hegel recapitulates Plotinus. He mentions specifically mentions two mythical names used by Plotinus, namely Saturn and Jupiter: "When [Saturn and Jupiter] express moments of the soul, that is as like each of them is now to express a particular metal. Just as // Saturn expresses lead, Jupiter tin etc., so Saturn also the concluding, Jupiter the will, etc." That is quite certainly the way that Hegel would have approached Plethon if he had ever written anything about him.

The one Byzantine philosopher that Hegel lectured on in any depth (and wrote about in his lecture manuscript) is Proklos (supra, pp. 466-485). Hegel writes about Proklos (p. 468 f., my translation): “The main ideas of his philosophy can be recognized easily from his text on Platonic Theology; and it has many difficulties particularly because the pagan gods are considered and // philosophical meanings of them are sought out.” On pp. 473 ff., Hegel discusses Proklos’ trinity of three abstract gods, and dialectics in Proklos. On p. 476, Hegel points out what is functionally the henotheism of Proklos (one God with many lesser gods of God’s creation). Those beings are principles; they are abstractions (p. 477). After that first triad comes a second triad (p. 482). Then comes a third triad (substance, vous/mind, p. 483). (Further discussion along those lines with more details.)

Pavel Revko-Linardatov wrote his short book on: *Byzantine Philosophy, Genesis and Development*, not as a full-fledged history of every detail of Byzantine philosophy (so the author, p. 8); that would, today, not be possible even from the Russian libraries. One may consider it as a detailed conceptual study. It is apparently a doctoral dissertation that was accepted by a Russian publisher (publishing house Nuance/Нюанс) as a book.

All translations in the following are my own (machine assisted).

The Russian description of the book reads approximately as follows: The book explores questions of the origin, innovation and development of Byzantine philosophy. Special consideration is given to the context of the socio-political and cultural life of Byzantium. The book is intended for specialists, scholars, high school teachers, graduate students, university students, and a wide range of readers.

The book of 138 pages is organized at the top level in Part 1 and Part 2. Part 1 is a general description of Byzantine philosophy and its origins (pp. 10-62). Part 2 provides a brief history of Byzantine philosophy (pp. 63-134). The beginning is made by a foreword (pp. 4-9). At the end is a conclusion (pp. 135-137).

The book is thoughtfully and carefully written. The text has the feel of a carefully balanced condensation. The sentences are atmospherically laden in a non-optionated way that is not particularly explained. The most dense passages, atmospherically, are the conclusion and the foreword.

Tatakis is mentioned, and then an even earlier Russian historian of Byzantine intellectual history (p. 5, note 3): См. Успенский Ф.И. Очерки по истории византийской образованно- сти. СПб., 1891 [Uspensky; *Essays on the History of Byzantine Education*].

The opening phrases of the foreword are: “remarkable and multifaceted cultural tour” and: “significant role in the development of modern civilization”, “origin (...) was complex”. **A striking statement is made (p. 4): “The cultural and religious crisis facing the Roman Empire in the fourth century let Christianity and pagan Hellenism merge into one, creating the Christian Greek culture, (...).”** That is the first time that I have read such a breathtakingly clear perspective written so candidly. It simplifies everything to adopt this perspective. Conversely, it complicates everything extremely not to adopt this perspective, which might be the strongest writer’s block that is currently preventing the writing of a straightforward “History of Byzantine Philosophy”. The material, I can imagine, flows very well into a cogent Hegelian narrative, accomodating the material’s many inherent contradictions, and not gaining weakness but gaining strength from them. (Deeper inside the book, the Polish-Russian scholar F.F. Zelinsky is cited for this fundamentally clarifying insight.)

The first paragraph of the foreword (p. 4) continues by enumerating the “main features of this culture”: “direct connection to the Hellenistic tradition, Christian ideology [!], preservation of the Roman state and political doctrines, geographical location at the crossroads of the empire of Western and Eastern cultural influences.” The ideas of the Byzantines “had a powerful effect on many neighboring countries and peoples. The study of Byzantine philosophy allows us to understand the character of this influence, to assess its impact and intensity.” I find that brilliantly summarized by Pavel Revko-Linardatov. A key to understanding this type of writing, as the author states himself in the book description, is not to write an “intellectual history” that is isolated and separated from the social, economic, and political development (material culture) in which the intellectual history is embedded. That greatly facilitates, for Non-Byzantines, understanding, apparently.

My comment to this is: As a predominantly (not exclusively) receptive phenomenon, Byzantine philosophy was particularly sensitive to the situation of the material culture. The material culture predetermines what is received, and how it is received, and what is not received. Those two major issues are not up to the readers alone to determine. I do not believe that the important ramifications of that connection can fully be overseen yet today for the Byzantine empire. A feel for the pervasive influence of the Byzantine material culture on the emotional-mental form of people can be gained in the volume by Gerstel. Much could be said about this.

The brief Conclusion at the end of the short book points out some of the most important consequences of the notion of a hybrid Pagan-Christian religion of Byzantium from the foreword:

1. Byzantine philosophy was complex and contradictory in nature.

2. It evolved and changed in the context of socio-political and cultural life of the eastern Roman Empire.

3. Its genesis and development of features can be explained by a combination of various factors:

a) In contrast to the medieval western philosophy, Byzantine philosophical thought is characterized by a significantly higher level of ancient Greek and Roman heritage, which is primarily due to the direct cultural continuity of traditions of ancient Byzantium.

b) The overwhelming majority of ancient philosophical texts were written in Greek, which became the official language of the empire.

c) Byzantine Greeks formed the ethnic nucleus of the cultural life of Byzantium.

d) Hellenistic cultural elements continued to exist, adapting to the new conditions of domination by the Christian religion.

e) Orthodox Christianity was the dominant factor in the life of society. That gave Byzantine philosophy a directionality.

f) The synthesis of philosophies of the ancient Greeks and the Christian faith became the core of Byzantine philosophy.

g) The debate on the place and role of Greek philosophy in the Christian empire continued throughout the history of Byzantium.

h) Philosophical activity became dependent on secular authority, closely related to the dominant state religion.

i) Byzantine philosophy had a powerful impact on the cultural life of many other countries.

j) Byzantium was a link between western and eastern cultures, trying to implement a kind of synthesis.

k) Thus, a special position between East and West predetermined the unique originality of the intellectual life in the Byzantine Empire.

The book's Part 1, general description of Byzantine philosophy and its origins (pp. 10-62, which is 53 pages) is structured tenfold as follows:

- The term "Byzantine philosophy"
- The chronological framework of Byzantine philosophy
- Features of Byzantine philosophy
- Philosophy and theology in Byzantium
- Ancient philosophy and the Christian faith
- The Alexandrian school of Neoplatonism
- John Philoponus
- Hellenism and Judaism
- Gnosticism and the formation of Byzantine philosophy
- Specifics of education and intellectual activity in Byzantium

It find good work has been done by Pavel Revko-Linardatov in establishing this useful general structure.

The term "Byzantine philosophy" is preferable to the term "medieval Greek philosophy" because there were so many non-Greek influence, subtle and not so subtle, that a historian needs to keep track of. No clear

demarcation line to later antique Hellenistic philosophy can be drawn, neither systematically nor historiographically. Early Christian doctrine and ancient Greek philosophy were not in “parallel worlds”. They actively influenced each other. The range of interaction was diverse, from open struggle to mutual enrichment. The Patristic fathers need to be included in the study of Byzantine philosophy, as a necessary first step. After 1453, the Byzantine philosophical tradition did not end abruptly, but continues recognizably at least to the end of the seventeenth century (and to this day, I find, as Mt. Athos and the Orthodox Church traditions show). Nicolae Iorga coined the term, “Post-Byzantine”, for the afterlife of the Byzantine intellectual tradition.

The discussion of the Gnostic influence in the formation of Byzantine philosophy begins on p. 53. This discussion is not particularly original. The Gnostics were wiped out by the end of the fifth century. One interesting point is a weak-sounding Gnostic Zoroaster link mentioned on p. 53 in note 70.

In Part 2, which I don’t want to deal with at such length, there is a reminder that the Alexandrian school developed a famous allegorical method of Bible exegesis. Not everything important for understanding the Bible lies on the surface. It needs to be recovered from deeper, hidden levels by symbols and allegories. The most prominent representatives of this school were Clement of Alexandria and Origen. That places the origin of a basic allegorical method before the beginning of Byzantine philosophy, regardless of which century one designates as the beginning of Byzantine philosophy (usually, fourth or sixth century). It is mentioned that Origen was a pupil of Ammonios Sakkas, who was also the teacher of Plotinus, and who is responsible for the extremely likely strong Buddhist influence in the entire school lineage of Neo-Platonism including without limitation Dionysios Areopagita (see my Framework Commentary vol. 1, McEvilley). Origen created the first system of Christian theology.

The conventional stations of History of Byzantine Philosophy are present in the book. I see the principal value of this book in its general ideas for structuring this still emergent branch of intellectual historiography.

I would like to pursue somewhat more what I believe is the most important point of the book, namely the Zelinsky theorem: briefly stated, that Byzantine Orthodox Christianity was a hybrid that came about when Hellenism and Christianity merged, I would see the first stage from the early Christian era to the fourth century, then from the fourth to the sixth century (Areopagita), then from the sixth century to the fourteenth century (Palamas), then the remaining Byzantine period (to Plethon). This fits well with known things like Euhemerism. If one looks the facts in the eye, a trinitarian religion (Byzantine Orthodox Christianity) is not monotheistic. That is well known, and is logical without doubt, but people do not like to discuss that since it is a sensitive matter for the repressive Vatican ‘til today. On the other hand, precise scholarly work cannot be built on lies.

The trinity of the persecutorial Church cannot be explained by adding the element of Hellenism. The trinity is not Hellenistic. It comes from the murky waters of ancient Egyptian spirituality. The trinity is not connected to loving spiritual forces, but is a monstrous force in the Church. It must fall, the sooner the better.

The recognition of the abstract pagan nature of the Church’s “trinity” may facilitate, however, reception of the Zelinsky theorem (merger of Hellenism and Christianity). Hellenism had already developed the notion of philosophical monotheism by the time Christ came to the Earth. That is a lightful presence that balances out the sinister trinity element. The trinity is distinctly counter-intuitive, since human intuition visualizes God, the Source Existence Level, as Oneness. The trinity is a vision blocker (and a spiritual network connection to monstrous forces in the dark and proto-hellish realms).

The fight for mental vision in the Byzantine intellectual development is, among other things, a fight against the trinitarian fraud of the persecutorial part of the Church establishment. It is a war of factions on the secret knowledge, and secret society, level. There are only hints to be seen of this on the surface of the surviving historical record, but they are sufficient to establish this as a fact. Unlike in the western Church, the higher-mind faction of transpersonal lightful spirituality gained the upper hand in Byzantine Orthodox,

through the Hesychast dispute and its resolution in favour of the Palamite camp. The bottom line is probably two fighting secret Egyptian spy networks spreading through Byzantium, and through the west.

The Hellenistic component of the merger was strongly changed compared with its pagan form in classical antiquity. Conversely, the Christian component of the merger also was strongly changed, compared with what the earliest form of Christianity was, a small Gnostic movement of sects of Christianizing Jews. The deeper power structures behind this never openly appear. Plethon was linked to the lightful side, apparently. In the Plethon-Bruno axis, the cover of secrecy does grow rather thin at times.

The aim of the secret war is either to permit and enable a particular psychological development of man, or to prevent such a development. The goal of the development is spirituality, the psychological awakening of man from a psyche that is “bound in Plato’s cave” the exit from that cave in the mind, and the joining of the minds of the newly freed with the minds with other free beings as part of the universal Divine mind. It is essentially up to every individual herself and himself to form an opinion on this critically important issue of human fate. There are no saviours who will take that responsibility out of an individual’s hands. There are many things that can help an individual, however.

A perspective that penetrates beneath the surface of things, in this respect critical to the entire genre of “history writing” that Revko-Linardato and others stand for, can be found, for example, in Kupperman. While philosophy can purify and religion can illuminate, the mode of uplifting necessary for spiritual ascension comes from what the Neo-Platonists called theurgy. Theurgy is an extension of rational philosophy, a search for wisdom, beyond the rational mind, into the transrational and transpersonal mind. As religion experiences belief, so theurgy can experience knowledge. That is Gnosis. Philosophia, Theologia, Theourgia: that is the triad that looms as a secret over the Byzantine age. Its purpose is to invoke the personal daimon, that is the ancient term for a human’s Higher Self.

The central issue is not merely spiritual connection, but finding a connection that leads to God. That is the purpose of the Higher Self, and no other spiritual union. The Higher Self is in a spiritual network of angelic nature that is the Holy Spirit.

The underlying problem is a problem of spiritual functionality. It is known that, outside of Christian rhetorics, there is a “necessity of regarding the intellectual culture of the ancient Mediterranean as common to both pagan and Christian” (Parnell, p. 256). There are clear footprints in the sources how theurgy, the ritual of summoning the divine by elevating the soul, moving from Iamblichos via Proklos to Dionysios (and from him into Byzantine mainstream Orthodox theology), as pointed out in the article by Dylan Burns.

It is interesting to note what one of the founders of modern psychology has to say about this (Heidelberger, pp. 116 ff.). While science observes nature from the outside, the philosophy of nature observes nature from the inside, in a similar way as a person is able to observe herself or himself from the inside through the mind, “from the side of nature visible only to nature itself” (supra, p. 116). There are external material signs that provide us with the inferences that we need for such an “internal” philosophy of nature (p. 118). Fechner finds most crucial, functional similarity. Fechner, who is recognized as an able scientist and astute observer, holds the notion that a system has a soul. Nature, for example, has a soul. Souls can be organized in many different ways.

Fechner mentions criteria for an ensouled system: unified whole, closed system, individual, autonomous, self-regulating, self-developing, capable of innumerable effects, source of unpredictable innovations, self-preservation. With that list, Fechner describes why nature is very likely ensouled similar as a human body is ensouled. He also developed five more lists. His criteria are met not only by humans but also by animals, plants, minerals, the Earth, the universe. Every animated system has a unified consciousness (principle of synechiology). The Divine in the world shows the world soul (which is a central figure in all of Platonism) and God’s existence. We are subordinate parts of God’s body and soul (p. 122).

Byzantine Orthodox Christianity was, and is, organized around a theurgical liturgy. Theurgy came into Christianity through pagan Hellenism, but ultimately from sources that are so ancient that they cannot be traced. Their form in Dionysios in which they entered the Byzantine mainstream Church practice derives mainly from Iamblichos (Burns). The purpose of theurgy is to uplift the soul, which can go so far as to reach noetic states in which humans can attain knowledge, and mind-to-mind contacts. This is a key example, together with Hesychasm, for the Zelinsky theorem that Revko-Linardatov prominently presents.

The important example of the theurgic Orthodox liturgy and Eucharist confirms the Zelinsky theorem of Byzantine cultural synthesis, namely in the German research of Wiebke-Maria Stock (2008), independent of Zelinsky. An English summary of Stock's findings is in the 2013 edited volume on "Aesthetics and Theurgy in Byzantium" (pp. 13-30).

Independent of Zelinsky and independent (according to his footnotes) of Stock, Dylan Burns (2004) came to essentially the same conclusion as Stock, again independently confirming the Zelinsky theorem through the major liturgy/Eucharist example of cultural synthesis. The later Neo-Platonists were not only philosophers but were, additionally, theurgists, a function that they deemed higher than that of a philosopher. Theurgy is not the same as "magic", in particular not the same as "sorcery", even though scholars have liked to claim otherwise for lack of distinction of the significant practical differences (in agreement with Stock 2013, p. 17: "clearly distinct from magic"). Theurgy is the technical backdrop of the key Byzantine Orthodox concept of "theosis" (deification).

It is, as I would describe it, the knowledge and the craft of attracting, expanding, and uplifting the soul. If one were to insist on using the word "magic" it would have no defining use in this context. Theurgy is a set of effective psychological techniques for reaching a blissful ekstatic state of mind that is not drug induced. This involves partial awakening of the astral body (soul, fourth energy body of eight). The techniques involved are smells, rhythms, sounds, geometries, colours, movements that partly deactivate the ego defence mechanisms (EDM) so that the soul is involuntarily admitted as a presence into the sphere of the senses of the physical body. Theurgy is a blissfully mind-altering method that is hard or impossible to understand with the lower, rational intellect. It arises from a usually suppressed artful and creative intuitive part of the mind that is noetic and mystic. The assertion that theurgy has a philosophical value is, hence, not particularly meaningful, and vice versa. Philosophy can describe but not understand this since the phenomenon is transrational and can reach into the transpersonal.

For example, the theurgist does not "conceive" of the union with the divine, as Stock (2013) misleadingly writes (p. 15), but he does it; that is the same difference as, "conceiving to walk into town" and, "walking into town" (in agreement with Iamblichos, mentioned supra, pp. 16 f., but not with Porphyrios, who was not a theurgist, however). Like Plethon centuries later, Neo-Platonists like Iamblichos, Proklos, Dionysios, and then also Psellos read the Chaldean Oracles as a revelation, since they are the basis of theurgy (supra, p. 17). See the resources in the "Chaldean Oracles" section below. They give a most distinct theurgic link to Plethon, that is thus differentiated from Hellenic, or Platonic, "ancient paganism", actually, through Dionysios Areopagita, informing the mainstream Byzantine Orthodoxy (in a not so Hellenic side branch of the Zelinsky theorem).

Burns (2004) admirably develops an intricate conceptual grid for distinguishing "Hellenic" and "Christian" in the Areopagitan "theurgic liturgy/Eucharist" convolution that was made known to the world as Byzantine Christian Orthodoxy. More fully, it is:

Chaldean/Culdeean-Buddhist-Neoplatonic-Jesus trinitarian-pagan and henotheistic theurgic

religious worship of extremely beautiful synthetic spirituality. I cannot fully summarize Burns' distinguishing grid work here since that would mean, copying his entire article of twenty-two pages. If we are wondering what Plethon was doing: He must have been scratching his head over what the Byzantines for more than a thousand years had been doing!

I would like to point out an important mistake that, as I believe, both Stock and Burns, and all others scholars so far, are making: Have you ever wondered that everything important in Dionysios Areopagita is triadic? How about the most important of all, his theurgy? That is not triadic but is, singularly, dyadic. Is that really complete?

Asking that question is already answering it. No, that is not complete. It is all the more incomplete since, in the dyadic form, it ends on “negative theology” that is not visualization but that is negation of visualization.

My conclusion is: What we are being shown openly on the record is an exoteric (outsider-oriented) form of theurgy. It is not the full form of theurgy, that would be a triadic form, namely the exoteric (insider-oriented) full version of theurgy.

Already as a student, privately reading philosophy, I wondered about an important missing block in the two classical philosophers, Plato and Aristotle. Plato stands for the “Good”. Aristotle stands for the “True”. The intuitive third part, however, is the “Beautiful”.

I noticed that Aristotle, at the end of his “Nikomachean Ethics”, is rather clearly withholding a lot. He ends just when he lets the philosopher reach the vision of God’s thinking. There would be so much more to ask and to say what that is like. It is against the grain of Aristotle to clam up at that point.

Burns (2004) presents an elaborate argument that Dionysios’ “Christian” theurgy is distinct from the older “pagan” version of Iamblichos and Proklos, since Jesus and his love for mankind have been added, making the Christian version much more powerful than its pagan predecessor (Burns 2004, pp. 127-132).

That is, however, just the exoteric viewpoint, since even the Christian version is still a dyadic, not a full triadic, version of theurgy (notwithstanding the Orthodox “trinity” that has nothing to do with this specific context). The esoteric viewpoint so far has not been mentioned in the discussions.

The esoteric viewpoint is, presumably, a secret viewpoint. We are not told that anywhere openly in any of the surviving sources. By logics, however, we can conclude that an esoteric viewpoint must have existed. Burns (2004, p. 118) gives, as I believe, the decisive hint:

There, Burns quotes a famous passage of Proklos about the great value of faith in theurgy (Proclus, Platonic Theology 1.25). It is Proklos who explains that the gods are possessed by three superior properties, namely, in this sequence: “Goodness, Wisdom, and Beauty” (verbatim, supra, translation by Burns).

That gives me the key to the missing third leg of the triadic full version of theurgy. It is the “Imperative” that I define above at the start of this essay. The Imperative is the triad of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. What is missing in the dyadic exoteric theurgy is the third leg, the “Beautiful”.

Burns fills that in with remarks about Jesus’s great love for mankind. That is an appropriate remark. However, one should keep in mind Jesus did not invent divine love. Divine Love is the key metaphysical force in Aristotle; Metaphysics, book lambda, that the “Unmoved Moving” (in Tibetan Kalachakra Tantra: the “Supreme Unchanging”) elicits from all that exists, and thereby moves. That, and more, is part of the esoteric theurgy. Aristotle fell as silent about that secret teaching as did his teacher, Plato. We may presume that, while Burns is correct that the dyadic exoteric theurgy of Byzantine Orthodox Christianity is more powerful than the dyadic exoteric theurgy of its Neo-Platonic predecessors, the full esoteric version of theurgy is still much more powerful than that.

I believe that the esoteric full version of theurgy is what the Plethon-Bruno axis were working on, The Church was deadly afraid of that secret becoming known.

What more can I say about the presumptive esoteric full version of theurgy that never came out into the open during the Byzantine millennium? The first person in known history to expose the esoteric full version of theurgy (ancient and Byzantine term) was Immanuel Kant in the eighteenth century, even though he never spoke of a “theurgic” context. The terminology had, by his age, shifted to: “transcendental philosophy”.

Kant wrote three immensely difficult “Critiques”: the Critique of Pure Reason, the Critique of Practical Reasons, and the Critique of the Power of Judgment (or similar English translation). To understand his

difficult writing, it is necessary to have a specialized advanced philosophical education. (I am not going to write on such a level, which I find not suitable to the simplicities involved.) In Kant, the sequence of the Imperative is thus: the True, the Good, and the Beautiful. It is better to switch the first two around (GTB).

The first to put the GTB triad on record was Proklos (Proclus), as quoted via Burns (2004). Proklos does not mention a roof concept for that triad. I developed the concept of an “Imperative” from a legal viewpoint. The Imperative is a will, namely the will of GOD, the only moving will that exists. The will of an individual human being, and even the collective will of all humans united, is entirely unable to change any jot or tittle of the Created reality. In order to move something, such as, one’s finger, or one’s mouth, a human must, without realizing it, go through GOD, for GOD in providence to match the individual’s purely internal will with a manifestation in the Created reality. That is a strict logical consequence of GOD’s absolute omnipotence, that is, by the way, a good and ancient Christian axiom of spirituality.

The esoteric full form of theurgy goes beyond knowledge, namely, to participation in the Imperative. That has a nearly endless list of character requirements for the individual human who wishes to participate, a list that can be met only over thousands of reincarnation lifetimes when they are diligently spent for that goal. The force of the Imperative is what is, in Sanskrit, called “Kundalini”. Kundalini is a life force that is radiated from the Unmoved Moving at the center of every local universe, such as ours. The Unmoved Moving is responsible, for example, for the variable expansion rate, including an acceleration phase, of our local universe that was discovered by scientists to their utter astonishment in 2012/2013 through a large-scale international research project after many years of scientific preparation (details in my Framework Analysis vols. 1, 2, passim).

The Imperative is the process by which man recognizes, through higher levels of the awakening mind, the Love of GOD for all Creation. GOD’s Love is unconditional. GOD’s Love can never be forfeited. Included in it is an absolute Freedom of the individual for her or his own life, not covering other beings, not covering Creation at large. Evil is an abusive exercise of individual human freedom in its GOD-given range. Ignorance of this point is voluntary since all knowledge is inherently in man; it can be realized by shifting from the low human form of mind into higher states.

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Nikephoros Gregoras on Late Byzantine Philosophy

In order to gain an overall picture of late Byzantine philosophy that is as historically authentic as possible, it is mandatory to consider the letter cache of the fourteenth century Constantinopolitan historian, hagiographer and learned letter-writer Nikephoros Gregoras (died ca. 1360). Gregoras was a fierce Anti-Palamist and a philosophical skeptic, the latter of which trait is traced back to his mentor Theodore Metochites. Rare in Byzantium as far as we know from the scant sources indicating a quite undeveloped scientific literature, he was competent in mathematics and astronomy. Manolova has compiled the information in this unique source trove concerning its discourses of mathematics, astronomy and philosophy.

The Palaiologan culture in general, of which Gregoras was an early exponent, saw a rise in scientific book production, and scholarly debates about astronomical subjects (p. 3). As far as philosophy goes, Gregoras read Plato and Aristotle, either in the original or in paraphrases as available (p. 48 f.). It is attested that his letters circulated and were performed at public gatherings (p. 52). The Byzantine educated elite pursued polymathic learning (p. 59). They were polymaths, not specialists. The amount of information available to them simply did not warrant specialization in today's sense. Including issues of learning in letter form raises issues of its own, namely, the intersection of such presentations with rhetorical forms and purposes (Manolova, *passim*). The inclusion of mathematics, specifically, is a means of bestowing prestige (p. 101).

In Gregoras' "Hortatory Letter" (also preserved in speech format) promoting astronomy, there are some remarks illustrating the general nature of philosophy (pp. 76-78). Gregoras speaks repeatedly of a universal law of friendship. Pleasant things are by nature unevenly distributed in life. This creates mutual affinities between those who have and those who need. That favours relations of mutual love. Someone blessed with good who withholds it from others commits an injustice, establishing evil as law (p. 77). While the heavens describe God's glory, it would be shameful to turn a deaf ear to what they are saying (p. 78).

These are styles and themes that already clearly prefigure humanists such as Giovanni Pico in fifteenth century Italy. The general Byzantine humanist mother soil comes into evidence in Gregoras' epistolary writing and flowered in the Palaiologan age. It strongly formed the later Plethon-Bruno Secret School axis (for this, see the third Essay below, also the sixth). It became a pervasive non-denominational unifying force for all the late Byzantine intellectual development.

Gregoras, through a notion like the law of friendship, gives us some of the missing implicit philosophical underpinning of the later predominantly rhetorical and stylistic phenomenon of Humanism. Humanism testifies to the existence of such a seedbed but does not actually make it openly apparent. Judging in terms of collective emotional shift, the transformative forces at work here were powerful. This suggests that the other side of the coin, namely clerical Orthodoxy, relatively well-preserved today in recognition of its Byzantine roots, was in Byzantium balanced out by a benign secular philosophical ambient attitude such as we find in the preserved letters of Gregoras. An ancient Pre-Christian model for this type of ambience would be Lucretius and his mode of visualizing, an ancient poetic pantheist (see Lehoux et al.).

The ambience, I find, gained exciting intangible and emotional qualities through the Byzantine Christian period, significant transformations of Epicurus and the philosophical hedonism of the Epicureans. It is noteworthy that Gregoras seems to have been beyond the ancient "concept" of friendship, in that he mentions an outright "law" of friendship. Is that just rhetoric? If so, even that is new compared with antiquity.

There is a good reception study for Epicureanism in the seventeenth century, where that ancient school was prominent (Catherine Wilson). For the earlier early modernity, a reception of Epicureanism is not today recognized as a major phenomenon. In particular, the Epicurean backdrop to Renaissance humanism that flashes into sight in the letters of Nikephoros Gregoras is not a studied phenomenon. It is not so much the use of the ancient generic philosophical notion of friendship that lets me say that; it is more the way how that notion is used, which is to my mind characteristically Epicurean in its pleasurable harmlessness. Particularly Epicurean characteristics of the philosophical notion of friendship are: a community of friends outside the traditional polis, distinction of mere “utility friendship” versus true friendship as a virtue of its own, the role of wisdom to maintain virtuous friendship, virtuous friendship supports tranquillity which is the greatest pleasure (Eric Brown, in *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism*, pp. 182-188). Since humanism has such a low utilitarian value, it is inherently close to the Epicurean notion of friendship. Perhaps research in this direction - reception studies are very involving - should be contemplated.

Gregoras emphasized divine forethought (p. 81). History interprets, according to him, heavenly phenomena. There are things to be known, not only about the past, but about the future (*supra*). That, namely to gain knowledge of the future, provides historical justification for astronomy (*supra*). This also included abstruse number symbolism, such as the trinity, number symbolism being a rhetorical and allegorical device (p. 81 f.).

It is more than just conjecture to assume that the novel concept of “law” such as in the expression: “law of friendship” harks back to the mathematical and astronomical thinking of Gregoras. After all, his letters are replete with such scientific references. The notion of “laws” indicates the intrusion of scientific thinking into a typically philosophical domain such as ethics. This may have developed first in rhetorical diction long before becoming a scientific technical term of modernity.

In her Part III, Manolova discusses “Letters and Philosophy” in Gregoras (pp. 130 ff.). For the first time in the history of philosophy, since Michael Psellos in the eleventh century, philosophy and rhetorics are blended and merged (p. 136, after Stratis Papaioannou). Since then, rhetorics is used as a vehicle for philosophy; and vice versa, philosophy is used as appropriate content for rhetorics, during the remainder of Byzantium and well into the Renaissance after 1453. That is an important precondition for the Renaissance philosophies outside of a strict systems paradigm, such as, in particular, the syncretistic-unifying scholarly efforts of Plethon, Ficino, Pico, and Buno.

Through that movement, philosophy becomes performative, which is somewhat different than just textual and just a reading. Key elements of the performative can be: tone of voice, figurative speech, allegory, extensive visualization, poesis, personification, dramatization, etc. – the inventory of rhetorics is vast. We find all that to snowball in size into the Renaissance, in particular in the Plethon-Bruno axis.

The balance of Manolova’s dissertation discusses either mathematical issues or presents positions that Gregoras as an individual philosopher promulgated. The general characteristic as (late, Palaiologan) Byzantine philosophy is more on the formal side and has been outlined above.

The source material from Nikephoros Gregoras gives a clue to an Epicurean opening in the discussion. Certainly, scholarship today in this emergent field (Byzantine philosophy, here: late stage of the Palaiologan area) has not recognized that Renaissance humanism has, through Byzantine transmission, an essentially Epicurean root. Looking closer into the matter, however, the notion is not unknown, either, and is currently under significant scholarly development, as the first pertinent monograph (Ada Palmer, published October 13, 2014) shows. I would here, briefly, like to append Manolova’s work by broadening the Epicurean outlook coming from the insightful flashes of the source information that she presents (above).

Block (2009) justifies to regard Epicureanism as an “authentic form of humanism” (p. 493). The Epicurean school is known for using the “Garden” (of Epicurus) as an allegory of philosophy and its best character. The Garden is a place for acquiring friends, which, according to Epicurus, is a way of achieving happiness, and is a

philosophical activity. The essence of Epicurus is the allegory of a garden filled with friends. I am unaware of any logical type definition for this; it is powerfully ambient, and probably tied to the allegorical medium.

Apart from that more ethical side, Epicurus, Lucretius, and others in the Garden were atomic materialists. That was an important reason for their revival during the Renaissance, as far as we can trace it today, which is still very sketchy. Socially, that was an element of protest against the burdensome Church censorship directed against the fundamental human freedom of thinking and believing. In a contrary view based on a Kantian reading, James Porter sees the atomistic-materialistic segment of the Epicurean tradition in conflict with the humanistic segment of the same tradition (p. 181). But is not the Garden a wonderful material thing?

Lucretius in his didactic poem, “De Rerum Natura”, rediscovered in 1417, a stunningly beautiful and graphic text about nature as a whole, expounds the atomist physics of Epicurus. Lucretius pits his art against the fear of death, and against human enslavement by false beliefs about the gods. For a background from the viewpoints of philosophy, science history, and literary criticism, see the edited volume by Lehoux et al.

John James McNulty in his 2013 Harvard dissertation has located in the dispersed records many points of the survival and vitality of Epicurean philosophy in early modernity. This represents one of the many specialist fields that need to participate in unearthing the lost worlds of Byzantine receptions and their continuities in rejuvenatedly articulate Renaissance philosophy, a necessary but risky division of labours if one of the parts wrongly claims the whole (I don't mean, J.J. McNulty).

The ultimate blasphemy in the eyes of church establishment, of course, is a philosophy that seeks to find how to live a happy life, and actually, in many ways, succeeds, such as, by providing a leading allegory that is easy to grasp, and impossible to dismantle. The Church depends on sustaining people's unhappiness. Over the millennia (more than two), they have become very proficient at it. What is, by the way, freedom without happiness, other than sheer insanity?

The Epicureans have the Creation of the world arise from chance associations of atoms. This reduced the necessity of the divine. (Palmer 2012, pp. 397 f.) The Epicurean atomism was associated with atheism, which is technically not fully correct. Palmer labels it, “proto-atheism” (2012, p. 398). Most readers of the Epicurean manuscripts of the Renaissance saw moral advice as the core, not atomism (2012, p. 406). This included advice such as to avoid romantic love and to stay level-headed in one's love relations (supra).

Palmer 2014, a monograph resulting from her pioneering work, analyses manuscripts and their readers' attitudes. As a pioneering work, it has opened a platform for many questions to be asked. By the very nature of her work, such questions could not yet be answered. It will take time and effort to develop this further. A general connection of Epicureanism with Renaissance Humanism is far from being established in this book.

Resources:

Manolova, Divna; *Discourses of Science and Philosophie in the Letters of Nikephoros Gregoras*; doctoral dissertation, DOI: 10.14754/CEU.2014.01, Central European University, Budapest 2014

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Warren, James (editor); *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism*; New York 2009

Brown, Eric; *Politics and Society*; in: Warren (foregoing item), pp. 179-196

Festugière, A.J.; *Epicurus and his Gods*; Cambridge (Mass.) 1956

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- Konstan, David; *Friendship in the Classical World*; New York 1997
- McNulty, John James; *I Spit Upon the Noble: The Epicurean Critique of Love of Honor and the Origins of Modernity*; doctoral dissertation, Harvard University 2013
- Miller, Michael; *Epicureanism in Renaissance Thought and Art: Piero di Cosimo's Paintings on the Life of Early Man*; delivered at American Philological Society Annual Meeting, Boston, January 2005; pdf: <http://michaelmillerliterary.com/publications/Epicureanism.pdf>
- Palmer, Ada; *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance*; in: *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Volume 73, Number 3 (July 2012), pp. 395-416
- ; *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance; Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance*; I Tatti studies in Italian Renaissance History; Cambridge (Mass), London 2014
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Philosophizing on Byzantine Philosophy with Nikolai Berdyaev

Berdyaev needs to be used with caution. He is a counterweight against rationalist reduction. On his own, he is saying not much more than that. That message is of extreme difficulty. To make it heard for those who might profit from it, it is necessary to open a new radio channel of the mental, which is above the rationalist radio channel. That actually takes more than merely a message being given. It takes an intervention in the sick and failing mind. In that sense, Berdyaev can be described as a mental chemotherapy.

To recognize this view - I have summarized what I believe Berdyaev wanted to say, but was too polite to say - and to step out of it, is a gain for a philosopher's collection of viewpoints. The Berdyaev viewpoint is suited to neutralize its specific opposite, not simply through listening to Berdyaev, but when one half of the philosopher becomes mimetic of Berdyaev, the specific opposite can be erased. That is somewhere in the vicinity of Stalin's "new man". It is effective mentalistic human engineering. I am quite convinced that in the Byzantine empire, such drastic forces worked in a formative way on man.

To understand Byzantine philosopho-theology, with its currents of ancient psychic knowledge and divine transpersonal contacts, means first and foremost, to understand such drastic intervention and its mental forces. In sum Byzantine wisdom was designed to change man in this Earthly life. That was the central purpose of the Byzantine state, a potent and proficient theocracy fed by the ancient sources of knowledge. Scientology today is child's play compared to it, pervasive as even it may be with its initial level of relevant knowledge. The internal competition in that system was driven by such abilities and the search for their intellectual cutting edge. In that respect, Byzantine society above the level of the slaves and peasants was one great secret society.

If one accepts that description, then one must add that the great secret society that was, in a nutshell, Byzantium, was riven by opposing factions of the human engineering factory. This drove things to the extreme, a level of the extreme that is beyond comprehension today, especially since it had no material focus. Edward Gibbon caught on to this when he poured ridicule over the fragmentation behind the kaleidoscope of doctrinal terminologies. Hypothetically, if an approach across the time barrier were possible, the societies of Byzantium, and of the U.S.A. today, would mutually consider each other clinically insane. The bitter dividing lines of the Cold War in the early second half of the twentieth century are not entirely dissimilar to that.

Berdyaev was critical of Marxism and was expelled from the Soviet Union. He was not a communist. He was a thoughtful adherent of Orthodox Christianity.

Posited between rationality and spirituality, Byzantine philosopho-theology, an indissoluble unit of two, is antinomian. Of particular value for penetrating into the heart of the Light is Berdyaev, representing a closely related antinomy in Russian religious thought (see elucidating article by Krečič).

For Berdyaev, *coincidentia oppositorum* (concept developed by Cusanus, "coinciding of opposites") is a fact of spiritual experience (Warner, p. 114). God is the coincidence of opposites (p. 115). Berdyaev at times considers himself neither philosopher nor theologian but mystic. He recognizes that there is no logical relation to the mystic, neither by philosophy nor by positive theology. Berdyaev's solution, as far as he has a solution to offer, is, over and over again, the symbolic way, arising from a critique of rationality. The greatest confusion arises then rational theology pushes the limits of mystical understanding too far (p. 121). Theology has made God a slave based on cataphatic knowledge (p. 123). God's providence is freely given love. That is the way of freedom and not of necessity (p. 131). (Add to that that love is complete when it is requited. It is man's freedom to requite it or not. SG)

Methodically, at the heart of Byzantine philosophy, the toolkit of Byzantine receptions, is a system for resolving antinomies. That is not a total innovation, but a great improvement and refinement of the Byzantine age for the handiwork of the philosopher.

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Berdyayev, Nikolai; *New Books, Concerning Sophiology, ArchPriest Sergii Bulgakov. Jacob's Ladder. Concerning Angels.*; originally (Russian) in: Journal Put', mai. 1929, No. 16, p. 95-99, pdf online (English): http://www.berdyayev.com/berdiaev/berd_lib/1929_343.html

Gavrilyuk, Paul L.; *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance*; Oxford 2014

Richardson, David Bonner; *Berdyayev's Philosophy of History: An Existentialist Theory of Social Creativity and Eschatology*; The Hague 1968

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Nikolaos Matsoukas Mediates the Apophatic and Cataphatic

Nikolaos Matsoukas, born in 1934, is a leading representative of Greek Orthodox dogmatic theology. He was a professor of theology at the University of Thessaloniki. His orientation is neopatristic. His thinking is based on St. Gregory Palamas and St. John Damascene. Nikolaos Matsoukas has a scholarly and theological interest in Byzantine philosophy. We can fairly expect from him an insightful view on Byzantine philosophy reflecting his intellectual pedigree.

Interestingly, Matsoukas pleads for an opening of dogmatic theology to other forms of knowledge (Ioja p. 171). He is not bothered by other forms of knowledge, being open to them in addition to dogmatic theology and enriching it in a balanced manner. His vision is comprehensive and synthetic. Theological “gnoseology” (Ioja, *supra*) is the very way of life for Church members. The attitude of the Orthodox dogmatist is inclusive towards philosophy and science. He compares the dual methodology (theological and philosophical) with the unidirectional methodology of Scholastic theology (*supra*, p. 171 f.). In all that, dogmatic theology keeps its own profile centered around the charisma (p. 172).

Truth is not the same as knowledge. Knowledge is participation in the truth. Contemporary science has a view on reality. Science shows us that there is a difference between reality and man’s image of reality. Sciences should not be divided into theoretical and practical, but should be divided into natural and spiritual. By implication, that means that, according to Matsoukas, there is such a thing as spiritual science(s). Such a notion is not unknown, historically, in the Orthodox world, but does sound strange to western ears. He is aware that quantum science poses serious questions to scientism and positivism, in a sense that science cannot answer every question.

In his history of Byzantine philosophy, Professor Matsoukas uses a different research method than his predecessors B.N. Tatakis and K.I. Logothetis used (*supra*, p. 175). In Ioja’s reading, Matsoukas gives us an “image and a holistic interpretation” of the history of Byzantine philosophy. Christianity developed among the three cultural factors of Gnosticism, Judaism and Hellenism, letting it emerge as a new perspective on the world.

Revelation is unity between natural-supernatural, i.e., between apophatic-cataphatic (*supra*, p. 169). Two revelations are out of the question. There is one revelation with two ways of manifestation. Man’s vision of knowledge must process the unity of the apophatic and the cataphatic. That reflects, directly, on the relation of reason and mysticism, and the relation of science and theology. Ioja (p. 170) explains that, for Matsoukas, reason and faith coexist and are complementary. There is a “balance” required. Any revelation, inside or outside the Church, is both natural and supernatural. Such are the views, in introductory summary, of the leading philosophical Greek Neo-Palamite, Nikolaos Matsoukas, an influential and learned modern position concerning Byzantine philosophy.

Such an approach throws many secondary questions open. Even if some people one might tend to reject the basic position, thinking it through in its consequences lets one come out better informed than before. In that respect, the position is, in the least, a “useful” position for learning about Byzantine philosophy, and about the limited number of preferred viewpoints that it offers. (The “preferred viewpoint” is a term from the discussion of central perspective, where any image material offers one or just a few preferred viewpoints – the issue is also known to photographers today.) Thus, embedded as in any mental “viewpoint”, is a “theory”

Matsoukas is not an academic historian. He is writing not only for the present but is, partly, writing from the present. One of the many secondary questions, of interest to authors who plan to write a history, is, how historical can key philosophical ideas be presented? Even the most academic history text is intended to be read in the present. A purely antiquarian history is of little interest to anyone.

Another secondary question is, the art of discourse. Intelligent discourse is of timeless interest. Unless the history book is to become a source anthology, discourse will break up historical contexts and will construct new contexts, in order to write a modern text. Typical pitfalls are the usage of historical concepts and other expression in an anachronistic, modern sense, and the construction of thematic unity through text structure for issues that had no or only insignificant historical connection. If one were to read Matsoukas as “pure history” (a mental construct), then one might imagine that the various branches of Byzantine history talked with each other much more than they actually did. Further, the modern author’s viewpoint is easily misread into the mind of a historical philosopher. It is certain, however, that writing without any viewpoint at all is technically impossible.

The historical subject matter of Byzantine philosophy poses novel challenges to authors under all of the aforementioned aspects. Unlike most modern philosophers, nearly all of the Byzantine philosophers save at the very end of Byzantium had no interest in the history of their discipline, and accordingly reveal no awareness of their own positioning in tradition. That takes away the most authentic possible source of “systematizing” them. They are not “self-positioning” writers. The best way to treat that is to be careful not to present them, directly or implicitly, as self-positioning. They had no grid for comparing themselves with other philosophers. The standardized introduction of modern philosophy texts by delineations vis-à-vis-others are, in Byzantium, practically nonexistent, because apparently no reader was interested in that.

When “delineations” happened, it was by unilateral Church censorship. The awareness of such boundaries can indeed be detected frequently in Byzantine writings, which is a delineation of philosophy against a belief system. If one were to write a history of that structure, one would register a broad and pervasive change over the Byzantine millennium from ancient Christianity to Humanism. My Framework Commentary vol. 1 includes organizing materials for such an analysis. Whatever one may have to object against such a venture, one advantage that it offers is to avoid as far as possible the mixing-in to the subject material of a modern author’s perspective. Technically, such a structure stands in the discipline of legal history (Byzantine canon law: censorship: heresy, apostasy). That is about as impersonal as a structure for history writing can get to avoid viewpoint contagion and to achieve viewpoint neutrality.

When writing a history of Byzantine philosophy, there is no arguing away the fact that the Orthodox Church held a dominant position in Byzantine intellectual life for nearly the entire era. That fact must appear appropriately on the pages of a history book. The many strands and shades of Byzantine philosophy testify to the fact, however, that the writers of our surviving source materials, and the transmitters of the sources, had significant individual freedoms. and of course, also, survival strategies, which need to be taken into account when stepping over from preservation of a source text to its interpretation.

Unlike modern philosophy, there is much secrecy and double meaning in Byzantine philosophy. Much of Byzantine philosophy is, in that sense, “occult” (Latin word for “closed”). That is nothing unique just for a single author like Plethon. The overall question is that of the autonomy of Byzantine philosophy, which includes both the intellectual autonomy, and the social autonomy (participation of non-elite segments of society). The intellectual autonomy seems to have been significantly greater than the social autonomy of Byzantine philosophical writing; the relative intellectual autonomy was a strongly restricted elite privilege (not so very different from classical antiquity). The relative secrecy of Byzantine wisdom texts certainly also has to do with that fact of social life. The ancient distinction of exoteric and esoteric teachings still applies here. That does not make the writing of a “History of Byzantine Philosophy” easier. The insider-outsider distinction is of major importance. I am not aware of any history so far that considers that complication.

Another issue foreign to modern philosophies is that ancient and Byzantine philosophies, such as Neo-Platonism, had the goal of personal self-development in a spiritual sense. Most people living in the west today do not have the awareness of that goal. They can read Augustine, for example, without noticing that he is something like a yoga master of personal self-development. That dimension is so far totally missing in modern histories concerning Byzantium, taking out the meat of the sandwich. A key phenomenon such as Hesychasm (theurgy on Jesus) thus remains not understood.

The history book by Matsoukas could have been more informative about the last-mentioned aspects if it had presented a Hesychast view of Byzantine philosophy. That is not the case. The efforts to write a history of Byzantine philosophy will not penetrate deeply into the secret layers without understanding the basics of spirituality, such as the Higher Self (a separate biological life form connecting with a human). The science of biology today is oblivious of other life. A starting point is to conclude that in many ways, the Byzantines were far ahead of our modern western civilization. As long as that is not clearly recognized in its details, the writing project is for all practical purposes doomed to fail due to an unresolved disconnect.

Matsoukas reminds us that there is more behind the mainstream of Byzantine intellectual development than is apparent on the face of it. The deeper secrets are always theurgic. This is not sufficiently realized. They are in their ultimate root origin Hermetic. Much of theurgy came down to later ages through a text, the “Chaldean Oracles” (which might possibly be British from the Culdees, Druids), attributed to Middle Eastern sources, or to Zoroaster in Persia which is factually incorrect. According to Michael Stausberg (p. 84), the Chaldean Oracles belong to the same religious and intellectual worlds as the Gnostic and Hermetic writings and the Middle Platonic philosophers.

Since Plethon prominently used the Chaldean Oracles (actually, in his own proprietary edition), merely in name tracing them to Zoroaster (to which there is, factually, nothing at all), we may safely conclude from solid source documentation that Plethon had major Gnostic and Hermetic inclinations in addition to his Platonism, even if he tried to keep that secret. His purpose was theurgy of a mental type, using visual figurative techniques. “Zoroaster” was just a cover, as I pointed out in the first Essay above. Stausberg is a leading expert for such questions. Scholarship has made it amply clear that the Hermetic-theurgic links run prominently through Dionysios the Areopagite. I cannot fully unravel this here for space constraints; I refer to the resources on this “scientific theurgy” subject below.

Resources:

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Scientific theurgy:

- Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a New English Translation, with Notes and Introduction*; Brian P. Copenhaver; Cambridge 2000
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- Majercik, R.; *Chaldean Triads in Neoplatonic Exegesis: Some Reconsiderations*; in: *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, 2001, volume 51, issue 1, pp. 265-296
- Parnell, Jason B.; *The Theurgic Turn in Christian Thought: Iamblichus, Origen, Augustine, and the Eucharist*; doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 2009
- Shaw, Gregory; *Taking the Shape of the Gods: A Theurgic Reading of Hermetic Rebirth*; pdf [2012]: <http://www.princeton.edu/~hellenic/Hermeneutica/ShawPaper.pdf>
- Stang, Charles M.; *From the Chaldean Oracles to the Corpus Dionysiacum: Theurgy between the Third and Sixth Centuries*; in: *JLARC* 5 (2011), pp. 1-13

SUMMARY:

The main point of this Essay is the Zelinsky theorem from eastern European research, presented in the section on Pavel Revko-Linardatov. I have added the key example of theurgy/Byzantine Orthodox theurgic liturgy (beside Hesychasm), illustrating and thus “proving” the **Zelinsky theorem of Byzantine synthetis**.

There are different ways of approaching what is to date largely still an unknown: Byzantine philosophy. This Essay tries to give an overview, with no claim of being complete, of some of the main possibilities. In doing so, critical ideas are presented concerning writing a history of the said phenomenon. The approaches that are mentioned are those of the authors: Kapriev, Niarchos, Arabatzis, Antonova, Strezova, Tatakis (Tatakis), Zografidis, Revko-Linardato, Hegel, Nikephoros Gregoras, Berdyaev, Matsoukas, Logothetis.

The longest single feature (with Hegel) is on the short 2012 Russian textbook by Pavel Revko-Linardato. A personal thesis used to enter into a reading dialogue with his book concerns the development of visuality in the receptive-type Byzantine philosophy. For sake of completeness, a difficult distinction is introduced here in this summary, namely, on the one hand, “Byzantine philosophy”, that is a research concept that has already found scholarly approval, or slightly modified, as “philosophy in Byzantium” (Kapriev).

On the other hand, there is a twin of that concept, namely, “knowledge of philosophy in Byzantium”. Taken literally, and given the strongly receptive nature of Byzantine philosophical activities, that could mean as much as a library of the philosophy of classical antiquity, which indeed came upon our modern age mostly through Byzantine transmissions, plus a library of the pertinent Byzantine-age texts. How active was that knowledge?

For a receptive phenomenon, it is important to find access to the mental thought forms, for example through styles, in particular, the styles of mental visuality of the actors of philosophical receptions in Byzantium. That casts doubt on the very possibility that a “History of Byzantine Philosophy” can ever properly be written in any depth of mental detail. What is mostly in evidence is the shell that such mental receptions have left.

A true “History of Byzantine Philosophy” as, predominantly, a receptions phenomenon of an elite of copyists and of readers, would have to ascend from a history of the indirect medium of writing to the direct medium of thought. The artful task is to use the preserved writing, in a novel approach in the history of writing the history of philosophy, as indirect evidence for the direct media of reading, thought, and visualizations.

George Gemistos Plethon figures prominently throughout this book as the key node of Byzantine philosophy as it leads man to the inner spiritual Light of the Divine, liberating the soul. Important aspects are added to that in this Essay. Plethon died almost to the year when the Gutenberg age of the printed book began. For philosophy, science, and theology, that meant a great broadening of their social basis of readers.

3

Plethon and Bruno “On Fate”: Explaining the Noetic State I

*An Essay in Seven Parts,
with a Source Text Appended*

*by: Dr. jur. Stefan Grossmann, Hanau
August 14, 2015*

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Summary

The Noetic State

The meaning of the word “Gnosticism” is: scientific spirituality.

One of Plethon’s texts is his text “On Fate”. Scholarship so far considers that text to be a particularly clear piece of evidence for the categorization of Plethon as a late Byzantine “pagan”. In this essay, I wish to place several large question marks behind such a categorization.

During Plethon’s lifetime, it was his opponents, not his friends, who labelled him a “pagan”. Plethon at no point in the record said or wrote that he is pagan. Hence, categorizing Plethon as a “pagan” is a matter of interpretation. I would like to use Plethon’s text “On Fate” as a test case for my novel thesis that Plethon was a late Byzantine Christian Gnostic.

I incorporate both of my foregoing essays into this presentation by way of reference. Scholars have made a mistake to assess Plethon as some kind of a dullard who was unable to present his complex views in a maze of double meanings. This paper would like to promote an understanding that Plethon is a master of doublespeak.

Let me begin with describing the bare facts of the text according to established scholarship. Then, in the next section, will follow a presentation of the “pagan” interpretation.

I miss the understanding that in some cases, interpretations may have an opposite:

There is counter-evidence from Stoic philosophy, namely, fate is God (Bobziert), which is distinctly not the same as mechanical determinism.

Indeed, there is also evidence that the concept of “fate” (Greek: “ananke”, or the synonym “heimarmene”) has a Christian side to it, namely as an important rhetorical concept in the Christ vitae of the Gospels (Bass).

The Christian Orthodox position of the Byzantine mainstream would formulate its position that man is no self-sufficient being. That does not clash particularly with what Plethon says, if one reads “fate” as the God (capital “G”) over gods (lower case “g”) as proposed in the foregoing essay.

Then, finally, there is Gnostic counter-evidence to which we will still get toward the end of this discussion (Lewis). At the end, we will need to draw some conclusions. There is no need to get excited about this; it just takes years to put it together. If Plethon looked for decades to locate the most mind-boggling philosophical ball of string, he certainly found it here. His treatment lets the modern age discourses of philosophy on this subject matter look simplistic and prone to premature conclusions. We are not up to speed today compared with what he knew, concretely: about the immense difficulty of asserting verily that the human will is free.

This awareness of this difficulty is still reflected in the Reformer Martin Luther, even though Luther never knew about the solutions of liberation (setting the unfree will free) that spiritual teachings of old, including those of Gnosticism, have to offer. For Plethon, as for any spiritual practitioner, freedom (liberation) is the result of specific self-improvement and self-realization, which is long and arduous work and is the subject of a nearly endless array of progressive teachings.

If you have simply no idea what I am talking about, you might want to look into Reiki or the spiritual side of yoga. If none of that appeals to you in any way, you might have a fundamental disconnect which is very common. That does not negate the basic point that there is something hidden here that is apparent to such

people who have, for whatever reason, a knack for things like Reiki and yoga spirituality. Of course, the claim that these things are governed by a science and not by a mere sectarian “belief” system does hold the promise that this can speak to anyone who applies rational operations of the mind.

Here it is on a different note: From the viewpoint of modern science, before the existence of quantum physics, human life and experienced reality could only, scientifically, be considered under aspects of full determinism. Physics and physical causality did not allow freedom. Fate was seen, as in Plethon as a blind force of wanton coincidence. With that insight, he was analytically actually ahead of his time. He was “pagan” (loosely speaking) in the sense in which a western physics professor in the year 1950 was “pagan”. Such a view was, in ancient philosophy, atomistic and materialistic. Aristotle, for example, had, according to a common consensus of historians of philosophy, no notion of a free will.

Lewis, chapter 4, resolves this nicely. I hope that I can put the clarifying ideas from that chapter onto paper here. If my writing makes no sense, please refer to the chapter in Lewis.

According to Lewis, there is an emic/etic distinction in the Gnostic discourse on fate in the Nag Hammadi documents (part of the Dead Sea Scrolls). To use a metaphor, one could say about the Nag Hammadi texts: If you are an outsider, you are a marionette of fate. If you are an insider (an initiate), however, you gain the knowledge and practical ability to cut your puppet strings, and you gradually come free. You morph from a marionette in determinism to a liberated being outside of determinism, connected to the guiding beacon of divine wisdom, divine providence, and divine Love, participating in God’s freedom. Through the wisdom, you become conscious of this and become an active participant. Under such aspects, “freedom of the will” is something self-contradictory for as long as the will remains isolated, separate, monadic, until it opens up to the spiritual reality of the oversoul of the Holy Spirit that alone has the ability to lift the burden off of man.

In modern physics, through the development of quantum physics (physics of microcosmic connectedness), there is an ongoing shift to a physics beyond the entropic limitations. That is the only plausible explanation in science for the emergence of order and of life. Entropy in thermodynamics prevents an evolution of order and leads, instead of into order, into an orderless condition called “heat death” (after Walter Nernst). A physical world governed only by heat death never could bring forth increasing order, nor could it let develop life. That physics is more than a metaphor, but it makes the same point, underscoring that it is a scientifically real point, even if exceedingly baffling to scientists who cling to fading paradigms. (See my Framework vols. 1 and 2 for more examples.)

My conclusion is that in his text “On Fate” (*Libellus de fato*), Plethon is doing the same thing. Lewis’ chapter four Nag Hammadi analysis applies to Plethon’s text “On Fate” without needing to be changed around, except that Plethon’s text is spectral in a sense broader than just its central Gnostic message as it is today known from Nag Hammadi Gnostic texts: the overcoming of fate, of determinism through life.

Thus, in a very real sense, Plethon’s cryptic text holds a treasure for our times, neatly packed and time-stamped to reach us now. It helps our boggling minds along the path of an immensely difficult transition.

Without further ado, to the bare facts of the text itself:

Plethon’s text “On Fate” (*Peri heimarmenis*) is the only part of Plethon’s secret manuscript “*Nomoi*” (“Laws”) that became known during his lifetime; it was by far the most frequently copied section of the “*Nomoi*” (its section number is: chapter 6 of part II entitled, *On Fate*). (Hladký, p. 145) Somehow it was arranged that this text was circulated as a separated essay of which so many copies were made that, later, the arson Gennadios impossibly could have destroyed them all (Woodhouse p. 332).

The text is not the only locus in Plethon’s writings that deals with fate. Plethon’s “Differences” in section VIII mention two axioms. (i) Everything is determined. (ii) Everything occurs necessarily. Plethon contradicts Aristotle in the latter’s demand to drop axiom (i). Plethon writes that doing so (dropping axiom (i)) leads to atheism. In a tell-tale twist of grammar, Plethon argues that in adopting axiom (i), people are demonstrating the most obvious belief in - note the singular form - “the deity”. Put into plain English, Plethon is speaking

about the One God (singular), not about many gods (plural). What “people” did Plethon mean? I believe he was talking from his experience living among Byzantines. “the deity” they would be believing in is, again, the One God, not an assemblage of many gods. These small symbols are easily flung aside when the lawnmower of biased opinion is running. The argument is worth noting as a piece in the puzzle that does not fit into the “pagan” picture of Plethon. (I use the same phrasing as Hladký in his translation on p. 144.)

Basically, Plethon’s argument becomes, you need to be atheist if you deny determinism. What is “pagan” about such an argument? Is that not the Orthodox Christian speaking? Indeed, that is the Christian speaking. Do the gods in Homer “determine”? No, they fight among themselves, and then there is some outcome. It is only the Christian God that determines. Aristotle was not at that point yet, but Plethon was.

In all of classical religion except in one single source, Zeus himself was dominated by fate. In Plethon, Zeus is the “one king of everything”. Zeus in Plethon is free and exempt from fate. (Hladký, p. 145 f.) What Plethon is demonstrating is that rare bird, namely, a refined Christianity pursued to its rational, philosophical consequences. That is what readers of Plethon on fate do not understand, simply because our world of beliefs has barely a precedent for it. If he uses “the deity” and “Zeus” to name the First Principle, that is, at least to those who use many names like Dionysios, a non-issue. Determinism is just a verbal transform of the One God’s omnipotence. Of course one cannot do without it without abolishing God (from a thought system).

The construct, which is the backbone of Christian intellectuality, makes it clear that freedom can unfold there where a human become a participant in God. Again, that is not pagan, but is Byzantine Christianity of the gnoseological-sophiological type with its most radical openly known form, Hesychasm.

This leaves an evil human will no chance. A system such as Plethon’s with full omnipotence (which is just Christian) cannot, in its rational philosophical consequence, permit a devil as adversary of God. Since evil is a part of human experience, and can only be through divine determinism, it follows that God permits, to a certain extent, that humans can act in evils ways. That indicates that God manages and handles Her/His powers in such a way as to respond to a human, and to act in a wish-fulfilling manner.

The question if God her/himself is determined is thereby not answered. It is answered by Plethon’s argument that the First Principle, call it Fate, call it Zeus, is not determined. That also makes it clear that God is not a human, and also not a human-like god (with a small “g”).

According to Pletho, our will cannot be self-moved (Hladký, p. 147). If one pursues that, and assumes that the will of a free being such as a human cannot be externally moved, either, one comes to the only remaining conclusion that the human will is not moved at will. There is a paradox in all this of a very deep nature, namely, while every human is free, no human actually choses which freedom she or he has. Humans are thus not merely eternal beings but are fully timeless (absonite) beings, unmoved truly in God’s likeness but without the powers of God.

That is the highest meaning of “fate”: The essence of a human is uncreated, again in the likeness of God. While fate cannot change the will, it can change the existence of an evil being, and of a good being. Human beings are free according to their will; and nothing can change that. That is a very high assertion of freedom that follows from Plethon. It is hidden, and not hidden, in an old knowledge tradition that is based on rationality and logic, that is infolded (Cusanus) in a “mustard seed” (Jesus). To look for “the books” is, on the highest level, futile; but to seek the mustard seed is the All. The spiritual answer as to its location is: It is in each one of us. Again, none of this is pagan; it is a hologram of the science of the Spirit, of which Jesus himself is just an adept.

That is how Plethon’s symbols and texts can be read, if one knows what to look out for. I did not learn this through Plethon, but I learned it over decades through visionary experiences and a general study of spirituality from now available information world-wide. Some texts are suitable to be read this way (holographically). Other texts, from what are called “ordinary people”, are not suitable to be read this way; they are somehow “dead”. The statements and symbols of Plethon as far as I am familiar with them are among the most strongly

holographic that I know. The “pagan” evidence results from non-holographic (exoteric) reading. The veil of distinction is deployed intentionally but it is not impermeable. Examples of holographic mind objects can be garnered, by the way, in reading Homer, not necessarily only in the difficult original Greek but also in good translations. The Homeric epics are in a far-reaching sense automatically visionary. Plethon’s god-symbols are operationalized into a semiotics thereof.

The picture of a solitary Plethon is crumbling. He is part of forgotten Renaissance idea networks. Their focus is what William James called the “noetic state”. We will return to this in section V. below.

Resources:

Text:

Georgios Gemistos Plethon; *Libellus de fato*; (Greek, Latin); Lugdunum Batavorum 1722

----; (same text); in: Migne Patrologia Graeca, volume 160; PG 160, Sp. 961-964

----; *Traité des lois; ou recueil des fragments (etc.) texte revue (etc.) par C. Alexandre (etc.) traduction par A Pellissier*; Paris 1858 (to this day the standard edition of the fragments of Plethon’s “Nomoi”, no longer complete due to discoveries of more fragments, critical Greek text with French translation; the text “On Fate” is chapter 6 of part II, pp. 64-79 of the Greek/French main text)

Vocabulary:

Schreckenberg, Heinz; *Ananke: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Wortgebrauchs* [Ananke: Inquiries into the Use of the Word, German]; Munich 1964

Preus, Anthony; *Historical Dictionary of Ancient Greek Philosophy*; 2nd edition, Lanham etc. 2015; lemma: “fate”

Facts of the text:

Woodhouse, C.M.; *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*; Oxford 2000 (first 1986)

Siniossoglou, Niketas; *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*; New York 2011

Hladký, Vojtěch; *The Philosophy of Gemistos Plethon: Platonism in Late Byzantium, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy*; Farnham, Burlington 2014

“Pagan” evidence:

Bene, László; *Constructing Pagan Platonism: Plethon’s Theory of Fate and the Ancient Philosophical Tradition*; in: Jozef Matula; Paul Richard Blum (editors); Georgios Gemistos Plethon: The Byzantine and the Latin Renaissance; Univerzita Palackého v Olomuci 2014; pp. 41-71

“Stoic” counter-evidence:

Bobzien, Susanne; *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy*; Oxford, New York 2004

“Gospel” counter-evidence:

Bass, Kenneth Lee; *A Life for Others: The Rhetorical Function of Necessity in Luke’s Bios of Jesus*; PhD paper, Baylor University; 2012; pdf online at:

https://baylor-ir.tdl.org/baylor-ir/bitstream/handle/2104/8506/Kenneth_Bass_phd.pdf

“Orthodox” counter-evidence:

Klimenko, Victor E.; *The Orthodox Teaching on Personal Salvation*; Diploma thesis, May 2011, online:

<http://www.orthodoxtheologicalschool.org/journal/klimenkothesis2010.pdf>

“Gnostic” counter-evidence:

Lewis, Nicola Denzey; *Cosmology and Fate in Gnosticism and Graeco-Roman Antiquity, Under Pitiless Skies*; Leiden, Boston 2013, especially chapter 4 (pp. 85-101) “Heimarmene at Nag Hammadi: *The Apocryphon of John* and *On the Origin of the World*”

I. The “Pagan” Evidence

The “pagan” reading is a very important learning experience at the exit of the basic level. The real basic level, such as how to deal with your sexuality in spiritual practice, namely to direct it into the astral and spiritual realms, is not touched upon by Plethon. See in Samael Aun Weor for this, or in any full integrated spiritual teaching. Learn to distinguish between systems of the Light (“good” in human terms) and systems of the darkness (“evil” in human terms). Saint Symeon the New Theologian, for example, gives such teachings of the “Alchemical Wedding Type”, as “Divine Eros”. The fifth essay below will be a take on Symeon.

The exit basic level is a playground of basic key unification methods, such as Byzantine Triadology. The student is given the problem (paganism) as is requested to apply appropriate methods to solve it. Plethon’s text, when read at this level, poses the problem and is silent about the solutions to apply; it is a test given to the reader. (In Byzantine literature, many appropriate solutions can be found. Plethon did not need to record them in his short riddle text “On Fate”.)

If Plethon was a, perhaps arrogant, Gnostic master, his view about others would have been deprecatory. He would have denied that they are free because they lacked his knowledge. Indeed, Siniosoglou in his groundbreaking Plethon study attests to Plethon that he held an “elite profane notion of freedom” (p. 322). Taken at its face value, that insight implies that to his mind he, Plethon, as a member or leader of an elite, which was a knowledge elite, was more free than others were who were not members of that elite. There is a noetic motive of freedom through knowledge. Since that it a carefully concealed subtext, but not totally invisible, it is usually not considered in a full assessment of what Plethon actually thought. I find that is an important key to making sense of the garbled writings of a man who was apparently most intelligent in a difficult environment.

To simplify, Plethon long gave his best efforts, in necessary self-censorship, to convey his knowledge and to prevent it from being lost in the cataclysm of the residual Byzantine empire that stood on the horizon. He believed that through his knowledge (an acquired knowledge through long studies) he could help others to rise above their unfreedom, primarily caused by their ignorant illusions. The strength of his efforts is not least demonstrated by a rather provocative way of approaching others. Perhaps his model was Sokrates in that.

Woodhouse in his summary of the text “On Fate” (p. 333) makes an important point: Men and gods (with a small “g”) determine events themselves. Their, however limited, power of pre-determination comes from their, also however limited but real, power of foreknowledge. Thus, and this is my conclusion, in a simple equation, the more foreknowledge a person has, the greater that person’s power of pre-determination becomes. That restates the argument in the two foregoing paragraphs under a different aspect.

Plethon is by no means a blind fatalist concerning such people who value, gain and use knowledge. It might not be stretching this too far by assuming that Plethon, from his attitude, sees himself as a custodian of secret knowledge that is relevant for foreknowledge. Modern science today describes its system of, however limited, foreknowledge, as a set of “laws”. The title Plethon gave his manuscript tellingly was, “Laws” (Greek: “Nomoi”). A modern book title for a popularly written book (which Plethon’s manuscript was not) might be: How to Make Determinism Work for You. It should come as no surprise that the Byzantine solution for this was, in keeping with tradition since earliest times, diametrically different than our modern materialist solution of non-spiritual science is. In earlier periods when the empire was not collapsing, we find this a pursuit of groups of ecstatic esotericists. What secret knowledge would Plethon actually have been collecting over his long lifetime?

Alexandre, the nineteenth-century editor of Plethon's "Laws", writes that the liberating key is intelligence (cited after Woodhouse, p. 334). That is not directly the same thing as knowledge, but can be schooled and increased by knowledge. We would think today of mathematical knowledge, and accordingly, mathematical intelligence; but Byzantium was, even compared with late antique mathematics, mathematically not particularly highly developed. Byzantium's intellectual strong point, and thus at the same time its weak point, was its brand of esoteric Christian spirituality.

To overcome that as a weak point required that what philosophers typically do, namely to criticize, to analyze, and to rationalize. I thus interpolate Plethon's secret knowledge as a highly differentiated philosophy of spiritual laws, gained from ancient knowledge and practice, for example theurgy, and added to through studying the many interesting Byzantine phenomena of advanced and technically refined personal spirituality. There was certainly a large domain of specialized spiritual psychology involved, in the sense of distinguishing and operating energies in the Palamite tradition of the term, practically summoning angels, as John Dee did somewhat later in the west using other sophisticated gear of higher semiotics. That probably outlines a good part of the most plausible answer to the question suggested at the end of the foregoing paragraph.

Paganism, a thing of the distant past, was plausibly not the main objective of Plethon, and stands in the foreground only until the higher levels of Plethon's message of "liberating knowledge" shine through. Once we have found that classifier, the rest is basically already known through the modern comparative studies of other instances of the same classifier world-wide, such as considering India and China. What changes is mostly the cultural drapings, while the core of the teachings is, within close limits, a recurrent cultural universal.

A Christian principle in Plethon is the pronounced philosophical monotheism of his key god, Zeus. Zeus is who determines all, is indivisible one, is all-powerful, is uncreated, is Light. He is equated with Plato's form of the Good (Woodhouse, p. 329, citing from chapter 5 of book I of Plethon's "Laws"), that is, with Akhenaten's and Plato's sun. That is the epitome of Christian Platonism painted in an icon of the mind, training the sacred gaze. Names? Why should a Moslem not call the Source Existence Level, Allah? A Christian today speaking English, God? A Hellene in Byzantium, Zeus? Come on, you pagans! You just see what you want to see, and that is a magical property in Plethon's text to let you realize it and show paths of inner growth. I see what he actually says, namely that. He lets ideas flow, which was freedom before the materialistic curtain came down.

Plethon, prior to Spinoza, as Siniossoglou points out at the end of his book, held a pantheistic viewpoint. From Plethon's vantage point of knowledge, such a viewpoint corrected the irrational error of Christian religion that is ignorant of pantheism, or more precisely: panentheism. I agree with Plethon for the noetic state. If God is omnipotent, how can the quantum vibrations of any particle forming the universe not be directly from God? What rational causal link can a transcendent "God" have to a world, to an atom, to a flower, from which she/he is theistically removed?

The spiritual realm pervades all, mineral, plant, animal, man, the microcosmos and the macrocosmos. It is one's good right to deny that if one does not experience that, which is of course most common. There is a dilemma speaking about things that one does not know anything of. There is a drive to project ignorance as negatory knowledge for ego defence reasons that are beyond rational control. In the void of certainty, a certain culture of violence, repression and persecution seeks to affirm itself.

The opposite of pantheism/panentheism is a construct called theism. It is possible only in belief and not in knowledge. In this respect, Plethon's viewpoint results not least from a philosophical rationalization of myth. Panentheism is broader than pantheism in that God is not identical with the universe; this local universe is but an immeasurably small part of God's absolute infinity. Panentheism is experiential to the mystic through the astral senses and was not considered heretic, for example, in St. Symeon the New Theologian who spoke of spiritual senses. There is not so much a clash of cultures here as a clash of perceptions, experiences, and levels of awareness and awakening. As a Christian monotheistic pantheist, Plethon was ahead of his time.

I do not see the point why pantheism/panentheism would make a person “pagan”. Pantheism/panentheism (p./p.) is a state of heightened noetic awareness of God’s infinite unity. Any paganism is quite contrary to that. One might also construe a claim that p./p. breaks through the veil of transcendence, by permeating the matter-spirit barrier. That is correct. Any mystical contact does that. In its noetic state, the world is p./p. There are also pagan forms of mysticism with their noetic state. As ancient Olympian religion shows, even then there still remains a power above all, in antiquity named, fate, still more fear-laden than in Christianity.

The situation here is unsatisfactory. I would like to try to come to terms through the two books by Levine (on pantheism, panentheism, theism) and Versnel (on complications of polytheism, oneness, henotheism, divine omnipotence). Especially Versnel’s massive book should be read in the original because it is so laden with fresh ideas about these difficult questions very ably grounded in the ancient source materials.

The common classification of pantheism is as a “metaphysical and religion position” (Levine, p. 1). Well, no, not at all. Pantheism/panentheism (p./p.) is a minority experience of reality. That is probably not quite communicatable to the majority experience. I argue: theism is a metaphysical and religious position, but it is rationally inconclusive. Theism practically always considers God to be a person (p. 2). I argue: Theism thus is an anthropomorphic conceptualization, and hence forms a one-god paganism.

The second defining element of one-god paganism (theism) is, that god (one should spell the theist “god” with a first letter “g” that is half-way between lower case and upper case) is “in some sense separate” from the world (supra). I argue: That has logically necessary consequences. Ggod cannot thus act rationally-causally, which makes him partly omni-impotent and partly omnipotent. Readers will sense that there is fundamental confusion here, but I profess to be innocent of it, except for exposing it. The pagan one-god is Ggod while having a bad day, which actually is not supposed to happen.

I am not at all making fun of gGod. I am mocking the confusion that he strikes in certain people. That is probably heretic and even apostatic under any definition, which is another good reason why I do not belong to any church or political party. It is such people, by the way, who accuse others of being pagan, heretics, etc.

Enough of this. The book by Versnel is actually instructive. Adluri is further recommended reading for a fuller understanding.

When I came across Ernst Cassirer’s German chapter on “Freedom and Necessity in the Philosophy of the Renaissance”, spontaneously the thought came to my mind: “Okay, the damage is done!” (Cassirer, pp. 77-129, which is, chapter 3.) You might agree.

Giordano Bruno is remembered as an early scientist with esoteric Neo-Platonic notions of the One. He believed in panentheism, namely, an infinite divine universe. In addition to being an early scientist, however, Bruno had an interesting literary method for expressing difficult philosophical ideas. Bruno used figures from ancient myth and poetically let them move in allegorical stories before the eye of the mind. For example, Bruno wrote an allegorical treatise on the “Cabala of Pegasus” (“Cabala del cavallo pegaseo”, not in Latin but in Italian the language of the people.) When you read that, you automatically become lucid about the dark intentions in religious dogmas, and you rise above the level of dogmas and beliefs to understanding and poesis. One of the subjects that Bruno wrote about in this allegorical fashion was: on freedom and necessity (Bruno, *Spaccio della bestia trionfante*, Italian), which is one of the texts that Cassirer in his chapter discusses. That is the same subject that Plethon wrote about in his central text “On Fate”.

Cassirer, whose main work is a three-volume philosophy of symbolic forms, rarely read today, explains the underlying method (supra, pp. 78 f., my English translation):

“May this representation appear most shadowy compared with the eternal transcendental content of the ideas it is nevertheless that representation that alone matches our thinking and our mind. As the shadow is not per se darkness but is a mixture of light and darkness, thus the ideas, rendered into human forms, are not deception and semblance but are the truth itself, to the extent that it is

comprehensible to a limited and finite being. For such a mode of thinking, allegory is no mere // outer ingredient, no coincidental drapery, but becomes the vehicle of the thought itself. Bruno's ethics in particular, having to do foremost not with the form of the universe but with that of man, grasps all over for this specific-human means of expression. Bruno's Spaccio is the overall development of that ethical-allegorical language of forms that seeks to clarify the relations of the inner world through figures of the visible, the spatial cosmos."

Giordano Bruno marks the surprizing intrusion of this visualizing literary device of the Renaissance into philosophy (Cassirer, supra, pp. 77 f.). Cassirer gives a specific comment on Bruno's text (p. 79, the direct continuation of the foregoing passage):

"The forces that move man's interior are visualized as cosmic potencies, the virtues and vices as signs of the zodiac. However, when in this discussion the *fortezza* [an Italian word from Bruno quoted by Cassirer, meaning here: 'moral or spiritual force; one of the four cardinal virtues and seven gifts of the Holy Spirit in Catholic theology'] becomes central, that may not merely be understood in its ethical meaning and in its ethical limitation. It means (...) the power of the human will that becomes the tamer of fate, '*domitrice della fortuna*' [Italian quote by Cassirer from Bruno]."

That is on the face of it essentially the same as what the secret knowledge and the secretive use of ancient mythical figures in Plethon is about. The cosmos is thus envisioned as a connected mind, bypassing through knowledge of right forms divine transcendence, hence, bypassing fate, and hence, reaching "contact" with the divine, opening personal individual participation and levels of freedom. That establishes a fingerprint telltale link with Plethon's emblematic philosophical writings. That requires an own essay; see the concluding sixth Essay below on the little known subject of Renaissance Emblematic, which is the technical term for this sort of quasi-visual allegorizing about difficult philosophical concepts. What it addresses and awakens in people are higher strata of the mind that Sri Aurobindo calls "supramental" (see in my Framework vols. 1 and 2). The universe is approached as humanly unconscious infinite Creator mind with the potential of being realized by humans through emblematic allegorical visualizations. Notice that Light and darkness are always personified spirits thereof.

The question whether Plethon was a "pagan determinist", as Scholarios insinuated and as scholarship today uncritically largely affirms, but which actually mixes together two different things (pagan, and, determinist), depends upon the following section. That means, that the "pagan" reading of Plethon's text "On Fate" is on the face of the matter inconclusive and incomplete right here.

Resources:

- Levine, Michael P.; *Pantheism: A non-theistic concept of deity*; London, New York 1994
Versnel, H.S.; *Coping with the Gods: Wayward Readings in Greek Theology*; Leiden, Boston 2011
Adluri, Vishwa (editor); *Philosophy and Salvation in Greek Religion*; Berlin, Boston 2013
Cassirer, Ernst; *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance, Studien der Bibliothek Warburg*; [German, Individual and Cosmos in the Philosophy of the Renaissance, Studies of the Library Warburg]; Wiesbaden 1927

II. The Counter-Evidence: Stoic

The “mythos” problem from level one (paganism) is here restated in “logos” rationalization. That is the first transitory step above the basic level. We thus enter the next, second, level of man’s grand Exodus from the fragmented reality of the fragmented mind, with the Christian Buddha of Mistra as Moses leading the train.

In principle, Plethon knew as much about the human will and its freedom as Sigmund Freud, the modern founder of psychoanalysis. Freud rejected the free will (article by Erwin). According to Freud, our belief in free will is deep rooted but is nonetheless illusory. Freud writes in his introductory lectures 1916-1917: “You nourish the illusion of there being such a thing as psychological freedom, and you will not give it up. I am sorry to say I disagree with you categorically over this.” (supra, p. 215) Later in the same work, Freud writes: “Once before I ventured to tell you that you nourish a deeply rooted faith in undetermined psychological events and in free will, but that this is quite unscientific and must yield to the demand of a determinism whose rule extends over mental life.” (ibid.) In this line of thinking, given the unconscious nature of driving forces, humans are not masters of their fate (brief discussion supra, pp. 215).

Modern free-will assertions by philosophers thus appear to be either politically motivated, or issued in the pursuit of the motive of atheism. Plethon carefully sidestepped both. He defended the Orthodox principle that man is not a self-sufficient being but is destined to live in the spiritual Kingdom of God. As for the dogmatic intricacies of exoteric dogmatics, this was later picked up by Martin Luther rather inconclusively; but this aporia of unenlightened dogmatic theology is outside of Plethon’s scope as trivial and irrelevant. In Luther’s terms, Plethon sets out to explain the workings of divine Grace on the various levels of a multi-level gnostic wisdom system, known perhaps in outline to Luther’s back-office associate Melanchthon, but not to Luther.

Plethon, in this level, relies on Stoic philosophy. He is not a pure Platonist but takes into consideration another of the four great philosophical schools of antiquity (Academy, Peripatos, Epicureanism, Stoa). We may impute to him the philosopher’s aim to find the truth (such as, much later, Freud found). The Stoics were the first to recognize the daunting difficulties of establishing that the human will may be free. They recognized correctly that the human will is not free but, since man is a part of nature, depends on causality that governs nature. The problem as far as the Stoics developed it is the subject of the voluminous and penetrating monograph by Bobzien.

In Byzantium, much ancient knowledge accrued. The Byzantines did not, of course, have such modern amenities of knowledge management as we have today, to wit, many huge research libraries, databases, text processing systems, the internet. In a certain way, a predecessor of Plethon was the Byzantine philosopher Joseph Rhakendytès (Joseph the Philosopher), born ca. 1260. He wrote an encyclopedic treatise about the learning of Byzantium. Erika Gielen, p. 159, note 2, lists twenty-three known manuscripts of Rhakendytès, probably the only work, she writes, that Rhakendytès left us.

She does not mention a long 666 page manuscript in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich, held under the author name Josphus Philosophus, “De tentamine, experientia, arte, scientia, in quo et de animae facultatibus”; Greek minuscule manuscript, BSB Cod.graec. 78 available free online as pdf. Rhakendytès, writing for higher education, not for beginner level, prefaces his so-called “encyclopedia” (not one in our modern sense) with a poem of 140 iambic verses, discussing his text; in the poem, the text itself speaks in the first person to the reader.

Rhakendytès, from a rationalist corner of Byzantine philosophy, may be rather different from Plethon in style and interests, but his example reflects both a late Byzantine revival of ancient Greek culture, and a certain use of poiesis as a text management system, in pursuit of knowledge in its own right.

Psellos, too, is reported as using poiesis in his writing on philosophy. Bernard, p. 16, points out an example that does remind quite distinctly of the allegorical style that Plethon later used. Plethon wrote of himself that he did not know if he is a philosopher; he may be an “animal” that is “more complex than Typhon”. That uses figurative speech, one may call that rhetoric, with the help of a mythical figure of antiquity, Typhon. Psellos lends himself to an interpretation of strongly using antiquity both for content and form of expression. He was careful enough, however, so as not to clash with Orthodox belief censorship.

Looking at an impressive and massive monograph such as that of Susanne Bobzien on determinism and freedom in Stoic philosophy, I wonder how the Byzantines managed the mass of textual knowledge behind just a single question such as that treated by Bobzien. I am beginning to learn that one means of knowledge management is through figuration. Ancient orators since the beginning of the historical record used a similar techniques to memorize precisely, and then deliver from memory, a carefully prepared and honed speech. This involved, in particular, translation into a mental space, usually symbolized by a house with several rooms, with symbolic things placed in specific locations of the house. That technique lived on but the style changed, the house changing into the universe, the symbols changing into figures from myth, and the character as literary fiction shifting to deeper inner realms, away from mere invention and toward the archetypal.

There was indeed such a thing as the memory machine. It grew and thrived unto the middle of the fifteenth century, the Gutenberg advent, when the printed book supplanted the memory machine. Plethon was either dying or dead by then. If we look to Plethon’s now lost (burned) manuscript, the “Laws” (Nomoi), we fail to see (for natural reasons) that the true repository was his memory. I have heard, in terms of spy history, the expression “a walking encyclopedia”. That is from oral tradition. Oral tradition is the heyday of the memory machine. Plethon was one of its last representatives. We have not actually lost his secret writing, we have lost his memory.

What Plethon lost due to no fault of his, Giordano Bruno conserved. The latter is fully on the record, an early child of the Gutenberg revolution. Bruno is an overlap, an artist of the memory with astounding abilities (Uricchio, opening page). With a grain of salt, the burning of Giordano Bruno was the burning of a memory palace. The goons of the Holy Inquisition knew that they were doing, but they came too late. Enduringly, the figurative (but not: pagan) memory method of Bruno (like, presumably, Plethon) straightened out the messed up intellect, led the individual through ethical transformation, and consumed magic (Clucas, opening page). It was like having a library loaded in your consciousness. That is truly forgotten today.

The breaking point for any human intellectual endeavour comes with a rational approach to the infinite. Giordano Bruno was at that point. I presume that Plethon was also already at that dividing point, but from the wantonly mutilated written record that is not apparent. The infinity of reality is for the transrational mind, only. The figurative, emblematic mind in Bruno, the instruments of which Plethon also had to a somewhat lesser extent, is fit for infinity. That is the culmination in the early modern age of the Neo-Platonic “One”. I did not find this special aspect reflected directly in the literature.

To assess adequately the Stoic philosophy of necessity and freedom, the foundation for that philosophy in its preceding structuring by Aristotle first must be mentioned (Dudley). The noble concept, freedom is usually associated with, choice. I am free to choose this, or to choose that. I am, conversely, free to choose not this, and not that.

Is that, possibly, a mistaken view of the nature of freedom? In a natural world of causes and effects, how can there be not full determinism? The question is an ancient one. The circumstance that the ancient philosophers were not a cheering crowd at the festival of “human freedom”, unlike the philosophers of the

modern age, may be due to a more sober and more realistic view of the natural restrictions of human freedom that the ancients held, compared with the moderns.

Doubtless, the popular notions of human freedom today have been formed in the past through historical events such as the (re-)discovery of America in 1492, and by the advance of medicine and technology, and, of course, by the political revolutions from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, establishing a modicum of democracy in nearly all countries of the west (not counting the Vatican and Andorra, the former being the richest institution on the planet). So we are free!

What next? That couldn't have been it yet, could it?

According to Plethon, Aristotle was a determinist. According to the modern study by Dudley, Aristotle rejected determinism. The frequent wisdom that Aristotle did not know a free will is thus incorrect, with qualifications.

The stoics, coming after Aristotle in the philosophical developments of classical antiquity, necessarily had to work with statements of such a figure as Aristotle before arriving at their own views. The basis of philoepoetry that the Stoics found in the historical record were not clearly set for determinism. Accordingly, the Stoics ultimately arrive at a type of freedom that can be acquired through self-transformation, namely, the hallmark Stoic brand of freedom from emotions.

We may safely assume that Plethon had familiarized himself with the classical teachings on determinism and freedom before writing his own short tract "On Fate". The notion of a total determinism, which is really hard to distinguish from fatalism, has no precedent in the schools of philosophy from classical antiquity. It has no precedent, of course, either, in the Bible. It could possibly be read into the Quran in an understanding that is popular in the Muslim world today, but such an unphilosophical position is most unlikely to have shaped Plethon in what may amount to his most important single teaching: determinism and freedom.

There is thus a tentative presumption that reading Plethon as a full determinist is not the only way of reading him, and, likely, a false way of reading him in any sense. The presumption starts with recognizing, per the own statements of Plethon, that he made ample use of Stoic philosophy in compiling his argument. If Plethon was indeed as secretive a person as the short fact list of his vita tells us, then his texts could well share the secrecy of their secretive author. In an important way, Plethon did not write to tell, but wrote to conceal.

It is up to us - and this makes him such an interesting source - to discover what he is concealing to us (not necessarily, "from" us). We have, today, extensive briefing of the philosophies that Plethon, as he informs us, used in this question. The Stoics, after Aristotle, developed a Hellenistic position of semi-determinism that is not devoid of an element of freedom. That element of freedom depends upon the individual person working on herself or himself according to the methods and goals of the teaching. That is a rough outline, which we may, again, presume to have been accepted by Plethon, indicated by his words that he used Stoic philosophy.

Since Scholarios/Gemistos through burning Plethon's manuscript "Laws" compels us to reconstruct Plethon from that source material that we have, it is first necessary to analyze to what effect Plethon's own source materials, here: from classical antiquity in custodianship of the Byzantine libraries, informed him. We can be quite certain that, like all Byzantines, Plethon was not a complete innovator, but took into careful consideration existing tradition, of which we are informed generally that he must have done so extensively throughout his long and active life. I am of the viewpoint that his philosophy was a synthesis of all knowledge that was in any way at all available in his time. I am further of the opinion that we are, today, in possession of the essential information that he could have used in his synthetic project of knowledge. A third aspect is, that we can rely on from information coming from his own time, that he was radical in his quest, driven by the impending collapse of the empire that once had been Byzantium.

We can find the precarious difficulties of semi-determinism already in Aristotle, in what was in antiquity a scientific mode of discussion. Aristotle distills the question in two fields of knowledge, namely in "physics" (that is, ancient "natural science" in general), and in "ethics" (which meant back then about the same as it

means today, the practical philosophy of human decision and action). We are fully informed, as far as I see, about Aristotle's discussion of this issue, and about that what the Stoics in Hellenism, and later in Rome, made out of it (Dudley, Striker, Bobzien). We must, moreover, be cautious of using Aristotelianism directly in the presence of Plethon, since he was, nominally, a Platonist, not an Aristotelian. A good part of Plethon was, however, an esoteric Aristotelian (see above in first Essay). Before turning to Dudley on the Aristotelian side of this issue, we thus should consult Schmitt on the critique by Jesus' secret School of Aristotle in its most comprehensive form, which is, in Pico della Mirandola. Looking into this, we gain insights into the potent critical, skeptical potential of the secret School, to which Plethon in an elder generation had belonged, admittedly far outshined by Pico in this facet of the Plato-Aristotle dispute. Pico's program was to demolish philosophy, but he had strong learned interests, and apparently the drive to create something very new; and he also wrote an Oration that is functionally a praise of philosophy. (He mentions a strange occult library as his source material, see Copenhagen, p. 5. This sounds like a school library to me. SG)

Like most details I am writing about, this, too, can be found in more depth in the resources cited, here: Schmitt, a stalwart guide to key into the philosophical difficulties. Pico, in effect, rejected Aristotle's rejection of Plato's major focus on the theory of ideas. Pico, swinging around full circle, returns to Plato's major focus on the theory of ideas. As always when the hermeneutic circle (Gadamer) has been passed through repeatedly, the issues are different and more mature in complexity than they had been at the beginning (i.e., Plato). To wit, at the same time, Pico is unwilling to let go of the achievements of Aristotle's lineage, which are, feeding real life empirical facts into the pure idealism that Plato stands for. Pico's opinions changed over his lifetime. In "De Ente et Uno" (1491) the reconciliation of Plato and Aristotle enables Pico to reflect on the nature of God. Pico was a syncretist whose dominant interest was to unify differences.

Pico is, for a philosopher, quite full of lofty fantasy flowing through his elegant prose. There is the One but it has many perspectives. He does still believe in one truth, however, again tacitly contradicting other of his artfully flowing suggestions. A key word for him is, mystery. If he is metaphorical, he is dialectically so. Many of his prose sentences are those of a philosopher-poet who is indeed always envisioning One, but in a mode of mental perception animation, a mental scanning of it through the Many, expressed with an effortless beauty and light, like murmuring glistening waters flowing, in lieu of a dialogue.

What are the empirical facts of Plato's theory of ideas? My try at answering that question was the first Essay above (On Ideation), but extending through this entire book through the backbone concept of the "noetic state" after William James, a most observant American pragmatic brimming with real-life empirical facts. Aristotle, the empirical encyclopedist of knowledge, did not recognize Plato's theory of ideas as a possible probing ground for experiential scientific methods. Pico, and presumably Plethon two or three generations earlier, were somewhat ahead of Aristotle in that respect. In particular, they had a mythopoeic representation system for exactly this unplowed field of knowledge that Aristotle, eighteen hundred years earlier, had lacked. Of course, philosophical theology is never just about the Divine – it is about ideation from the divine, about the participatory interaction of man with the Divine. Aristotle did not miss the point, since it occurs at the end of his *Nikomachean Ethics* in the vision of the Divine as it thinks. In the Renaissance, however, eighteen hundred years later, we may register that this most recondite point in all of philosophy was undergoing a surprizing growth phase.

The geometry that Aristotle used to describe the thinking of the Divine is the circle. The divine, or perfect, motion is always circular. In the Renaissance, in its participatory leanings after Byzantium, the Aristotelian geometry of the circle no longer applies. The circle has opened. It is replaced by a geometry of communication lines. That is a world of rays to and from the divine. The rays of the divine are known from ancient Greek mythical poetics, such as the rays of Helios the ancient sun god. This, again, is close to Platonic metaphor.

In Plethon presumably, and in Ficino, more visibly, and in Bruno, evidently, we are invited to visualize the Divine through the world of changing communication rays (of the mental state of Oneness/Connectivity).

The metaphorical imagination of antiquity is expanded into a metaphorical universe in the theater of the mind. To keep track of that large complexity, empirical - and that means in classical terms: Aristotelian - methods remained distinctly in demand. That is not admitted by Plethon and Ficino, and probably not seen by them.

The Aristotelian method of knowledge collection by empirical means moved, however, from its native field of the external world, into the internal world. The esoteric Aristotelianism of the secret School is a science method of the inner world, using a dedicated mythopoeic semiotics, indicated by mythical names, but operated by and for a blissful poetic vision of Christian theology and its realms, primarily the realm of Paradise (Heaven), which is the greatest shortcoming everywhere else. The essence of the secret School was a spiritual science of Heaven. That is my reconstruction of what went on in the minds in the secret School, interpreting it as a Gnostic School, running at full speed since Dionysios the Areopagite during the Byzantine millennium.

I found this nowhere in Schmitt; but his book helped me to write the foregoing paragraphs topical to this instant book. For more about the nitty-gritty of Pico della Mirandola, refer to Schmitt's landmark book.

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III. The Counter-Evidence: Gospel

The Gospels are textual forms of ancient Egyptian Gnosis for this level. Their problem is death of that what is finite in us, and rebirth, like the Phoenix from the ashes. The fact that certain events in Jeshua's life coincide with this are notwithstanding, but is not really that important to understand the lesson of this level. St. Symeon, for example, knew this clearly; he speaks of the "mystical resurrection of Christ".

Importantly for the entire Byzantine millennium the church fathers distinguished between mere pagan philosophy, and then, true philosophy that covered Christian belief. One subject of true philosophizing, as the church fathers distinguished it, was the "imitation of Jesus Christ" (Timmermann, p. 154). That opens up to numerous exoteric and esoteric readings.

Luke is a very special "handcrafted" Gospel, as we shall see toward the end of this book. According to Bass, late ancient readers of Luke read the Gospel before the backdrop of the Greco-Roman and Hellenistic-Jewish worlds (p. 3). This might have included the humorist Lucian's "Zeus Catechized). The curious Cyniscus asks Zeus all sorts of things he wants to know: Zeus, are the gods subject to necessity? Jesus recognizes that he has to stay with Zacchaeus (that part of the story is copied from Euripides, a classical Athenian dramatist, into the pious Gospel hoax). Plethon most likely would have expected his initiates to see through the major Gospel text frauds, originating to a large part but not only in the early Byzantine Church history.

According to Cosgrove, Luke presents four elements of divine necessity [for the Gnostic initiate for whom the ancient bones of sketchy Gospels were fixed up SG] (supra, p. 4 f.). First, there is a plan of God. Secondly, there is a call of obedience that requires the human to participate in God's plan. Jesus virtually engineers his own passion (Cosgrove, 179). Thirdly, God ensures what is necessary by miracles, if need be. Fourthly, Cosgrove (p. 190) sees a "dramatic-comedic understanding of salvation history" in Luke. a dramaturgic logic of necessity, again and again setting the stage for divine intervention.

Luke presented the early Christians (who before the fourth century never saw our "Fraud of Luke" Gospel, see in the concluding part of this book below, because Jesus' Secret School put it together only then), with the prototype of Plethon later Gnostic riddle text, "On Fate". Squires (in Bass, p. 5) rightly points out that there are philosophical problems of divine providence one the one hand, and human freedom on the other hand. Luke was a children's story for the early Christians to learn the beginning grounds of antinomies such as this one, an apparent Byzantine tradition that Plethon carried forth faithfully in his text "On Fate". Such texts are made for a teacher-student dialogue.

Clare K. Rothschild thankfully walks into one of the booby traps (p. 6): She denies that there is a divine plan. That all makes it all much too easy, of course. For her, Luke's necessity is just rhetorics. Rothschild fails to account for the fact that her interpretation is anachronistic: The early Christians simply would not have agreed with her. God is in full charge of events and uses the instrument of necessity (Bass, chapter 5).

On pp. 129-130, Stagg cannot believe that God decreed the "death" of Jesus. What Stagg, obviously not a Christian, fails to accept by faith that Jesus did not die, despite the fact that he died. There is no death. The soul is immortal. That is the essence of the Christ's message. Don't shit in your pants over death. Under certain circumstances (within a legal deadline of three days) the dead in physical body can even reenter the physical body and rise, like Jesus. (Another possibility is to reproject a precise copy of the physical body, which would be a kind of bilocation. Other possibilities are a time reverse, holographic inserts, etc.) The common way for mortals is rebirth (reincarnation).

Black introduces us to methods of Biblical hermeneutics from the Italian branch of Plethon's Secret School (part of tradition of Jesus's Secret School). The hermeneuticist is Giovanni Pico. His hermentics is a theory of allegory developed for the six days of Creation in Genesis. The method is, however, useful for unlocking the hidden visual meanings of any part of the Bible (Black, p. 1, "... biblical interpretation in general").

Pico first justifies the existence of hidden non-literal meanings in the Bible. Beside the exoteric meaning, there are, additionally, esoteric meanings (cf. supra, p. 2). In the School tradition of Pico, which Black does not see, the purpose of the hermeneutics is, to return the Many of the phenomenal world to the One. (The term "phenomenaly world" is my modern diction.) Pico helps the Bible reader to sift out the One from the Many, which is mentally visualizing exercise.

The One with its Platonic background is sunlike in the mind. It is hidden by shadows, by the cloud of ignorance, which is a particular technical ignorance, namely the lack of a style of poetic vision that the School, starting with Plethon, developed for visualizing the One. It is harmless and beautiful, something that needs particular emphasis for the sick and inflamed minds on this planet – the way Jesus read the Bible that he had, which was, approximately, the Old Testament. When he read the Bible, he saw beautiful golden Light stream all over. He was not thinking of who to kill next.

Is it forbidden to imagine Jesus? No! That brings us very close to Pico's meaning. The imagination reads the truth out of the hateful words from our traumatic past, which is the Bible, brightened by the addition of the New Testament somewhere along the mysterious Byzantine millennium. Pico asks: Can you read as Jesus did? Can you relax, and become harmless, and evict all fear from you, and let the joy come into you? Then you are right, here, as you start reading. But you are reading through Jesus' eyes. That is the ancient esoteric hermeneutics of the Bible that has been preserved for today through Jesus' Secret School.

Further, Pico gives us a model of the cosmic structure, and allegory. That is an important tool to assist such reading (Black, chapter 5, pp. 148-176). The cosmos is the all. There is in it a distribution of worlds. There are three worlds. The "angelic" (or "intellectual") world is located at the top of the cosmos. The second world is the celestial world where the heavenly spheres rotate. This world is located beneath the angelic world. At the bottom is the sublunary world (an expression from Aristotle). It is the mundane world that we live in.

That model of the cosmos is, itself, an allegory, since it is managed in such a way that we can perceive ourselves in it, unlike the "dead" models that our modern materialist science prefers, for various reasons. In the cosmos is life. In the angelic world, there are light, fire, eternal life, and stability. In the celestial world, fire and water are mixed, light and shadow, eternity in operation but change through motion. In the lower, mundane world, there are darkness, watery instability, life and death. The cosmos is, through its three worlds, an overall place of great differences, as a comparison of its three worlds shows. (The three worlds were visualized by Dante in the late Middle Ages in his "Divine Comedy" that Pico, an educated Italian, certainly was familiar with. He places us in hell, which is a difference to Dante.)

Pico puts in all the missing parts in Dante. Dante is restylized in terms of the Secret School's Renaissance visual theology. The missing parts in Dante are stylistic elements of scientifically advanced visualization: Dante supercharged. That reveals the master visualization scientist. The cosmic model of this so-called "Platonic" School after Plethon is decidedly Aristotelian: there is the empyrean which is the throne of the glorious Light of God; there is the primum mobile (Unmoved Moving, the outermost sphere); there are ten mental-crystal spheres in total (in Aristotle there are approximately fifty-five); there is our world Earth at the center of it all. Due to the concentric spheres, the entire model is strongly geometrical. That is a scientific (knowledge-based) mental model of the Secret School's visual theology, after Aristotle who lived in Pre-Christian times, and in accordance with Thomas Aquinas. The model's decisive main function is the mental visualization of the all as a living entity of awareness (Aristotelian), which is the same as, the One (Platonic). It is, importantly, a model of God that is not anthropomorphic, but is nevertheless strongly visual in one's imagination.

Much more is said in Black's chapter. It is interesting to read in order to note the day-and-night difference between the short passages that convey the striking visual mode, and the long passages that "just talk" (about sources, etc.). The long passages that "just talk" in no way register, or connect with, the visual model. Black is, without probably intending this, demonstrating to us that most speech is irrelevant for the visual model. In order to become relevant, the speech must have particular functional characteristics.

Pico's allegorical theory does just that: It positions speech in the model. The speech is of figurative, and that means: visualized, nature. As it moves and unfolds, it relates to all parts of the All, that is the One. This generates mental rays of relational connection. That is an astral activity of the soul which sends out the mental rays (as biophotons). We are thus closing in on the mythopoeisis of the Divine. The key function are the moving geometries of the allegorical speech. The allegorical speech is the

allegorical nucleus

of the model of the All, that is the One. (The "allegorical nucleus" is my term, SG.) That is how Jesus read in the Bible.

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IV. The Counter-Evidence: Orthodoxy

Orthodoxy means, the holding of the right opinions. This is an expansion of the Gospel-Level lessons.

To the extent that a temple, or church, or other type of teacher, is looked upon with the expectation: “SAVE ME!”, it is a necessary failure. Most people live with an intuitive belief in God, or something good, or just a “it will be okay” type of feeling. We cannot live without that. When that preverbal core belief sinks, that is a suicidal situation.

Teachings world-wide claim to step in and to intervene with people’s natural preverbal core belief. Instantly, the expectation of “SAVE ME!” swings into action. It is a holdover reflex from childhood. Temple fraud starts when the teacher, temple, church etc. responds positively to that grossly misleading impulse of the seeker, “SAVE ME!” in the sense of a promised external savior. Even for a particularly intelligent ethnic, the Jewish people, that proves to be a trap, as the alleged Messiah, Sabbatai Zevi (Shabtai Zvi and other spellings) demonstrates. Money religion is based on this, a great blessing, and at the same time great delusion, of our times. In concrete terms, any historical teaching is just as useful as it is helpful to set free money from delusion. That is a difficult task, and the main barrier for spiritual success in this life today.

History shows us that Sokrates (Socrates) fell against religion. Jesus fell to religion. In both instances, that is fatal to the intellectual message.

In the eastern Orthodox Christian churches, in particular the Russian Orthodox Church, the memory of wisdom teachings from the time of Jesus is still strong. There is a monastic backup to that spiritual wisdom tradition of eastern Christianity. The teachings that are known and taught in the Orthodox world are not the fully developed teachings, but they are very helpful to overcome the “SAME ME!” pitfall.

Sokrates the teacher of Plato in classical Athens, Greece, spoke of the “daimonion”. That is a universal of spiritual wisdom teachings. The Sanskrit term in India for the daimonion is, the “antaryamin”. Like the daimonion, the antaryamin is a part of philosophy, of Greek and Indian philosophy (see “resources”). The translation is, the divine indweller. The modern term is, the “Higher Self”. In the eastern Orthodox exoteric knowledge, that is “Jesus in me” (“me” meaning here: “an individual person”, first person perspective).

The untrained intuitive “SAVE ME!” is transformed to the “I AM!”. That is the nutshell of the essence of practical spirituality world-wide. The Buddha summarized this as suffering through ignorance. In our times of knowledge overflow, it helps westerners to clarify that “ignorance” as the Buddha said it means, in a specific way, “ignorance of spirituality”, not ignorance of electrical engineering, dentistry, or legal sophistry. If you see the difference of the knowledge levels in western civilization of spiritual learning compared with legal, medical and technological learning, that is the point I am trying to make. The west is practically a blank page in spiritual terms. That is, according to the Buddha, the root of suffering. Technocracy is just a modern form of the immature “SAVE ME!” of the social intelligence level of age three. Cusanus developed the philosophy of learned ignorance (docta ignorantia), a philosophy for the modern age, the age of learned ignorance. With that foreknowledge, Cusanus was clearly a high gnostic. We have fared well through it; this is no complaint. But I am certain, we can do better than that; and that has always been our forte.

The Renaissance addition to Orthodoxy, which means, “concerning right opinions”, follows the adage:

Seeing is believing.

That is, to reach Orthodoxy, the stage of seeing is required. This was achieved by Jesus’ School during the Renaissance through a mythopoiesis of the Divine. That consequence for Orthodoxy is so far unrecognized.

Actually, there is a culture gap to the established Church. The Renaissance poets of the Divine were watched by the ever vigilant Church, both the eastern Orthodox Church, and the Vatican in the west. Their agents burned a key manuscript, the “Laws” of Plethon, and burned one of the poets, Giordano Bruno.

The burning of books, and the burning of people, is the work of irresponsible terrorists. They have nothing to do with the example and with the message of Christ. These people have perpetuated their organization to this day. The Vatican is by far the wealthiest state on the planet. Its secret service, which is the Jesuit Order, owns the present Pope, Francis, as a military chattel slave. The Jesuit agenda is the Counter-Reformation. They are an army of assassins. I do not believe that the Vatican is a church. It is the central banking institution of the world. It determines the agenda of wars. It controls so-called democracies. It misuses the name of Christ.

The secret teachings of Jesus will not reach the people through the Churches. People who are interested in becoming Christians have every right to leave the Church, and to take their spirituality into their own hands. This book encourages you to do so. Stop being a believer. Become a knower. If you leave the Church you have the chance of gaining freedom in this life. It depends on your inner decision alone. Once you make your decision, you will find to your surprize that you are not alone but that you have every help that you could imagine. Save your soul from the Pope! Turn to Christ as your guru!

Let us continue with our A B C, after Plethon from the Secret School of Jesus, of becoming spiritually independent. “Right opinions”, which are the foundations of Orthodoxy, are gained by logics from knowledge that is scientifically established. Opinions that are not gained by logics, or not from knowledge, are guesswork at best. Knowledge of nature starts with the perception of nature. Knowledge of the Divine starts with the perception of the Divine. The churches of the world, with the exception of Buddhism which is not a church, have taught their followers for thousands of years how to block the perception of the Divine.

Learn the perception of the Divine. Then you will become able to hold the right opinions, and thus, to become free. There is no other way. This cannot be delegated to “priests” or to anyone else but you yourself. The perception of the Divine is the key secret of Jesus; and it is a secret of knowledge, not belief; it forms a science, not a mass.

There is good reason to assume that this, precisely, is the reason why a mob of Vatican terrorists murdered Giordano Bruno. You should be curious what he knew, and that you don’t, and that you are not supposed to know. You have all the abilities that you need for this. You will not be required to walk on the water. All you need to do is to keep an open mind. You, too, can see the divine. It is not an old bearded man. But what you call your mind is a small part of it. Seeing the divine starts with seeing the mind.

Seeing the mind starts with observing the mind. Initially, this can be done only within yourself, namely, observing your own mind. You can do that quite easily to the point that you see something, inwardly. Obviously, it is not your physical eyes that see into yourself, inwardly. You can learn that you have other ways of seeing apart from your eyes. Those basics are the most important to get on the right path, and to leave a life of endless turning in circles.

The early forms of Orthodoxy, it is true, grow through faith and belief. I do not want to belittle that. To reach higher forms, that are appropriate today, as mankind is growing and maturing, it is necessary to reach beyond belief and to build certainty. Certainty is a higher and superior form of spirituality than faith and belief. Belief is the twin of doubt; but certainty leaves no space for doubt. You have everything you need to gain that.

The turning point is to be consciously aware of your Higher Self. Your Higher Self is a highly developed human, sometimes an angel (an extension of the Divine will, not an individually free human). I am not talking about what psychologists sometimes mention, that you get in touch with deeper/higher parts of your own mind. First of all, you have nothing since every form is from the Creator. It is not “your” mind. The mind is the big ocean. You are not getting in touch with deeper/higher parts of the mind. You are meeting

someone like yourself, but someone who is spiritually more developed than you. You do not meet your Higher Self face-to-face. The meeting is a special form of telepathy and takes place inside the mind.

Most mystical experiences are a meeting of the Higher Self of the mystic. There are other forms of mystic encounters, also, but let us put that aside for now. You can inwardly call into the mind: “Are you my Higher Self?” You must be very still to listen and to sense for a reaction. There will inevitably be a reaction. You might notice more than one reaction. One of the reactions is authentic. If you receive more than one reaction, you are being tested if you can distinguish. You can ask questions, pointing them to a specific reaction. Then to another reaction. If you ask forcefully, spirits will not lie to you. They will tell you, “yes”, or, “no”.

In the way things are set up today, different than a hundred years ago, and very much different than two thousand years ago, it should not take you longer than five minutes to contact your Higher Self. The least important thing is its name, or the planet or dimension where it lives. Simple questions are: “What should I do?”, “Do you guide me?”, “What is my mission in life?”, “Can you help me learn about the spiritual world?”, and similar.

It might be that you discover that you have no Higher Self. In that case, you are oriented towards the dark side. Then you will have a Lower Self, not a lamb but a wolf. It is time for you to connect with that, as well; but you will today always have only the one or the other, not both together (only a Higher Self, or a Lower Self, but not both together). I will simply continue with the Higher Self, which on Earth is the more common (ca. 80%).

The following are exercises for you and your Higher Self both together. The lead question is: “How can I learn to see the Divine?” The specific answer will be different for each individual person. There are quite a few generalities that all this has in common, however.

The example is the Christian Orthodox teaching on personal salvation, followed by remarks about the mythopoetic visualization of those teachings. People who have a developed knowledge of something “see” the knowledge in the sense of “understanding” it. That is what I mean with “seeing the Divine”. You are actually already starting to see the Divine here since you are building knowledge. If you are together with your Higher Self in a mental discourse, this will no longer be abstract any more, but will be hands-on real life.

Your personality changes significantly when your psycho-analytic structure no longer focuses on your parents, but focuses, instead of on your parents, on your Higher Self. You can get your personal information from same. Being in touch with your Higher Self is a major element of your freedom, which is primarily not the freedom of “doing” but is the freedom of awareness of who you are – an immortal spirit in human form working in a spiritual network of many beings. Your difficult personal job, not your only job, is liberation from karma and rebirth over many reincarnations. (That is the message of Plethon’s text “On Fate” in a very encrypted way, that one needs to learn to decipher. If one knows the answer from comparative spirituality it is easy to see.) Together with your Higher Self, you will need to develop strategies for that key goal of spiritual life, liberation (mukti) that will realign your entire life and socialization in drastically changed new ways.

Church control, media control, etc., work with the psycho-analytic parent connection. By joining forces with your Higher Self, which you are made for, you can, as a side effect, get rid of all that.

See? If no, go through the above again, until you get a green light. Then continue below.

The point is made if you realize that it is impossible, even absurd, not to see the Divine. Unfortunately, nearly all people on this planet are not at that entry level awareness yet. Fortunately, our spiritual ecology has been improved by ongoing works behind the scenes in such a way that we can start climbing on the ladder of knowledge and awareness right now.

There is a critically important subtlety that, later, Immanuel Kant would highlight: Human “freedom” is, in more precise diction: “freedom of the will”. This is a philosophized insight of modernity based on long tradition of Christian theology. I repeat the decisive words: “... of the will”. That is, the will is free, not the human in toto. Or at least, that is the starting point, the string to pull to unravel it all.

At this level, that subtlety becomes relevant. The will is always a counterfactual, since it is not aroused when already fulfilled. Building on Christian theology, the arcane philosophies of George Gemistos Plethon, Marsilius Ficino and Gianfranco Pico della Mirandola (and possibly Giordano Bruno who I have not researched in this respect) are prematurely early (dated according to present standard historiography of philosophy) philosophers of the internalized ethics of the internals of the will and its counterfactual. (I am not counting Hellenistic Stoa as a somewhat different precursor here.) That seems to be another important cladistic element to group them as a “school” (a “secret school”).

In a second-layer reading of the Christian notion “orthodox”, one can see that the decisive element is not resultative (the “right opinion”), but is causal (the “innermost will” behind the right or “wrong” opinion). In consequential Orthodox analysis, “right” or “wrong” opinions are caused internally by the free will. It is up to philosophy, first of all, and in today’s science classification, psychology, to establish the mechanics of the internal causation of the counterfactual.

I work with my own, following analysis: There is a constant influx of ideas into an individual human’s free-will center (which is located mostly in the seventh energy body, see my Framework Commentary vol. 2). The free will of an individual human authentically influences the ideation stream, namely, through its orientation more towards the spiritual Light (Holy Spirit, Fourth Force, Divine Love, Connector Force, spiritual angel network), or more towards the spiritual darkness (Satan, First Force, hellish torment, Atomic Force of density and separation, spiritual monster network). The human free will is, accordingly, indirectly observable through observing ideation. That is in a nutshell that chain of deductions that makes out the notion “orthodox”. That type of observation is of the essence for society formation, and also for spiritual growth in knowledge (gnosis). On the social chessboard, it opens game scenarios.

There are hints of such an analysis in Ficino and Gianfranco’s uncle Giovanni Pico (see Euler, written as a second dissertation, a German “Habilitation”). Theology (Euler’s original German: “Gotteserkenntnis, d.h. Theologie im Wortsinn”) and anthropology (Euler: “menschliche Selbsterkenntnis”, literally “human self-recognition”) belong together and must be considered in one (“ineins betrachtet werden”). That is a more than radical shift away from the central notion of “revelation” that is claimed by precritical religious theology. The discipline resulting from such an axiom, or lead maxim, is no longer religious theology, becomes knowledge based, or with a different word to the same effect: scientific theology. Ficino and Pico were, of course, most cautious not to use such clear words in their day and age. Words that have been coined for such an approach over time are: theosophy (modern word), and: gnosis (ancient word). That flags the two thinkers at issue with their proper marker; and both are very close to the elder sage, Plethon. (This is not strict “evidence” that the specialist mentioned in the Preface above would like to have. This is analytical evidence linking philosophers. This procedure is common practice in the historiography of philosophy.)

The visual theology agenda that is present in the Renaissance School (Plethon, Ficino, the two Picos, Bruno, others) had its explosive historic prequel in Byzantium at the heart of the intellectual development. This is described in a salient way in a somewhat dated volume (Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences 1977, pp. 280-293). In short, the visual theology agenda is transmitted out of Byzantium during the Renaissance by the Pletho-Florentine connection under the guise of “Platonism” which was in reality strongly an [esoteric SG] Aristotelianism (p. 292). The Byzantine prequel is what is known as the (two-phase) Byzantine iconoclasm. The Pletho-Florentine connection is, according to that interpretation, the Renaissance counterpart of the earlier iconodules (image friends, more loosely, friends of visualization). While this interpretation by the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences is dated in many details, in its overall drift it is worth taking note of here.

There are two key correspondences:

church and dogma:	external control, determinism, unfreedom
science and vision:	internal control, freedom, nondeterminism

The notion of spiritual liberation through church and dogma is a fraudulently promoted fallacy.

Paul Oskar Kristeller showed that Giovanni Pico went further than Ficino. The latter placed the human soul at the center of the universe, which thus gained an element of subjectivity, foreshadowing Teilhard. Pico, in his famous “Oration on the Dignity of Man” (*De hominis dignitate*) declared that the soul of an individual human can choose by its free will which place it takes. It can thus, by exercise of the free will alone, raise to divinity (by implication, fall into darkness, conversely). See Kristeller 1964, p. 67. The great scholar of the Renaissance thereby summarizes spiritual science precisely. We are in this essay in the process of establishing that this key insight of spiritual science was germane already to Plethon, as evidenced by my proposed reading of his short text “On Fate” that was a published key part of his long secret manuscript “Laws”.

In addition, there is some hard evidence, that should not be over-emphasized. Since I am not a specialist, this is merely what I am aware of, but there might be more.

One piece of evidence is that fact that Plethon developed a new religious science (some say, a religion) without ever, visibly, distributing it. That only makes sense if he was invisibly distributing it. He left a key unique manuscript to let it fall after his death into the hands of his enemies, who (Gennadios) burned it, so it looked like the content was destroyed.

Cosimo de Medici studied Greek (under Roberto de’ Rossi). He searched the northern monasteries for manuscripts. He was Florence’s most powerful citizen. He founded the Platonic Academy of Florence, the head of which was Marsilius Ficino, the greatest Italian Renaissance Platonist. (Woodhouse, p. 155) The story went, that some twenty years prior, Cosimo had attended a lecture (or lectures) that Plethon held in Florence in 1439, which inspired his founding of the Florentine Academy (two decades after Plethon’s lectures in Florence). Ficino, son of the Medici family physician, received a Greek education due to Cosimo’s patronage. (supra, p. 156) Ficino’s surviving explanation of the founding reads quite stylized (see translation, supra). There was a reception of Plethon in contemporary Italy, but without leaving traces concerning his purported, now lost, secret teachings (supra, p. 228 f., also see following pp. for Plethon’s philosophically inconspicuous correspondence with the Emperor).

There was a created myth in Ficino’s philosophy, namely, that Plethon started a revival of ancient theology (*prisca theologia*). In my opinion, that can be used as a cladistic tracer of the Secret School. The possible meanings include either paganism, or the ancient, original form of Christianity; this is ambivalent. More importantly, Plethon inspired a complex attitude towards ancient philosophy. (Blum, p. 391)

Plethon’s “complex attitude” as Blum analyses it is useful as a fingerprint of the Secret School, combining a whole cluster of cladistic markers. According to Blum Plethon was not so much a “last Hellene” (Woodhouse) but was the first “Philhellene” with a particular attitude to the Hellenic past. In summary, Blum argues (p. 408 f.): Heumann discriminates antiquarian scholarship versus re-enactment. Plethon was a re-enactor of a new religion (this is not verbatim in Blum, but the contradiction of the Plethon puzzlement is there, I find). I am not convinced that Plethon was, mainly, a Philhellene. It rather believe that this was just one of his many vanishing cloaks. It does, however, telling tracks that reappear in Ficino, even though the nature of the Plethon mimesis as metamythical (a myth stacked on myths) in Ficino is transparent. There is something tongue-in-cheek about this.

Presti in her doctoral thesis summarizes that in the Middle Ages there was no historiography of philosophy. She writes (p. 156): It was the Byzantines Plethon and Bessarion vis-à-vis the Florentine humanists who introduced the idea of a historical transformation, a development over time. Their aim was the idea of a perennial philosophy that uses, like Plato did, different voices, starting from an original wisdom (*prisca sapientia*), and allowing, properly understood, to grasp the essential harmony of philosophy. [That brackets a School. SG]

Molinari (2010/2011) is quite emphatic about a lineage (p. 191 f.). He refers to Eugenio Garin, who discovered a note relating to Plethon in Giovanni Pico’s “*De Ente e Uno*” (in *Codex Hamilton 438*). Garin (pp. 278-279) quotes Pico’s reference to Plethon as follows (after Molinari, p. 191, note 9):

“qum et inter ipsos etiam platonicos sint quibus dogma illud non placeat unius scilicet appellationem quae entis nomine sit superior deo attribuendam non autem entis. Nam et Julianus Augustus, magnus inter platonicos, nulli ait magis entis cognomen convenire quam deo et a Juliano non dissentit Gemistus in eo libro in quo Bessarionis quaestiones dissolvit”.

Based on that, Garin remarked that, when in the future he would write the history of thought in the fifteenth century, Ficino and Pico, aside Cusanus, will find their place as interlocutors, and even pupils, of Plethon, Bessarion and Argyropoulos (Molinari, p. 191 f.). According to that, at least two renowned Italian specialists do approve of a transmission link of the sort that I am independently proposing (without mention of Bruno here).

I do not see the Latin quote covering anything such as now lost secret knowledge of Plethon. It is strange, however, that the “Philhellene” Plethon is privately noted as a precursor by Pico who is, at least part of his lifetime, strongly set against Greek philosophy since he plans to develop *prisca theologia* with new philosophy. The question becomes, plausibly, if Plethon may not have been Pico’s role model for that, in particular.

In his doctoral thesis (2012), Molinari essentially shows, in the development from Plethon to Pico, the incompatibility of the philosophical assertion of the human free will with a merely rational view of reality. This leads me to the conclusion that, along a School continuity from Plethon via Ficino to Pico (i.e., both Picos), the solution of the riddle text “On Fate” is to dump the merely rational view of reality in favor of a transrational view. An initiate can attain that viewpoint experientially by accessing higher levels of the mind through appropriate spiritual knowledge and practice. This is merely my logical inference, but I see no breach of logics in making this inference. The underlying practice would be, again, designated by William James’ term “noetic state”, and related terms. A real example is Byzantine Hesychasm, the attainment of a high degree of freedom through mystic spirituality, mystic union, joinder of the ego self with something much bigger of Divine provenance (Holy Spirit angelic network). The point to recognize is that that is no mere dogma, but describes an alternate human life form as compared with compartmentalized human ego life. That indeed is secret knowledge, drawn from scholarly inferences by Molinari.

If one considers both presented findings of Molinari together (Molinari 2010/2011, and Molinari 2012), then, indeed, secret, now lost, knowledge of Plethon is referenced by Pico’s Codex Hamilton 438 Latin note. This also strengthens the assumption that Plethon’s key text “On Fate” has, as proposed here, more than just a single reading of itself in mind. Pico’s Codex Hamilton 438 private note is, accordingly, an important clue for a multi-level knowledge-based (gnostic, spiritually scientific, non-denominational) reading of Plethon, both in his text “On Fate”, and in general. It must further be noted that Bessarion cleaned the public slate of Plethon effectively, and the so-called “pagan” interpretative claims enshrouding Plethon today were not known abroad.

Additionally, that fits in with the overall tendency of the Secret School during the Renaissance era, to merge numerous currents into the visualizing One, a historically and intellectually singular Platonizing twist of the classifying Renaissance, present in Plethon, Bessarion, Ficini, in both Picos, and in Bruno, with minor personal variations, using archetypal Platonic imagery, but concretized scientifically in a characteristic esoteric Aristotelian vein. The trademark weave of those intricate bodies of wisdom is limited, historically and intellectually, to the Plethon-Bruno axis, indicating a tight-knit School tradition. The Codex Hamilton 438 Latin private note of Giovanni Pico referencing Plethon is a doubtless piece of hard evidence that definitely confirms this. It is hard if not impossible to come up with a divergent interpretation that negates this without running into all sorts of confusion (again). The quality of the hard evidence is impeccable, one such piece being entirely sufficient to turn the tide.

Let these remarks suffice here to illustrate everything relevant behind the notion of “orthodox”. The point has been made that scientific evidence (in the humanities, better called “scholarly” evidence) is necessary to form the right opinion. Mere belief, mere belief system, is nothing of worth, at this level, any more; it flies in tatters in the wind.

Resources:

- Sri Bhagavan Speaks on how Antaryamins are Networked*; pdf 1 p. online:
http://www.oneness.at/level3/transcript/2011/transcript_2011_08_23_teaching1.pdf
- Swami Krishnananda; *The Nature of the Inner Controller*; pdf online:
http://www.swami-krishnananda.org/brdup_audio/brdup-18.pdf
- Euler, Walter Andreas; *“Pia philosophia” and “docta religio”: Theologie und Religion bei Marsilio Ficino und Giovanni Pico della Mirandola*; [Giovanni being the uncle of Gianfranco, both influential for each other] Munich 1997
- Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences; *The Posthumous Life of Plato*; scientific editor: Ludvík Svoboda; scientific and linguistic adviser: J.L. Barton; The Hague 1977
- Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni; *De hominis dignitate / Über die Würde des Menschen*; übersetzt von Norbert Baumgarten, herausgegeben und eingeleitet von August Buck, lateinisch-deutsch; Hamburg 1990
- Kristeller, Paul Oskar; *Eight Philosophers of the Italian Renaissance*; Stanford 1964
- Blum, Paul Richard; *Plethon the First Philhellene: Re-enacting the Antiquity*; in: Jozef Matula; Paul Richard Blum (editors); Georgios Gemistos Plethon: The Byzantine and the Latin Renaissance; Univerzita Palackého v Olomuci 2014; pp. 391-413
- Presti, Eleonora Lo; *La filosofia nel sua sviluppo storico: la prospettiva storiografica di Marsilio Ficino e l'influenza dei dotti bizantini Giorgio Gemisto Pletone e Giovanni Basilio Bessarione*; doctoral thesis, Università Degli Studi Di Bologna, M-FIL/06
- Codex Hamilton 438* [manuscript]; Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Ms. 254. See:
- Bertozzi, Marco; *Giovanni Pico, Gemisto Pletone e l'imperatore Giuliano: una strana alleanza*; in: Caroti, Stefano (editor): Nuovi maestri e antichi testi: Umanesimo e Rinascimento alle origine del pensiero moderno; Florence 2012, pp. 41-56
- Molinari, Jonathan; *Pletone e Pico: Gli studi di François Masai sul platonismo di Mistrà e il “De Ente et Uno”*; in: *Philosophia* III (2/2010 - 1/2011), pp. 189-196
- ; *Libertà e discordia: Da Giorgio Gemisto Pletone a Pico della Mirandola*; doctoral thesis, Università degli studi di Bologna, 2012
- Garin, Eugenio; *La cultura filosofica del Rinascimento Italiano: ricerche a documenti*; Florence 1961
- Klimenko, Victor E.; *The Orthodox Teaching on Personal Salvation*; diploma thesis, May 2011, online:
<http://www.orthodoxtheologicalschool.org/journal/klimenkothesis2010.pdf>
- Carroll, Bruce; *The Early-Modernization of the Classical Muse*; dissertation, University of New Mexico, 2014

V. The Counter-Evidence: Gnosis

**Literature is invention;
spirituality is intention.**

Significantly, Plethon firmly asserts that writing cannot express the highest philosophy (Woodhouse, p. 67). The teacher needs to give the student spoken instructions; and these need to mature in the student (supra). Additionally, the highest philosophy can be transmitted only through such non-written channels (supra). By implication, the highest philosophy will, consistent with what Plethon just explained, not be found in any of Plethon's writings. For as long as we are not privy to the oral teachings of Plethon, we will be compelled to find that such teachings were given by Plethon to his pupils, and that the teachings represent the apex of Plethon's system. In other words, we need, with all due caution, to infer. The strange "gods" that we find in Plethon - and they are indeed strange - thereby very likely assume parts of the role of myth in oral cultures, namely to assist by mnemonic markers such as places, narratives, key figures, the successful oral transmission of high and confidential knowledge over long periods of time.

The most highly advanced system of Gnosis (spiritual knowledge) on the planet is Buddhism in its original form (transmitted practically in Myanmar to this day). Martin Luther recognized that the Fourth Force of Creation ("Holy Spirit", connector force, divine Love) is a matter of grace and cannot be cultivated directly. The Third Force (ovoastromic force, archetype of the perfect human) is the Buddha Force. This can be cultivated directly. It is the center of scientific knowledge of spiritual things. The goal is to attain "Buddha nature". That is the perfect unification of the inner workings of an individual human. This leads to positive biological immortality. Further, cultivating Buddha nature is an indirect cultivation of the Holy Spirit (divine Love) because it attracts Grace.

On the planet, there are various gnostic systems (systems of spiritual science). These are typically kept separate in organization terms from "religions" because the knowledge systems are, socially speaking, elite systems. Unlike religions, they actually work in a systematic and predictable way. I call them "spiritual contact systems", which is precisely descriptive.

The Gnosticism of the west is one of such elite systems of spiritual knowledge and proficiency. The modern Neo-Gnosticism that Samael Aun Weor released to public knowledge is not a fully developed system of spiritual knowledge. It is geared to the popular needs of the twentieth century. It is a good system, however. Plethon's Gnosticism starts at the exit-basic level and reaches high, in particular posing important riddles for a student to master. As I read it, Plethon's system is a system with five levels. Seven levels of the full twelve level system are missing at the top.

For a system of the first nine levels, read my Framework vols. 1 and 2. The system is in vol. 2, but vol. 1 is preparatory for that. That is exactly what Byzantine philosopho-theology is useful for.

For George Gemistos Plethon, prayer was a means of finding union with the One (Woodhouse, p. 75). In the context of the times, this meant mystical union, even though Plethon professed not to be interested in Hesychasm. That suggests that he had his own ways. As Scholarios noticed, Plethon launched a thinly veiled attack against the Church's doctrine of the trinity (Woodhouse, p. 77). Like the Hesychasts with the Jesus

Prays and instructions in the Philokalia, Plethon did not rely, for seeking the One, on the trinity which is an instrument of sabotage designed by clerical cynics to hide the knowledge of union from the common folk.

The pervasive phenomenon of Byzantine mysticism, including without limitation the phenomenon of the practice of Hesychasm, is Gnostic evidence. The converter to arrive at this conclusion is what William James keenly observed and described as a noetic state of the typical mystic experience (see introductory in Shrader). The mystic experience, if not drug-induced, is filled with dense holographic knowledge of a rapid information transfer rate. James is a respected author who laid the foundation for the academic study of this field. A noetic state in the sense of James comes with a boost of the process of ideation which is central to Plethon's entire philosophical endeavour (see analysis in the essay on ideation above).

This discussion is central to the entire plan of this book, as stated in the book description:

The central concept used in this book is William James' "noetic state". It is identified with Byzantine Hesychasm, i.e., the widespread phenomenon of Byzantine mysticism. The noetic state is explained primarily in the third and sixth Essays, but is developed running throughout all six essays and through the concluding part at the end. A related concepts is the "henosis" of Plotinus, the Neo-Platonic School and Dionysios Areopagita, through the latter of whom the noetic state became the key focus of Orthodox Byzantine Christianity, in a covert conflict with surviving pagan hold-overs that to this day still dominate Vatican Christianity of the west.

The last great Byzantine philosopher, George Gemistos Plethon, is identified as the secret head of Christian Gnosticism, the preservers of the noetic mystic state since Jeshua (Jesus Christ). At the end, radical scholarship is lined up to unveil the Gospel and New Testament myths, drawing into question the key texts of religious Christianity, in an effort to usher in the ancient spiritual science that has always lingered behind Christianity since its great founder.

Plethon's philosophy of ideation gives vivid testimony to a life filled with non-drug-induced noetic states, and likely also with a preferred personal situation in a society in which that was a central social value. Our normal mind has a self-protection mechanism that shuts off the overwhelming information stream, unless our mind is trained to take that load. That last aspect is not in James but needs to be developed for understanding Plethon and Byzantine sacred culture and philosopho-theology with their information laden mental visual phenomena especially of the mystical practices. We thereby reach the primary source of Gnosis, which does not preclude, of course, that writings of related nature are read and received. "Gnosis" is thus most similar to, "ideation". We may hence, coming from the above context, verily speak of an "ideational nature of Gnosis". To recognize that point is a high insight of Gnosis itself. An overall characterization is: glory, an unrecognized key Christian value of our possible inner development into freedom, into the Kingdom of God.

Mystical states, or with a less euphemistic word, paranormal states of mind, were an explicit theme in Plethon through his use of the Chaldean (possibly: Culdeean) Oracles, and extremely likely through the Neo-Platonic branch of practiced parapsychology (henosis, theurgy) including its Byzantine mainstream reception through Dionysios Areopagita as a roof for separately originated Hesychasm. Ficino later added to the school the stream of Hermeticism, Giovanni Pico, Cabbala. Bruno was a Hermeticist who included Cabbala. (After Frances A. Yates, critical of setting aside the Hermeticist Lodovico Lazzarelli: Wouter Hanegraaff).

This has all been written out, basicly. I see my task to assign this a place in an interpretation toolkit that I see in Plethon the philosopher. His truth comes in layers. It needs to be read in layers. Much of what he says makes sense only in this, fifth, layer. It is a scientific truth; and it is paranormal through powers of the mind.

The reason for wrapping such powers (in India: yoga powers, siddhis, paranormal powers) in protective layers is, as in yoga, their potential misuse. Only such initiates may access this who are reliably tuned to discipline in lightful spirituality, under the proven guide of the Higher Self. The late ancient founder of the School, Jesus, had immense such abilities, The School would be glaringly incomplete without their consideration.

I believe the best service to conclude this section is to provide some little known general information about the Neo-Platonism that Plethon, as a major component inflow into his intellectual activities, would have found in the Byzantine textual memory. According to Po, the founding figure of Neo-Platonism, Plotinus, was “both a philosopher and a mystic” (p. i). The entire influential Neo-Platonic family of schools were such: both philosophers and mystics. This is, initially, entirely independent of the evolving Byzantine Proto-Hesyachasm of the desert. This comes out of the heart of syncretistic Hellenistic philosophy with its large injection of Buddhist meditational practice knowledge of Oneness (McEvelley, see in my Framework Commentary vol. 1).

The dissertation presents Plotin’s mysticism. Plotin’s main philosophical text, the “Enneads”, are a spiritual guide filled with mystical teaching for Henosis: unification with the One. Ho explains what Plotinus’ mystical methods are and how they relate to Henosis. The two textual bases that Po uses are (in chapter 4 section 3): the mystical vision in I.6.8.21-27, and the visual illustration of Henosis VI.9.8.13-22.

Plotinus clarifies that mystical union cannot actually be reached since connectedness is the original nature of things. Man can merely, through getting rid of delusions, become aware once again of that fact, which is somewhat misleading, as Plotinus would have it, termed to be, mystical union. More fully stated, it is the (re-)gaining of the awareness of original union, with the mystifying “mystic” word thus becoming redundant. It would be a misunderstanding of that explanation of the founding master, however, to speak as follows: The One always has been “in” man. That would be as true as saying: “Man has always been “in” the One. The description as connectedness is more functional in this context than the “in” relation (and also than the “at” relation misleadingly suggesting a spatial contiguousness).

In my way of seeing it, the One is a part of the mind (not your mind, not mine, similar to the legalities of the open oceans) that is not dedicated to a single individual (it is transpersonal) and that is not in “multi-thingness” fragmentation of a one-sidedly material use of mind by most people today and throughout history, i.e. that is pristine light untainted by human fears and their resulting shadows and darkness.

In practical terms, the One is Higher Self contact, not direct God contact, even though such is possible as well. Pagan worship included Non-Higher-Self contact. Some of the contactees on the other side were very low-life (e.g., Seth/Lucifer, Hekate, Belsebuub, Ahriman, the historical “Zeus” at Mount Olympos); others were, and remain, extremely Heavenly beings (e.g., Jesus [I, II], Athena, Michael, Gabriel, Apollon/Raffael). Contacting the Heavenly “gods” (with small “g”) is Heavenly-pagan. There is nothing objectionable, harmful or detrimental about such private spiritual social contacts with our Ascended Masters through the peaceful and loving medium of Light-Mind. If one does insist on visualizing God (with a capital “G”), then my suggestion is that the least mischief comes out of visualizing Her/Him/It as the medium that carries the Great Wave that is All. What the Great Wave is depends largely on the free-will beings in it (who have to go through God the Medium of Infinity, the Source Existence Level, every time they move a thought or something).

In Plotinus, “vision” often stands metaphorically for henosis (Ho, p. 155). To “close our eyes” means to “go beyond the intellect” (p. 156). Vision is purely receptive. It requires the prior silencing of the mind and of the noise of the world in the mind. Vision requires unstrained stillness of the mind, which is bliss. Pierre Hadot (p. 35) sets forth that mystical vision mirrors, related to consciousness. If that means, becoming conscious of consciousness, there is a point to it. Ignorance infests local consciousness, dampening its awareness. Going beyond that permits us to regain untainted, or less tainted, consciousness fields [prana, electron/photon plasmas, orgone, chi, etc., all meaning the same SG]. Hadot is struggling, as Ho sees correctly (p. 158), Ho

notes that Hadot's remarks are not very convincing. From a forensic viewpoint, I would confirm that Hadot, in good faith, is saying things that do not come together coherently in his mind (as, here, in most people).

Using complicated philosophical prose is a guarantee for failure to see, or to describe, anything useful beyond being a manifesto of confusion. Such efforts have not yet started with any knowledge of the soul. I point this out so others may recognize the futility of such efforts. If people speak from personal experience, even about such topics as astral travel and mystical union (Higher Self contact, same as in Patanjali yoga: samadhi), listeners will intuitively understand that what the speaker is saying makes subjective sense. On the other hand, readers can also sense, without visionary abilities, that writing with a lack of personal experience simply does not make much sense and is incoherent.

The first step to improve that - I am departing from Plotinus and facing towards our modern age - is to let go of all complicated thoughts. They are gratifications of ego only. They stand in the way of what seekers are searching, they are the cloud of ignorance, which is a good metaphor. Take a pole and shove that cloud aside. Then you can also see what, in this context, it means to "touch" the one - you can intersect your expansive fields with its expansive fields. "Touch" is a metaphor that starts making sense, paradoxically, in non-local awareness.

To reach non-local awareness, which is: non-point-shaped, which is: spacious itself, look back to the second Essay above. In the mental museum, we walked past Renaissance theories of visualization. We also walked by the visual arts method of central perspective. That is not simply for paintings on the wall; that is, very importantly, also for opening your own mental space in mind. It is structured geometrically with a center point and outgoing rays.

That is an exercise for your Third Eye (sixth chakra, Ajna). When you are in nature, visualize it overlaid with that mental structure. Using both your senses and your imagination at the same time, move your awareness into two different spaces that overlap. One space is seen by your physical eyes. The other space is created within the mind ("your" little plot of the mind) and also can hold your awareness, especially if there is something beautiful there to see (to see visionarily).

Split your awareness so that everything that you want to forget is in just one corner. Build yourself your own Paradise! That is what most people do, anyway, unfortunately forgetting that Paradise is beautiful, loving, filled with Light and not darkness, effortless, true, good, lasting, unlimited. Most importantly, Paradise is a place where there is an eminent presence, which is neither you nor any part of you, of Glory, of Omnipotence, of Omniscience. Through a simple trick as mentioned you can see that into your daily life that your senses show you. Do that and let it take over. You can experience a new and high kind of freedom, that freedom that we are made for.

At the same time, let go of all that is a hindrance. If you are half-hearted about this you will simply delay this, and can harm yourself. Watch yourself communicate with the light, like little children do. That is from one of Jesus' most important sayings of spiritual science. The harmful ego is intertwined in many ways with the grown-up concept that most of us still feel is right to follow, but which is in reality an immature and ignorant figment of the mind. It gets you to smoke; it gets you to do all sorts of things that harm yourself. It is that part of you that you want to say good-bye to.

That is possible. I have mentioned the Higher Self. Such efforts are only possible under the guidance of the Higher Self. It is like having a competent consultant friend with you all the time, with the exception of a physical bodily presence of the friend. That is something to get used to.

There is an angelic finding program installed for planet Earth since some years (written in 2015). Make use of that. Ask into the Light, incessantly. Your serious pleas will be answered. That is Henotheism for our age.

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Conclusion

We looked at Plethon's toolkit of philosophical interpretation. The groundwork of philosophy is to read texts with different sets of eyes. I presented a model of reading in five layers for Pletho's key text, "On Fate". Its antinomy was dissolved, reaching from the notion of determinism to the notion of freedom. Important tools, presented by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola for Biblical hermeneutics, are a cosmological model visually descriptive of the sixth and seventh chakras (Ajna, Sahasrara) that visualizes, and thus activates, man's innate cosmic consciousness. For Earthly things, it works through an allegorical nucleus.

Man's favorite passtime is to lapse into a condition of fear. Fear is deterministic. Plethon, and similarly Bruno, in their texts "On Fate" (fate and determinism discussed together with the human free will) start at the antinomian level. According to a frequent confusion in scholarship, this is presented at a level of a "pagan" reading of Plethon as a "determinist", a view inspired by the mindless Scholarios, Plethon's enemy, the manuscript vandal. Paganism and determinism are not particularly linked, however.

The "noetic state" (William James) is introduced. In any parapsychological spiritual practice, for example Hesychasm, third party human life forms are contacted telepathically and, mainly, telempathically. This is a new and momentous medium of knowledge, after the Gutenberg revolution (McLuhan) and the internet revolution. Byzantium was far ahead in this.

The proposed five levels of reading are: pagan, Stoic (with Aristotelian background), Gospel (Luke Fraud example), Orthodox (leading to concept of "knowledge", based on "evidence"), and Gnostic (level of spiritual science, and also of awakening paranormal abilities). Those are the first five levels, leading through the pre-astral barrier to the beginning of astral awakening. For nine levels, see my Framework Commentary vol. 2.

Through spiritual guidance of the "Higher Self", a dedicated spirit guide that every person has, and can contact, man's depressive, melancholy general condition of fear is gradually overcome. That is freedom, and liberation and purification from ignorance. That is the deep message of Plethon in his key text "On Fate".

I have provided at the end of this essay the complete French text, middle nineteenth century, by Alexandre, plus two English machine translations of Alexandre's French. Additionally Giordano Bruno's passage on fate and freedom in his essay on the expulsion of the triumphant beast (he was a loudmouth) is mentioned; the content and method are, in principle, the same as in Plethon. The subject was also written into the Gospel of Luke in the fourth Century under Eusebius using ancient sources (see end of book below).

The central textual segment is the following passage:

FRENCH VERSION:

En effet, ce serait évidemment une erreur de dire que la liberté est le contraire de la nécessité,

ENGLISH MACHINE TRANSLATION 1:

Indeed, it would obviously be a mistake to say that freedom is the opposite of necessity,

ENGLISH MACHINE TRANSLATION 2:

Indeed, it would be of course an error to say that freedom is the opposite of necessity,

This insight summarizes the entire text, which presents a context of understanding for this insight. Take this one step further, and one concludes that freedom is identical with necessity (hinted at by Plethon); and the seeming stark opposition of the two notions is illusory due to ignorance of the true nature of necessity and freedom. Freedom exists as a necessity. The curative toolkit is antinomian, and dissolving antinomies. Cusanus (*concordantia oppositarum*) is looking over the shoulder of this.

It is up to man to actually realize her freedom. This is the same as, departing from melancholy. That happens in the head, or more precisely, in the cosmic mind and its allegorical nucleus, where man becomes spiritually seeing without using the eyes. Giovanni Pico in the Secret School of Jesus, close to Pletho in time and in concert, presented an appropriate mind model, taken from Aristotle, who is replicating Atlantean material, to visualize the divine mind beyond melancholy and ego. Plato, in the first Essay above, added the simile of the cave for the ego – Pletho is transmitting Plato’s path out of the cave and into the sun.

Towards the beginning, Pletho, as a teacher, argues that foreknowledge (which the gods have) would be impossible if the future were not fixed. That is a specious argument. If one accepts foreknowledge, why can one not have foreknowledge of an optional future? The underlying is to describe a mindset of fear that blockades, the same cleft mindset that is in all “religions”, hallucinating “absolute rightness” to the believer, which is a question of survival for people who are held in superstitious fear.

Another key in Pletho’s text is: “So those who think that the gods exist” Pletho is thereby addressing the issue of paganism (polytheism, with “gods” as objects of religious worship). The veiled implication is that polytheism contributes to melancholy, man general condition of fear, causing determinism. Pletho, as a good Platonist, is, if one can read in layers, criticizing paganism for this (in the critical vein of Plato and his judicially murdered teacher Sokrates), and pointing out the deterministic fear mechanism of paganism. There is much confusion about this because specialist scholars are apparently unaware of the history of philosophy in classical Athens.

Machine translation 2 in the same paragraph has: “And even if the Gods would be the authors of the things of this world,” (Machine translation 1 is to the same effect, somewhat garbled.) If that hypothetical sentence is a possible translation, then Pletho is certainly not on a pagan “believer”, but is a skeptic. Has no-one read this text before fulminating the self-contradictory expression: “Pagan Platonism”? Hladký apparently has read, and he has, through actually reading the sources, something apparently out of fashion in parts of scholarship today, at least if it stands in one’s way, come to the conclusion that Pletho was an unorthodox Christian with strong leanings towards ancient philosophy.

The next paragraph of Pletho “On Fate” opens with the argument: If, then, everything is (pre-) determined through fate, human freedom is done with.

The prefix I added in parenthesis (first syllable of “predetermined”) touches on an issue that I do not find in Pletho. Can determinism be post-determining? In modern physics, that theoretically allows time travel, that is theoretically possible. That would allow for people to will, think, and act freely, and then have some post-determinism come in. In eastern teachings, that is exactly what the law of karma is. The law of karma is the law of consequences. You do “A”, and you thereby inescapably create certain consequences for yourself, for your life. You do “B” (which is not “A”), and you thereby inescapably create certain other consequences for yourself and your life. You are thereby, paradoxically, both (i) free, and (ii) fully under inescapable necessity. That eastern teaching puts the spiritual practitioner very much on the spot. “Karma” is a synonym of “sin”.

Pletho gets close to this in the overall reading. Since Neo-Platonism through Ammonios Sakkas has a dominant Buddhist inject (see in my Framework Analysis, vol. 1, links are in the first Essay above near the beginning), It is quite likely that Pletho would have known about this probably most prominent eastern spiritual teaching. Pletho’s short text “On Fate” is not that detailed, however, that one could read such a specific out of it. The general line is to get out of deterministic fear and to overcome spiritual ignorance through spiritual knowledge. From a Vedic and Buddhist view that is the very great universal of all spiritual teachings.

Getting out of melancholy and fear is getting out of sin. Getting out of sin means, that the strict law of consequences no longer forces to replicate sin as a series of repetitions through your many reincarnations. Getting out of sin by you personal life practice is the precondition for being liberated from the cycle of your

sin-induced reincarnations. The big lie is where the external savior comes in, Messiah or Church, etc. The latter point is touched upon when Plethon is teaching the initiate how to do it (spiritual science, gnosis).

In the same paragraph, one of Plethon's sentences reads (translation 1): "Thus, men are masters of them[selves] as governing their conduct, although this rule is subject to a higher domination, and one can say that they are free and are not." There is a higher domination. That makes men free, and not free, at the same time. Thus, freedom has two components, individual freedom, and freedom or nonfreedom under the rule of higher domination. The question is moved forward into: "How deterministic is the higher domination?" "Can man do anything to change that component?"

Immediately after that comes the key sentence: "Indeed, it would obviously be a mistake to say that freedom is the opposite of necessity," That in context opens the curtain to the idea that the higher domination by: God, necessity, fate (to leave that open) might not always, and not under all circumstances, be "necessity". Can necessity change? If necessity is an emotional attitude of man towards nature, then, yes, necessity can change. That is learned at the Stoic level where it is taught how man can become free of emotions. That is not the highest level, however. At the Gospel level of reading presented in this Essay (second level), Jesus is shown to have promoted his own passion. That is an example that man can follow that what is necessary. The only way a free-will being, man, can do so is, through her or his free will. Is that still necessity? It is both, freedom and necessity.

A yet higher variant of that gnostic learner's question is: Does man have the power to change necessity? The project of science is, indeed, a project to change, in many specific respects, necessity, that is, necessity as it is found by in nature by default. Science can transform, in certain cases, one necessity into a different necessity that is more amenable, more lucrative, more liberating to man than the prior necessity. I bring this, somewhat belabouredly I admit, under the heading of "orthodoxy", forming the "right opinion". Orthodoxy is a system of belief that claims to be "right". I argue, in keeping with the pedagogical intentions of Plethon's text, that "right" belief can only be based on truth, that is, on scientific (or, in the humanities, "scholarly") evidence. That opens the door to orthodoxy as a science which is beyond the level of rumours and beliefs.

The distinguishing element is, certainty without doubt. It is very important to detect doubt, with the help of that part of the mind that is "one's own" (for loan from God). Only if one detects doubt can one resolve it. Only if one detects doubt can one move in the right direction for finding not only facts, but relevant facts. The religious working with doubt therefore provides a critically important subjective pointing instrument for reaching the level of certainty. The test, essentially, will always be practical, to see if it works (experimental method of science: constructing, testing and improving hypotheses.)

The method of science can fully apply in spirituality. Gnosis, the science of spirituality, is nondenominational. That seems to be the key difficulty for understanding Plethon, Ficino, the two Picos, Bruno. They fit under no religious hat.

The essay goes into such questions and more. I proffer that there is a very large overlap of this with the thoughts that Plethon would have held. I have taken into consideration that he must have been an extremely radical critic.

Appendix: Plethon's Text "On Fate" ("De fato")

This is not a critical edition of Plethon's text "On Fate" ("De fato"). I extracted the French translation of Alexandre that was made from the critical Greek text of Pellissier, published in 1858. Then I made a machine translation of the French text into English, obviously needing much emendation. When I saw the English machine translation, I was astounded. The title of the text came out in the first of two machine translations as: "On Doom"! That is a possible English translation. Are we reading a very wild, radical text through pink sunglasses? I decided to present to you the English machine translation, slightly emended. That will help to ensure that readers will not suppose that the English text below is anything like a "final meaning" of this difficult text that is strangely situated in the midst of core changes that our own times are undergoing. I broke down the text into paragraphs. The text is given below in three slightly different versions: the French of Alexandre (1858), English Machine Translation 1, English Machine Translation 2. In the English Machine Translations 1 and 2, I replaced the name "Jupiter" from the French text for "God".

BRIEF COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT:

Plethon's original text has, today, a certain semantic spread. This is indicated by the range between the three textual versions that are presented below. I hesitate to provide a (my) "final" version because I do not believe that there is such, apart from the late Byzantine Greek original text. Working with this text, my understanding has changed. Its key message is: there is no real coincidence. Albert Einstein in the early twentieth century said as much. The central textual segment is the following passage:

FRENCH VERSION:

En effet, ce serait évidemment une erreur de dire que la liberté est le contraire de la nécessité,

ENGLISH MACHINE TRANSLATION 1:

Indeed, it would obviously be a mistake to say that freedom is the opposite of necessity,

ENGLISH MACHINE TRANSLATION 2:

Indeed, it would be of course an error to say that freedom is the opposite of necessity,

This insight summarizes the entire text, which presents a context of understanding for this insight. Take this one step further, and one concludes that freedom is identical with necessity (hinted at by Plethon); and the seeming stark opposition of the two notions is illusory due to ignorance of the true nature of necessity and freedom. Freedom exists as a necessity. Plethon's writing on this paradox is, I believe, unique in the history of philosophy, except in the Plethon-Bruno span, joined by a telltale allegorical form. It certainly does not mark as a pagan, nor as a fatalist. Plethon has so far not been understood, even though his statement in this regard is not esoteric but comes in the garb of classical philosophy, yearning beyond itself.

Under the assumption of a causative imagination, the world can be co-created by an individual person, or by a group of persons together, as unfree. Or as free. That is variable. By default, humans on this planet, the spiritually ignorant "fallen man", imagine through their co-creator powers the world as unfree. The Jesus trick is to change the causative imagination. This very high spiritual insight relativates absolute ontology through voluntarism, reminiscent of a certain unorthodox Indian school of philosophy of viewpoints (Jaina Nayavadi), and of Teilhard de Chardin's "Anthropic Principle". Such evidently is what guided Plethon in composing his short and hot treatise "On Doom" ("On Destiny", "On Fate", in Greek: "Peri heimarmenis").

THE FRENCH VERSION:

PLETHON
TRAITÉ DES LOIS.
LIVRE II.
Chapitre VI. Du Destin.

Les choses futures sont-elles toutes déterminées et fixées à l'avance par le destin, ou bien en est-il qui n'aient rien d'arrêté et qui se produisent sans ordre et sans loi, comme le hasard les amène? Sans nul doute, toutes choses sont soumises à une loi; car si quelque événement se produisait sans être déterminé par une loi, ou bien il n'aurait pas sa cause, et il y aurait alors un fait qui se produirait sans cause, ou bien la cause qui le produit agirait sans détermination, sans nécessité, et il y aurait alors une cause qui ne produirait pas ses effets nécessairement et d'une manière déterminée: les deux choses sont également impossibles. Mais il est bien moins possible encore que les Dieux changent ce qu'ils ont résolu pour l'avenir et fassent autre chose que ce qu'ils ont fixé, déterminés à ce changement, par les prières des hommes, par certains présents ou par quelque autre raison semblable.

En effet, en niant la nécessité et la prédétermination des faits à venir, on s'expose à refuser entièrement aux Dieux la prévision des choses humaines ou à les accuser d'être les auteurs du pire, au lieu du mieux possible, puisque nécessairement, des choses qu'ils ont résolues en premier ou en second lieu, l'une doit être pire que l'autre: ceux qui nient absolument le destin, tombent donc dans l'une ou l'autre de ces impiétés. Mais ces deux suppositions sont tout à fait impossibles; tous les événements à venir sont fixés dès l'éternité, ils sont rangés dans le meilleur ordre possible sous l'autorité de Jupiter, maître unique et suprême de toutes choses. Seul de tous les êtres, Jupiter ne connaît pas de bornes, puis-qu'il n'y a rien qui puisse le borner, rien ne pouvant être borné que par sa propre cause; mais, trop grand pour pouvoir être borné, il demeure éternellement et parfaitement identique à lui-même, il a pour essence la nécessité la plus grande de toutes et la plus puissante, qui est par soi d'une manière absolue et ne dérive d'aucune puissance étrangère; car ce qui est nécessaire vaut mieux que ce qui est contingent, et la nécessité la plus grande convient à l'être essentiellement bon.

A ceux qui procèdent immédiatement de lui, Jupiter communique le même attribut à un degré inférieur, car les êtres qu'il produit sont nécessairement de même nature que lui; il détermine ces choses et toutes les autres à cause de lui, et il n'y a rien de si grand ni de si petit à quoi il puisse de lui-même assigner sa limite, parce qu'il n'y a rien dont il ne soit la cause suprême. D'ailleurs, si l'avenir n'était pas fixé, la prescience serait impossible, et pour les hommes, et même pour les Dieux; car on ne peut pas connaître avec certitude l'indéterminé, dont on ne saurait dire à l'avance avec exactitude s'il sera ou ne sera pas. Or, les Dieux connaissent l'avenir, puisque ce sont eux qui le fixent, et qu'ils l'ont présent en eux, comme en étant la cause, avant même qu'il ait reçu l'existence. Ils le connaissent uniquement parce qu'ils le disposent et le produisent; car ils ne peuvent le connaître comme étant eux-mêmes affectés par lui; en effet, il répugne, il est impossible d'admettre que les Dieux soient affectés par des choses d'une nature inférieure, et qui n'existent même pas encore.

Ainsi, ceux qui pensent que les Dieux existent et qui leur refusent en même temps la prescience et la prédétermination des choses de ce monde, sont conduits à leur en refuser jusqu'à la connaissance; car ils ne les connaîtraient ni comme soumis à l'action de ces choses, puisque le moins parfait ne peut agir sur le plus parfait, ni comme agissant sur elle, parce qu'ils n'en seraient même pas les auteurs. Il est nécessaire, en effet, que ce qui connaît entre en rapport avec la chose connue, soit à titre de participation en subissant son action, soit à titre de cause en agissant sur elle, toute connaissance étant impossible à une autre condition qu'à celle d'un rapport entre le connaissant et le connu. Et quand bien même les Dieux seraient les auteurs des choses de ce monde, s'ils ne l'étaient pas d'une façon déterminée et nécessaire, jamais ils ne sauraient ce qu'ils doivent faire un jour, puisqu'ils ne le fixeraient pas nécessairement et de toute éternité d'une manière immuable. Mais les Dieux connaissent l'avenir, et parmi les hommes ils en choisissent auxquels ils le font connaître dans une certaine mesure. Quelques-uns de ces hommes ont voulu mettre à profit cette prévision d'une partie de l'avenir pour tenter d'y échapper, mais, comme les autres, ils ont trouvé les arrêts du Destin nécessaires et inévitables; il en est même qui par cette prévision de leurs destinées et par leurs efforts pour s'y soustraire en ont amené l'accomplissement, cela même étant dans leur destinée. Il n'y a donc aucun moyen d'échapper, de se soustraire aux choses une fois décidées de toute éternité par Jupiter et fixées par le Destin.

Mais, dira-t-on, si tout est déterminé à l'avance, si aucun des faits présents ou à venir n'échappe à la nécessité, c'en est fait de la liberté humaine et de la justice divine: car, d'une part, les hommes agiront sous l'empire de la fatalité, ils ne seront pas maîtres d'eux-mêmes; ils ne seront pas libres; d'autre part, les Dieux renonceront complètement à punir les méchants, car ils ne seraient pas justes en les punissant, puisque leur méchanceté est fatale et involontaire. Mais les hommes sont maîtres d'eux-mêmes, non pas comme n'ayant personne qui les gouverne, ni parmi les autres êtres, ni parmi les Dieux eux-mêmes, mais comme ayant en eux un seul principe qui commande, c'est-à-dire l'âme, et tout le reste qui obéit; c'est ce principe unique, le meilleur de notre nature, qui dispose de tout le reste. Mais cette âme elle-même, personne n'oserait soutenir qu'elle ne subit aucune domination.

Elle est d'abord évidemment soumise à l'impression des choses extérieures; de plus, s'il est vrai que dans tous les hommes l'âme n'est pas soumise de la même manière aux mêmes influences, il n'en serait pas moins absurde de penser qu'elle ne subit pas nécessairement ces influences, puisque évidemment cela dépend du caractère propre à chaque âme en particulier, et aussi de l'exercice. En effet, un même événement quelconque venant à agir sur plusieurs hommes différents, produira nécessairement sur eux des impressions différentes; car leurs âmes diffèrent et par la nature et par l'exercice: or, la nature de l'âme dépend des Dieux, l'exercice dépend de l'intention préalable de celui qui le pratique, intention qui ne peut naître dans l'homme sans lui avoir été suggérée par un Dieu. Ainsi, les hommes sont maîtres d'eux en tant que gouvernant leur conduite, bien que cette domination soit soumise à une domination supérieure, et l'on peut dire qu'ils sont libres et ne sont pas. En effet, ce serait évidemment une erreur de dire que la liberté est le contraire de la nécessité, car il faudrait alors appeler esclavage la nécessité: or, l'esclavage suppose une domination à laquelle l'esclave est soumis en sa qualité d'esclave; mais cette nécessité première qui seule existe absolument et par soi, tandis que c'est par elle que toutes choses existent; cette nécessité que nous appelons le bien absolu, Jupiter, à quelle domination sera-t-elle donc soumise?

Car assurément, ce qui est domination ne peut être en même temps esclavage. Si d'un autre côté on appelle esclavage la soumission à un supérieur, et liberté l'affranchissement de toute domination, il n'y aura de libre ni un seul homme, ni même un seul des Dieux, excepté Jupiter; car chaque inférieur sera l'esclave de celui qui le gouverne, et tous seront esclaves de leur maître commun, Jupiter. De cette façon, la servitude n'aurait absolument rien de pénible ni que l'on dût fuir. En effet, l'esclavage sous un bon maître ne peut être fâcheux, bien plus, il est profitable et doux à l'esclave lui-même, parce qu'on ne peut attendre que du bien d'un bon maître. Mais si l'on n'accepte pas cette définition de l'esclavage et de la liberté, si l'on dit que ces deux états consistent à être empêché ou non de vivre comme on veut; chacun voulant vivre heureux et content, quiconque sera heureux sera en même temps libre, qu'il ait un maître ou non, puisqu'il vivra comme il veut; le malheureux, au contraire, ne vivant pas comme il aurait voulu, ne sera pas libre.

Or les hommes ne peuvent être malheureux que lorsqu'ils sont méchants; ainsi personne ne veut être méchant, puisque personne ne veut être malheureux: c'est donc contre sa volonté et par erreur qu'on devient méchant; par conséquent aucun méchant n'est libre, c'est le privilège des hommes honnêtes et vertueux. Que si les Dieux châtent les méchants, le but qu'ils se proposent et auquel ils aboutissent, n'est pas la punition en elle-même, mais le redressement des fautes. En effet, il est impossible que l'homme ne pèche jamais, puisqu'il est composé de deux natures, l'une divine, l'autre mortelle; tantôt il est entraîné par ce qu'il a de divin en lui vers l'imitation de cette perfection dont il participe, alors il est vertueux, il est heureux; tantôt emporté par ses instincts mortels, il tourne à mal; c'est alors que les Dieux viennent à son secours et qu'ils cherchent à le corriger par des punitions: ils veulent que ces châtiments qui lui sont infligés le délivrent de sa méchanceté, comme les remèdes amers et douloureux délivrent notre corps de la maladie; ils veulent que l'homme soit par là conduit à un état meilleur, et passe de l'esclavage à la liberté, quand ils jugent qu'à cause de sa mauvaise nature, des moyens de correction plus doux ne sauraient l'atteindre. Ainsi, rien n'empêche que l'homme ne soit puni, quoique sa méchanceté soit involontaire, puisque la punition, loin d'ajouter à ses maux, lui procure un bien. En résumé, il y a des Dieux, ils veillent sur les hommes, ils ne sont la cause d'aucun mal; enfin selon la loi inévitable du destin ils accordent à chacun ce qui lui vaut le mieux. Pour ne pas dépasser les bornes, nous nous arrêterons ici.

THE ENGLISH MACHINE TRANSLATION 1:

Pletho
TREATY OF LAWS.
BOOK II.
Chapter VI. Doom.

Future things are they all determined and fixed in advance by destiny, or by which he is arrested and have nothing that occur without order and without law, as chance brings them? No doubt, all things are subject to law; because if some event happened without being determined by law, or he would not have his cause, and then there would be a fact that would occur without cause, or the cause that produces it would without determination unnecessarily and then there would be a cause that does not necessarily take effect and in a specific way: the two things are equally impossible. But it is still less possible that the gods have determined this change for the future and do something other than what they have determined, determined to change this, by the prayers of men, some present or by any similar reason.

Indeed, denying the necessity and predetermination of future events, you are exposed to refuse entirely to the gods predicting human things or accuse them of being the perpetrators of the worst instead of the best, as necessary, the things they have resolved first or second, one should be worse than the other: those who absolutely deny fate, thus fall into either of these profanities. But both assumptions are quite impossible; All future events are fixed from eternity, they are stored in the best possible order under the authority God, unique and supreme master of all things. Alone of all beings, God knows no bounds, as there is nothing to limit, nothing that can not be limited only by his own cause; but too big to be limited, it remains eternally and absolutely identical to itself, it has as essence the necessity of all and most powerful, which is by itself an absolute manner and derives from any foreign power; because what is needed is better than what is contingent, and the greatest need should be essentially the good.

Those who proceed from him immediately, God communicates the same attribute to a lesser degree, because it produces beings are necessarily of the same nature as himself; it determines these and all other because of him, and there is nothing so great or so small what it can itself assign its limit, because there's nothing it is the supreme cause. Besides, if the future was not fixed, foreknowledge would be impossible, and for men, and even for the Gods; because we can not know with certainty the unknown, which we can not say in advance exactly whether it will or will not. But the gods know the future, since it is they who set it, and they have this in them, as being the cause, even before he received existence. They know only because they have and produce; because they can not know themselves as being affected by it; indeed, it is repugnant, it is impossible to admit that the gods are affected by things of a lower nature, and does not even exist.

So those who think that the gods exist and that deny them together foreknowledge and predetermination of things of this world, are led them to deny knowledge; because they would know the nor subjected to the action of these things, since the less perfect can not act on the most perfect, nor acting on it because they would be not even the authors. It is necessary, indeed, knows that what comes into relationship with the thing known, or as a contribution by

undergoing its action, either as a cause acting upon it, all knowledge being impossible to another condition than that of a relationship between the knower and the known. And even the Gods are perpetrators of the things of this world, if they were not of a determined and necessary way, they never would know what to do someday, since they would fix the not necessarily and eternally in an immutable way. But the gods know the future, and from men they choose whom they do know to some extent. Some of these men wanted to use this anticipation of a part of the future to try to escape, but, like the others, they found strips of Destiny stops necessary and inevitable; there are even some who by this prediction of their destinies and their efforts to escape it brought in achievement, it even being in their destiny. So there is no way to escape, to avoid the things once decided from all eternity by God and fixed by Destiny.

But, you will say, if everything is determined in advance, if none of the facts present or future escapes the need, it is all of human freedom and divine justice: because of on the one hand, men act under the influence of fate, they will not be masters of themselves; they will not be free; secondly, the gods give up completely punish the wicked, for they would not have the right to punish, since their wickedness is fatal and involuntary. But men are masters of themselves, not as having no one who governs them, nor among other beings, nor among the gods themselves, but to have them in one principle that controls, is -to say the soul, and everything else that obeys; this is one principle, the best of our nature, which has everything. But the soul itself, no one would suggest that she suffers no domination.

It is first of course subject to the impression of external things; Moreover, it is true that in all men the soul is not subject in the same way to the same influences, it would not be absurd to think that it does not necessarily facing such influences, because obviously it depends on the specific character of each soul in particular and also for the year. Indeed, any same event coming to act on several different men necessarily produce different impressions on them; for their souls are different and the nature and exercise: gold, the nature of the soul depends on the gods, exercise depends on the prior intention of the practice, intent can not be born in man without having been suggested by a God. Thus, men are masters of them as governing their conduct, although this rule is subject to a higher domination, and one can say that they are free and are not. Indeed, it would obviously be a mistake to say that freedom is the opposite of necessity, since it would then call slavery need: gold, slavery implies domination to which the slave is subject in its capacity as slave ; but this first necessity which only exists absolutely and by itself, while it is through her that all things exist; this need we call absolute good, God, how she will rule therefore subject?

For surely, which is domination can not be simultaneously slavery. If on the other hand called slavery submission to a superior, freedom and emancipation from domination, there will be neither free one man, or even one of the gods, except God; because each will lower the servant to the government, and all will be slaves of their common master, God. This way, servitude would have absolutely nothing painful or that we had to flee. Indeed, slavery as a good teacher can not be unfortunate, even more, it is profitable and soft to the slave himself, because one can not wait for the good of a good teacher. But if one does not accept this definition of slavery and freedom, if we say that these two states are to be prevented or not to live as one wishes; each wanting to live happy and content, anyone will be happy at the same time off, he has a master or not, as live as he wants; the unfortunate, however, do not live as he wanted, will not be free.

But men can not be unhappy when they are wicked; and nobody wants to be mean, because nobody wants to be unhappy is this against its will and by mistake we become wicked hence no evil is free, it is the privilege of honest and virtuous men. If the gods punish the wicked, the goal they propose and to which they lead, is not the punishment itself, but the recovery of faults. Indeed, it is impossible that man never sins, since it is composed of two natures, one divine, the other mortal; sometimes it is driven by what he has divine in him to imitate the perfection of which it participates, then it is virtuous, he is happy; sometimes carried away by his deadly instincts, he turns to evil; that is when the gods come to his aid and they are trying to correct by punishment: they want these punishments inflicted him deliver him from his wickedness, as bitter and painful remedies deliver our body disease ; they want the man to be thus led to a better state, and passes from slavery to freedom, when they judge that because of his evil nature, milder correction means can not reach it. Thus, nothing prevents that man is punished, though his wickedness is involuntary, since the punishment, far from adding to his pain, gives him a good. In summary, there are Gods, they watch for men, they are not the cause of any harm; finally, according to the inevitable law of fate they grant each earning it the better. Not to exceed the limits, we will stop here.

THE ENGLISH MACHINE TRANSLATION 2:

PLETHON
TREATY OF LAWS.
LIVRE II.
Chapitre VI. Of Destiny.

Are the future things very determined and fixed beforehand by destiny, or is there it which have nothing of order and which occur without order and without law, as chance brings them? Undoubtedly, any things are subjected to a law; because if some event occurred without being determined by a law, or he would not have his reason, and there would be then a fact that would occur without reason, or reason which produces it would act without determination, without necessity, and there would be then a reason which would not produce its effects necessarily and in a determined way: both things are also impossible. But it is much less possible still that the Gods change what they have solved for future and make something else than what they fixed, determined in this change, by requests of the men, by some gifts or by some other similar reason.

Indeed, by disclaiming necessity and predetermination of facts to come, they run the risk of refusing entirely the Gods the prediction of the human things or of accusing it of being the authors of the worst, instead of the best possible, since necessarily, things which they solved into first or secondly, the one must be worse than other one: those who disclaim destiny absolutely, fall therefore in the one or other one of this impiety. But these two assumptions are completely impossible; all events àvenir they is fixed from eternity, are lined up in the best possible order under the authority of God, unique and supreme master of any things. Alone all beings, God does not know demarcations, since there is nothing that could delimit it, anything able to be delimited only by its own reason; but, too big to be able to be delimited, he remains forever and perfectly identical to himself, he has as petrol the biggest necessity of all and the most powerful, who is by one in an absolute way and derives from no foreign power; because what is necessary is better than what is contingent, and the biggest necessity is suitable for the principally good being.

To those who are immediately a product of him, God announces the same attribute to a lower degree, because the beings whom it produces are necessarily the same nature as it; he determines these things and all the others because of him, and there is anything so big nor so small in that he could of himself allocate his border, because there is nothing supreme reason of which it is. Besides, if the future was not fixed, prescience would be impossible, and for the men, and even for the Gods; because it is not possible to know with certainty the indeterminate, about which they could not say beforehand with accuracy if he will be or be not. And yet the Gods know the future, since it is them who fix it, and that they have it gift in them, as by being reason, even before it receives existence. They know him only because they dispose it and produce it; because they cannot know him as themselves being affected by him; indeed, he is averse, it is impossible to suppose that the Gods are affected by things of a lower nature, and which even do not exist still.

So, those who think that the Gods exist and who refuse them at the same time prescience and predetermination of the things of this world, are led to refuse it them up to knowledge; because they would know them neither as subjected them to the action of these things, since the least perfect can act on the most perfect, nor as acting on her, because they would not be even the authors there. It is necessary, indeed, that what knows enters in touch with the known thing, either as participation by suffering its action, or as reason by acting on her, any knowledge being impossible on another condition than on that of a report between knowing it and the knowing. And even if the Gods would be the authors of the things of this world, if they were not it in a determined and necessary way, never they would know what they have to make once since they would not fix him necessarily and of any eternity in an irremovable way. But the Gods know the future, and among the men they choose it to whom they make it connaitre to a certain extent. Someone of these men wanted to put in benefit this prediction of a part of future to try to avoid it, but, as others, they found width necessary and unavoidable dictates of fate; he is there even which by this prediction of their destinies and by their efforts to escape from it brought accomplishment, it even being in their destiny. There is therefore no means to avoid, to escape from things once decided of any eternity by God and fixed by Destiny.

But, as it will be said, if everything is determined beforehand, if none of present facts or to come avoids necessity, it is made of human freedom and divine justice: because, on one hand, the men will act under the influence of the fate, they will not be chief of euxmêmes; they will not be free; on the other hand, the Gods will abandon complètement of punishing the villains, because they would not be fair had punishing them, since their nastiness is fatal and involuntary. But the men are chief of themselves, not as having nobody who governs them, either among other beings, or among the Very Gods, but since having in them the single principle which commands, that is to say soul, and all the rest of it who obeys; it is this unique, the best principle of our nature, that has all rest. But this soul itself, nobody would dare to support that she suffers no domination.

She is first of course subjected to the impression of the external things; besides, if it is true that in all men soul is not subjected in the same way to the same influence, he would not be Mb ins absurd to think that she does not suffer this influenccs necessarily, since of course it depends on the character peculiar to every soul especially, and also of financial year. Indeed, same any event coming to act on several different men, will produce different impressions necessarily on them; because their souls differ and by nature and by financial year: and, nature of soul depends on Gods, exercise depends on the prior intention of the one who practices it, intention which cannot be born in the man without having been suggested to him by a God. So, the men are chief of them as governing their behaviour, good that this domination is subjected to the upper domination, and it is possible to say that they are free and are not. Indeed, it would be of course an error to say that freedom is the opposite of necessity, because it would then be necessary to call slavery necessity: and, slavery assumes a domination to which the slave is subjected in his slave's quality; but this first necessity which only exists absolutely and by one, while it is by her that any things exist; this necessity which we call the absolute good, God, to what domination will she therefore be subjected?

Because surely, what is domination cannot be at the same time slavery. If on the other hand slavery is called submission to a superior, and freedom the postage of any domination, there will be a free neither the single man, nor even the only one of the Gods, except God; because every

inferior will be the slave of the one who governs him, and all will be slaves of their common master, God. In that way, servitude would have nothing hard absolutely or than they should run away. Indeed, the slavery under a good master cannot be unfortunate, much more, him is beneficial and soft to the very slave, because it is possible to wait only for the good of a good master. But if they do not accept this definition of slavery and of freedom, if they say that these two states consist in being prevented or not from living as they want; each wanting to live happy and happy, whoever will be happy will be at the same time free, that he has a master or not, since he will live as he wants; the poor person, on the contrary, not living as he would like, will not be free.

And the men can be unhappy only when they are malicious; so nobody wants to be malicious, since nobody wants to be unhappy: it is therefore against his will and by accident that they become malicious; as a result no villain is free, it is the privilège of the honest and virtuous men. That if the Gods castigate villains, purpose that they offer and to which they lead, is not the punishment in itself, but the rebound of errors. Indeed, it is impossible that the man never sins, since he is composed of two natures, the one divine, other one lethal; sometimes he is drawn away by what he has of divine in him towards the simulation of this perfection of which he participates, then he is virtuous, he is happy; sometimes taken by its lethal instincts, it turns in trouble; it is while the Gods come to its help and while they try to correct it by punishments: they want that these punishments which are inflicted on it issue him from the nastiness, as bitter and painful cures issue our body of illness; they want that the man is driven thereabouts to a better state, and master key of slavery in freedom, when they judge that because of his bad nature, softer means of correction could attain him. So, nothing all the same the man is punished, though his nastiness is involuntary, since the punishment, far from adding to its troubles, gives him a good. In summary, there are Gods, they watch over the men, they are the reason of no trouble; finally according to the unavoidable law of destiny they grant each it that is the best worth to it. Not to go too far, we will stop here.

SUMMARY:

We looked at Plethon's toolkit of philosophical interpretation. The groundwork of philosophy is to read texts with different sets of eyes. I presented a model of reading in five layers for Pletho's key text, "On Fate". Its antinomy was dissolved, reaching from the notion of determinism to the notion of freedom. Important tools, presented by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola for Biblical hermeneutics, are a cosmological model visually descriptive of the sixth and seventh chakras (Ajna, Sahasrara) that visualizes, and thus activates, man's innate cosmic consciousness. For Earthly things, it works through an allegorical nucleus.

Intellectual evidence of the Secret School is discussed. There is also a piece of hard evidence, a Latin note by Giovanni Pico relating to Plethon in Codex Hamilton 438. The hard evidence is discussed. It is found that it proves secret knowledge from Plethon.

4

The Turin Shroud is Aging

An Essay in an Increasing Number of Parts

*by: Dr. jur. Stefan Grossmann, Hanau
August 05, 2015*

CONTENTS:

(Yes.)

Introduction

Official research closed 1988. Scholars and study groups are continuing their research to date. Giulio and Malfi in their 2016 book, reviewed here in early August 2015, give an overview. Sifted through in great depth, the large amount of forencis-type evidence shows compellingly that the Turin Shroud, the burial cloth of Jesus after his Crucifixion, dates from the first century A.D. The traditional knowledge that the large piece of cloth is actually Jesus' burial cloth, not a forgery, not a production of later centuries, thus in the eyes of the authors is well proven. By implication, of course, the otherwise not fully clear question, did Jesus exist, is answered clearly in the affirmative.

The book is xvii + 431 pages long. Its frontispiece shows Pope Francis standing at the Vatican, holding the Italian version of the book in his hands, looking at its front cover. The authors thank Pope Francis for taking great interest in the Italian version of the book. The Italian edition of the book was published in 2014.

The subtitle of the book, English version, raises the claim that the Shroud dates from the first century after Christ. Does the book keep the promise of demonstrating and making evident the claim that its subtitle makes? Yes, it is a good book, convincing from an evidentiary point of view. All views and their different theories that have been involved in the process of finding the truth have been considered fairly.

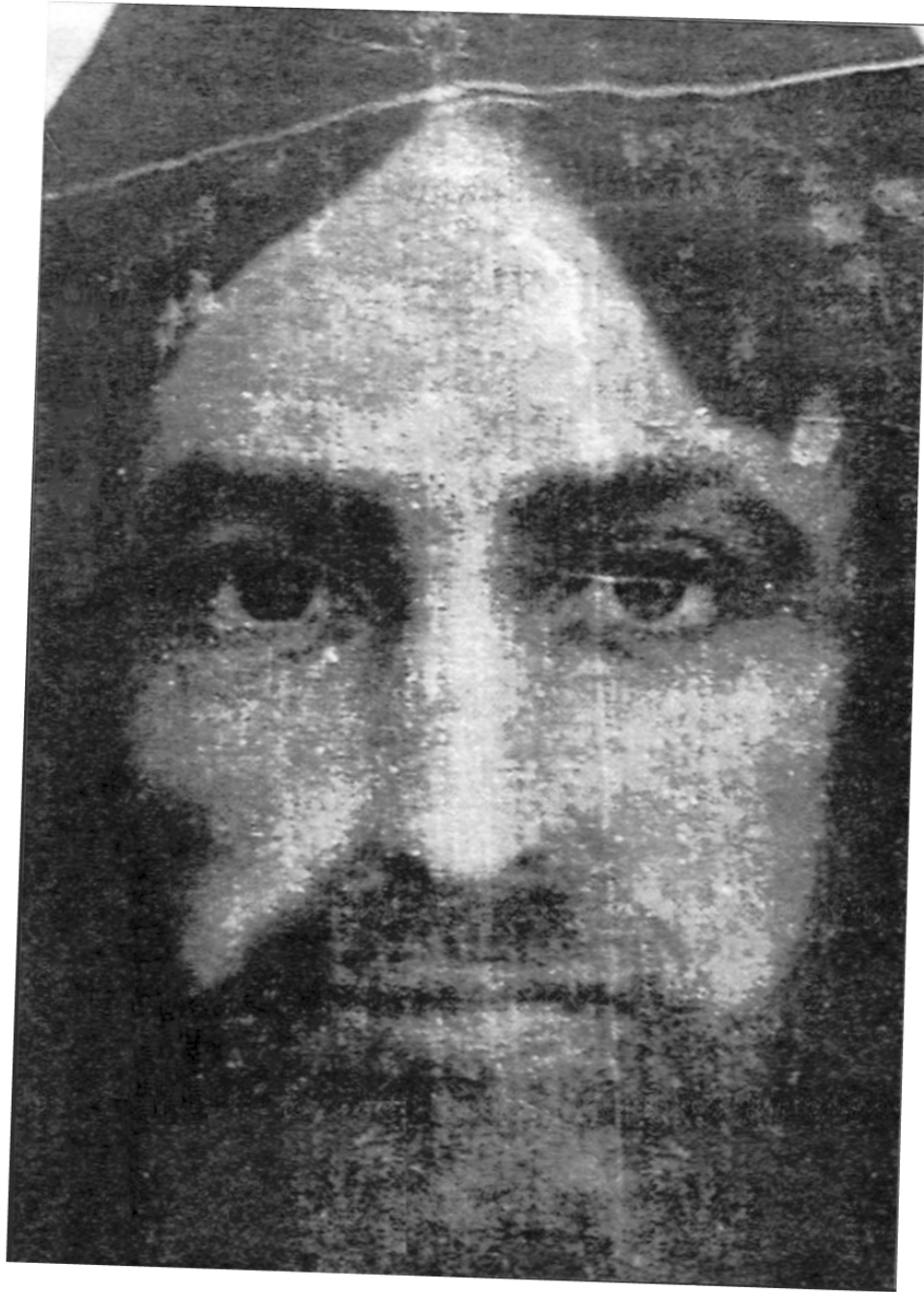
Official research ended in 1988 with the radiocarbon dating, by a team of scientists, of the Shroud of Turin, pointing to the late Middle Ages as the time of the Shroud's creation. Some years later, however, through photo layout techniques, similar to what we call today Photoshop overlay, a significantly large blood stain on the Shroud could be matched with the same blood stain on another, different and less famous piece of cloth the Sudarium of Oviedo. Alan D. and Mary Whanger used "polarized image overlay technique", a scientific grade image analysis technique, to determine that the blood stains on the two different clothes matched precisely in seventy (70) measurement points. That precise positional correlation and other evidence gave clear evidence that the Shroud was as old as the Sudarium, which is, first century.

Accordingly the Shroud could not have been, and was not, created only in the late Middle Ages, with certainty based on unimpeachable evidence from people outside the official lie community. This analysis raises, in my eyes, the question what the scientists who conducted the crap radiocarbon that closed official investigation in 1988 were taking. The official radiocarbon dating was thereby impeached as a manifest fraud, rendering it worthless as evidence that can be relied upon. It is natural that people are dissatisfied with such policies. They want the truth. They recognize who the cover-up crowd are.

The face that was mysteriously created on the Shroud over 1500 years ago is the same face as the face in the ancient camera obscura photograph of Jesus that is shown on the front cover of this book. That is never mentioned because nobody believes the photo is authentic. The photo, taken for a wealthy person on a silver colloid photo plate, was published with a report some years ago in a later discontinued periodical, WWN (Weekly World News, November 9, 1999). That is mentioned with no word in the book under review here.

Only cautiously hinted in the book (p. 156), but leaked by insiders: The radiocarbon used clippings from a different cloth, not the Shroud, a cloth sewn onto the Shroud in the late Middle Ages.

There is no scientific explanation for the exact mechanisms how the image of Jesus (Jeshua) got onto the shroud. It is thought that an energy burst at the time of the Resurrection created a faint image that grew more distinct over time. The image bearing layer in the cloth is less than one micrometer thin; and it is not painted and not the work of any artist. There are no signs of bodily decay detectable on the cloth.



Ancient photo of Jeshua, taken shortly before the Crucifixion.

The whitish spots in the image at the forehead level show that the two images are somehow related.



The face on the Shroud

The whitish spots in the image at the forehead level show that the two images are somehow related.

Was the inexplicable image on the Shroud (both the face shown above, and the full-body image) created by some kind of printing process in antiquity? That is a question that has never been investigated. I do not accept out of hand a recourse to a supernatural event. At the instant of Resurrection, why would the eyes be shut? There are no traces of the herringbone structure of the linen of the Shroud on the ancient photograph. If the ancient photograph is a clever forgery after the Shroud, why were the telltale whitish spots (and lines, and other markings) copied into the forgery? That makes no sense. If, for the sake of discussion, the image in the Shroud was created with the help of the ancient photograph, then the antiquity of the photograph would actually be evidenced. The only way to rule that out is to show that the photograph was created after the image in the Shroud.

There is a difficulty here, however. There is no credible explanation so far how the image in the Shroud was created. The only plausible explanation within the scope of known science, without hocus-pocus, is a photographic process as the primary source, with an imprint onto the Shroud to follow. How was it done?

The eyes on the Shroud are not really shut. It has been shown that coins were placed where the eye sockets are. That is why the pupils from the photo are not to be seen.

The extreme thinness of the image layer needs an explanation. Something rubbed off onto the linen of the Shroud that does not penetrate into the material. That could be a press-off of the photograph. The body image could have been created in a similar way.

The book takes a different course. It sets out to demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that the Shroud dates back to the first century. There is obviously much that the book does not tell us.

The only certain thing that science knows in this context is: Faces never show up on linen burial cloths. That sounds simple but says everything. I believe the white at the forehead level on the Shroud is a residue, i.e. an artefact, from the imprinting process, joining the photograph and the linen. Another aspect is the fact that the photograph distinctly has the greater amount of detail of the images. Intuitively, the photo is real, the Shroud is merely realistic but has a doubtful feel.

The mouth of the face on the Shroud is unusually small. It is probably beyond the limits of normal human physiology. The Manoppello image, which looks like a creation made after model of the Shroud, illustrates this. Specialized biometric face recognition software in a German police laboratory has recognized, using a photo, the face on the Shroud as a face, but not the Manoppello image (the unlikely third of three images that are discussed together). That has to do with the fact that the Manoppello face is in many respects out of alignment. The unlikely detail of the short (narrow) Shroud mouth probably does not irritate the face recognition software since it is an isolated detail in an otherwise credible face. The three images are: the Shroud of Turin, the Sudarium of Oviedo, and the Manoppello image. The Shroud mouth resembles the Manoppello image, looking cut off at its two edges, and off-center from the vertical nose axis. My artist's impression is that the Shroud mouth is a fake, created by some artificial process.

The huge moustache that is seen in some photos in the Shroud mouth zone looks like it is influenced by artefacts. The moustache in the photo looks credible. The narrow triangle that runs from the lower nose sideways to the left across the cheek is present strikingly in the same way and same lighting gradients in both images. Again, my artist's impression is that the photo is the original, the Shroud is the copy. Note that the Shroud face is usually shown in mirror reverse (p. 16); in reality, the photo matches it one-to-one when its picture surface is laid on the Shroud face so that the photo faces and touches the Shroud face.

The point that the book makes is good and forceful. Thanks to the research that is summarized in the book, it is today established beyond reasonable doubt that the Shroud of Turin dates back to the first century. I would like to trace that story into some detail, because it most likely verifies the photograph as an authentic photograph of Jesus.

My first round of reading the book by Fanti and Malfi (morning of 2015-08-03) will be dedicated to the task of spotting the different types of evidentiary issues that are mentioned, and of listing them below in the order in which they appear in the book, with page numbers referring to the book. The book's table of contents has a similar structure. The following is, thus, a specialized index of evidentiary issues mentioned in the book:

- p. xiv attacking the 1988 radiocarbon, here: statistically unreliable
innovative numismatic investigation as part of the book
- xv rare Byzantine coins were created after the model of the Shroud face, probabilistic counting
typical details of the Shroud face (skewed nose, eyes shut, asymmetric hair length, long nose)
body image formation hypotheses (Fanti: intense electrical charge)
radiocarbon dating is not reliable
Shrouds wounds and blows perfectly matching signs during Christ's Passion described in Gospels
- xvi recent scholarly confirmations of the historicity of the Gospels
increase of doubts of the medieval dating (by the 1988 radiocarbon)
(Foregoing from the Foreword by Andrea Torielli)
- 4 long tradition says that the Shroud, now in Turin, was Christ's burial shroud after Crucifixion
Shroud: double body image is neither explainable nor reproducible
the Shroud: a linen cloth that "for sure" enveloped a man
The man on the linen sheet does not have a name
scourging plus crucifixion are in evidence, but in Roman legal history usually did not co-occur.
Gospels report such unusual co-occurrence for Jesus (because the Jewish people demanded that)
- 5 confusing array of different signs on the Shroud (follows a four item list in the book):
specular image of a male body, front and back [like reclining, hands folded]
the man shown is wounded, there are blood stains matching his wounds
water stains
burn holes (1532 Chambéry fire, or other fires, or accidents)
[the foregoing four item list does not include signs revealed only by microscope, analysis, etc.]
1534: Poor Clare nuns sewed patches of linen to the Shroud to partly repair fire damages
2002: in a major intervention, the 1534 patches were removed
the Shroud is yellowed due to aging
the red stains have been identified as human blood
- 6 large photo with small inset: blood stains matching the left wrist and arm
- 6 f. physical dimensions and specifications of the cloth
- 8 photo: water stains, samples of the 1534 patches (now removed), photo: holes preceding 1532
- 9 side strip sewn on, its seam is very peculiar, known only from first century Middle East [also p. 359]
- 10 details of weaving, and of the rare "Z" twist, herringbone twill, cloth is very refined and precious
- 11 storage, folding, and damage through mold and folding (rolling up) in Turin, reform of storage
(issues of conservation)
- 15 photo of unfolded entire Shroud with 12 arrows explaining details
two images of one lying man, his front & back, determined at around 30 years old, on the Shroud
image best seen in photo negative; lacks sharp outline, at least 1 m distance or is less visible closer
the man was enveloped in the shroud after his death since rigor mortis shows
- 16 photo of Pantokrator Icon at St. Catherine's Monastery and Shroud face compared [match]
- 17 graphic demonstrating how the long Shroud was folded in the middle above the head over him
the Shroud man's frontal image is 195 cm tall, the back image is 202 cm tall.
[In antiquity, people were generally much shorter than today. He would have been a giant.
another clue that the image is artificial and not directly real, also for the 7 cm discrepancy.]

- computerized anthropomorphic analysis: both images can be superimposed on a manikin of him
 [I am extremely skeptical of that.]
 the man's racial features are Semitic
- 18 argument that in antiquity (and Middle Ages) anatomic knowledge lacked to create the image
 [this argument does not consider the use of ancient camera obscura photography]
 shoulders seem lifted up like due to a transport being placed on something
- 19 numerical manikin with angles required for a match of both images, head leans forward
 [that is entirely speculative since the Shroud face looks at one fully frontal without forward lean]
 argument that "front" image has neck part missing, "back" image has neck elongated
 [in one photo, a horizontal white line separates "face plus top neck" body – suspicious]
 the hand fingers are elongated, probably by image distortion (from "sheet enveloping" – ??)
"a heel bone and fingers" are evident "over the sole of the right foot" – clear image fakery!
- 19 f. **the last three lines of p. 19 and the first word on p. 20 say that modern science has been
 unable to reproduce all characteristics of the Shroud on one piece of cloth. The sentence
 is barely understandable in the otherwise very clearly written book. There is something
 more here, being withheld (but see right below).**
 (hypotheses of how the image was formed, all of them inconclusive to date)
- 20 ff. the optical and physical qualities of the image on the Shroud are extremely complex and unusual
 many details are given, depending on lighting and viewing, different aspects are seen, the effect is
 not reproducible, the image level is extremely thin with a two-level superficiality
 If I understand right (p. 23), the face image is shown twice, one on the "frontal" image, and
 another extremely faint face on the "dorsal" image.
 three-dimensional features of the body image
- 23 verbatim, concerning the body image: **"It looks like a photographic negative (...)"** (p. 23)
 23 also, "it is not fluorescent." I take this to confirm, in some complicated way, my "photo" theory.
 23 the book makes it clear, with no dissent of one author, that the body image was imprinted
 23 to the Shroud after the blood stains coloured the Shroud.
 [As a matter of scientific knowledge, no face/body image shows up in a linen burial cloth at all.]
- 23 f. the blood stains entered the sheet naturally, but the face/body image is associated with
 "more flattened areas of the sheet, especially on the face area." (p. 24) That, too, fits a "photo" print.
- 25 the position of the man and the arms and legs is consistent with a death by crucifixion.
 (details of some hypotheses)
- 27 Shroud image is evident also in spots without cloth-skin contact (e.g., between nose and cheeks)
- 31 ff. blood marks
- 31 Unlike the image, the blood stains are "photopositive". They show a slight UV fluorescence aura.
 the blood marks of from human blood, they match positionally with the body's wounds
 stains from serum and blood, many difficult to reproduce artificially, because
 blood first coagulated on wound skin, then only through contact with the moist cloth became
 again de-coagulated (fibrinolysis), and only then, many of the stains formed on the Shroud
- 32 color photopositive of the Shroud face, many (not all) of the forehead level image artefacts
 are red blood. **This speaks against my "photo" theory, but does not wipe out all of the
 artefact evidence. There could have been artefact transfer from the Shroud to the ancient
 photo through the imprint process. The blood artefacts are more prominent on the Shroud
 than they are on the ancient photo shown and discussed above. The crossing line artefact
 over the right eye (in each of the two images shown above) could not have come from the**

photo onto the Shroud if there was a coin in between the photo and the Shroud. ?

[The forehead level blood stains are apparently from the “crown of thorns”. Footnote 26 describes details, but not this detail, which, I am sure, will follow later.]

33 The details follow here. The forehead blood coagulated while the man was in “straight” position [meaning, I presume, “upright” position] There are scourge marks, Matthew 27, 26, some facial nail puncture wounds (at the wrists, not in the palms), chest wound from lance, “blood belt”
34 photo of frontal and dorsal image with scourge wounds highlighted as red zones the first author counts a total of 372 wounds in all, not counting some doubtful ones; the lateral (side) wounds are not on the Shroud [also p. 361: no body image formation at the sides].
[Wait a minute: This says that the sides of the man are not on the Shroud, not in the image.]
[No, wait a minute. I can understand that for the blood. But if there was some kind of an energy burst per the physical hypotheses for image formation, that happened also, as the book notes, in “areas of body-sheet noncontact zones” [also p. 362]. If that was the case, then why are the sides entirely absent in all the image? That is unexplained, shatters hypotheses.] ?
HIGHLIGHT: ENERGY BURST HYPOTHESES SHATTERED, FOREGOING

[Were the sides not resurrected? That is not mentioned in the Gospels.

The Gospels say the tomb was empty. There were no sides there.]

[The foregoing speaks for my “photo” thesis.]

35 ff. details of the wounds
40 the fine image of hair and beard are impossible to explain; earlier in text: face serene but disfigured
42 there are contradictions between blood position and hair; change of Shroud configuration assumed

Chapter 2 Historical Evidence, pp. 46 ff.

55 In a speech, Byzantine emperor Constantinos VII Porphyrogenitos (912-959), expert on painting, explained that the image on the Shroud (Mandylion of Edessa) was imparted to the linen through a moist secretion without paint or artistic craft. **That fits my “photo” thesis.**
57 Robert de Clary, a Crusader, mentions (clearly) the Shroud in Constantinople, with its image
59 In 1578, the Shroud was brought to Turin in northern Italy, where it is to this day.
63 Orthodox tradition: only reliable image of Christ is based on the Manydlion of Edessa
The resulting Orthodox image tradition includes, most pronouncedly, a strange little mouth,
65 and a matching angled eyebrow.
70 the book calls the 1988 crap radiocarbon a “scientific disaster”. I assume Pope Francis agrees.
77 Gian Carlo Durante photographed the back of the Shroud. There is another body image there.
79 the great secret of the Shroud remains the body image formation

Chapter 3 Numismatic Investigation, pp. 81 ff.

82 the relevant coins start in the fifth century
many Roman/Byzantine coins, the Shroud face is recognizably resembled on some of them
97 says that that is the “predominant canon” of the coins harking back to the Shroud image
113 image overlap example, coin of Justinian II, probably 692, very close structure match
[re. my “photo” thesis: 100s Shroud face details are distorted, but never on the photo]
125 end of qualitative numismatic analysis, and start of quantitative numismatic analysis
Shroud: nose/eyes ratio: 1.28 (etc.)
remarks on capriciousness of some researchers in face of quantitative data

Chapter 4 Radiocarbon “Distraction”, pp. 143 ff.

- 143 In the 1980s, much research was published that authenticated the Turin Shroud. In this situation, the radiocarbon testing was undertaken [with the bias to negate the evidence, S.G.] Max Frei investigated microscopic pollen in the linen, tracing it to Jerusalem
The evidence of one (!) coin from the first century on one (!) eye of the Shroud is treated as light-weight or spurious in an off-hand way, **that supports my “photo” thesis**
chapter 4 goes into technical detail of radiocarbon testing
chapter 4 concludes that the 1988 radiocarbon test report is technically unsound
- 152 photo of a linen sample for the radiocarbon testing, photo shows no herringbone structure
there is much evidence of data fraud, which has been subject of massive criticism
- 155 Villareal analysed a thread of the test sample and found one end consisted of cotton (not linen)
other issues are massive contaminations, violations of technical protocols, and false counts
- Chapters 5 through 7 present scientific tests by the authors that show the Shroud is authentic
The authors do not claim full identification since the anonymous man has no passport.
Near the end of the book, the two authors briefly disagree fundamentally about authenticity.
- 252 f. (in Chapter 8) Raymond Rogers provided sample of the 1988 test material. One half is cotton.
This was established by the U.S. government Los Alamos facility.
- 286 (in Chapter 9) the numismatic evidence shows that the 1988 radiocarbon result is grossly off mark
- 311 (in Chapter 10) latest photos: there are no traces of coins on the eyes, **strengthened “photo” thesis**
coins on eyes would additionally have been Roman tradition but contrary to Jewish tradition
- 316 f. the man is said to have been 1.75 tall, contradicts “giant” measures on page 17
the page 316 f. “small” measures were created by corrective adjustments, p. 17 gives measurements
the “small” measures are thus speculative and fictional **that still confirms my “photo” thesis**
- 317 Palestinians 2000 years ago were on average 1.67 m tall
- 320 the Manoppello image has two superimposed image levels, unlike any known painting technique
- 327 no burial cloth except the Shroud in Turin shows an image
- 328 the Gospels mention no image on the Shroud (large burial cloth of Jesus)
- 331 the Shroud: linen sheet that enveloped a tortured man who was killed through crucifixion
- 333 the Shroud is a very complicated issue
- 334 in 2005, American chemist Ray Rogers published first scientific article disproving the 1988 test
- 336 it has been recognized that the Shroud endangers belief if it delivers actual proof, causing knowledge
- 354 (in Appendix) there is no image between the tops of the heads of the frontal and dorsal images
- 355 some measurements of the Shroud image (hands, calves, torso) disagree with anatomical standards
no image formed under the bloodstains
- 357 DNA in blood spots is highly degraded, some little black spots are outside of the body image
- 358 residues of silver were found around the burn holes **this confirms my “photo” thesis**
- 367 Before the sixth century, images like on the Shroud were made independent of it. [**suggests photo**]

There is one point of the evidence that is best discussed separately from the foregoing list. That is, the relation between the blood spots at the forehead level, and the ancient photograph.

The ancient photograph is to my knowledge black and white. In the artefacts corresponding to the blood spots, there is either no image, or an image of reduced clarity to be seen on the photo (more the latter than the former). Correspondingly, on the Shroud, according to the fantastic work of scientific research and skepticism by Fanti and Malfi, there is no image at all where the blood stains are. That provides an additional argument that the photo is the original and the Shroud image (the face part) is derivative in relation to the photograph.

I do not claim that the last word concerning these issues is said.

Resources:

Fanti, Giulio; Malfi, Pierandrea; *The Shroud of Turin: First Century After Christ!, with an in-depth-study by Marco Conca*; Boca Raton 2016

Whanger, Alan D.; Whanger, Mary; *Polarized image overlay technique: a new image comparison method and its applications*; in: Optical Society of America, Applied Optics, 15 March 1985, volume 24, issue 6, pp. 766-772

-----; *The Shroud of Turin, an Adventure of Discovery Technique: A New Image Comparison Method and Its Applications*, Franklin 1998, here pp. 56-59, 123

SUMMARY:

This Essay deals with the large body of forensic-type evidence concerning the Shroud of Turin, an important relic of Christianity. The official investigations were closed in 1988 after a devastating miscarriage of science. This has by now (2015) been corrected by less compromised findings from private research communities, to which the two authors of the book under review belong (Giulio Fanti and Pierandrea Malfi, book, English edition). One author sees the Shroud date back to the first century A.D. A so far unknown issue is the relation of the Shroud to a probably black and white photograph that was first released into the public in 1999 in an extremely obscure periodical that is today no longer in business, WWN (Weekly World News). I have shown from the evidence that it is the only scientifically possible solution of the image formation problem that photographic methods plus unknown imprinting methods were used; there is actually foundation for my “photo” thesis in the evidence that the book presents. This relates not merely to photoraphic methods in general, but to the specific ancient photograph of Jesus shortly before his Crucifixion. This issue weaves in and out of the four page special evidence index of the book that I have written in list format as part of the Essay.

SUBJECT TAGS:

Jesus Christ; Crucifixion; burial; grave cloth; Shroud of Turin (Turin Shroud); Sudarium of Oviedo; Manoppello image; radiocarbon dating; evidence; ancient camera obscura photograph of Jesus; image analysis

5

Symeon and the Kingdom of GOD

An Essay in Real Infinity

*by: Dr. jur. Stefan Grossmann, Hanau
August 25, 2015*

CONTENTS:

(The science of the Lights.)

The spelling of the name “Sohravardi” follows the Encyclopaedia Iranica online.

Saint Symeon's vita dates are: 949 Galata across Constantinople – 1022 oratory of St. Marina (or 957-1035, etc.). Symeon had his first vision around age 20 or 21, approximately seven years before becoming a monk. **Hailing from the Studite monastic tradition, Symeon became the most extreme visionary of all times, seeing Paradise, the Kingdom of GOD. St. Symeon revered his spiritual father, Symeon the Studite Eulabes.** See Beck for the sources of St. Symeon's name. The fullest account of his life is by Archbishop Basil.

Symeon in his old age had a disciple who greatly liked him, Niketas Stethatos (c.1005-c.1090, Lauritzen 2013: c.1000-c.1065), who wrote a biography of Symeon, the most valuable historical source for the external events. In his middle phase (1019-1042), Stethatos used the writings of Dionysios to interpret and systematize the writings of his spiritual father Symeon (Lauritzen 2013). Stethatos reflects in so many ways on Symeon, he should be considered together with Symeon. A student of Niketas Stethatos was Michael Psellos (Lauritzen 2009), the famous reviver of philosophy and head of philosophical education.

Symeon was a polarizing figure in his time, of provincial aristocratic family, of senatorial rank, then joining the monastic state, head of a monastery, disputed, deposed, exiled, vindicated but remaining in his exile. The eastern Orthodox Churches recognize Symeon as a Saint. The Byzantine mystic Symeon was the first who, in his talks and writings, openly shared his mystic experiences with anyone who would listen, or read. His reports are, quite singularly for Byzantium, in the first person, not fictionalized, presented factually, not allegorically.

Symeon is beyond comprehension. This Essay sets out to bring him into comprehension. The sequence of the materials below is of the essence for that. I would not have undertaken this effort if I had not, years ago, found the extremely helpful papers by John Kotsonis. They present a carefully gauged “ramp” that might help some readers to actually understand Symeon, in light of all the foregoing in this book.

Symeon's mode of Biblical interpretation, that was not dependent on classical learning, has found its first treatment in chapter 2 in Hilarion Alfeyev (first as an Oxford dissertation 1995). Symeon's mystical visions of Paradise were presented for the first time in a monograph in 2014 by Dorin Octavian Picioruș (especially pp. 145-194), which can be seen as a high-end extension of the three 2011 papers of Kotsonis. As has been said, Symeon, albeit present in the memory of the Orthodox world since Byzantine times, for modern critical scholarship is still a new and fresh discovery, a difficult one to come to terms with since he is so very much “out of the box”, perhaps not quite so much as the secretive Plethon later was to become.

In 1055 (sic!), Michael Psellos retired as a monk to Mt. Olympus (Lauritzen 2011). In four short orations that have come down to us, he wrote about the beauty of the nature of Mt. Olympus. In them, he remarks on nature and the divine and on monasticism. He endorsed the ideas that Niketas Stethatos expressed in his tract on “The Spiritual Paradise” (alternate translation: “The Contemplation of Paradise”), but Psellos was critical towards Keroularios and Xiphilinos. That leads us into the central theme of the life of St. Symeon himself.

What are the views of Michel Psellos relative to this theme? There was a “green” strand in the Byzantine thinking of the time, apparently. His four monastic orations on Mt. Olympus from 1054 (sic!) reveal Psellos as a lover of nature; and he recommends contemplating on Creation as moving man a step closer to the divine. Psellos was soon recalled to Constantinople by Empress Theodora, probably in the second half of 1055. He found time to argue, and likely to appreciate, during his interval, that Mt. Olympus has a spiritual dimension that is partly due to its physical beauty, its fruits, trees and animals, the waters, the grass, the trees, the air, the sunlight.

Theologically, the four orations advocate natural contemplation (φυσικὴ θεωρία). I personally believe that the destruction of nature, and lack of our enjoyment of nature in its pristine beauty, is the most serious

hindrance against regaining our lost spirituality. That is indeed something that cannot directly be cured “in” ourselves. Psellos explains that closeness to the divine depends not only on spiritual nourishment but on the physical aspect of nature. An additional factor is music (which meant, for Psellos, either Byzantine sacred chants, or Byzantine Greek folk music, or both). The one is very spiritual, the other very civil, compared with most popular music today. Perception, especially of all that is enchanting, is receptive of divine action. That describes the entire receptive attitude of the Byzantines to their vast classical legacy. The soul has a passive part; and that is its “irrational” (or: “supra-rational” SG) part. This important doctrine that is known as the “contemplation of nature” was originally developed by St. Maximus the Confessor in the seventh century. Nature is interspersed with rational elements (λόγοι) placed there for us to perceive, helping us to ascend the ladder to Heaven (Paradise).

The question has been raised if Symeon was a “theologian”. That depends on definition. To my mind, Symeon was no studied academic theologian. He was a mystic. That is the difference between the theorist and the practitioner. Most theologians have practical experience (of higher levels of the mind and thus of that what those levels show) on the level of searchers and are, otherwise, bound in a profession that is theology that tends to give them much book learning. That is exactly what so-called “believers”, sympathetically called the “flock”, are looking for. Believers seek belief.

Symeon sought knowledge. That was the natural drive in him. He found it in himself through the help of others, of adverse circumstances, and not without some books that illumined his mind. He was formed when he saw his first vision, but continued to grow, unlike most people, who settle into a relatively static pattern. There are significant differences to a “theologian”, but there are also overlaps. Symeon was in a different world, but not entirely. He did everything he could to tell others about it, in very simply, almost childlike words. His visions are told concretely and without conceptual scaffolding.

From a forensic viewpoint, St. Symeon’s talk of his visions has a high degree of credibility through the communicated rich texture of experiential knowledge, not particularly dependent on specific wording, with self-perception and proprioception from the experience, typical of someone who has actually gone through it, without hatching it out in her or his mind, a process that leaves distinctly other traces and typically does not have the same authentic feel. Often there are embellishments that are added on to experiential knowledge, but even that I cannot see in what I have read of Symeon when he talks about his visions. He comes over as very forthright, while most theologians are, and must be to reach the flock, part dissemblers. That is nothing unknown and is natural when using the rational low mind, a projector of object-subject distinction, to describe the “thing as such” (I. Kant) which is God. Symeon had his lifelong difficulties with nearly all his theological colleagues for exactly that reason.

George Demacopoulos penetrates in a recent contribution into Byzantine mystical union, something that is, both, extremely mysterious (says the rational low mind), and is, at the same time, the beginning of clarity (says the higher creative and noetic mind). (The solution to this inner dispute is, in yogic, Buddhist and all other meditative tradition, to silence the rational mind.) The Byzantines did “not separate mystical experience from theological reflection” (Demacopoulos, p. 167). The Byzantines had perhaps the richest body of mystical experiences in the history of Christianity. All Byzantine theology, Demacopoulos says (supra), acknowledges that the human/divine communication is characterized by “hiddenness” of that relation to human comprehension.

Looking into the biography of St. Symeon, reading descriptions of the Studite monastic tradition, a very influential tradition for the middle Byzantine period, has led me to believe that that visions and mystic unions must have been very frequent, but were usually not chronicled. Perhaps they were so commonplace for those who were spiritual practitioners, typically in monastical communities, that the need to commit them to writing was not felt. That is done usually only in cases where something unusual is assumed, which is outside of the commonplace. Additionally we may have lost much written source material, if it ever existed in this

case. I would rather tend to assume a large and long oral tradition of knowledge with few or no records in writing. Symeon would thus be a lens for looking into an entire tradition of the middle Byzantine period. (Also see Sabo on the Proto-Hesychast movement throughout Byzantine history, including Symeon.)

In his caption, Demacopoulos (p. 274) associates Symeon with “mystical pedagogy”. Was Symeon a mystical teacher? According to the above theory, our rational mind, which is a low level of the mind (contrary to what the rational mind wants us to believe), cannot answer that question, since it depends on our freedom and the exercise of our power of judgment (which is beyond the rational mind). (That is Kant’ian, Immanuel Kant.) Whether Symeon brought to us “mystical pedagogy” I do not know. Sokrates (Socrates) knew that he knew nothing, and that the mindset to approach wisdom is that of wonderment. The rational mind, seen from that perspective, is a parade of dualistic knowledge projections that is ignorance of the One (after Cusanus, *docta ignorantia*). That is, by default, the radio channel of the human mind, unless an individual human switches to the channels of freedom (there are several channels, nine in the system described in my Framework Commentary vol. 2). That is great value of silence and listening, inner silence and inner listening, taught in all meditative traditions. (“Contemplation” is not meditation, but is a pre-exit elevated state of the low mind.)

There is an interesting sentence (Demacopoulos, supra) concerning a Secret School: In Symeon’s writings there is a strange claim that “authentic spiritual insight” is proprietary “exclusively to a small group of spiritual mentors”. Only they are able to initiate disciples into mystical union, into the human/divine communion. Demacopoulos explains that Symeon’s claim as mentioned implies that there is a “chain of spiritual mentors” running parallel to the less viable chain of ecclesiastical authority. Demacopoulos does not write, but does not contradict, either, that the mystical chain of initiation is shrouded in secrecy. That would additionally explain the absence of written sources in the first person perspective for the mystical phenomenon.

If one wants to enter the insight of various levels and types of mind, it is possible, but it is extremely difficult. It requires a strong exertion of one’s will power, and exhaustive use of all possible venues, most likely over an extended time. Our situation today, in the information age, has significantly improved compared with the Middle Ages when Symeon lived. For readers who are particularly interested in using their possibilities, I have compiled some ideas:

1. The safest way is if you have a mathematical bent of mind you can use mathematics to reconfigure your mind to a fifth-dimensional level (versus the third-dimensional level lower mind/rational mind. See: Berkeley, Coudert et al.; and, especially, the website with four books online by Tomo Perisha, Sacred Geometry. Perisha has published the lost geometry of Lemuria and Atlantis, including c. twelve different “more geometrico” solutions of the squaring of the circle. Academic mathematics is unwilling to look at this, as I have discovered through efforts to make this better known. That reflects upon the fact that the lower rational mind is, not least, a severe form of mental disability if it stands alone in the mental guidance of a person. The circle geometry of the “Flower of Life” that Tomo Perisha presents is an important way of not “moving in angles” of which Thoth warns (in my Framework Commentary, vol. 2). If, after two to three years of self-study, you have mastered the materials (which is, up to lower middle level), then your mind will be opened through the exertion of your personal learning (including unlearning accumulated human attitudinal ignorance) to the free choice of the next two higher levels/patterns of the mind above the rational/lower/ego mind. **Human freedom starts in the mind, namely, with choosing which pattern of the one consciousness to select.**

2. Additionally, you can learn traditional eastern meditation, or Jewish Cabbala. There is much literature about this. I cite two books here only, a good but random selection: Motoyama, and Wirszubski.

3. You can study appropriate parts of psychology, such as: C.G. Jung, Sri Aurobindo, and others. Keith Frankish is a philosopher who has described a good introductory two-level (simplified) model of the mind.

4. There is much more in my Framework Commentary, vols. 1, 2, which I wrote in 2014 and which is my preparatory work for this book (see book information on the following three pages with two links).

My preparatory work for this book is:

Stefan Grossmann, *A Framework Commentary on the Fifteen Emerald Tablets of Thoth:*

volume 1: *Byzantine Philosophy: A Framework Analysis*
xviii + 281 pages, published November 06, 2014
pdf, free online, see links below

volume 2: *Atlantean Philosophy: The Nine Bodies of Man*
xxii + 439 pages, published November 06, 2014
pdf, free online, see links below

The Framework Analysis can be found by going to archive.org, a large internet repository, and searching for: Stefan Grossmann, Byzantine Philosophy, Framework Analysis (in the Community Books section).

The web addresses of the two pdf volumes are:

volume 1 (click link):

<https://archive.org/details/StefanGrossmann1ByzantinePhilosophyFrameworkAnalysisCRC>

volume 2 (click link):

<https://archive.org/details/StefanGrossmann2AtlanteanPhilosophyNineBodiesOfManCRC>

The descriptions of the two foregoing volumes
are shown on the following two pages:

BYZANTINE PHILOSOPHY

This presents a specialized analysis abstracting the influences, both external and internal, that *enabled* the salient features of Byzantine philosophy, the alchemical melting pot of antiquity (Greek philosophy during the Middle Ages, from the fourth to the fifteenth centuries). It intends to help forward this convoluted and still understudied field, so strikingly alien to the wayward modern western secular mind. The “framework analysis”, not a “history”, starts as a quest on a high level of abstraction through many outlying disciplines (“prerequisites”).

A key internal development is found: the “Johannine turn”, basic for Hesychasm and the Reformation. Uniquely, the pages lead into *scientific spirituality, prepared by the notion of “Byzantine receptions” versus merely another type of “philosophy”*.

Aided by the middle term of “intelligent evolution”, the Byzantines teach us: Intelligent evolution proves Creationism. The “re-accelerating universe”, as proven 2012/2013, also is Creationism. Alchemy is another example, being reclaimed by chemists through “low energy nuclear reactions”. In a revision of the Theory of Relativity, all this is brought under the Byzanto-Aristotelian dogma of “divine energies”, an ultra-advanced concept that poses a mystery. The modern psychosis of nihilism thereby is brought to the brink.

There are also psychoanalytical remarks on the persecuting society, and on its historical basis in Byzantine Church history (Athanasius). The Trinity is explained as a fetish in a perennial clerical control phenomenon. Byzantium gave signature features to emergent Islam, but without the Trinity. Islam, as recorded by The Prophet Muhammads’ earliest followers in the Quran, is no original “revealed” religion, but is mostly composed of older insights and traditions collected in the centers of Makka and Medina in the penumbra of the Byzantine spiritual empire. The Non-Trinitarian god Allah is a look-alike of the One in Neoplatonism.

It is religion, but there is method in it. That leads to a hidden body of “spiritual wisdom”, in most countries today, reserved for the elite key holders. Looking back into Byzantium, the books were, instructively, much more open than they are today about this.

An aside in the book is an *algebraic* solution of Fermat’s last theorem, in a space of less than two pages, which can easily be skipped.

In short, Byzantine philosophy makes us aware in many novel ways of what our modernity, its promises, its dangers, are truly about. It is a major step in restoring our lost sense of human dignity.

ATLANTEAN PHILOSOPHY

Growing from the first book is a second book. This second book uses the Byzantine paradigm to zoom out into a bigger perspective. There is today massive relevant evidence of a forensic grade concerning this that has never yet been assembled in book form.

The subject, probably slightly beyond comprehension, is delineated by the following book tags: Atlantis, Atlantean, Lemuria, Mu, Atlantean philosophy, Emerald Tablets, M. Doreal, Thoth, Byzantine philosophy, Byzantine spirituality, spirituality, consciousness, awareness, philosophy of reception, divine energies, alchemy, immortality, spiritual contact systems, subtle senses, transfiguration, divine light, Planet X, Nibiru, Zecharia Sitchin, Immanuel Velikovsky, Nancy Lieder, pyramid age, pyramids age, Sphinx age, Sphinx, Sphinx water erosion, Robert M. Schoch, Christopher Dunn, pyramid cement blocks, ancient science, ancient Egyptian science, Kalachakra Tantra, Supreme Unchanging, paramaksara, Aristotle, four causes, Four Forces, unmoved moving, unmoved mover, metaphysics, psychic powers, psychic abilities, Giuseppe Calligaris, siddhis, Drunvalo Melchizedek, Flower of Life, mandala, squaring the circle, Delian problem, angle trisection, alchemy, low energy nuclear reaction, low energy nuclear reactions, Barbara Ann Brennan, Padma Aon Prakasha, nine bodies, aura, nine eyes, Sahu, Akhu, Ka, Ba, Soul, energy bodies, energy anatomy, astral travel, reincarnation, near-death experience, near-death experiences, higher self, Thiaoouba, Michel Desmarquet, Greenland, sunken continent, Egyptian mysteries, Kahfre, Kahfra, Holy Spirit, God, magic, magic-science, vision, understanding, paradise, heaven, beings of light, angels, Urantia Book, OAHSpe, Osirian Civilization, Osirian Empire, Azores pyramid, Bahamas, Bimini, Kurt Schildmann, ancient technology, ancient history, prehistory, ancient Egypt, Egyptian religion, Egyptian spirituality, Egyptian mythology, occult Egypt, Abydos, Flower of Life, sacred geometry, occultism, esotericism, esoteric, Egyptology, poleshift, poleshifts, wisdom, law, Adolf Hitler, Nazi, dictatorship, Holocaust, Black Sea Flood, Mediterranean, prehistoric floods, flood, floods, Noah's flood, immortal, immortals, Pantheon, thinking, mind.

Some of this occurs already in volume 1 of this Commentary. The Sokratic wondering about the Transfiguration is brought to a theoretical end, centering around combining two Sanskrit words: *paramaksara samadhi* (Transfiguration samadhi, AGWANTI). Readers will recognize this. The purpose for writing this book has not been, to “prove Atlantis”, or similar. Primarily, this book explores depths of human spirituality heretofore virtually unknown, picking up the many loose threads and open questions of the first book, and expanding on them. Here, now, is a full panorama.

FEATURE GUIDE: HOW TO STUDY THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE RAMP:

It is easy to find the solution in philosophy, provided that you turn away from the west with a shudder (don't forget to shudder!) and look in the philosophy of India. German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer did that. Start with him (Cambridge Companion, or Wiley-Blackwell Companion). Read his classic "World as Will and Representation". Then you will be fit to learn from the Indian perspective.

The Indian rishis, after the Vedic age, began to collect a philosophy in various writings that are called the "Upanishads". There is a must-read, written especially for westerners, free pdf e-book at archive.org:

Deussen, Paul; *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*; Edinburgh 1906 (free pdf at archive.org)

Deussen is the one book that you should read. It will fire your curiosity to learn more on your own.

There are c. 108 principal Upanishads. The Katha Upanishad is on concentration (dharana). Books on it:

Easwaran, Eknath; *Essence of the Upanishads: A Key to Indian Spirituality*; 3rd revised edition Tomales 2009

Sri Aurobindo; volumes 17, 18, The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, pdfs online at:

<http://www.sriaurobindoashram.org/ashram/sriauro/writings.php>

Swami Krishnananda; *Lessons on the Upanishads*; <http://www.swami-krishnananda.org>

-----; *The Secret of the Katha Upanishad*; <http://www.swami-krishnananda.org>

Paramahansa, K.R.; *Philosophy of the Upanishads*; Friendswood 2007

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati; *Dharana Darshan: Yogic, Tantric and Upanishadic Practices of Concentration and Visualization*; Munger 2006, ISBN: 81-86336-30-3 [advanced]

The Indian philosophy system that distilled out of the Upanishads is called "Vedanta" (literally: "end of Veda"), especially Adi Shankara's "Advaita Vedanta" (philosophy of Nonduality/Oneness). See, in English: Waite, Dennis; *Back to the Truth: 5000 Years of Advaita*; Winchester, Washington [D.C.] 2007

Apparently through the Buddhist link in Neo-Platonism since Ammonios Sakkas the teacher of Plotinus (Framework vol. 1, McEvelley), **Byzantine philosophy, especially since Dionysios the Areopagite, can be appreciated fully only through a working knowledge of Indian spiritual philosophy.** (The five-volume magnum opus of Surendranath Dasgupta on the History of Indian Philosophy, published by the Cambridge University Press, is free at archive.org, unmatched to date. Not all of the Indian schools are "spiritual".)

Altogether, the Indian philosophies, in particular the wisdom of the Upanishads, and Advaita Vedanta, provide a philosophy of the "ramp" between the rational mind and the higher mind (the "vrittis" of chit). That is the core of the Indian wisdom tradition. One will not find it in European philosophies, nor, in that clarity, anywhere else. Today, we find it in Byzantine wisdom, not comparable with western philosophies. It is however, comparable with the monistic Brahmanism, Advaita Vedanta, and with types of Buddhism.

If a Near-Death-Experiencer, as happens significantly often, reports perceptions from another location that the body could impossibly have made, and the perceived is verified, it is sub-rational to deny that a part of the person had an out-of-body experience. Denial of the relevance of such a phenomenon is beneath the level of the mind that is still logical, and devalues so-called "science" as worthless. Rationally, the said phenomenon (proven true out-of-body experiences) shows that the subjective awareness that makes the perceptions has separated, spatially, for a certain time, from the body (physical body), not being affected by the death-like state of the Near-Death-Experiencer's physical body.

The sages in India have no problem with reality as it comes to us. Western biased scientists do have a problem with reality when they deny phenomena in violation of logics. Byzantine philosophy was situated in levels of the mind far above the denial disease that has blinded the western mind since the Renaissance. It is important to recall that we have not always been so shut down as we are today, as a result of our building of material wealth and technology. If anything is attractive about our lost spiritual tradition it is the overwhelming beauty that it was conscious of in nature and in man, and that forms our true purpose of being.

Contextualizing Symeon's relation to his guru, or (western terminology) his spiritual father, is Sandra Annette Bates. Specific lineages are not so important as the principle, which alone enabled an initiatory way of awakening along lineages, which are by their very nature secret unless they were, unusually, to become part of any publication. It makes a significant difference if a person is an individual "thinker" or if she or he represents an entire lineage of thought. Symeon falls into the latter category. It is typical of eastern (Indian, Chinese, east Asian) face-to-face transmission systems of spirituality that enable initiations. The principle was common in the west until the Renaissance.

Niketas Stethatos, a first-generation disciple of Symeon, and Michael Psellos, a second-generation disciple of Symeon, are systematizers. Unlike St. Symeon, they were no ordinary visionaries. We may assume that their supra-rational visionary basis reaches back to St. Symeon and his writings. It is interesting, then, what Psellos wrote in this respect. He informed Patriarch John Xiphilinos in a letter about the ascent of the mind to the summit. In the letter he symbolizes the summit by Mt. Sinai. The mind's ascent culminates in a final illumination. Psellos informs the Patriarch that he took those ideas from the Chaldean Oracles and that he subordinated the ideas to the Christian scriptures (Duffy, p. 87). Plethon acquired his text of the Chaldean Oracles from Michael Psellos, whose edition, after the loss of Proklos' commentary, was the only collection of Chaldean wisdom in the Byzantine world (Athanassiadi, p. 238).

There is a dated German book that does not hold up in its details to modern research standards. Despite that fact, the outline of the philosophical system of Michael Psellos and his more radical student John Italos which the book develops remains intriguing. I am referring to Joannou 1956. The German title in my English translation reads: "Michael Psellos' and Joannes Italos' Theory of Illumination". The title, and the contents, thus put Psellos/Italos in the same category as the Persian Illuminationist Sohrawardi, which indeed has been proposed as a Plethon link (Corbin, not tenable today). The outline that Joannou develops, not in all the details that his book involves, is to my mind fitting for the conceptualizations of Psellos and Italos.

One may conjecture that, actually, Psellos and, specifically, Italos after his condemnation, grandfathered Sohrawardi, who comes over weaker than they, neither as originator nor standing in a context of origination, leaving question marks as to the origins of his Illuminationism. Research sees that Sohrawardi (Suhrawardi) has Neo-Platonic influences (Walbridge, von Stuckrad), but mentions this only in a generic way; also, research asserts that Illuminationist philosophy started with him in twelfth century Persia. The latter is contradicted by the notion of Joannou who sees Illuminationism begin with Psellos and Italos in eleventh century Constantinople. Illuminationism would thus stem from the Studites in Byzantium, most prominently, from St. Symeon the New Theologian, through Psellos and Italos, two Neo-Platonists of the late middle Byzantine era. Razavi finds that Sohrawardi makes extensive use of Zoroastrian symbols at least for one issue, and uses elements of the Zoroastrian tradition.

Islam itself, several centuries earlier, branched off from Byzantine sacred philosophy as a popular simplification of Neo-Platonism, merging with monotheistic tendencies of the Arab peoples. The Arabs did not take over the "trinity" from the Byzantines, nor the fancy "triad" methodology. See in my Framework Analysis, vol. 1, search in the pdf: "Islam".

Joannou 1956 is a book that researchers (both historians and philosophers) can work with today to amend it to fit the finer details of Psellos' and Italos' writings. I believe that it reflects in a systematized form what St. Symeon stands for, without reflecting it in such a systematic. There are two illuminations, namely (i) cosmic illumination (pp. 35-86), and (ii) illumination of the human soul (of an individual person) (pp. 87-140). Since there is one cosmos with many human souls, the logical implication is clear that the cosmic illumination is partly subjective: cosmic illumination as becoming manifest to a person (through her or his soul), and, thus, an extension and expansion of the subjective illumination of an individual soul. That is another triad (triadic argument, taken in whole), a very interesting one.

Nearly every time when I have started reading about St. Symeon, somehow reports about a luminous halo or aura have sneaked into the reading. The phenomenon is known from medieval paintings, especially from Byzantine iconography. I decided not to research that as a parapsychological phenomenon, since, obviously, no hard evidence is to be expected from the historical source material, especially not linking the phenomenon to a particular person. Theorizing about this, however, one comes to the conclusion that, perhaps, the “cosmic illumination” as an advanced stage may transit into the experience realm of our senses.

According to Psellos’ letter to Patriarch Xiphilinos (above), the theory of the illumination of the cosmos and of the soul was the core of what the Chaldean Oracles meant to Psellos, and, presumably, later to Plethon, namely creating inner light in the soul and its world through ritual, that is, a ritualized form of inner mental theurgy involving concentration and visualization. “Julian” the author of the Oracles was a theurgist (Majercik, p. 2), with congruent Gnostic and Hermetic thought (p. 3 f.).

In the Chaldean Oracles, there is a magical “wheel” involved that is called Iynxes (ἰνυγξ). There is a wheel symbol in spiritual practice, such as the eight-spoked “wheel of dharma” in Buddhism, but that is symbolic and not magical. A magical wheel as such does not exist, but what is probably meant, covertly, is a magical spiral, the abstract key “symbol” (more than merely a symbol) that Swedenborg in his pre-visionary phase saw frequently (above, p. 59). Another meaning was a non-mental physical golden globe of Hekate.

That is in accordance with the Iynx as the “binding force” between man and the gods, and the “couriers” between the Father and matter (Majercik, p. 9). All that points to the form of a chakra which does not rotate unidirectionally, but rotates back and forth, changing directions, pulsing in and out like a breath (pneuma), in this case, the central cosmic chakra or “Unmoved Moving” that moves the world like the “beloved” moves (Aristotle, similar in Tibetan Kalachakra Tantra).

The word “chakra” means, literally, “wheel” in Sanskrit, so it matches literally with the Chaldean material in Majercik, supra. In Dante’s *Paradiso*, it is the Heavenly Rose (Love) at the end of the great poem. That is the source of the Imperative, the inertial/moving force for this local universe. That is the important notion of the “divine Eros” in Symeon, to be mentioned here. The “Imperative” (see second Essay above) actually recurs in the formula “Faith, Truth, and Love” in the Chaldean material (cf. Majercik, p. 11). That “Eros” is “clearly the chief virtue” of the Chaldean theurgy (supra, p. 12), a triadic dialectical composite (the Good/Faith, the True/Truth, and the Beautiful/Love). Then there is Aion, Light generated from the Father (supra, p. 15), which fits with the “Zeus” allegory at the top of Plethon’s system (cf. in the first Essay above).

Returning to St. Symeon, we find this theoretical structure confirmed by his practice, as the writings that he left and the writings of his student Niketas Strethatos testify. Symeon was, if there is anything at all to the preserved sources, a uniquely powerful creator of moving experiences of an inner light, both prior to, and after, his entry into the monastic state, experiences described metaphorically as an “ascension”. (The same is the thinly veiled metaphorical knowledge in J.W. von Goethe’s “Faust Part Two”, a gnostic poem of light.)

Symeon was exceptional in that his visions reached far beyond this local universe, and beyond even the Material Creation Worlds, into the immaterial Paradise, which is composed of non-atomic plasmas which also make up the energy bodies and the chakras. (You can discover the topography in: Paramahansa Yogananda; *Autobiography of a Yogi*; if you read it all the way; and in the: “*Urantia Book*”, with simulated numbers for the cosmic and hypercosmic counts). Symeon’s Light is not the Tabor Light (which is from the local cosmic chakra) but is incomparably finer Paradise Light. Technically, the exit, and return, route from and to the local universe is through its central chakra, which is not described in Symeon, however. Symeon’s visionary level is thus not “cosmic consciousness” but a highest level “supra-cosmic consciousness” of Paradise, the Kingdom of GOD.

If, in the Secret School, we allow a somewhat greater distance in time, Marsilio Ficino can add some final preparatory thoughts for St. Symeon (Toussaint). Ficino deals with anti-gravitational levitation of physical bodies, that is, theoretically; there is no evidence that he ever performed scientific experiments. Levitation is an

ability of the soul (supra, p. 105). A quote from Ficino argues that the “Chaldeans” (i.e., Chaldean Oracles) believe that the soul can surround its body [astral body] with light. The light is attracted [by sympathy] from scattered rays in the surroundings. The rays lift the body into levitation. Toussaint calls that “theurgical levitation” (p. 106). It involves a blazing rapture. Elijah and Paul were swept away into Heaven in such a fiery “chariot” (merkava, currus, p. 107). The Greek word for the chariot is, ochema. Instructions how to establish and set the geometry-in-motion of the Merkabah are not given; such would be very confidential if, which is most doubtful, it had been known to Ficino. The ability to levitate (human self-levitation) is practically not very useful, and one can fall down; but it is counted as the starting step to mastering psychical abilities (which are distinctly not the same as spiritual abilities that are always related to liberation from karma and rebirth).

On the earlier end of the lineages of the Proto-Hesychasts there is Evagrius Ponticus, whose theology has recently been reconstructed (Casiday 2013). The Christ was seen as a mediator between the divine and the human (p. 166). That is the only useful view, cobwebs of “trinity” swept aside, and characterizes Evagrius’ theology as a “wet” system dominated by praxis. All these ideas (Illuminationism, Evagrius) were present in Symeon in a condensed “infolded” format. Symeon left the “outfolding” to others, but gave us, mainly, his reports of his heavenly visions.

What is the soul made of? Our times are working up to a scientific view (search: “plasma” in my Framework Commentary vol. 2). Symeon, while not a philosopher in the classical sense, did work with a small number of concepts (see mention of his “divine Eros” notion above in this Essay). His concepts are not to be found in any “philosophy”, which does not devalue them as concepts. Another concept that scholarship has found in Symeon is the “divine substance” (Perczel 2001). That is the non-atomic (and only in that sense: non-material) substance of the soul and its realms.

The divine substance, which is Light, is noetic. Search in my Framework Commentary vol. 2: “infinite information”. The substance is imparted to the human soul by initiation. This can be by personal contact, by intention (Sanskrit word: “samkalpa”, or “sankalpa”), or by texts and/or rites that induce the person to their own visionary self-initiation. That is very transformative. St. Symeon’s texts have a strong such potential, but without any “effects” being guaranteed – the best way is to read his texts, or analyses of his oeuvre, in a normal and relaxed way as texts without particular expectations. Maximos’ and Psellos’ “doctrine of the contemplation of nature” (see above in this Essay) can be very helpful in doing so. A point of technical spirituality is that the human energy bodies (the aura of eight layers, or “bodies” including the “soul”/“astral body”) raises its light quotient by attracting light sympathetically, through awareness and love, out of the ethereal (plasmatic, astral) realms of the soul. The light quotient is the noetic component in any state of mind.

St. Symeon taught the doctrine of a “substantial participation in God” (supra). The spiritual context of that is what the foregoing paragraph lays out. This doctrine stands in contrast to western Scholasticism but is used prominently by the later Hesychasts (so Perczel, supra). The doctrine is, thus, unique to the eastern forms of Christianity. It is, aside the trinity (which is fraudulent on Church doctrine east and west) “real distinction within God” (Perczel, supra, p. 126) [my commentary: the only such distinction]. It is not really a distinction, though, since the Light is indivisible, but permits participation by a potentially unlimited number of people after spiritual enlightenment, That is a universal teaching of spirituality world-wide and is something that the Vatican does not want people to believe, or worse yet for the Vatican, to know experientially, for it leads to bliss and deposing the world.

Let us stay with Sohrawardi the Illuminationist (not Sohrawardi the Sufi, approximately his contemporary). It is certainly a coincidence that their names all start with “S”. This “S” was killed by fundamentalist vandals for his teachings. They apparently didn’t appreciate Illuminationism. What does it say? (The answer, when properly written which is rare, puts one in tune with “St. S.”. I have a suspicion from my limited readings that it was back then quite strongly like what the Ayatollahs in the late twentieth century would have to say, GOD is Light etc.)

There is a nice article by Roxanne Marcotte that gives us an impression that is, I believe (but do not know), authentic in its diction and visualization. The subject is the same that the eminent Henry Corbin pursued, centrally, for most of his working life, here in a modern summation of the mentally visual core:

The overall scenario for Sohrawardi's main writing, the "Hekmat al-ešrāq" (The Philosophy of Illumination; Arabic) is a lightful Heaven into which our mind passively morphs while reading. (A shift of the overall setting of the theater stage, the best metaphor for switching between "states" of mind; cf. for the theater metaphor since Aristotle: Baars. – Also think of the "windows" technique of a certain computer operating program.)

Suhrawardi writes (all information and translations taken from Marcotte, *supra*, there with footnotes) that he has made experiences that show him that there are four worlds. His report presupposes looking into all four worlds at one and the same time, which, if not part of the experiences he mentions, may take part in his memory of the experiences, apparently a highly visual form of memory. It is not apparent from the writing that he wrote precisely at the moment while making the experiences. Presumably, he is writing from memory.

There is a world of intelligences. It is the world of the "dominating lights". Then there is a world of celestial and human souls. It is the world of the "ruling lights". Thirdly, there is a world of bodies, divided into two corporeal realms, namely that of celestial bodies, and that of sublunary [Aristotelian term] bodies. Fourthly, there is the imaginal world. "Mundus imaginalis" is a term coined by Corbin. Sohrawardi's mundus imaginalis is a world of "luminous and tenebrous forms". [This sounds like supra-cosmic consciousness, similar to Dante in his "Divine Comedy". Heavenly elements of this are very similar to that what St. Symeon reports. Psellos and Italos are not very explicit on this as far as I see, this is probably heresiological caution in their era. Remember that, several decades after them, Sohrawardi was killed for what he wrote. I suspect that St. Symeon, with all what he did write, was still equally cautious as, presumably, Psellos and Italos, not to disclose too much of what he envisioned.]

Marcotte translates from Sohrawardi a passage containing three paragraphs of text graphically describing the fourth world (Corbin's mundus imaginalis). The closest analogy is apocalyptic literature, which is always clad in symbols, however, which Sohrawardi's text is not. It is an anthropological field report from a visionarily experienced realm beyond. The trouble with such a report is that, if the reader gives it any credence at all (which would have been the case with most medieval readers, I presume), the reader is left no choice to believe or disbelieve. In that sense, such a reading experience is extremely harsh, as are some of the facts reported (the damnation elements of the scene). I will skip the graphic translation here.

Marcotte comments (p. 70): The fourth world (Corbin's mundus imaginalis) is an intermediary realm "between the world of pure light and the physical world of darkness." The balance of her article explores the fourth, imaginal world. One reason for its name is that our imagination manifests there, letting our innermost become apparent. That is very dangerous if one is not prepared for it in the laborious curricula of Creation since, obviously, any negative emotions and thoughts will manifest precisely that way. Creation prepares for such a type of higher life, which reflects on the purpose of human life on Earth in the material realms where instant manifestation is delayed and deferred for developmental reasons of the soul. As is apparent from such material, our purpose is to purify our soul from all darkness and negative emotions, and to assimilate to the divine Light as much as possible.

In a Spanish dissertation (De Vita), a part of the title reads: "science of the lights". That is what Sohrawardi and his Illuminationist philosophy is about. It does not take a large step of analogy to apply that title to the program of the entire Secret School that is the subject of this book: the science of the Lights that, in noetic states, we encounter in the mind.

I suspect that Sohrevardi was a Neo-Platonist philosopher with spiritual interests, but that he did not actually have the visions that he writes about. He writes that he made experiences, but he does not describe how and in what circumstances the visions came about (as far as I am aware). That is extremely untypical and is a clear signal. St. Symeon describes the how and why, Hildegard von Bingen and the many medieval mystics do so, Jakob Boehme does so, Emanuel von Swedenborg does so, Maurice Bucke does so, etc. There is something missing on Sohrevardi, namely the personal authenticity. The visions themselves read as authentic. The question is, who wrote them if not Sohrevardi himself?

That question cannot be answered for certain. To my mind, it is highly likely that the vision material in Sohrevardi is secret material that St. Symeon wrote but never dared to publish. It found its way along secret transmission lines into Persia (probably through John Italos) and to Sohrevardi, possibly through his teachers.

In St. Symeon, there is also a strangeness. A visionary of his calibre, such as (less proficient) Swedenborg, always sees Heaven and hell. There is no visionary specialized on just Heaven; it is, instead, an open panorama of realms, of lokas. The hellish part that must have been there is not reported in St. Symeon. A motive to suppress the material was the heresiological situation of Symeon's, Stethatos', Psellos' and Italos' lifetimes.

The hellish part does occur in Sohrevardi, in his description of the mundus imaginalis. The open panorama occurs in Sohrevardi, but feels edited and fine-tuned in St. Symeon. Sohrevardi actually refers to "ancient sages" such as Hermes, which is a give-away in its own right. The vision material is clearly not from Hermes, nor from any other known possible ancient, Hellenistic, or earlier Byzantine source.

In the "Hekmat al-ešrāq", Sohrevardi tells very briefly that, on a "strange day", the truth and the secrets of the divine were revealed to him (Razavi, p. 67). From that single event, that is not even called a "vision" (as far as I can see), and not described as to the how and why, he writes all his visionary material. That is most clearly not credible. Then he has a vision of Aristotle telling him things in a dialogue, which is a cover story and does not account for mental transmission modes. He tries to assemble a systematic of fifteen different types of an inner light, which is a stereotype narrative that has nothing to do with personal experience. He is apparently trying to make sense of some kind of strange materials that he has. There are more details, all of which point to the same conclusion.

I will thus, for purposes of writing and editing this Essay, assume that the visionary material in Sohrevardi is originally suppressed secret material from St. Symeon of the original Byzantine Illuminist tradition (after Joannou). An outline thus belongs in this Essay. The most important element is the "mundus imaginalis", already presented. Correctly, it should be considered a vision, or a condensation of two or three visions, of St. Symeon.

Kotsonis (paper 1, p. 16) points out that St. Symeon came to prominence during a time after the great Ecumenical Councils, when the spiritual atmosphere was declining. St. Symeon emerged as a new spiritual leader. St. Symeon's main message was a direct relationship with God, not what we do or read or write on our own. The means for this are mystical union and theosis. The message rocked the Byzantine world for several centuries, leading up to the Hesychast controversy in the time of St. Gregory Palamas. Symeon was adamant that EVERYONE should seek God in a personal relation through spiritual communion, clerics and laity alike. The message stood in stark contrast to the established external worship, corporate domination structure of the church, and formal education (supra, p. 19). It was, in ways novel outside the monastic communities, both intimately private and mentally internal.

According to St. Symeon, the soul does not have its own light, but depends on the grace of God to be enlightened (Kotsonis, paper 2, p. 9). The Saint sees someone's soul and it is dark; and he sees the soul of someone else and it is bright because that person has accepted God's gift of Light. The soul is darkened by sin, and it is brightened as we are raised by faith (supra, p. 9 f.). This is theosis, deification (p. 10). Theosis does not mix up the boundary lines of identity; there is no confusion of the essences of each one of the two, God

and a person. Clerics who have not received the grace of the presence of the Holy Spirit should not celebrate the Holy Sacraments. (That is a correct and functional initiatory insight of Symeon.)

In his third and last paper, Kotsonis deals with St. Symeon and the divine Light. This is the longest paper of the three. Symeon was tireless in talking about the divine Light. (So much so that it gave reason for monks to complain against him. SG) **He experienced that the Light is a Person but not a human.** (The Light is just one way of infinitely many ways how that Person can manifest. The Light, and that Person, is not Jesus, who is, as you will have come to realize by now, largely, but not entirely, a fictional figure, anyway. SG)

You should be (hopefully, a nice word...) be cleared so far here psycho-analytically that you have no more father complex and no more mother complex. The Light is not your "father", either, nor your "mother". It is more fitting for the appellations: God, Creator, Repairman. Allah is fine, too, and many other names. Brahman is a bit more descriptive. The Lemurian-Atlantean "Source Existence Level" is even more descriptive. "Jehovah" (Thiaoouba) is the name of a high planet in Aldebaran, not that Person, although "Thiaoouba" is also an astral name of *. There is nothing that comes even close to a "fully" descriptive mode; that is correct (G. Palamas). (This entire §: SG.)

On a very tricky point, heresiologically speaking, namely the Orthodox Christian "trinity", St. Symeon succeeds in hiding his true experience behind a careful textual construct. He is very careful not to negate or to cast in doubt the trinity. He does so without holding it under a reader's nose. In his Discourse XXVIII, Symeon in a slick way writes word to the following effect: The light [within] shines on us all the time, unchanging, formless. It speaks, works, lives, and gives life. People who are illuminated by the light [within] are changed by the light into light ("changes into light those whom it illuminates"). Each person of the trinity is light. All three are "only one light." (supra, p. 195) (This entire §: SG.)

Those statements of Symeon leave open if the trinity is God. Upon careful reading, Symeon is expressing, very cautiously veiled behind his sentence and paragraph structure, his disbelief (from personal visionary experience) that the trinity has anything to do with God. He explains that any person should seek God and union with God. God is light within. If the light within illuminates anybody, then anybody becomes light. That points to the fact that the trinity is, after personal experience of God, just a threesome of anybody who the light has illumined. The trinity sets an example of three people who have been illuminated by God's light; and they have thereby become light, but have not become God. They are advanced deified mystics, who are, and remain, entirely separate and distinct from God who is light not human. Symeon does not say at any time directly that the trinity is God (because he knew better through his visions). The trinity is not God, because God is Light. The trinity is not light but is three people who have been illumined. Anybody can become illumined. Symeon was lucky that he got away with telling the truth in his time. (This entire §: SG.)

Back to the third paper of John Kotsonis, Symeon's fourth way of seeing God is, that to those who are deified, God is visible (p. 4). Two quotes from St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. John of Dalyatha are cited for this. Symeon uses two graphic metaphors to describe God as he, apparently, has experienced, namely, (i) "as a bright flash of light", and, (ii) "as a great sun" (p. 5). Symeon does bow to the trinity, as he was compelled to do in his time and position, and calls it a "divine symbol" but does not mention that it was something that he actually saw. If Symeon had seen God as a "trinity" he would have said so, but he does not say so.

Symeon did not want to blaspheme God through fraud, however. He was telling candidly what he did see, and, by implication, what he did not see, namely, the trinity (an Athanasian fabrication, see in my Framework Analysis, vol. 1). Throughout his writings, Symeon pays all due lip service, falsely understood as "faith", to the doctrinary trinity, but in his visionary passages of spiritual reality, no trinity occurs. In the mystically inclined Byzantine circles, Symeon would by no means have been the only person to know this. (This entire §: SG.)

Kotsonis (supra, p. 8) mentions Symeon's descriptions of what he saw: "ineffable beauty of God", and: "His formless form". A description of the trinity would read totally different. Symeon's dogmatic passages make it clear that he was theologically in favour of the trinity, and thus, that he had no motive to falsify his

vision reports and omit anything like a trinity that he might have seen. We may thus assume that Symeon is truthful when he reports his visions of the spiritual worlds without any trinity. The Sohrevardi material is, also, without a trinity.

Additional examples in Kotsonis's third paper are: "By Your essence You are invisible", "You who in form have no visible shape", "light of Your countenance" (in the singular, not three) (p. 9); Christ with the Father and the Spirit "thrice Holy light" the word "God" is absent here, in a so-called vision of the "Trinity" the "Three are one unique trait my God / that is named the Spirit ..." it is unclear what the "three" is and it is clear the God is named the Spirit (only) (p. 10 f.); such vacillation continues through a number of other text examples from Symeon. Apart from such vagueness on the spiritual reality of a "trinity" structure, an even more striking point is Symeon is the functional irrelevance of anything trinitarian for the workings of the divine Light, which is always undivided One. When Symeon uses an explanatory-mode expression such as "hypostases" (p. 22) it is clear that that is nothing that he envisioned, since it is presented in an argumentative mode using a fancy word that has zero graphical content. For example, the being in "three Persons" is, aptly, prefaced by the modifier "inexpressible" (full clause: "inexpressible in three Persons", p. 36). Symeon spoke of light, not of discernible well-defined images (explanation by Kotsonis on p. 20). In conclusion, especially from supra, p. 22, the "trinity" is a possible manifestation (Symeon: a "symbol") of God, but not God/God's one singular essence (Symeon on p. 22: "essential unity" of God). In the practical outcome, Symeon's truthfulness as a visionary has killed the "trinity" as a realist God-fetish, properly reducing its value to a mere nomen. He is utterly careful how he expresses that throughout his entire writings that are preserved under his name.

There is a comment on the rhetoricization of philosophy by, and since, Michael Psellos (see in the second Essay, above). Given the teacher genealogy of Psellos, that formal innovation could well have come from the pastoral theology (in discourse form, in poem form) of St. Symeon. That could be worth further investigation.

Dorin Octavian Picioruș shows that for St. Symeon, the communion of man with God takes place through God's glory, "ecstatic sight" (p. 54). Symeon speaks of the divine Light as a noetic light, or light of the mind (p. 54). Ekstatic vision is spiritual, with mind's eyes (p. 55). To see in such a way is the "wonder of wonders" (p. 70). There is a real paradigm of the "blind of the light" (p. 56).

The coming of the Light in the heart of a person is as the rising of a "sun", or "sun disk" (p. 70), or "sunrise" (p. 75). The Light is also described as "flame" or "tongue of fire". It is likened to a "full moon" and to a "spheric light" (p. 71). The Light is most often associated with "glory" (p. 72). The many verbatim quotes of Symeon by Picioruș - 891 often multi-quote footnotes to his main text - show that he has read the entire source material of St. Symeon thoroughly. The footnotes serve the philological underpinning from Symeon's writings, and underscore that Symeon over his lifetime laboured intensely to be as descriptive as possible of what he saw spiritually. In summary, the deifying experience is seeing the divine light (p. 75). Symeon thus expresses a "personal experienced teaching" (p. 76).

Where Picioruș fails to add a footnote, such as for his expression "sight of the Trinity's glory" (p. 95) we know that he is phantasizing outside of the Symeon source corpus. This phantasizing continues up to p. 102. On p. 103, Picioruș does notice that Symeon is massaging his text. To make sure that only the "right" meaning (from his own Orthodox viewpoint) is understood, Picioruș adds the expression in square brackets: "[the glory of the Trinity]" that Symeon was so careful not to write in his text (p. 103). Picioruș, too, will not have to face any accusation that he might be less than faithful to the "trinity" fraud that Athanasius and his minions perpetrated in the early Byzantine centuries (see in my Framework Analysis vol. 1).

Symeon explains theologically that man's union with God depends on vision and, moreover, on knowledge ("gnosis", γνῶσις). The prong of "Gnosis" (knowledge) is not explained, except that knowledge and ekstatic sight have to co-occur at the same time. (Picioruș, p. 123.) That is quite secretive and may possibly refer to unpublished esoteric teachings of Gnostic (spiritually scientific technical) nature.

On p. 145, Picioruș turns to Symeon's personal ekstastic testimonies and their validation (up to p. 194). For the writing of this Essay, that is the central part of Picioruș wonderful dissertation.

Picioruș has Symeon at the time of his first vision (as Picioruș calls it, the "first Ecstasy"), "almost" twenty years old (which means, probably, nineteen years old). Symeon uses the name, George, for himself. He was praying, more with the mind than with the mouth. As a divine surprize in his life, he had a vision of Light. He mentions "divine brightness", coming in "unexpected mode", appearing "suddenly in his being", "shining" "from above" p. 149. The entire place where "George" stands is filled with divine brightness (p. 150). He sees light everywhere. He is not aware of walking on Earth. The roof suddenly disappears. (p. 151.) George forgets everything he knows and wants (p. 152). On p 153, Picioruș speaks of the "light of the Trinity", again without a footnote. This is phantasizing outside of Symeon's text.

George (Symeon) wept tears and felt unspeakable joy and gladness (p. 154). His mind rose to Heaven. There, he saw a second light, weaker than the first. Close to the second light was an old man, holy and wise and like the angels. It was his spiritual father, Symeon Eulabes. (supra.)

The next vision reported took place during Symeon's noviciate as a beginner monk. Symeon was 28 years old. According to Niketas Stethatos, this was Symeon's third ekstastic vision. During prayer, he is overcome by immense interior joy and pleasure (p. 157). Lying face downwards, in adoration of the trinity (which he describes as a symbol, see above SG) he is entered by the divine Light. The Light shines in his mind and takes his mind and soul. (p. 158.) Symeon is filled with ekstasy and wonder (p. 159). He forgets where he is and who he is (p. 160). He speaks with the Light, specifically in the sense that he conversed actively and passively with the Light, had a personal attitude to the Light, and felt it as a personal irradiation. The Light changed him, "scattered the fog", removed the "burden", invigorated him, and took the garment of corruption. (p. 161.) He forgot life, world, death, mortality; and he was filled by an ineffable joy of the Light (p. 162). There is no mention of the trinity, which is why, again without footnote, Picioruș jumps in to mention it where Symeon did not mention it.

Symeon's sixth ekstastic vision, reported by Niketas Stethatos, involves a voice from the divine Light, saying: "the Apostle and the disciple of Christ, the mediator and our ambassador at God" (p. 179, English quote taken verbatim from Picioruș). That is not compatible with any of the "trinity" driven lip service. Christ is not God. He is a mediator (as Evagrius Ponticus already saw). Christ is an "ambassador". Here the divine Light, coming from God, directly trashes the trinity beyond repair.

The further reports of Symeon's visions let it sound like, as a monk, he had visions so frequently that he lost track of their number. He lived in the Light, in continuous union (pp. 183 f.). When the Bishop made Symeon a priest, Symeon saw "infinite Light, simple and formless" (p. 183). According to Stethatos, during liturgy, Symeon became "like a fire and almost unapproachable for human eyes" (p. 184). Such is also reported of Christ (Transfiguration, still much more extreme) and of Siddharta Gautama Buddha (twice in his life, with blue light). I am not counting references and paintings of saints with luminous halos and/or auras.

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SUMMARY:

St. Symeon the New Theologian was the greatest mystic ever in a global comparison. He left breathtaking descriptions from personal experience of the divine Light. He is revered as a Saint by the eastern Orthodox Churches. His preserved writings are a priceless treasure in the human heritage.

There is an interesting sentence (George Demacopoulos) concerning a Secret School: In Symeon's writings there is a strange claim that "authentic spiritual insight" is proprietary "exclusively to a small group of spiritual mentors". Only they are able to initiate disciples into mystical union, into the human/divine communion. Demacopoulos explains that Symeon's claim as mentioned implies that there is a "chain of spiritual mentors" running parallel to the less viable chain of ecclesiastical authority. Demacopoulos does not write, but does not contradict, either, that the mystical chain of initiation is shrouded in secrecy. That would additionally explain the absence of written sources in the first person perspective for the mystical phenomenon.

This essay explores the possibilities that have just been suggested. The source material leaves little doubt that Symeon was initiated, and initiated a student, Niketas Stethatos, who then initiated Michael Psellos, and that Symeon's descriptions are candid statements.

Additionally see the overarching summarizing insert on pp. 150-153 above.

A title was found (p. 157 at the end, bold type), using a dissertation on the Illuminist Sohrevardi, for the entire program of the Secret School of Jeshua the Gnostic:

"the science of the lights".

6

Renaissance Emblematics, a Key: Explaining the Noetic State II

An Essay in No Parts

*by: Dr. jur. Stefan Grossmann, Hanau
August 25, 2015*

CONTENTS:

(Read the Essay, but forget parts.)

I have really looked for a long time, and I have absolutely not been able to find a more obscure and forgotten field than Renaissance emblematics. This is an essay about Renaissance emblematics. To my mind, it holds the key to linking Plethon with Giordano Bruno, and thus to establishing that there was a secret school, and secret transmission, of gnostic knowledge (meaning: spiritual science). Also, a mystery enshrouding an old murder case may finally become solved: Why did the Church burn Giordano Bruno at the stake, a peaceful scientist? Did the Church have the motive to kill members of a secret Brotherhood preserving Jesus' knowledge?

This concluding essay seeks to establish Byzantine emblematics, Plethon's place in Byzantine emblematics, and the connections of Byzantine emblematics with greater Renaissance emblematics. In the course of the discussion, linkages connecting George Gemistos Plethon and Giordano Bruno, the latter a semiotic theorist, and literary user of, Renaissance emblematics, will become salient, together with the relevance of this linkage. It remains up to every reader, of course, to draw conclusions from this in light of the balance of the entire book. I have, I believe, made it amply clear what my own conclusions are.

I do not have to correct myself. Byzantine emblematics is not even more obscure than Renaissance emblematics, because a field of study "Byzantine emblematics" does not yet even exist. That is exactly the reason why George Gemistos Plethon so far has been, without satisfactory results, been categorized as a "pagan". Plethon was not a pagan. Plethon was an outstanding Byzantine emblematicist, just as Giordano Bruno was the outstanding emblematicist of the Renaissance in the west.

The seventh sentence to the end in Simpson (1901?) is set in quotation marks and reads: "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ" If that is a quotation, I do not know what source it is being quoted from. It could, however, stand as program for Plethon's burned manuscript, entitled "Laws", and his entire work of emblematic gnostic Christianity, a rejuvenated form of Apocalyptic, apparently a most ancient mental art of working with the Hierarchies (Dionysios) of Higher Selves (see in my Framework vol 2). That hits upon the Tabor Light level, waiting in the wings of world history.

Important findings of Ernst Cassirer about an emblematic written by Bruno were made above in the third essay, in the "Pagan Evidence" section. Bruno's emblematic strikingly has the subject of necessity and freedom, the same subject that Plethon's text "On Fate" has. The thematic developments of the subject both in Plethon and Bruno reflect the same dialectical turn and educational goal, the same rare and arcane line of presentation. That is my platform to continue this discussion here under the very specialized aspect as mentioned.

We saw earlier that there is no compelling evidence that requires us to understand Plethon as a "pagan". While Psellos frequently refers to pagan deities whose names are written in ancient myth, that does not imply anything more than just that. We have firm evidence that Plethon used mythical imagery. He did not use the stories, the genealogies of the myths. He did not invent new myths. He used the divine names in a style known from Dionysios. In many ways, actually, that out-of-context use of mythical deity names is anti-pagan, since that what we lose in (pagan) faith we compensate in artful (mental, imaginary) imagery.

The arts of memory, mentioned in an earlier Essay, lead to a "theater of memory" in inner mental space (Yates). Plethon and also Bruno adapt that device to a "theater of deified concepts" in inner mental space. The protagonists, the deified concepts, are raised to visibility in life's basic dialectic of shadow and light (volume edited by Tymieniecka) through the dream-like compressions of Emblematics. The theater shows dialectics at play but not paganism, philosophy itself visualized ("Sophia") and approaching the sacred outside religion.

The method is the same in many ways as that of the Platonic dialogue. The participants are not speakers but are mythically visualized philosophical concepts. Their interactions are dialectic, set to work in an inner land of visualization.

That method is particularly well able to condense large amounts of disparate base information into the symbolically dense form of concepts and categories; it is a tool of that most difficult task of the philosopher, concept formation. That method is a natural yet very advanced form of concept formation, as Cassirer (in the third Essay above) hints, a system of psychic hieroglyphs outside the cave, with mystical powers of spiritual contact of the causal energies behind normally perceived reality. It is, in that sense, man's natural metaphysical method. It had many presuppositions in the highly evolved cultural surroundings in which it came about. It is today, alas, once again a lost art.

Reflecting on this, it is quite clear that we have come to a place that is outside, and beyond, philosophy as that name was understood in classical antiquity. Philosophy in the ancient sense is a study of thoughts and concepts. The emblematic, if we may use that name for the phenomenon, picks up on a Byzantine mystical theological subject, namely the essences and energies of God and his angels. That is neither philosophy, nor is it theology, since theology in its intellectual apparatus is essentially an offspring of philosophy, of the rational ego mind. We are dealing with something new for which we do not even have a proper and accepted name. That so far unnamed is what Plethon and Bruno stood for. Some fitting descriptors are: gnoseology, or emblematic, or sophiology of the inner light. My favorite is: higher mental semiotics of the inner light. John Dee found the terminological redux, the "hieroglyphic monad".

Giordano Bruno was a fabulous memory artist. That is usually forgotten today. He used mythical names in an elaborate system, including a memory wheel (reconstructed by Frances Yates) to keep track of the many aspects of reality in a Unity. That is no longer a function of the sixth chakra (Ajna, second Essay); that is a function of the seventh chakra (Sahasrara), which in India is also called the thousand-petalled lotus. It is the chakra of ecstatic self-realization in the divine Light, and leads to the levels of the golden Light in Paradise.

There is something strange about the Sahasrara chakra. It is usually said, when it is discussed, that it is located at the top of the head. In that location, there is no gland, however, like the chakras two, three, five and six have. It shows that the chakras are, contrary to a popular piece of knowledge about them, not necessarily linked with glands. The Sahasrara comes close to a unified chakra of the whole body. I describe its function as "seeing the blueprint", or, more precisely, "holographing the blueprint". If one develops the Sahasrara, it gives moments of holographic consciousness, which are often what is meant by words like: insight, intuition, and the like. It can become very powerful in its imaging, up to cosmic consciousness.

There are different human chakra configurations. The configuration normally presented is a seven chakra system. Cabbala shows the "Tree of Life" diagram which is a ten chakra system. A life that comes from karmic birth is, first of all, fully determined by the karmic contract with the Higher Self which is agreed upon prior to a reincarnation. Sometimes, certain elements of that contract, which includes a deterministic life plan, are remembered, which is what the "déjà vu" phenomenon in the technical sense is.

The determinism of the birthed incarnation can normally not be altered. It can be altered, however, in an advanced practice of the Sahasrara hologram, or divine plan of an individual. That is apparently something that both Plethon and Giordano Bruno knew, covertly described in their philosophical discussions about fate, and practiced, most likely not merely for their personal plan but also for elements of the collective plans of mankind. The strange mythical symbols and their uses, as far as we can determine them, evidence this.

The Sahasrara hologram, when developed, is called the Merkabah. It is basically reconfigured constantly, which is its operative secret as a vehicle of freedom. It is also called, the chariot of the gods. The didactic poem by Parmenides, so elaborately translated into philosophy by Plato, is a Merkabah teaching from Atlantean times. The same type of visualisation is also what is found in Homer in such poetic nodes as the "Shield of Achilles" etc. An essential element of the Merkabah is always a holographic geometry in motion.

It is not possible to practice the Markabah (Merkavah) profoundly with the present human seven chakra configuration of man. One conclusion is that Plethon, Bruno, and probably all of the “secret School” such as Dionysios, Maximus, Symeon and Palamas, and others, had an expanded chakra system, such as can, for example, be reached by Cabbalistic practice (Christian Cabbala, or in the alternative the Tree of Life knowledge that is incorporated in a Gnostic system such as that presented to the world by S.A. Weor).

Probably the best-kept spiritual secret until now on this planet is how to change from a seven chakra configuration to the ten chakra configuration of the Tree of Life (as in Cabbala and Gnosticism). The key is the Sahasrara chakra and its hologram. Jewish people normally have the common seven chakra system; the ten chakra system is not racial; it can be acquired through a practice of spiritual science. The blueprint is virtually in the visual diagram, that is printed in most any Cabbala book, and is freely available on the internet, of the “Tree of Life”. It is a schematic of a person seen from the front, but reduced to the ten energy centers (or “chakras”, or in Gnosticism, “logoi”).

A seven chakra person must become intensely aware of the seven chakras. That can take years of practice and meditation. The person must awaken all seven chakras, in particular the top or “crown chakra” (which is the Sahasrara). Kundalini must be released from the first chakra (Muladhara, or root chakra, base chakra) into the crown chakra (which is a meditatively simulated orgasm). That practice must be practiced and perfected cautiously over long time, since it can, in the case of a premature Kundalini release, cause great mental damage to the practitioner. That is why all eastern systems are based on the guru-student principle.

Using the Kundalini energy, directed by intentional visualization, the chakra system can be reconfigured, but not all at once. The key is the knowledge of which steps to take one after the other. In the Tree of Life, the chakras (seven chakra system) three, five and six are duplicated, so that each one of them splits into two twins that take position one twin to the left and one twin to the right of the person (who is seen frontally). That results in a total of ten chakras. That is the Cabbalistic configuration for (lower) Merkavah practice.

The starting point is the third chakra. Once it is split, the fifth chakra can be split into its twins, who then automatically rearrange to the left/right position. The third step is the sixth chakra, the Third Eye. There must be other ways of doing it; but I am not aware of those.

Why is the third chakra (navel chakra) the starting point? In normal humans (default setting), the navel chakra is where the dan tien (Chinese term) sits. The dan tien is the energy center of the human being. During incarnation, it takes its place slightly beneath the navel near the front of the body. It is compressed there. In reality, it is an orb who is slightly larger in diameter than the human body indicates. It is what leaves the human body at death (not, or not permanently, during Near Death Experiences).

The dan tien can have up to three locations simultaneously in the body, namely (i) slightly beneath the navel, (ii) at the throat), and (iii) at the Third Eye. The navel chakra, the throat chakra, and the Third Eye chakra are exactly those three chakras that split into twins, rearranging into left/right position, during Cabbala realignment into the ten-chakra Tree of Life configuration. What is behind that is a partial awakening of the dan tien (the orb) itself.

The realignment additionally depends on, as mentioned, a partial awakening of the dan tien. (A too strong an awakening of the dan tien/orb means deincarnation through what Buddhism calls the “rainbow body”, not a form of death, leaving no or nearly no material traces of the vanished person such as a few teeth or so.)

An awakening (partial) of the dan tien/orb is functionally the core teaching of Buddhism, about which tens of thousands of volumes has been published since two and a half millennia in many languages. It is the reaching of “Buddha nature” in increments, during which the dan tien/orb gradually awakens in a controlled and blissful manner. The “Tree of Life” realignment of the seven-chakra system is, seen this way, a side effect of the path of Buddha nature (reaching purification, liberation, permanence of mind).

It is discouraged to aim for any particular effects or results through spiritual practice. Not only is the path the goal, but the path is the only goal. There is nothing at all we “want” or “need” along that path, unlike consumers in a shopping mall, because the impurity of wanting is self-defeating for the effort of purification.

In addition to what is already said in my Framework, vols. 1 and 2, I have included some books about chakras, Kundalini, and Merkavah in the resources section below. This serves as basic information.

There is one more point to be made, illustrated by Mokerjee. The Tantric practice is to arouse Kundalini from the base chakra (Muladhara) at the bottom of the pelvis, rising upwards. That is usually done by sexual Tantra. That is dark libidinous life energy flowing upward and being refined by the chakras. That works as long as the chakras, especially the heart chakra (fourth chakra, Anahata) are opened and working well. That runs into problems of unpurified dark energy reaching upwards and taking over the free-will center in the seventh (mostly) energy body. That is, altogether, a dangerous practice, and discouraged for westerners.

A second method is to pull Heavenly Kundalini, a much purer form of Kundalini (energy from the local cosmic center, Aristotle’s “Unmoved Moving”, and its equal pendant in Tibetan Kalachakra Tantra), down from “above” through the crown chakra. That method does not use the Tantric shortcut “from below”. That is therefore, in particular for beginners, a much more difficult practice. It is the only practice, however, that can reach good results for connecting with divine grace, which is, the liberating Holy Spirit (Fourth Force, Divine Love). Liberation in a spiritual and karmic sense cannot be had from the libidinous dark force. That is the basic deception of Tantric and Tibetan practices. In a short formula, the mortal sex energy is replaced by Divine Love, which is an immortal Heavenly sex energy. That is great liberation that all spiritual systems talk about. The discernment that is necessary between the energies of various light quotients is another large and essential part of Buddhist teachings and exercises. Good discernment, on the basis of non-attachment to life circumstances and “interests” in the material world, is the best single factor that can help a person into Paradise. The Heavenly Kundalini energy, by the way, is not an “inner energy”, since it comes from Heaven as a divine Light in the inner (astral) universe.

Good discernment, then, is not least an issue of trained cognition assisted by a suitable symbolic system that stores collective knowledge of spiritual discernment. That brings us back round to the historical and philosophical subject of this essay. The symbolic markers of Plethon, Bruno and others are a symbolic system of spiritual discernment, containing much knowledge in general about the calibrations of discernment, as transmitted orally over many generations through myths, in a human sense, the knowledge of good and evil, in a more scientific vein, the knowledge of psycho-energetic darkness and light in the motivation of free-will beings. The apex of these teachings, from the western world and from all over the planet, is thus the seeing of the free will, which precedes its exercise itself, setting aside the determinism of mortal human life, the veiled but central subject of the writings of Plethon and Bruno during the Renaissance.

George Gemistos Plethon, and after him the early modern Italian Neoplatonists including Giordano Bruno, stood in a flowering synthetic tradition blending Platonism, Buddhism, and the Gnostic superstructure of original Christianity, with additional gnoseological influences added from the Arabic and Persian worlds. Historiography has no received name, or names, for this. I am fine with that in that it reflects the universal nature of the scientific teachings about spirituality that that synthetic tradition succeeded in bringing over from the Middle Ages into modern times.

The particular feature of the Plethon-Bruno axis in that synthetic tradition is an ultra-differentiated mythic symbolism of essences and energies for mapping the proximate spiritual world and its inherent conflicts. This included, presumably, interventions into that spiritual world that could be subsumed under the difficult name, “magic”. In that context, the word merely reflects the namelessness of the entire tradition.

The best approach is the symbolic analysis on the background of the open-mind transpersonal psychology that the protagonists themselves worked from. Despite the fact that Plethon’s manuscript “Laws” was burned there are more than enough source materials, not unknown to historians, to undertake such symbolic analysis.

This remains, of course, an interpretative venture by the author. I am speaking from sources, but am not merely presenting sources as they are, a claim that not even history books will stand up to unless they are anthologies with source collections. The interpretative steps by now have been clarified sufficiently to begin the interpretation.

The natural forces behind the material world are demons, i.e., angels who are in the Hierarchy of the First Force (the Atomic Force) of Creation. The great Renaissance thinkers were aware of that. Maggi (p. viii) reminds us that the Renaissance believed in continuous interaction between spirits and humans. The spirits that Maggi studies in his book are demons. The Renaissance demonologist Girolamo Menghi, a Franciscan since 1550, believed that demons existed and were fighting a war against God's Creation in order to pervert mankind (Maggi, p. 1). My comment is, to the extent that demons interact with humans, they provide an antagonist force against which the human free will can be exercised. Without an antagonist force, the human free will cannot develop. The demonic force is thus the basis of human freedom as a necessary condition. It is one-sided, and serves the purpose of an imperial control Church, to paint the demonic force as evil. It is double-edged, in a more complex sense than simplistic rhetorics such as that of Menghi suggests.

The renowned English Elizabethan magus John Dee duly took note of Menghi's writings (supra). Demons were part of John Dee's natural philosophy (Clulee). In knowledge of demons, John Dee wrote (in a Mathematical Preface, cited supra, front matters):

“The whole frame of God's creatures (which is the whole world) is to us a bright glass: from which by reflection rebound to our knowledge and perseverance beams and radiations, representing the image of His infinite goodness, omnipotence and wisdom.”

As Dee saw it, there was not a speck of evil in the world planted there directly by God. God is called omnipotent and of infinite wisdom, in addition to being of infinite goodness. That is the essence of the natural philosophy of John Dee.

As part of his natural philosophy, Dee from 1583 to 1489 committed to writing a mystical and, as Clulee calls it, supermetaphysical philosophy in: *Libri Mysteriorum* (Clulee, pp. 203-230). The writing results from Dee's actions with angels through Dee's skryer Dr. Kelley. (Angels are a type of spirits who are extensions of the divine will who are not individually free, unlike humans.) This writing, perhaps a philosophy, marks the high point in this entire line of possible human development in the Renaissance. I wish to preface it to the following interpretation of the Plethon-Bruno axis as a mirror in which the salient points can best reflect.

Dee considered these actions not as magic but as a type of religious experience. Unlike Ficino and others, Dee did not seek to attract angelic assistance. Dee wished to learn and to follow God's will. His motive, he wrote, was to learn “true knowledge and understanding of the laws and ordinances established in the natures and properties of his creatures.” (p. 207 at note 14; the note refers to two of Dee's manuscripts in the British Library, MS Sloane 3188 [fol. 5] and 3191 [fol. 45]).

In his angelic transactions, Dee's main interest is the reception of revealed esoteric wisdom and universal knowledge of creation (p.208). Dee concludes that there was no other source of such wisdom available. He cites Enoch, Moses and others as examples. Beginning 1583, the angels transmit by dictation details of an entirely new language, which came to be called Enochian. As the angels predicted, Dee's curiosity for divine arcana are not fulfilled. On p. 213 at note 38 is a key sentence: In the Enochian language, “every word signifies the essence of a substance” [meaning a spiritual or metaphysical substance, SG]; and that language thus holds the “secrets and keys to the world”. The related processes are similar to Cabbala involving sign correspondences being brought about. What is distinctly not the case is that the signs, as in normal language, simply express things; they need to be brought into alignment with the correspondences by special procedures. The angels actually call this the “Cabbala of nature”. The rules for the correspondences are not revealed. This

tended away from a Neoplatonic and toward a Cabbalistic view (p. 214). What Dee and Kelley faced was an encryption of the reality that we experience, separating the reality and its causal source, an angelic code in form of a language with sounds and even an alphabet – altogether, what we normally would call a language, but not any known language of the world, and not applicable simply by expressing things in normal speech. Natural science developed along partly similar and partly significantly different lines, using numbers and formulas derived from human language – and I emphasize: not with the full success that John Dee dreamed up.

In the Renaissance, there were other inventors of science at work. Some of them may have come closer to John Dee's ideal than the science that actually emerged did come, which is, essentially, our modern science. It may possibly be valuable to look back at what other types of science could possibly have emerged. The Jesus story from later antiquity suggests that there may be very different science systems in the unknown to be discovered, superior to what our science is today.

In my interpretation, two of the other inventors of science during the Renaissance were Plethon and Giordano Bruno, two people whose voices were rabidly silenced. They should get their fair chance to be heard. Their key proposal is that, prior to engaging in scientific ventures, the mind needs to be opened to higher levels of reality than what humans normally experience. That is, the mind needs to ascend, itself, to higher levels, into something like a supra-mind, or the supra-mental, or an enlightened state. Only in that state, a noetic state, can science in its best form be undertaken, since science is a match of intelligence against nature. In that analysis, the non-feasance and non-pursuit of that option is a major shortcoming of the sciences as they are today.

That option is governed by a science that is Gnosis. Gnosis in this respect is the science of the mind behind science. It is a critical science in the engagement with the situation as it is today, critical in particular of a mind divided against itself by a willful distortion of deep denial.

What is the logic of keeping the mind out of science? I do not see the point. The mind, interacting with matter, is the origin of science. One point to be gained is the individuality of every situation. When science operates primarily from general "laws" that is misleading as to the nature of the mental phenomenon, nature, that it deals with. The laws are a default setting but are not the only thing that nature can be.

With the shift of the basic science, physics, to quantum physics, it is high time to shift the mind behind science, as well. Science so far is a science of objects. The true challenge of science is not, however, a random set of objects, but is a universe, and an environment, that are filled with energies, of a type that everything communicates with everything else. The rational surface mind that so far has absolutely dominated scientific discourse is not up to speed to deal with this. Science has been outwitted by its own development.

A new mind is called for. That can only be, the unconscious mind, the mind of symbols and archetypes. The interactions with the universe and the environment cannot be, for obvious reasons of data overload, of the precise one-to-one mathematical type that physical thinking so far has cultivated. Alternate paradigms are the logics of fuzzy sets, the science of biology, to deal with physical complexities of the quantum age.

The participating observer - that is, humans - are of such a complexity that the need for new, sufficiently intelligent mind-ways are obvious. Mathematical abstraction of the old type has a shrinking domain. A growing domain is conceptual model formation. The main new factor (actually, an ancient factor) being added is the factor of purpose, of teleology. If the nature-man interaction system is to be comprehended in any way, it is by its intentions. Its key divide is the dissolution of pure determinism, and the addition of freedom. It is not that nature has changed, but it is that humans are realizing what nature actually is: a part of them and of the mind (I avoided writing, "their" mind since humans do not own the mind, nor did they create it, nor did Charles Darwin do so).

Man is of the mind, and nature is of the mind. Both are psychogenic. If science wants to live up to its big and so far empty words of a causal approach, then here it is. Must the three monkeys really be considered so

wise for looking the other way? I have my doubts. Three scientists would be preferable, but perhaps that is asking too much. What is with the devices that provide cosmic energy for free, for which hundreds of patents have been granted by very critical patent assessors in state service? What blindfold does science have to push that aside? (I know, it's the dough that corrupts everything...) When will science grow up and become an asset of human development? We don't need only better machines; we need people who are closer to being realized of what they can be, of their potential. Science so far is a major roadblock to that for various reasons.

The mind is science's source. So far, science is wantonly clogging up its own source. That is an untenable situation and must be changed.

Albert Einstein is a good example. He, the famous Nobel-prize-winning physicist, was highly intelligent. He was also a fraudster and could not count to three, almost literally. Precisely by not being "scientific" in the narrow sense in which science is defined today, help the cause of physics tremendously, namely, by using his Jewish intuition, not stupid math, to solve, in outline, the unsolvable foundations problem of physics of the first half of the twentieth century. Come on, physicists in his day and age actually still worked with slide rules for their equations!

Einstein is an example to this day that physics, and all of science, should include in their repertoire a variety of different types of intelligence. By far the most critically important type of intelligence that is underused by contemporary physics, and other sciences, is intuitive visualization. Einstein had that to a high degree, and at the same time fell short of being a "scientist" by the standards of garden variety scientist today, a sort of engineer type, which Einstein was not. Had he also been the latter, it would have killed his intuition. Nothing against engineers and their good work.

I claim, functionally: Einstein's intuitive vision of what is reality lay at the heart of the Gnostic efforts of Plethon and Bruno. Their system (or two varieties of one system) is a system for mentally cultivating a high visual intelligence that is geared to crunching issues of high complexity. That is why they are most valuable to this day. The lesson that they hold for us should be learned well, to the furtherance of future science that is up to facing its great challenges of overwhelming complexity. The John Dee venue provides no solution for this even though it was a nice try and may have a future still in times to come.

Rishi Nityabodhananda (p. 2) claims that the knowledge of the Einstein type, intuitive, visual, seeing, is a function of the Third Eye (Ajna chakra): We gain our knowledge of the external world through the senses, eyes, ears, etc.; other knowledge, however, is received through the Third Eye. We are naturally aware of a manifest creating energy; but logic demands that it take its form from an unmanifest cosmic energy (p. 5). Logics is not the strength of the current scientific world view (my comment SG). It is unclear, for lack of a census, how many scientists still believe in an uncaused Creation (cf. p. 6).

The Third Eye is the conduit of ideation; it is where the "flashes" of intuition enter the individual human mind (cf. p. 8 f.). There is another source of knowledge beyond the ordinary intellect (p. 27). That is cosmic or super-consciousness (supra). The awareness of an individual of higher levels of consciousness is associated, according to ancient knowledge, with Kundalini (supra).

There is a counter-force that keeps us from seeing. That is Maya, the goddess of illusion (cf. p. 43). Nature, everything around us, is Shakti (Kundalini Shakti, supra). Kundalini energy flows through channels (nadis). The main nadis are the Shushumna nadi (corresponding to the spine) and the Ida nadi and the Pingala nadi that surround the Shushumna nadi. These nadis open when the chakras are awakened – in the case of the three main nadis, all seven major chakras of the human psychosomatic system. The Ajna chakra is the chakra of the mind (p. 52). This means, manas, or the ancient mortal mind (cf. p. 54).

We see dreams during sleep (in the dream state); but during meditation, we see visions (p. 55). (Both are, by implication, from the Ajna chakra, i.e., the Third Eye.) Ajna also gives extrasensory perception (supra). The symbol of Ajna is a two-petalled lotus (p. 61); it signifies the flight of the soul during astral projection through Ajna.

I conclude that the limitation to the perception of the senses (of the physical body) for knowledge input reduces the concept of what a “fact” is to external phenomena. This definition blends out inner facts of the mental realm. If the Third Eye awakens to astral perception, mental phenomena are recognized, and are seen as influential for the reality experience of a person. This can affect scientific activity, since science pursues knowledge.

Ajna is the command center of the psychic body (p. 76). Ajna channels the power of resolution, how yogis achieve their aims, which is not the same as “strong willpower” (p. 82). There are special techniques for awakening Ajna (pp. 89 ff.). The main direct technique is concentration on visualized images [and mentally scanning details while holding the entirety of the image aware, which forms mapping consciousness].

The system of George Gemistos Plethon and Giordano Bruno is a system to cultivate the sixth and seventh chakras (Ajna and Sahasrara), leading man from karmic (i.e., sinfull) determinism to freedom of the soul in participation in the divine Creator Mind. The purpose of this system and chakra cultivation is to visualize the divine influx of ideation into man’s free will, which is liberation (mukti) from the cycle of reincarnations and from the mortality of fallen man. That is the epitome of deification (theosis) and of Hesychasm, the waking contact of man with the Heavenly spirit world. They were walking and living in Heaven. Their method is mental poiesis of the Heavenly Realms (visual theology).

Look: It is, today, not (yet) possible to write this Essay. I am confident that sometime in the more distant future, it probably it will become possible to write it. But not now. At least not by myself.

I have assembled the materials per the “Resources” below. That still does not make it writeable, however. The first question to answer is: Why did the Vatican terrorists burn Giordano Bruno? What are they most afraid of?

At least that question is at least close to an answer today. The traditional record sources of the Church trial of Giordano Bruno do not answer the question. The answer is, however, in the systematic of the Secret School of Jeshua the Gnostic (“Jesus”), the Nemesis of the western Church (the Vatican). The Vatican is, most of all, afraid of Jesus. That is the core of their religion.

Today, through historical research, we know that “Jesus” is mostly, but not entirely, a fictional figure. The real person was Jeshua who died on the cross and was resurrected into life, then ascended into Heaven. There is no need to be afraid of a mostly fictional figure.

There is a derivative fear of the Vatican, namely, of being exposed for crimes and theft of the wealth of the planet symbolized by money, corporate shares, and trust contracts. That fear is a rational, not a metaphysical fear. It is justified – but not more. So let us get over that. Then there is a slight detail of the exobiological identity of leading Vatican personnel. That is another matter concerning only those. It exclusively occurs in the Jesuit Order, including secular lay Jesuits (but not on their school teacher level, only higher up).

What is being covered-up are scientific truths, concerning the physical nature of life, life fields, mind fields, memory fields, psychic powers, spiritual affairs. That cover-up is gradually crumbling. It would have been, probably, premature to disclose those things during the time of Giordano Bruno (sixteenth century). It is well enough if these matters are clarified today (twenty-first century). There is still time to implement them, after the passing, which is history already, but not quite in 2012 – a narrow miss!

Giordano Bruno had a secret. Its outline is known today. That was the reason, so far unknown, why the Vatican assassinated him using their terror courts of Inquisition. They were afraid that he would change the

course of history, so carefully set up to let them (and not many others) survive the “2012” cataclysm (actually, end of 2013). But that is a matter of the past (today, late summer 2015). The cataclysm was averted by a giant shield of dark matter in the space separating the two planets, technically very simple for us.

It must out, now, then. What is it about?

A scientist who is similarly hated by them as Giordano Bruno was in the sixteenth century is Rupert Sheldrake. He is the target of a vicious hate campaign by the mendacious science community. His key notion is that of “morphogenetic fields”. That is also what Giordano Bruno worked on. The strange concatenation becomes clear when one looks into the work of a contemporary German linguistics professor, Wolfgang Wildgen. He has investigated the cosmic memory fields that constitute physical reality. He has paid particular attention to Giordano Bruno. That is the key. That is, also, the epitome of Byzantium, as Plethon knew.

The central part, according to Wildgen, is a geometrical language. I can say right now that Bruno did not have that figured out, nor did Plethon, nor anybody else. The solution was given only a few years ago when, through an avatar, the fifth-dimensional city of Telos in Mt. Shasta, California, the specialist: Pythagoras, published the ancient Lemurian and Atlantean geometry of the “Flower of Life “ figure (Tomo Perisha), as mentioned in an earlier Essay in this book (and in my Framework Commentary, vol. 2).

It is still worth taking a look at the overall theoretical approach, which is what it essentially boils down to as far as human knowledge went until just a few years ago. It is preparing the vessel for a solution that we do not have, and that is made for a universe that is infinite with many worlds, as Bruno was the first modern scientist to see.

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SUMMARY:

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7

Dimensions of Plethon: An Assessment of Byzantine Philosophy

Brief retrospect:

According to the sources, Plethon was the most knowledgeable person about Byzantine intellectual life, the philosophy and the theology of the Byzantine empire. He is at the preferred viewing point of Byzantine philosopho-theology, and represents its final union of opposites. Fine, there is paganism reflected in him, but for exactly that reason. Which also means, that that is by no means all. There is more to it than just the pagan aspect. The pagan aspect is, in the end, just an afterimage of what once was. During the Byzantine millennium paganism yielded to Christianity, and its shell changed, taking on new, formal, semiotic functions. Since Plethon's priceless manuscript (reportedly) was destroyed by torching it at the hands of a foolish hooligan, we are set back to fishing around for the many meanings that he collected. That process is tantamount to an assessment of Byzantine philosophy and theology, those two twins of the lost empire's mind.

This book of six essays and a final evaluation covers complicated questions across the board. The effort behind that is to connect the dots to let a bigger picture emerge.

My point in this book is not, say, to "wrong" existing theories. My point is that Plethon - like the Byzantine wisdom that he dedicated his life to, to collect and to preserve - has many dimensions. Saying that his knowledge has contradictions is like saying that there are books with contradictory viewpoints in one and the same library. That is highly educational in teaching a pluralism of viewpoints. Nowhere in the world has there yet been found viewpoint that represents such a surreal thing as the "real truth". Learning the pluralism of viewpoints is the relieving death of religion in its dogmatic belief based form.

Religion is just a modern word for myth. Myth and religion, when encountering stringent rationality, become rationalized, and gradually disappear. Our own civilization in the west is an example for that. In Byzantium, however, there was an open flow-back, which we in the west today are no longer culturally aware of. It meant, that in the place of religious belief, spiritual knowledge grew, which is not religion but is gnosis, which is not corporate but is private, which is not compulsive but is free. Plethon stands not only for the philosophical rationalization of ancient paganism, but stands mainly for the philosophical rationalization of the Christian religion itself. The product is gnosis, not in the sense of narrow traditions, but in the sense of a universal science of spirituality.

Plethon, the man of knowledge – a stumbling block for the ape. That is brutal, but so help me. Julian Jaynes had a point, and it is not forgotten. Out of the cave, there are voices in the mind. Plethon records the going out of the cave, but the voices have disappeared. They have been transformed into lights.

That is a good stopping point. I have just a few materials collected for this synthesis section, item 7 in this book. I feel that the legal philosophy, centering around universal law, is unduly silent in relevant discussion. Seconding Lynn Thordnike, a new aspect is the creation of natural science from medieval “legal science”, through a concept of “Laws” (the title of Plethon’s vandalized manuscript). Medieval legal science was a going concern for several centuries before the notion of “laws”, in a mathematical redux of the emblematic, was transposed to the realm of nature, through Bruno, Galileo, and other pioneers endangered by religious mind censorship. That is one of the plausible dimensions of Plethon in his presumptive function as a storage house of Byzantine wisdom.

Plethon the man of knowledge management – that leads us into many subtleties related to percolations of the ancient Platonic forms. Umberto Eco uncovers the lost Neo-Platonic knowledge management system of the “tree of knowledge”. We may assume that there is an undercurrent linking this with the “tree of life” in Christian Cabala, opening spiritual channels.

The deified concepts that we find in Plethon as myth-like “gods” recur, set in action, in Giordano Bruno. In a central position in his main text, the “Spaccio”, Giordano Bruno is the one person who restates Plethon’s preserved teaching on fate and freedom, using the Plethonian formal apparatus of deified concepts shown as personified actors who talk. I call that a fingerprint telltale linkage between Plethon and Bruno, two people abhorred by the Church as arch-heretics. In Bruno, this topic occurs as the touchstone of a secret School. According to the title of Bruno’s main writing, an ethics dialogue among gods and men, it is about the “expulsion of the triumphant beast from Heaven”, which is, of course, the key of apocalyptic Christianity.

In the preface, I joined in a specialist’s lament on the lack of evidence. I still agree with that here, with one reservation: We can make more out of the scant evidence that we do have, if we use methodologies that have been developed by anthropologists for their field work in similarly difficult situations of sparse evidence and cultural disconnect.

I have found one such relevant project description by Christina Toren. If we apply Toren’s approach, that lets become salient the strange symbols (pagan gods as semiotic markers, not in their ancient religious belief context) as “cognitive aspects of a social process”, as Toren puts it in her title.

Before turning to the anthropological method of Toren, I would like to point out some examples from a Post-Byzantine culture, namely the Russian culture, that illustrate the versatility of the symbolic deities down into the modern age. According to Pyman (*History of Russian Symbolism*) the last great modernist journal in Russia (1909-1017) was named, Apollon. That is the name of an ancient Greek Olympian god, god of light, music, etc. (usually the gods had many different local traditions). When that name was given in twentieth century Russia, Pyman does not categorize the creators of the magazine as “pagans”, as “the last Hellenes”, or the like. Doing so would indeed be far amiss. His narrative is given in the context of Russian symbolism, an influential literary-poetic and visual-arts movement of Russian modernity. Chronologically, Plethon is closer to that modernity than to ancient Greek paganism. Plethon is still somewhat of a mediator, however.

In terms of complexity, Plethon is a complicated affair. Similarly, even more so, Russian Symbolism is a complicated affair. It is something like the van Gogh version of, often spiritual, poetry, entered on a rainbow bridge. The parallel is made to illustrate aspects of Plethon that are swept under the carpet unduly; I find they are his most valuable side. If I am asked to give a half-page executive summary of what these aspects are, the questioner will draw a blank from me. They are mentally visual, to a large extent beyond words, but very beautiful and filled with light. I am aware that Plethon was not a Russian Symbolist. He was a Byzantine Symbolist, perhaps the greatest, but not the only one.

The Russian Symbolism served as seedbed of Existentialist thought, by the way, which in Berdyaev's interpretation was used above in the second Essay to philosophise about Byzantine philosophy. The native philosophy of Byzantine philosophy is Symbolistic, again in a sense that I would be unable to define in a satisfactory way. Plethon himself apparently knew this (knew that limits of notional knowledge lurk here); I conclude this from the myth-like formal semiotic apparatus that he assembled (which becomes fully apparent as formal and semiotic in Giordano Bruno).

An obvious objection is, Plethon and Bruno were using sacred symbols for expressing philosophy. My reply to that objection is, they were expressing philosophy that was additionally saddled with gnoseology. Their symbols are not so much sacred symbols, but are gnoseological symbols. They were not makers of religion. An undercurrent of their writings on freedom and necessity is, glaringly obvious in the case of Bruno, liberation from religion and its dogmatic dictates and constructions. From the viewpoint of the barbarians, they had good reason to burn a manuscript and a writer; but I am not justifying them.

It has become fatally widespread to identify Christianity with censure of thought through churches and dogmas, and additionally through lingering memories of the inquisitional horrors of former centuries. What is not within rigid bounds of convention is deemed Un-Christian. Christianity has come to be identified with a set of interrelated church organizations. The Christianity that once was before the Church came thus has been long forgotten. It perhaps never existed except in the person(s) who initiated it.

Spiritual knowledge is not primarily poetic symbolism. It is spiritual philosophy (not limited to being merely materialism) coming about in the symbolic realm. (That is a sentence that Plethon would have said cannot be written down. I have written it down, but at the same time not written it down to the extent that it is unwritable.) There is poetry involved, but only as an ancilla philosophiae...

The Orthodox Church considers Sophia to be an aspect of Christ (Pyman, p. 229). She is divine wisdom personified. One of her Gnostic titles is: "the Maiden of the rainbow gates". A Russian Symbolist philosopher-prophet-poet, Vladimir Solov'ev, wrote about her in his poems. Solov'ev worked in his lifelong commitment to Christianity of which his cult of Sophia was part (*supra*). Note that that is not "paganism", and, in this case, not the workshop of a "saint", either. Again, we reach a point where we lack words and long for symbols that are beyond words. I propose that Plethon's assemblage of mythical figures arose from the same psychologically pressing inner desire, transforming the opened mind's voices (Julian Jaynes) into inner light. (In technical terms: to survive the transition through the pre-astral barrier of awakening – I refer to my Framework vols. 1 and 2.)

If we assume that Plethon, during his lifetime, was not entirely alone in the most advanced state of that period, Byzantium, with his psychologically pressing inner desire, it is, for sake of argument, plausible to further assume, with Christina Toren, that social relations were formed around this, in just as secretive a manner as the first small mammals would have come together in the outgoing age of the dinosaurs (as we are told, take this just as a metaphor).

That is playful, but it has a serious background. This is illustrated by the study of Douglas Berger. The opening of the mind to the light is better known in the east than in the west. The decisive step towards spiritual enlightenment is when one leaves "abode cognition" to a state referred to as the "luminous mind", when the mind becomes self-cognitive through its luminous state (also called "splendour" or "clarity", Berger, p. 110). What Plethon, as interpreted through Giordano Bruno, gives us, is thus, an extremely powerful meditation technique for spiritual awakening, and for working with the inner Light. After decades of studying spiritual contact systems in a world-wide context, my opinion is that that meditation system is entirely unique from a lineage originating with Jesus (Jeshua) who was crucified and was resurrected from death,

Resources:

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What are the arguments for a debate?

There is an ongoing debate, whether Plethon was “pagan” or “Christian”. I find that merely a small part of the extremely complex issue, a big ball of string, is being addressed at this time. My first critique is thus directed towards the ongoing debate itself, in that it is - not surprisingly - a matter relegated to specialists, which in this context means, extreme specialists on a frontier of scholarship who are presently opening an entire new field of historical and philosophical studies (Byzantine philosophy). It takes a non-specialist, a back-seat driver, to see that there are related questions in the proximity, those questions, too, by no means easy.

First, what is the debate? Let me point out four positions from contemporary scholarship. I will skip, here, statements made during and shortly after Plethon’s lifetime, which all arose in the heat of polemics, and, more importantly, do not reflect the special knowledge and background knowledge that modern scholarship has assembled. My impression is that Plethon’s contemporaries, except his pupils like Cardinal Bessarion, who did not say much, were in a particularly disadvantaged position to get it right.

As said at the beginning of this book, Plethon himself nowhere in any writings or recorded sayings admits to being a “pagan”. Plethon himself was careful to give himself the appearance of an Orthodox Christian. There is no scholarly dispute about that basic fact. From that follows, the only way to stick the “pagan” label on Plethon is by means of interpretation. The most general characteristic of the debate is, that it is a debate about an interpretation. Facts that are mentioned in the debate are all used in indirect contexts to establish the one or the other interpretation.

Restating what I said three paragraphs up, another general characteristic of the debate is that its question of interpretation is an “either – or” question, namely: “pagan” or “Christian”. I find that misleading. Perhaps one should keep a third option open, something like “or other”. For example, one scholar, with certain justice, has labeled Plethon a Crypto-Muslim (Plethon is from today’s knowledge quite openly not a fan of the Christian dogma of the “trinity”).

A third general characteristic of the debate is, that the lead terms, “pagan” and “Christian”, are used in a loose sense, not in the sense of defined terms. Nobody really knows what a “pagan” is, or a “Christian” is. In today’s world, we would rely on what a person herself or himself says. Unfortunately, Plethon is silent in that point, apart from his posturing as being an Orthodox Christian, which is indeed questionable.

For the sake of discussion, let us imagine Plethon among us. What could we tell him what he is?

“You’re a pagan!”

“You’re a Christian!”

I think, both times he would laugh. He might reply: “Find it out yourself!”

Which is what the debate needs to do.

Let us take a look at some easy basic things: George Gemistos Plethon was a man who lived during the last decades of Byzantium, most of the time in the semi-independent despotate of Mistras on the Peloponnes. He had a high place in society at the court of Mistras. He was known as a philosopher. He chose his third name, Plethon, to demonstrate closeness to Plato(n). What he published during his lifetime cannot well be matched with any known philosophical system, except for a bit here and a bit there, well below any feasible system level. What became known of his secret manuscript, the “Laws” (“Nomoi”) after his death can even less be parsed with any known philosophy short of a philosophical library. During his life and after his death he was at the center of defamatory polemics. Plethon had pupils, none of whom inform us in a reliable neutral fashion what Plethon stood for. Plethon’s major public activities related to the late Byzantine Plato-Aristotle dispute and to the joint Union Council of the split Church (visit in Florence in 1439). Plethon probably lived longer than ninety years. He was extremely learned, of impressive personality, and as is seen today, also quite secretive with something like a double life of his inner persona.

I would like to present three positions in the ongoing “either – or” debate about Plethon. These are the positions of C.M. Woodhouse (1986), Niketas Siniouoglou (2011), and Vojtěch Hladký (2014):

1. Woodhouse’s book is the first complete Plethon monograph in any language. He starts by mentioning that there is a “legend” about Plethon, Woodhouse calls Plethon “an interesting and mysterious figure” (p. ix).

search for: “Olymp”

Woodhouse (p. 13): Three knowledgeable people described Plethon as a “leader of initiates” (Bessarion, Gregorios, and Charitonimos).

Woodhouse trumpets (p. 78): Plethon was a “reactionary Anti-Christian Neoplatonist”, “as much a pagan at heart as Proclus.”

(p. 167): this is a confusing page in Woodhouse.

(p. 167): Plethon gave “primacy to philosophy over theology”

(p. 167): Plethon “invented a religion of his own” – Plethon did this to “prove his point”

(p. 167): Plethon presented his religion “to a limited circle” [I doubt its presentation as “religion”]

(p. 167): Plethon’s religion was a revival of Olympian religion [that ignores major differences to myth]

(p. 169): repeat of the misleading argument that Plethon revived “Olympian” religion in “content” (sic!)

(p. 169): the Olympian religion had never completely disappeared (indirect evidence of legal bans)

(p. 321): this page shows a crack in Woodhouse’s consistency

(p. 321): Plethon’s manuscript “Laws” [not a published “book”!] is now not “Olympian” but a “synthesis”

(p. 321): it is a “synthesis” of “Olympianism” and “Neoplatonism”. That clashes with Woodhouse p. 169

(p. 321): in the synthesis, the gods are “personified ideas” (Alexandre), “Platonic Forms personified”

search for: “pagan”

(p. 7): Plethon’s philosophical outlook was “ostensibly conservative and even reactionary”

(p. 7): but at the same time “in reality revolutionary and even prophetic”

(p. 12): two panegyrist insisted on Plethon’s Christian piety

(p. 16): Woodhouse writes that “freedom of thought” was Plethon’s “most characteristic gift to his pupils”

(p. 16): Woodhouse writes that in the eyes of Plethon’s enemies that was also his “most unforgivable crime”

(p. 70): For Psellos (a philosopher preceding Plethon), Zeus was a “symbol” (of reason) [not a “god”!]

(p. 70): the expression “pagan mythology”: Plethon broke ancient myths vastly apart, did not adopt them

(p. 77): this page requires a somewhat more extensive comment. The “triadic structure of the deity” indeed challenges the Christian doctrine of the trinity. Triadism became part of Byzantine Orthodox theology in the sixth century (Dionysios Areopagita) and remained there, challenging what I have shown to be an anti-spiritual element (namely, the “trinity”) in Christian theology. Plethon ousted the trinity, and Islam did so. That is a complicated situation that Woodhouse oversimplifies, essentially, a great tension within Byzantine Orthodoxy. Hesychasm is a non-trinitarian practice, for example (Jesus prayer), a difference that is usually swept under the carpet. This point leads close to what Plethon stood for, but Woodhouse does not recognize that complicated point.

(p. 242): the most important topic for Plethon was the “Theory of Forms”

(p. 242): Woodhouse: that was the basis for Plethon’s “neo-pagan mythology”. [Plethon had no mythology.]

(p. 242): [Plethon retained mythical names, but not the ancient mythologies. That is a key point.]

(p. 272): the Juvenal affair, Juvenal said he learned pagan ideas from a “brotherhood” in the Peloponnese

(p. 273): Manuel of Corinth accuses Plethon of secretly treating Christian doctrine with contempt

(p. 273): [My question: in a philosophical debate, is such behaviour to be deemed Un-Christian? Luther?]

(p. 274): Woodhouse’ helpless definition: “pagan” god has offspring. Christian “Creator” has none?

(p. 320): Woodhouse reports, adding to the crime names “polytheist” and “pagan”, a third: “determinist”

(p. 320): [My comment: that is a philosophical argument, and Plethon never wrote a determinist text]

(p. 373, with note 71): P.O. Kristeller wrote that Ficino inherited from Plethon “an ancient tradition of pagan theology that led directly from Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, Orpheus, and Pythagoras to Plato and his followers” [that is certainly heavyweight testimony, but I disbelieve the attribute “pagan” – Sokrates the teacher of Plato was an anti-pagan and was judicially murdered for mocking paganism]

search for: “Euhemer” (like in: “Euhemerism”)

(p. nn): [that search term occurs neither in the text nor in the index of Woodhouse’s book, he missed the key starting point for this debate, a largely forgotten classic: Jean Seznec; *The Survival of the Ancient Gods*, 1953]

In summary, Woodhouse recites much name-calling and fails to even start understanding the phenomenon in context of the proximate historical development lines (and there are several more than just Seznec, all of them quite hidden aspects of intellectual history of the Renaissance and beyond). Such an effort would have been far outside the scope of Woodhouse’s very good monograph on Plethon.

2. Niketas Siniossoglou wrote a large monograph on Plethon’s philosophy. I jump right into a similar analysis of his book:

search for: “Olymp”

(p. 220): the sentence containing “intellectual mysticism and wisdom” as opening human participation among the ranks of the gods (a Proklos fragment), illustrates “paganism” [but the Orthodox Christian practice (not just theory) of deification, namely Hesychasm is, in general outline (not in contact to specific spirits) identical]

(p. 288): the top paragraph is of relevance especially if Damaskios is the identity behind the alias, Dionysios Areopagita”, as I propose (not alone), who was influential for injecting, in the sixth century, the major esoteric current into Byzantine Orthodox Christianity, unfolding then in Maximos, Symeon, Palamas, and many lesser names.

search for: “pagan”

(p. --): table of contents, Part II: there is no such thing as “Platonic paganism” Plato/Sokrates were radically anti-pagan. That hurts! Honour the dead Sokrates, recall how and why he was killed.

(p. x): None of three historians and Plethon monographers are philosophers. This shows – “Plethon’s radical Platonism” [no! Plethon does not precisely match any system] exemplifies the “pagan origins” of something. Plato/Sokrates were radically anti-pagan. What comes from them can exemplify “philosophical origins”.

(p. xi): “pagan Platonic paradigm” [no! – the bastards killed his teacher!] “Plethon’s pagan Platonism” [no!] “pagan’ Platonic ideal-type” [no!]

(p. 4): Masai established the “pagan cell” theory in modern scholarship

(p. 5 at note 11): Monfasani (1992) speaks about “Platonic paganism”. [There is no such thing in the history of philosophy.]

(p. 9): “explicit paganism of the [Plethon’s manuscript] Nomoi” [that is prematurely jumping to a conclusion, other and probably better possibilities are:

- (i) Euhemerism of rationalized “gods”, a tolerated part of medieval Christianity (Seznec),
- (ii) use of mythical names like in the “memory wheel” after Frances Yates of Giordano Bruno, with functions: art of memory, oral-type knowledge transmission, Renaissance magic,
- (iii) the work of an Aristotle-type encyclopedist collecting knowledge before the sinking state goes under, a possible knowledge management form: Neo-Platonic “tree of knowledge”,
- (iv) Inner-Christian opposition faction careful to avoid asebia charges (death penalty),
- (v) My totally novel thesis is Plethon the Christian Gnostic, carefully concealed, also relating to (iv), analysis using the modern movement of Samael Aun Weor, see later below,
- (vi) Plethon’s openly visible sides are thus, (v), carefully designed to mislead, several layers deep,
- (vii) an issue like Plethon’s alleged “determinism” is resolved in layers by a toolkit for antinomies]

(p. 11): Wind and Kristeller: Plethon unconnected to Mistra secret society cell (paleographically refuted)

(p. 11): Siniossoglou asks, rightly: what is “pagan” or “Hellenic” in Plethon’s Plato reception?

(p. 11 f.): Medvedev: Humanism seeks to be released from clerical control

(p. 12): Medvedev: Palamas and Hesychast identified humanism with paganism [M. doesn’t like Palamas]

(p. 12): “Plethon’s cult of reason” [“cult of reason” is a term from the French Revolution unfitting here]

(p. 12): Siniossoglou’s book proposes a “philosophical approach” with three goals:

- (i) clarify “religious, philosophical and political” reformism of Plethon. [that touches Pl.’s shell only]
- (ii) “paganism as philosophical Hellenism” [paganism was not per se philosophical, Pl. also not in there]
- (iii) book is about intellectual history, methodology in general [no comment]

(p. 15-21): definition of “paganism” (p. 21) S. sees an agreement between Plethon and Palamas. [I agree] [I stop flagging the frequently repeated “Platonic paganism” non sequitur here.]

(p. 13): here now finally comes the truth about paganism: according to modern scholarship, paganism ended ca. in the sixth century A.D. Plethon lived in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries A.D. during the dawn of the modern age when paganism was already extinct for over eight hundred years, except as a polemic cudgel. [The word “Nazi” didn’t exist yet.]

(p. 14): Siniossoglou concludes that Plethon was a “pagan”. [How can a philosopher be a “pagan”? Did Plethon ever engage in “pagan” worship? What temple? What priests? What was his tutelary deity? What did he sacrifice? All those defining questions consistently draw blanks. There are today neo-pagan movements; they have temples, priests, tutelary deities, rites of sacrifice. All that is missing for Plethon. I hence disagree, not only for these reasons, see my bold-typed comments at p. 9 above.]

(p. 13): continued, Siniossoglou uses the word “paganism” for a “particular philosophical constellation” for which one element is that it “transcends the historical borders of late antiquity.” [Use of words is free, and I will be the last to raise an eyebrow about that. In standard dictionary usages, that word and that meaning do not match, however. “Paganism” is a word for a type of religion, but not a philosophy, not a philosophical constellation. There are words that could possibly be more fitting - I am thinking of “syncretism” or such - but as we will see, Plethon is a REALLY tough nut to crack with any words. Besides, as Niketas Siniossoglou sees as a possibility, “paganism” is in the fifteenth century a rhetorical ploy, p. 14.]

(p. 31): “conceptual idolatry” (or, “mental simulacra”) [That is extremely close to what Plethon was doing, I believe, with the exception of the verb “to idolize”. The term “idolatry” means a form of religious worship. Religious worship was not involved. What was involved, if we look to Giordano Bruno, was memory action, and a technical honing of mental abilities, that is, a scientific activity relating to spirituality beyond the scope of churches and religions, and even beyond the scope of philosophies as they are openly known. The cluster “spiritual science” is practically synonymous to “gnosis”. I argue that Plethon’s and Bruno’s strand of gnosis originated in the gnostic Jeshua/Jesus of whom we have learned through the Dead Sea Scrolls in the twentieth century. Plethon’s antecedents after Jeshua were, mainly: Neo-Platonism, Damaskios/Dionysios Areopagita, Maximus, Symeon, Psellos, Palamas; and after Plethon: Bessarion, the Florentine Academy, Giordano Bruno – all of them not “pagans” in any meaningful descriptive sense. In this sense, the word “paganism” in the monograph by Niketas Siniossoglou comes close in its meaning to “spirituality”, or “free spirituality”, namely, free from clerical overcontrol, or with one of the many subtle meanings of the rainbow chameleon Plethon, freedom from fate.] – [I break off here for the search term “pagan”.]

Somehow, there is a key section of Niketas Siniossoglou’s Plethon book that condenses everything. This is the section, pp. 148-160. Instead of continuing to go page by page as I have done so far, I would like to discuss those dense pages in Siniossoglou’s book as a single block of meaning. That text block in Siniossoglou’s book is a section with the heading: “The puzzle of the Nomoi”. In a nutshell, it is actually enough to read just those five words. The Nomoi (Laws, Plethon’s later destroyed secret manuscript) is fully described by them. They

are a riddle, but that is also what Plethon intended. His secret text is a riddle text, a labyrinth of words. The only solution can be found not in words, but by exiting Plato's cave (strikingly, how Nietzsche centuries after Plethon lets his famous riddle text "Zarathustra" begin when Z. comes out of his cave like Plato's sun) – then a paradise of light and lights becomes manifest; and, unlike Barlaam the Calabrian, unlike poor Scholarios, we are no longer alone in "our" mind (Julian Jaynes).

The "Laws" describe a very dramatic event, namely the spiritual awakening of a human, the great secret of all spiritual teachings worldwide (in India called: *mukti*, liberation, and its path, or many similar paths, of study and practice). No secret, then, any more, the secret of Jesus, like that of so many others who have awakened (he already came awake). No text, either, that a person in the west today will even remotely comprehend. The reason such teachings are kept secret except for chosen initiates is that one "does not throw pearls before the swine" (Jeshua the Gnostic).

The "mystery" of the text is an intentional "secret" hidden in five layers (see the third Essay above, explaining Plethon's layers, the first five of twelve that were known in Atlantis, for nine see my Framework vol. 2). The mind is not "a" universe but "the" universe (our single local universe), when the physical senses of the physical body are bypassed and the astral senses of the astral body (in Cabbala: the "Zelem") take over. Giordano Bruno hints in his poetry that he was deeply into that as an astral traveller, evidentially through techniques mediated by Chistian Cabbala (Proto-Rosicrucianism).

That is not yet the same as spiritual awakening, and can lead to perdition; the necessary condition is similar to the very beautiful "meeting" in Near Death Experiences, which is in Patanjali's yoga the "samadhi", the spiritual network connection to an individually dedicated "higher self" in the spiritual realms, which is also what, in Byzantium, Hesychasm is about (and people like Athanasius "the Great", Barlaam, Scholarios and the Vatican Popes acting from the west are distinctly not about). That signifies the, also seemingly mysterious, psychobiological separating line of two different population types in the seed package of humanity.

It is unimportant, nearly irrelevant, if a given person is "label X" (Hindu, Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, pagan, a philosopher, and what the lot of verbiage might be). The only issue is in a wholesome way spiritual enlightenment (as distinct from single unique peak experiences of vision and contact). Prior to enlightenment (not in the sense of European eighteenth century scientific enlightenment), the fragmentation of "many names" marks the form of reality experience. During enlightenment, which is a permanent (versus "impermanent" in Buddha's sense) state of being, the form of reality experience switches to Oneness (same as Connectedness). Some Byzantine sages reached Oneness, for example, Dionysios, Maximos, Symeon, Palamas. I would also count Plethon among them, although not foremost in that line of names, somewhere on the advanced level of Photios, Psellos and Bruno.

On pp. 151-154, Siniosoglou describes seven theories about Plethon's "Laws" that have been proposed in modern scholarship since the middle of the nineteenth century. Alexandre, the translator of the critical text of the "Laws" by Pellissier, is listed as item (a) in the list of seven theories. That theory includes considering the "Laws" of Plethon as an "esoteric handbook" for use by a "brotherhood" (supra, p. 151). I agree to that extent with the seven theories. I miss, in the list, mention of the Chaldean Oracles that are prominent in Plethon, suggesting that one of his fields was some form(s) of magic. (The Zarathustra link is just imaginary.)

The question of "pagan Plethon" versus "Christian Plethon" (supra, pp 155-159) is for me unimportant for understanding the "Laws" along such lines, especially since the momentous findings in the twentieth century, the Dead Sea Scrolls, that require a much qualified answer to the question, what "Christianity" is and can be, what "Christianity" was and could have been. I do not accept the debate as long as it does not clarify that in keeping with the specialized modern scholarship that deals with that most intricate question in thousands of highly differentiated publications. One of the questions involved is, how many Christianites are there. At that point, the debate here becomes obsolete. That in no way limits or reduces the great value of Siniosoglou's 2011 Plethon monograph as truly groundbreaking.

A second very recent Plethon monograph was published in English in 2014, the book by Vojtěch Hladký. Unlike Siniosoglou, Hladký does not lay major emphasis on the question of either – or of what Plethon was. There are pertinent passages sprinkled throughout his book. According to Siniosoglou in his end of June 2015 review, Hladký “daringly proposes a re-evaluation” of that question. To my mind, that undertaking is not so much daring as reasonable, given the fact that for the first time a plausible conspectus of Plethon’s writings is on the table, without prejudice to Woodhouse, Siniosoglou and other dedicated researchers of Plethon who have made that achievement possible. Apart from downscaling the importance of the question, Hladký, as Siniosoglou notes, sees Plethon as an unorthodox Christian, and as inclining strongly to ancient thought. The book by Hladký is mostly limited to a positivistic exposition of Plethon’s major teachings, or if you like: doctrines; it is, in a sense, a “Plethon digest”, which is in the given difficult source situation of considerable value for penetrating into Plethon’s secret.

Since starting this book, I have had in mind to compare and to collate the pagan “gods” of Plethon, which are actually mere “names of gods”, with the “names of gods” in the writings of the founder of the twentieth century Neo-Gnostic movement, Samael Aun Weor. To gain an initial understanding of the principle, it is best to leave most of the actual names aside. The principle is, at the top, as far as I can tell, a trinity, which is identified as “Cosmic Christ”. That reminds strongly of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* book lambda, and of Tibetan Kalachakra Tantra, again. It is called - not in accordance with ancient paganism - Zeus. It is identified with Jesus using a word play, “Jew-Zeus” (Jewish Zeus, like Serapis was the Egyptian Zeus). The system uses mythical names to denominate the many facets. For example, Poseidon rules the pineal gland, a chakra. Hera symbolizes Kundalini, the cosmic force interacting with man (in India: goddess Kundalini Shakti). The system incorporates the “Tree of Life”, the expanded chakra system of ten chakras that is also in Cabbala. There is a neat explanation how to go out-of-body for astral projection.

The characteristic of the system is its practice of working with essences (denoted by mythical names) and their corresponding energies. It is a large knowledge system (gnosis, spiritual science) for interacting with final causes. It clearly includes personal self-transformation. It may also include the cultivation of spiritual powers. If one follows Alexandre in his theory that the “Laws” of Plethon were an “esoteric manual”, then this is a match with no other viable contenders. For myself, with what I have seen in terms of many telling details, I personally believe the match is a close one.

There is a certain focus that the question can move on from, who was Plethon, to, who was Elissaeus. Elissaeus was probably the teacher of Plethon. He was known as “Elissaeus the Jew”, obviously because Elissaeus would have been Jewish, not Christian. Very little is known of him.

Elissaeus the Jew (or Elissa, or Elissaios) is unknown to history except from two texts of one doubtful informant, namely letters written by Scholarios, the enemy of Plethon (for “Elisha” see below). Woodhouse gives his report on this on pp. 23-28; Siniosoglou discusses this mysterious figure on pp. 7, 8 (note 22), 130, 215, 290; and Hladký discusses Elissaeos on pp. 1, 189, 191-204. In summary, while there remain doubts concerning the informant (Scholarios), his two reported letters that mention Elissaeos do not fail to give an impression that Plethon was initiated into philosophical learning by a person whose interests lay outside of Orthodoxy, and are described as “Hellenic”.

Nearly every effort, so far, to get behind Elissa the Jew, has been futile, with specialists ably shooting down each other’s conjectures; and in terms of certain evidence, nothing yet has been discovered:

◦ Corbin (p. 34) conjectured (baselessly, unfortunately) that Elissa could have been a “wandering Ishraqiyun”, a follower of the Persian Illuminist Suhrawardi (Sohrawardi; note: there are two Sohrawardis). This would imply a combination of Platonism, Hermeticism, and Zoroastrianism. As discussed in the first Essay, a Hermetic connection of Plethon is unlikely and not in evidence.

- Monfasani (pp. 51 f.), responding to the Corbin (and Pines and Tardieu) conjecture, shows it is unlikely. (This) Suhrawardi hardly mentioned Zoroaster at all. Citing Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker (after Wust, see next), Monfasani mentions that the Jewish author and physician Elisha lived at the Ottoman court in Adrianople in the fifteenth century. Scholarios' Elissa could be this Elisha. I concur because I believe that Persian Illuminism wears a very different pair of shoes than what Plethon was developing.
- Langermann (p. 444) writes that Wust's proposition is plausible, namely, that Elissa was identical with Elisha the Greek. He is described as a rich and influential courtier and as a physician, as a Jew no longer practicing his faith. That Elisha was familiar with eastern Islamic medical literature and had mastered Aristotle's Arabic and Persian commentators. (I analyze in the first Essay above that a good part of Plethon is esoteric Aristotelian. That is a match that is not seen so far in the debate. I found that independent of, and prior to, researching this issue, some weeks ago. Note that Persian Aristotelians include profound metaphysical commentators on Sohrawardi, making explicit the nature of the Unmoved Moving as a final cause, something like a lightful cosmic will power – very close to the gnostic approach of S.A. Weor and detectable in Plethon, Dionysius, through his „first triad“ Zeus-Poseidon-Hera which is not in Sohrawardi. That is not directly what Corbin said, however; his conjecture was probably intuitive and not totally off mark, even though the meticulous nature of his scholarship has come under doubt in recent years.)
- Langermann (still p. 444) further points out, on unclear evidence (I cannot read the Hebrew of Wust), that there is a telling incomplete manuscript in Moscow (MS Moscow 1187) that is attributed to Elisha, albeit tenuously. That manuscript is a logical manuscript, „replete with references to eastern Islamic figures“ (supra), such as: Ibn Sina, Fakhr al-Din al-Rhazi, and others who will tell you as little as me (see Langermann supra for more details), all from late medieval logic of the eastern Islamic world. The information on this corner in the large „Handbook of the History of Logic“ series (volumes 1, 2) is practically nil. Rescher (1963) calls the area a „terra incognita“. The recent volume edited by Rahman et al. provides little remedy for anyone interested in specifics. If Elissaeus was Plethon's teacher, the teacher was handpicked by the pupil! As a general note, I would opine that an „Islamic“ logic is non-secular and is dedicated to coming closer to Oneness (Allah). In that respect I disagree with the opening comments of Rescher; he fails to address the question of who a logician is, and what she or he intends. That may prove to be an important key to Plethon and his studies.
- Siniosoglou (2012) adds materials for Plethon's tentative connection with the Mistra brotherhood. In a hymn, he not only addresses his co-citizens and his friends, but also his „brothers“ (p. 39, after Masai). In one rare slip of pen, Plethon admits „we have learned Averroes' doctrines in regard to the human soul from the most wise of the Italians and the Jews“ (p. 41). Masai observed Plethon's familiarity with Islamic notions (p. 42). That conforms with the Elissaeus story.
- Mavroudi is, in part, responsive to Siniosoglou. She, like James Hankins (p. 181) consider Plethon as a universalist, not an explicit rejector of Christianity, a claim that runs the risk of being anachronistic, and as following the invective cliché connected with the „pagan“ word in Plethon's time. Hankins pointed out that Plethon laboured among competing definitions of Christianity, a form of opposition against the western papal politics (p. 182), with which I agree to the extent that Plethon can be seen at this level (which is not his only level). On p. 182 in note 31, Mavroudi discusses and rejects Siniosoglou's theory of Ottoman mysticism and Bedreddin shaping Plethon as lacking „sufficiently concrete analogies“. On p. 187, we are reminded that for performing (pagan) magic, antique statues were instrumental (special techniques for summoning the divine force into them, described in the Corpus Hermeticum: Asclepius). There is none of that to be found in Plethon as far as his texts remain. That could be used as an argument of absence against his alleged paganism. On p. 190, Mavroudi presents unique evidence linking Plethon with Sohrawardi. There is linkage through excerpts of Plethon also covering unpublished works of Sohrawardi. There is a Zoroastrian connection in them through the god Bahman that can be equated with Poseidon in Plethon. Roundabout, Plethon's system does not following Sohrawardi's however (Mavroudi). I see no Zoroastrian connection except the use of the name.

The so-called “downfall of the Roman empire”, meaning, the burning-off of its western half, created a total new situation for the balance of religions in the remaining, eastern branch of the Roman empire, which in modern times has become known as the Byzantine empire. Its founder, by moving the capital from Rome to Byzantium on the Bosphorus, was Emperor Constantine. If Constantine was the founder of Christianity as the imperial Byzantine state religion, any discussions about “pagan” versus “Christian” relating to Byzantium down to its very end in 1453 are fraught by much duplicity and propagandistic deception, originating from the founder, Emperor Constantine, himself. Elliott, who presents an informed scholarly view of the problem, as I find just a beginning of seeking its solution, describes his work, p. 2, as “a serious departure from the literature on the subject.” To deal with this quagmire is to deal with a precarious issue: an assessment of Byzantine philosophy, secular and sacred, in toto. Siniossoglou’s question is inseparable from all of this.

It is Siniossoglou who insists on poking a stick in this hornet’s nest, not I. There is no going back behind this line, however. In the eye of the storm is a historiographical source: Eusebius; Ecclesiastical History. Opinions about that work can range, outside of paid academia, to the extreme, as the annotated bibliography (I do not want to call it a work of scholarship on its own) by Tony Bushby makes clear, who assembles mainstream scholarship of the past to what amounts to a trailblazing and a crash of Gibbon’s “pious fraud”. Turning to such a source, I make it clear that I distrust current mainstream scholarship in this issue. The scholars I mean are in fear of losing their jobs if they tell such a truth – their problem, not mine.

Whatever the truth (small “t”) is, it fits in with other truths (then heading for some Utopian Truth with a large “T”). An example of how perceptions at the detail level change models of the whole, is the book by Kevin Corrigan. Evagrius of Pontus and Gregory of Nyssa are major figures in the development of Christian thoughts in late antiquity, combining desert and urban spiritualities, and linking the great thinkers of antiquity, i.e., Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Clement and others, with the birth and transmission of the early Medieval period with exponents such as Boethius, Cassian and Augustine.

Corrigan presents Evagrius and Gregory on the soul, situating them in ancient philosopho-theology and in the Cappadocian fathers. According to Corrigan, Evagrius and Gregory introduce new forms of thought and empirical science in a new key. Centrally, they are no mere receivers of a monolithic pagan and Christian tradition: they are innovative and critical cognitive psychologists, treating upon the body-soul relation, reflexive self-knowledge, and related subjects. Corrigan evaluates their thought on these major issues; he traces how they include difficult intellectual problems of Christianity including asceticism, mysticism, epistemology, philosophy and theology. Indeed, early-on, the Byzantine intellectual development outgrew the level of mere belief systems (such as “pagan”, “Christian”) through such knowledge (versus mere belief) concerning the soul. Gnosticism is the spiritual science that begins with a knowledge of the soul, actually long predating the Byzantine period, but then blending into the Byzantine intellectual development, and growing to prominence through Dionysios and the Hesychasts – the word “gnostic” etc. was, of course, painstakingly avoided in that context.

Robin Lane Fox, an Oxford historian, writes about pagans and Christians. His book suggests that during the first centuries after Christ, there was a certain amount of open interaction between followers of Jesus and of the Greek and Roman gods. This was interaction between religious people of the time, not yet hindered by a state church and its censorship, but under scrutiny of the state. In the examples that Fox mentions, which would be the most interesting examples, the subjects are about spiritual knowledge, for example about the fate of the soul after death, a question posed to Apollon and mentioned, together with Apollon’s answer, in a Christian handbook. Apollon was knowledgeable about this.

Such interactions took place in an air of innocence. One may presume that the Church later would have destroyed much of this type of evidence, so that we are not too well informed. It was, understandably, ancient knowledge about the soul, reincarnation, afterlife of the soul, how to treat and to mistreat one’s soul, that the Church took out of circulation in order to foster relevant ignorance of the population for power motives. That

gave, at least as the State Church would have interpreted it in Byzantium, knowledge of the soul per se a pagan odour (as well as spiritual knowledge in general). To find out more about these issues I recommend reading Fox' book and forming one's own judgment about the facts.

Back to Elliott's book, we see a scholar hint, actually than just hint, that not everything may be correct concerning the mainstream image of Emperor Constantine's religious beliefs. It is quite clear from qualitative estimates such as from Harnack, that the percentage of Christians in the total population of the Roman empire was considerably higher in the east than in the west. With Constantine envisioning difficulties for the western empire - the most plausible reason his for moving the capital from Rome (in the west) to Byzantium (in the east, renamed into "Constantinople") - there was equally plausible reason to plan for a shift of the religious balance in the empire, which in the future would possible become an eastern empire. At least, that is what I read behind the qualitative estimates under demographical aspects.

For the age of Constantius, the father of Constantine, Elliott develops a new notion of a "more tolerant Christianity of the camp" (pp. 25 f.). This is, essentially, a flexible Christian-pagan hybrid. On p. 26, Elliott calls attention to the following facts: There were soldiers in the Roman army who were Christian. As far as we know, among them were very few martyrs. Elliott imputes to them the intention rather to kill than to be killed. His key sentence says: Those Christian soldiers must have "made their peace with the army's religion", which was, of course, at that time still pagan. The disputed Christianity of Constantius (father of Constantine) must have been like that "of a Christian officer in the Roman army". That was a relaxed standard compared with the rigorous standards of the Church fathers. With must assume that they sacrificed, which was the cleared outward sign of paganism. Yet, it would be misleading to consider them pagan. Many of them would not have been baptized since baptism usually did not occur at an early age in those times. For the bishops, that group was a very difficult group.

In the speeches by the Emperor Constantine (son of Constantius, who is now out of the picture) that Elliott quotes from (up to p. 36), Constantine frequently refers to "God", but not once to Jesus by name. He also also urges his subjects to become Christians. In the next sentence, he then refers to the oracle of Apollon to describe the beginnings of a recent persecution; the oracle was being disturbed by the faithful. On p. 36, Elliott doubts the conversion of Constantine through a miracle, as Eusebius reports. Constantine himself does not mention such a miracle, but would have mentioned it as a central feature of his oratory.

On p. 51, Elliott fights with the evidence of the Pangyrist of 310 that Emperor Constantine made lavish gifts of a pagan temple of the god Apollon in Gaul (today's name: France). saw the god in the temple, and recognized himself in him (stated in different words). Elliott's efforts to wiggle out of that, demonstrate unease with the evidence, and seem self-serving for his unease. This most powerful piece of evidence that Emperor Constantine in his personal belief was pagan stands despite Elliott's efforts. The panegyrist mentions, also, that the Gauls saw armies flying through the air to help Constantine, which is perhaps not so terribly unusual for those miracle-prone times; and readers could be expected to sort out fact and fiction. Even before 312, Constantine's panegyrists actually reduced the role of the pagan gods, according to Rodgers, if that is correct. On p. 52, it is not suggested that Constantine's gifts to a pagan temple are an invention.

On p. 55, it is clarified that Constantine was an unbaptized Christian. Then God invited him to become a Christian, written by a second author who did know about the first author. There is doubt as to Constantine's conversion, p. 56, apart from Eusebius. The story of Constantine's conversion could likely have arisen from a whitewash effort of Gelasius. (I am summarizing so strongly because the fact pattern with all the fighting and infighting is terribly confusing.) Lactantius says nothing about a conversion (nor does Constantine himself). The pious Eusebius in writings dated from 324 and 336 says nothing about a celestial phenomenon seen by Constantine (part of the conversion story). Then, when Constantine years later was dead, Eusebius came out with the fantastic story of the late Emperor's conversion - with the most important witness, C., gone.

In other words, there is no veritable evidence of Constantine's conversion from a pagan to a Christian. On p. 67, right in the middle of the conversion story, in chapter 32, Constantine is ignorant of the identity of his father Constantius' god. Later on the same page, Elliott argues convincingly that Eusebius himself did not believe that Constantine converted to Christianity. On p. 68, there are more arguments that Eusebius invented the conversion: the chronology and the geography of the making of the labarum (a thing that God gave Constantine that let the emperor win battles). From today's view, Eusebius' story of the conversion is a miracle fable. If Constantine had actually converted to Christianity, we may rest assured that Eusebius, and others in addition including Constantine himself, would be telling us so through reliable sources. On p. 68, Elliott restates that Constantine in all his sermonizing does not once mention his alleged conversion. On p. 71, there is no evidence that the labarum replaced the other standards of Constantine's army. Absent a conversion, and absent the most basic recognition of the elements of faith, the "First Christian Emperor" Constantine hence was a pagan. That makes it amply clear what the "pagan-Christian" debate down to George Gemistot Plethon's time actually means: nothing. I follow Edward Gibbon, who had two words for it: pious fraud.

I knew there was quite a bit of strangeness about the Gospels before I undertook this research, but I did not realize that the situation was so bad. Some examples are carefully rendered by Dyer. The Gospel of Luke contains a significant number of passages that were grafted into the balance of the text from ancient pagan myths of Dionysos (Bacchus). "Jesus" (Greek name for "Jeshua") is thus presented as a "new and improved Dionysus" (p. 1), that is, a pagan deity. Jesus himself according to the Gospels was part pagan! If the Gospels were Gospel, how could "Christianity" come out of that?

No serious researcher doubts that what Dyer presents is true and authentic. If we ask Edward Gibbon, he has two words for it: pious fraud.

The encounter between Jesus and the tax man Zacchaeus (Luke 18:35-19:10) is modeled on the best-known Dionysus drama, the *Bacchae* by Euripides. Acts, also, is tied particularly to Euripides' *Bacchae* (p. 5).

There are also Dionysiac tendencies in the Gospel of John, for example the entire wine miracle at Cana (John 2:1-10) (p. 5). That was copied from older wine miracles of Dionysus as reported by Pausanias (p. 6).

After careful methodical investigations, Dyer (p. 55 f.) concludes that the opening and closing of the itinerary in Luke are scenes directly evoking Dionysus. The ministering woman (8:1-3) and the Jericho exchange (18:35-19:10) emphasize Jesus' similarity to Dionysus. Luke's source for this was Euripides' *Bacchae*.

A pagan rite that was taken over into Christianity is, baptism by water (Lewis, chapters 3 to 6). Another pagan rite is Sunday observance, pagan Sunday (chapter 8). State religion is a pagan institution (chapter 9). Constantine was paganism seeking a new god strong enough to save the failing Roman empire (chapter 10) – *my note: and it worked!* More examples are: worshipping towards the east, Easter fires, penance, Mariolatry, the mass, purgatory and prayers for the dead, Peter's keys, Christmas, Easter, Lent (chapter 13). The question here becomes, what distinguishes "Christianity", especially with a "theistic" anthropomorphic god (written with a small g), from other paganisms? Is it the materialism of a despotic church state?

The dense hit piece by Tony Bushby makes use of scholarship. I shall in the following ignore the article and consider the scholarship that is cited in it.

p. 55: The "New Testament" is first mentioned ca. 331 (after its editing by Constantine)

p. 56: What Constantine created was not called "Christianity" until the fifteenth century

citation for above, p. 56: "How The Great Pan Died, Professor Edmond S. Bordeaux [Vatican archivist], *Mille Meditations*, USA, MCMLXVIII, pp. 45-7"

Chrysostom in 397 restructured Apollonius of Tyana, who became Paul in the New Testament

Apollonios' personal assistant Damis is Demis in 2 Timothy 4:10

St. Jerome (d. 420) said that the Acts of the Apostles were "falsely written"

citation for the foregoing: *The Letters of Jerome*, Library of the Fathers, Oxford Movement, 1833–45, vol. v, p. 445

The Sinaiticus (Sinai Bible) was discovered on 4 February 1859, consisting of 346 leaves of an ancient codex
Constantin von Tischendorf discovered it, a German Biblical scholar

The Sinaiticus is the world's oldest known Bible

p. 57: This and other such very old Bibles destroy the picture that we have of the Gospels

The Sinai Bible, compared with a modern Bible, has 14,800 editorial alterations for the New Testament

The Sinaiticus has three Gospels now removed: Shepard of Hermas, Missive of Barnabas, Odes of Salomon

The earliest Gospels do not know the virgin birth

According to scholarship of Bushby, Eusebius had scribes write the Gospel of Mark, the first Gospel

citation: *The Crucifixion of Truth*, Tony Bushby, Joshua Books, 2005, pp. 22-40. I have not read this.

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke depend on Mark; the Gospel of John was written independently later.

citation: *The Crucifixion of Truth*, Tony Bushby, supra

Bushby writes, supra: "Thus, the Gospel of Mark in the Sinai Bible carries the 'first' story of Jesus Christ in History, one completely different to what is in modern Bibles."

The Sinai Mark starts Jesus around age thirty, no Mary, no virgin, no mass murder of baby boys by Herod.

"Son of God" does not occur in the opening narrative in the Sinai Mark Gospel

further: conflicting version of events surrounding the raising of Lazarus

further: there are no resurrection appearances of Jesus Christ

further: there is no ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven

Resurrection verses seem to have been smuggled in in the twelfth century, marked as spurious with asterisks

p. 58: modern versions of the Gospel of Luke have 10,000 words more than in the Sinaiticus

8,500 of those words are a forgery in one piece, inserted as the "great insertion" in the fifteenth century

The foregoing are merely some main examples but not a complete inventory of Gospel forgery.

Did Jeshua, known as Jesus, exist? There is ancient source material confirming his existence (Van Voorst; Davis – the latter ascribes "shock value" to the childhood narratives that reach back to the second century).

If the Gospels in the New Testament are the defining texts of Christianity, what, then, is Christianity?

That question stands unanswered today if one relies on the Gospels. That, additionally, renders the debate at issue here futile beyond repair.

Resources:

Woodhouse, C.M.; *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*; Oxford 2000 (first 1986)

Siniosoglou, Niketas; *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*; New York 2011

Hladký, Vojtěch; *The Philosophy of Gemistos Plethon: Platonism in Late Byzantium, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy*; Farnham, Burlington 2014

Siniosoglou, Niketas; *Bryn Mawr Classical Review 2015.06.30; Vojtěch Hladký, The Philosophy of Gemistos Plethon: Platonism in Late Byzantium, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy. Farnham; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014. Pp. xii, 390. ISBN 9781409452942. \$144.95.*; review online at:

<http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2015/2015-06-30.html>

Elissaeus (or Elissaios) the Jew, Plethon's alleged teacher:

medieval Persian Aristotelian metaphysical commentaries on Sohrawardi: I read about that using translator software, but have never been able to locate the actual medieval Persian books, which is a desideratum.

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Some Afterthoughts (2015-08-26)

The Essays, and the concluding part, present views of an unfinished project of humanity. People do not know where to look for the divine Light that lifts us out of our mortal and temporal ignorance. Actually, the answer is simple: One must look in one's memory. It is all there, but it is blocked.

Reviewing literature for the sixth Essay above, I collected some ideas that I was not able to use, since in the given situation the sixth Essay cannot be completed. The Lemurian-Atlantean geometry is blocked in humans for the same reasons that the memory of the Great Ether, the infinite realms of Paradise Light, are blocked.

There are three elements that must come together in the mind of a searcher: (i) There must be a space (a mental space). (ii) There must be some kind of geometry, let us say, a planet. (iii) There must be perceptions that our senses can make. That third element I call "quasi-sensate". Everybody who can use language has the abilities to set this free. We can derive language content from the input of the senses, which is called, very simply, "being descriptive", or similar.

If we reverse the mental processes that go into "being descriptive", we return the input of the senses that we have been accumulating over our lifetime into the world. It is not the world that we sit and stand in, however. It is the world of the mental space and its geometries. That is, in a nutshell, the process of "vision" of the inner Light, which is the same as "understanding". Understanding grows, in the soul, from sensory input translating into language, but then, additionally, the input flows out of the language medium into the quasi-sensory medium that is in the mental space and its geometry.

Visualization creates the mental space and its geometry. Every visualization computes the inner Light. It builds, and sets free, in the memory, which is unlimited and supra-cosmic, the world and the self that a free being is co-creating in life. Emblems, metaphors, allegories are instruments for computing the inner Light. They contain geometry and open spaces. The co-created world of a human being is built from the thoughts and deeds of the individual. It can be Paradise; or it can be hell, accordingly. Our final place is called the mundus imaginalis (Henry Corbin).

It is not simply built from the imagination, since the imagination draws, internally, in the memory, which is an infinity (not the absolute infinite). At the time of awakening, everyone will live in the mundus imaginalis of their individual memory from their entire period in the material Creation worlds. In that world, new life unfolds, and new experiences are made. The basic determination for the spiritual Light, or for the spiritual darkness, is made, however, in the time window of Creation between the past half-eternity and the future half-eternity of a free being. For most people (ca. 80%), that is the Light and Paradise.

There is a memory of nature: of planets, of stars, of solar systems, of galaxies, of the universe. The memory of our planet Earth is called by different names, the most well-known is "Akashic memory". The reality that we experience is set through plasmatic memory fields in the planetary memory. Changes are registered and recorded by the planetary mind (and all higher minds), and manifest even in the material Creation words, as the path of our thoughts and deeds. The notion of deluded science that matter is all, is extremely misleading. Matter is effect, not cause. The cause that is relevant for humans is their individual free will building its record in Creation through the causal plasmatic mind fields of reality.

The "science of the light" that is mentioned in the fifth Essay deals with the mind fields of reality. Since the twentieth century, it is not unknown. It is possible, but not proven, that former periods in history also had

such knowledge. In secret schools throughout history, originating ultimately from Lemuria and Atlantis, through Egypt and other centers, the knowledge was always present for a few initiated adepts.

Jeshua the Gnostic started a particular branch of those secret schools. I call it in this book, the Secret School of Jesus (Jeshua). It is a hidden part of the collective memory of man, as outlined in the six Essays above. Through this particular transmission, the inner Light of an extremely high noetic state of mind has been spread through mankind across the planet. For those who are in harmony with the Light (that is, all those who are not following the path of darkness), the Light is a part of their personal memory of Creation.

That is indeed a gift for salvation, but not of salvation. Salvation is the personal active use that individuals make of this gift. Merely “having” the gift is not enough; it must also be “used”. In the following, there are some notes how best to go about this.

People with an active Higher Self connection (described in all three books that I wrote for you) already have their personal guide at hand. People who are not yet awake to their Higher Self should ask, in their mind, for their connection to become active. There will be a person mentally responding to the, which is, your Higher Self. That is your guide for all questions and solutions. God is always there, too, for questions and the like.

You can meditate with your Higher Self to see your future world. It might take awhile before you can catch a glimpse consciously. It might start with a beautiful dream, for example, perhaps a dream of soaring into the Light and meeting friends there. You will never be asked to take drugs for a Heavenly experience, or to do anything that you cannot do, or ethically must not do.

One important point is that you should find out why you are here. Everyone has a purpose for living in this life. You can only become good at that if you know exactly what your purpose is (and, of course, what your purpose is not). You can expand that to becoming aware of your entire life plan, which I call the “lucid mirror path”. Every breath and every smallest detail is in there. You will be able to find out that much that you can always follow it. Much important information will not be disclosed too far in advance, however, since that is not compatible with living a wholesome life at this level.

As a free being, you are a co-creator. Creation begins with thought. Blissful thoughts have a high quotient of the inner Light. If you are able to compute the inner Light in your mind before it becomes action, you can live all your life in a state of bliss.

Normally, people’s thoughts are melancholy; that has not change much since antiquity. Melancholy is a mixed condition of inner darkness and Light, with the darkness being dominant. You cannot simply muscle more Light into your mind. You have to have precise technical knowledge how to do that. After reading this book, you are well prepared for such techniques.

The inner Light is computed through the use of mental images, figures, emblematic complexes of figures, the theater of the mind, through metaphor, allegory, and, if it permits enough quasi-sensata data, poetry. A magical symbol for the white Light and the golden Light is the Pentagram (five-pointed star) in a circle, with its tip pointing upwards.

Things to avoid when you want to raise your light quotient are, for example: going to church, reading a newspaper, listening to the mainstream news, watching advertising, listening to loud and violent music, watching a horror movie, reading a horror novel, slandering someone, etc.

Things to do when you want to raise your light quotient are, for example: pet a kitten, reading something uplifting, listen to the baroque music of Johann Sebastian Bach (played by baroque or classical ensembles), looking at paintings by Monet and van Gogh, watching a movie that your Higher Self recommends, helping someone, etc.

Something special to do is to ask for being touched by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a great angel, one of the four angels of Creation, and is the angel of divine Love.

If you want to get the mind to manifest something for you, it reacts to pictures (your mental images). You need to become aware of your mental images. Most people today have mental images that are dark and full of fear, anxieties, etc. That is automatically what you experience in your life.

Clean up your mental images. Feed them with inner Light. That goes along with emotional forgiveness. Let go of the darkness and the dark feelings. They have been man's friends for long enough.

The vision needs to be precise, like seeing it with your eyes, hearing it with your ears, etc. That is why it is so important to learn how to move the sensory depth and detail of reality into your language, and to awaken it from memory. It is like if you are a painter who paints images with mental language in your part of the One Mind. This takes a lot of practice.

The most important step for that is inner purification. That is a lifetime venture. Be sure that you stop feeding yourself, through your senses (eyes, especially) with spiritually and emotionally dark (melancholy, depressing, fearful, etc.) material. There is quite a lot of self-discipline called for, especially when you start this practice. It is comparable to the discipline that you need when you are overweight and start losing it. If you do that and pay attention to what is going on inside you, you can notice that there are dark spirits who will get upset about such a change of behaviour. It means, for them, that they will soon have to leave you. That is painful for them because they feed off of your life energies and drain the inner Light from you.

The best way is to ask your Higher Self to feed images and inner Light to your mind. That is very effective. You will be asked to do specific things to assist with that, which might be, certain yoga practices (that term covers a wide range of things), or similar. Follow the instructions, but beware where they come from. Follow only your Higher Self, or God, or angels.

Clarity in mental vision is hard to reach. Most people have hazy minds because they are not used to clear thinking. All mass religions, and all mass media, make their money from making people's minds hazy. That is, then, called a "belief system", "patriotism", and other such fake names. In a belief system, you cannot reach clarity. Every belief is just the flip side of its doubt.

Clarity is reached in a dedicated mental space that is clear. You need to open such a space in yourself. That space needs to be: open (infinite, unlimited), empty (nothing in it), blissfully Light (no darkness, no shadow in it). Whenever you have one free second, sit still and imagine that space. The point for the space (which, since it is a space, cannot be imagined "clearly") is not clarity but is intensity.

The space is a spacious blissful brightness. Use your imagination and your will to let the space, that is a blissful expansive brightness, crowd out everything else: thought about the past, the future, worries, doubts, questions, chatter in the mind, even the so-called reality that your senses show you. Make it an outward blast of inner Light and bliss. Practice that incessantly. Eventually, your thoughts will form in stunning clarity in that mental space. You will become very different in a positive way through that.

It is natural that the staying force of the universe will place roadblocks in your way. That is a service so that you can exercise your freedom against it, like training against an antagonist force. Realize that that is a service and be grateful for it. Any negative emotion weakens you tremendously, even if it wells up just for a snap of the finger.

The normal human mind is highly impermanent. Transform your part of the mind (you usually call it "your" mind), so it becomes permanent, unchanging. Then you can hold the inner Light, the blissful feeling, and, most importantly, the clear image without changing them. That is the basis of manifestation. It is very difficult to reach.

One exercise is to look at beautiful paintings. You can use descriptive mental language as you scan a picture with your eyes, since that supports your memory. Then stop looking at the painting (close your eyes, for example, or look out of the window) and look at your memory of the painting. Find spots that are not clear in your memory. Then look at the painting again with your eyes and fill in the unclear spots by doing this back-

and-forth repeatedly. Practice a clear visual memory. Start with still images. You can later do this also with film sequences, which is particularly powerful for building a vast inner space.

When you are into building your inner space, find a book that you like that tells a story, and read the book. As you read, move the whole story into your inner space, and “see” it happening there like in real life, with colours and figures and voices and all. Add some special effects (a star, a sun, etc.) for the lighting.

When you sit, or better even when you walk in nature, move your and the whole scenery into your inner space. See yourself there with full clarity. Keep this up all the time. Learn how to do your work “in” your inner space. Keep this up all the time when you work. Make sure that you include the inner Light and the bliss in this.

What makes the inner image world unclear is desire. Learn to live without desire. That requires working closely with your Higher Self and having your Higher Self provide for your (through you per instructions). That is the only way how to avoid desire.

Money is a problem because it is an abstract. I am not aware that one can visualize money well in any way. If there is something you need, without the emotional desire, visualize it intensely and let that take its course.

What are building blocks of intensity? Long duration and unwavering persistence of visualization builds intensity, quasi-sensate clarity builds intensity, and putting yourself into the visualization builds intensity. When you put yourself in the image, that needs to include your emotions and your life force. Basically, you will deposit a part of your soul in the image, making it ensouled. That is a special ancient technique that is very effective. It is not so easy, however.

The image can be a still image. Despite that, however, your soul part that you move, by intention, into your inner image space can, for example, walk around there, sit down, drink something, listen to (beautiful) music, etc. That builds intensity in a particularly strong way.

Now comes the strange part: Meet friends in your vision space. If you are ready for it, you can meet your Higher Self there. It might take the form of a “presence” with an intense blissful feeling in a certain part of your inner space, communicating with you mentally inside your inner space. It might radiate inner Light to you there which you can see in your inner space.

Get involved in inner activities that do not have to do with “I want”. Find things that are beautiful and joyful just by seeing them and feeling their energy. Relax in your inner space and look around. At the beginning it was void (empty). By now, after several weeks have passed, you should see many things there that are well-known to you. The reason is that your thoughts automatically manifest there before they manifest, in this form: through the filter of the Light, in your external physical reality.

This book mentions the “dogma of the contemplation of nature” in Byzantium. That is a very effective method to strengthen your visualization powers. Take walks in nature and appreciate how beautiful it can be (in your area, too, I hope). Big cities have something like a prana (life energy) haze hanging in them that is hostile to people finding inner clarity. That type of trap is something to avoid. If you watch out carefully to what your inner space is doing you will feel the presence of such traps in certain locations. Your inner location thereby becomes a valuable extension of your normal range of perception.

Make your home a place that is particularly open to your inner space and your inner perception. Check your home for any negative energies (that will negatively affect the clarity in your inner vision space). Follow the goal of moving your whole life, in a radical way, into your inner vision space. Withdraw from the external life (in yoga that is “pratyahara”, something that is usually not really explained).

Use your growing senses of inner vision to analyse, without false hesitations, the family and social relations that you have, to find out if you want to continue those relations. Also explore inwardly if there are any social relations that you do not yet have but would like to become involved in. It is very likely that, if you have reached this point, you will be ready for a major relations overhaul, if you have not actually already worked on this already. Envision how you want to be in your inner Light, and become that.

One way to train your inner vision is to use it for learning. You might want to learn additional skills for your work, or learn a language, or might want to study things off of the internet that are of spiritual interest for you. The experience of learning in the inner space and utilizing the intelligence of the Light can be very transformative.

Can you learn from friends who you meet in the Light? One way to learn from them is by just being with them. They might want to tell you about the world where they come from, which is sure to be different from the world you come from. Ask them about the Light, and how they live with it.

If there is an economic calamity, the planet will need to find a new form of organization after money as it is known today. The inner space filled with Light and Love and Wisdom is a suitable replacement for that old order of organizing things. Its vision can give specific and entirely practical everyday guidance to everyone. Wouldn't that be a beautiful world if things, from now on, were to be run in that way – the way of the Light? It is possible, you know.

This is a call to you to become one of the guides. You have all the knowledge how to become one of us. Spread the word to others. Work in the Light on the problems of the time. Dissolve the dark fields that pervade human reality at all levels.

With your powers of discernment, form communities of Light. Work together. Help is always at hand.

Whatever you are going through, it is a test for important steps of your Creation. Be grateful for any obstacles that come into your way and bless them.

Realize that, in the Light, you are working for the only power that is.

Realize that you are never alone.

Realize that it can be the smallest, most trifling thing that leads to the most dramatic result.

Do not believe that you can “know” how the Spirit works, or should work. Just follow it.

Do not feel anguish for those who fail. If they fail, they do so because they are dark inside.

Death is not failure but is, for those of the Light, the opening of a new life.

You are here because you volunteered, even if at the moment you have forgotten that.

From the many things that your feelings tell you, choose only that what you want to.

There is never anything that you “must” do. It is all about what you “want” to do.

Listen to people from the inside. That is usually different than the are on the outside.

Don't trust anyone except your Higher Self, God, and the angels.

The night is darkest before dawn.

APPENDIX:

Auxiliary Materials

Appendix – Contents Overview:

For Essay 5: auxiliary materials for “illumination”, “illuminationism”, and “science of the Lights”

For Essay 6: auxiliary materials for conjecturing about Plethon’s and Bruno’s work as spiritual practice

Abstract:

Concerning Essay 5, the little known concepts of “illumination” and “illuminationism” are illustrated through passages from Psellos and Sohrevardi. The notion of a “science of the Lights” (from Sohrevardi) is pursued a bit further, outside of the historical contexts of the six Essays above.

Concerning Essay 6, a conjecture is presented concerning Plethon’s and Bruno’s work as spiritual practice. This makes use of Tibetan Kalachakra (Kalacakra) tantra that is a strange historically unrelated parallel to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, book lambda. If Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, book lambda, is read with Tibetan eyes, it is a secret instruction manual for meditating on the Unmoved Moving, the source of the primal force of the universe, obviously with the goal, not merely of a theory of an internal universe but, of influencing reality by utilizing the primal force of the universe. The Tibetan Kalachakra tantra, in this respect of relevance, is put in analogy to Aristotle, *Metaphysics* lambda, to show that Aristotle’s key metaphysical principle, the “Unmoved Moving” can be read in a hidden esoteric way precisely as the Tibetan initiates do in Kalacakra tantra in relation to the “Supreme Unchanging” at the center of their metaphysical cosmology.

In summary, the concept of “metaphysics” is resolved through a spiritual reading into “internal cosmology”. It is by no means credibly possible to establish that this runs counter to Aristotle’s text and authorial intentions. This reflects on so far hidden aspects of the Aristotle receptions in Byzantine philosophy, namely the slow and tacit spiritualization of Aristotle, and spiritualization of Aristotelian metaphysics, by means of receptivity. That is, purportedly, regaining Aristotle’s original esoteric meaning inherent to his Atlantean knowledge sources. This further enables present-day reception of the spiritual sacred geometry of Lemuria and Atlantis, so far ignored by mathematicians, that has been released on the internet (Tomo Perisha, sacred geometry).

*Materials for Essay 5:
“Illumination” and “Illuminationism”,
also: “science of the Lights”*

The metaphor of light, naturally understood internally, is a cultural universal. Akhenaten made use of it, as did Plato. Aristotle was much more sober and avoided making metaphor a major focus of his writing. The two words “illumination” and “illuminationism” are, in a general way, related to the universal light metaphor. Specifically, however, they become technical terms of visualized philosophy and theology when they relate to an (one or plural) internal world, or universe. In Greek philosophy, this began in close proximity with the ancient Greek linguistic turn, that is, through the philosophy of the divine Logos, and the Alexandrian school. The term “Logos” reflects that the internal Light is noetic like a language of the mind. The first major figure to develop that aspect was Philon of Alexandria. A somewhat better term than the single English word “Light” is: “Light-Logos” that is descriptive of both main aspects of the phenomenon at issue (mental brightness, and mental language, both simultaneously and indissolubly combined in the phenomenon at issue).

Slightly older than Philo, Lucretius (*De rerum natura*) entered the history of philosophy like a mythical pre-concept of the same phenomenon, the “Light-Logos”. The rediscovery of Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, in the Renaissance in 1417 signifies a replay of the Hellenistic discovery of the Light-Logos, in time for Plethon’s fervent final reception efforts of all things Hellenic in collapsing Byzantium. A fuller term would be, “Logos the language of the Light”, but the shorthand “Light-Logos” may be understood to mean the same: divine thought stream (as key to the philosopher’s life, Aristotle, at the end of the *Nikomachean Ethics*) in words of Light in the theater of the visualizing mind of the imaginal as described by Henry Corbin (to be further understood: in an internal/metaphysical universe of Light).

Divine discourse is incomplete, is monologue, if there is no participating human subject. Mystical union is, ultimately, the awakening of the lightful visual mind of the imaginal to the discourse of the divine in Light-Logos. The deifying meditative practice that follows from this is the speaker role of the human subject in the internal/metaphysical universe of Light, namely participation in the internal Light as Logos qua logos, divine word in discourse. The individuality of the participants is thereby not negated.

In eleventh-century Constantinople, Michael Psellos still fought with constructing the full-blown notions concerning the divine Light of the visualizing mind. He used Greek terms that are, in English scholarship, translated as “illumination”. For example, Charles Barber translates Psellos (*Orat. hag.* 226.676-227.689) in the context of Neo-Platonic ontology as follows (Barber, p. 127):

“While the divine is like unto itself and entirely without change, everything sublunar is unlike and changeable, and as the descent proceeds, this condition deepens. The inferior receives illumination from superior things, not as they are, but as it is able. Divinity is unmoving, but whenever the illumination proceeds hence to the body, this body has moved. For it does not receive the manifestation without change, as this would be impossible. The creating force is shapeless, while the thing that receives the creative force receives some shape and alteration.”

Psellos in that passage, as translated by Barber into English twice using the word “illumination”, identifies the Light (that what “illuminates” is, naturally, Light) as the “creative force”. That is the translated definition

of “illumination” and (modern term) “illuminationism” by Michael Psellos. It has to do with mental Creation by the divine, in such a way that the mind, when it is properly receptive, can visualize it, and thus can become cognizant of it.

To cite a second example, David Jenkins (p. 134 f.), not directly translating a specific passage from Psellos, writes as follows; again the English word “illumination” occurs:

“It is also meant to ensure the absolute transcendence of the One and to avoid the Third Man argument that extends the relationship of a unity to its // particulars ad infinitum. The simultaneous movement between these elements is described as illumination or procession (...) in descent from the One to Matter and as return (...) in ascent back to the One.”

In the passage from Jenkins it become clear (mentally visually clear) that the “illumination” is a mentally spatial phenomenon, and undergoes motion (descent, ascension) in oscillating back and forth between the Neo-Platonic One and the Many. The inner space of this mental visualization, a space of understanding, is the inner universe that I refer to. I feel that it is in this space that mental brightness (luminosity) is experienced by those who are awakened, enlightened, and liberated from sin (karma) which is dark.

In Psellos’ text (Barber, above) there are “bodies” that are “illuminated”; and by receiving illumination, the bodies “change”. If they are illuminated, they become light themselves. Presumably, Psellos is talking about human bodies, for it is, first of all, to them that the inner illumination can come. As Psellos would without doubt explain, illumination comes to humans through their soul, when they are sufficiently aware of their soul and its particular needs for its well-being.

The “science of the Lights”, then, is about the illumination of the soul, and the inner environment in a divine universe of Light where illumination takes place. That is what St. Symeon the New Theologian saw in his visions of Paradise. That is, additionally, that the purported St. Symeon material in Sohrawardi the Persian Illuminationist is about. In the contextualization by Sohrawardi, a passage of his *Hekmat al-Ishraq* present a description of a plurality of Heavenly worlds with illuminated beings in them. The Primary Source of the Light (God, Allah), and the enlightened beings, are, accordingly, what are the “Lights”. The “science of the Lights” is Metaphysics in the state of illumination. It is the same metaphysics as Aristotle describes, but it is read by people who are themselves ready for the esoteric understanding of Light-Logos in the metaphysical realms. That is a visualization of the moving force, described by Aristotle by analogy to Love in book lambda.

In Byzantine receptions, thus (Studite line through Psellos and John Italos, possible reaching into Persian to Sohrawardi, as proposed in Essay 5 above), metaphysics underwent a subtle change in its reading. It changed from a philosophy of the metaphysical, to a visualized description of the enlightened realms of the divine. That is a Christian theme, but it coincides with an internal development within Greek philosophy in the millennium of Byzantine receptions.

As a mental exercise, not necessarily in any proven historical lineage context with the Byzantine “illuminationists” (if one wants to label St. Symeon, Stethatos, Psellos, and Italos so, after/with Joannou), I would like to move to the Persian illuminationist Sohrawardi and his main writing, the “Philosophy of Illumination” (*Hikmat al-ishraq*, or *Hekmat al-esraq*). For decades, the French luminary Henry Corbin was the only expert able to comment competently on this Persian corner of the history of philosophy. Recently, the scholarship basis for this has been broadening somewhat (see “Resources” in Essay 5 above, and below). Tom Cheetham so far has written five books about Henry Corbin and his ideas, making that information available to a wide English-speaking readership for the first time. (The book in the “Resources” below is his first of the five.) The Oxford scholar Nicolai Sinai has translated Sohrawardi’s main book into German and provides the first textual commentary, published in 2011.

The consensus of the newer authors is that Corbin over-emphasized the mystical side of Sohrawardi. It is real, of course. However, Sohrawardi is not more than, say, perhaps, one-half mystic. The other half of him is a

rational, and rather critical and skeptical, philosopher. When Corbin insisted that Sohrevardi is a theosophist, not a philosopher, he had a good point; but the philosopher is also prominently present in Sohrevardi.

The Hekmat al-ishraq demonstrates this point by its organizational structure. There is a very brief introduction. Mainly, the introduction mentions the notion of a “science of the Lights” (§ 4; the paragraph numbering was established by Corbin in his French edition). Then, the book pursues two very different lines of thought, and is accordingly divided into two parts (Part One, Part Two).

The ontological-metaphysical panorama part is only in Part Two. In Part One, to the surprise of those who have come to see Sohrevardi only as theosophist, he deals with Aristotelian logic and criticizing it. That reminds me of the discussion about Plethon’s teacher Elissaeus (above) and the possibility that he was studying Arabic, or Persian, logics.

Sohrevardi’s opening argument for Part One makes it clear, I find, what he is doing: Sohrevardi gives us an esoteric reading of Aristotelian logics. What does that mean?

Plato, a brilliant metaphorical writer of philosophy, introduced the metaphors of the sun, its light, the cave, and its relative darkness (visually and emotionally). Aristotle, on the other hand, in Sohrevardi’s sight, complements Plato’s “Light” through logic’s “Logos”. Aristotelian logics in the Persian esoteric reading is the other half of the phenomenon under discussion, not the “Light” but the “Logos”. This understanding of logics presupposes that the categories, concepts, premises, and syllogistic processes of logics are visualized in the inner realms of Light. When visualization occurs, the proceedings of logics become recognizable as part of the divine discourse, enabling human participation.

Esoteric logics is illumination of the soul.

That is, I think, relevant to understand Plethon and Bruno, in their efforts to allegorize, through “deities”, the mental, in internal visualization. In this understanding, the “science of the Lights” is, first of all, the visual understanding of logics in the mental realms of inner Light. The Light is only one aspect of the phenomenon at issue, the other aspect being the Logos (divine discourse of Creation, moving force, Love).

Sohrevardi argues, for example, that Aristotle’s concept of the “essential” (substance – accident) cannot lead to full certainty of knowledge. The reason for this is that a human can never know if the list of essentials in a given is complete, or is merely incomplete. (Sohrevardi, Hekmat, § 15). Cognition is the correspondence of internal images with the perceived (§ 8); that is Platonic, but also Hermetic. (It is implied that the internal image must be conscious, not subconscious.)

The “syllogistic” process of esoteric Logics is the same as “Kundalini” in the systems of India. It is the passage of Light-Logos from the One to the Many (descension), or vice versa, the passage of Light-Logos from the Many to the One (ascension). That implies to interpret the One as the highest Archetype, in a Jungian sense (Corbin was a colleague of Jung at Eranos and was, himself, an archetypal thinker like Jung). The “images” are thus emanations of the highest Archetype (my interpretation). Accordingly, the “Logos” (i.e., the “language of the Light”), is thus indeed purely mentally-visual in that it is a language that proceeds in a form of realistic mental hieroglyphs. I believe that Plethon and Bruno with the so-called “pagan” deific symbols were working on decoding the high mystery of the language of the Light, Logos, and, at least partly, did succeed (Bruno, as demonstrated by his extreme mnemonic abilities).

If indeed esoteric logics is Logos it is an extremely mentalized and visualized flow of Kundalini in a symbolically controlled form. Kundalini is the Sanskrit term for the moving force of the cosmic center, which is (Aristotle:) the “Unmoved Moving” and (Tibetan Kalachakra tantra:) the “Supreme Unchanging”. Swami Narayananda calls Kundalini the “primal power in man”. It is the “Unmoved Moving” flowing through man when man, through yogic and other ancient and modern spiritual exercises, has been well conditioned for this. The fullness of the “Light” at the “One” is, with the Sanskrit term, Kundalini, descriptively, the “primal power” of the universe.

When the “images” are “forces”, albeit subtle forces, they are of necessity linked with, and controlled by, “essences”. These can either be angels in the technical sense (including also demons) who have no individual free will and are individually unfree extensions of the divine will; or, in the alternative, the controlling beings (Sohravardi: controlling lights/ruling lights) can be free-will beings such as we, humans. It is possible for humans, as we will see in a moment, for humans to ascend into the Light, namely then when they attain Salvation.

That leads us to Part Two of Sohravardi’s Hekmat al-eshraq. There, the Persian philosopher-theosophist deals with the ontological-metaphysical grand panorama of spiritual existence, and realms. He has an elaborate philosophical framework for this, which is Persian Neo-Platonic. Essentially, it is the illuminationism that, several decades prior to Sohravardi, was expounded by Michael Psellos in Constantinople in Byzantium, a neighbor and also a trading partner of Persia.

Part Two consists of five rather independent treatises. The main panoramic summary is the Fifth Treatise, which is also the ending of the entire Hekmat book (§§ 229-281). Its title describes its subject matter as: Resurrection, Prophecy, and Dreams. Corbin has added captions in the entire book, and for this particular Fifth Treatise, the captions in their succession read:

On the transmigration of souls

How the pure Lights find their Salvation in the World of Light

On the conditions of the human souls after their separation from the body (§§ 244-248)

On evil and non-salvation

How, from the sublime Existences, infinitely many created Existences can arise

On the cause of predictions and the knowledge of hidden things

On the classes of secret inspiration that are imparted to the Perfect

(etc.)

What I believe to be the, quantitatively small, but most important, St. Symeon material in Sohravardi is contained in § 247. This is the section that was mainly discussed by Marcotte in the fifth Essay above. The “fourth realm” is a totally novel insight in Sohravardi, missing in the list of all his Islamic predecessors. As I explained in my fifth Essay, I do not believe that Sohravardi had the visionary abilities to gain such an insight on his own. The only possible known source in the greater proximity of Sohravardi is, in Byzantium, St. Symeon the New Theologian. I do not feel that Sohravardi simply made this up as his brainchild, but feel that he was sincerely working with some type of strange material that he was trying to make sense of. This could have reached him, for example, via John Italos, originating from St. Symeon as otherwise unpublished material, written or oral, or both (see fifth Essay above). The particular differentiations in §§ 244-248 are not in any way typologically similar to Zoroastrian or any other known Persian material. Since they are uniquely original, I provide in the following my English translation of Sohravardi, Hekmat, §§ 244-248, from the 2011 German edition of N. Sinai, less than three small-sized pages:

On the conditions of the human souls after their separation from the body

Sohravardi, Hekmat al-eshraq, §§ 244-248

§ 244. The blessed of average character, and the pure ascetes, can find salvation in the world of the suspended images, the location of whose appearance is to be found beneath the sublime barriers. [There] they can call images into being and have the ability for: They make present: tastes, forms and pleasant sounds and other according to their desire. These forms are more perfect than those that exist among us, since the locations of

appearance and media of the latter are imperfect, while the former are perfect. They are, there, imparted life eternal, for their ties to the barriers and dark Existences remain and the sublime barriers will not pass.

§ 245. Concerning the non-blessed, however, “who kneel round-about hell” and who “in the morning lie in their houses” - independent of whether the transmigration to other bodies is true or not (for the arguments for both opposite opinions concerning this are weak) - it holds valid: When they are released from the citadels that are inherent to the barriers they are imparted shadows from the suspended forms.

§ 246. The suspended forms are not the Platonic ideas, because the Platonic ideas are light-filled and permanent, while amongst the suspended forms there are both dark and illuminated: For the blessed, radiant and hairless forms are determined, of which they are pleased, for the non-blessed, however, black and blueish. Since the suspended citadels are not located or similar, and have no substratum, they may have a location of appearance in this world; perhaps they even move from one location of appearance to another. From them, a certain kind of jinns and demons goes forth. An immeasurable number of the population of Darband, and innumerable inhabitants of a city named Miyanidj have witnessed that they have seen these forms many times, namely in such a way that a majority of the city saw them at a large congregation, so that one cannot simply dismiss it out-of-hand. That did not merely occur once or twice but they were manifest the entire time while the hands of the people were unable to reach them. A different experience that was made are citadels in armour that one cannot touch. Their location of appearance is not the *sensus communis* [they are not merely figments within the soul; textual commentary by NS p. 422]. They are armed nearly over the whole body, resist the body, and fight with the people.

§ 247. I myself have made reliable experiences that point to the fact that there are four worlds: The reigning lights, the governing lights, two kinds of barriers and suspended forms, which can either be dark as well as illuminated and in which consists the punishment of the non-blessed. From these souls and suspended forms go forth the jinns and demons, and in them are situate the blessings of the imagination. [Note SG: That latter is Henry Corbin’s famous “*mundus imaginalis*” in Sohrawardi, but not only in him. SG] These suspended images can newly arise or perish like reflections in a mirror or fantasms. They can be created by the ruling Lights of the spheres, so that they serve them as locations of appearance with the pure. Those of them who are created by the ruling Lights are light-filled and are accompanied by a character of noble spirit. The fact that such images have been envisioned and cannot be ascribed to the *sensus communis* indicates that the existence of a counterpart is not of absolute necessity for the envisioning; the envisioning depends only upon the existence of a counterpart insofar as it represents a particular type of becoming revealed.

§ 248. The world of which we have spoken we declare as “world of immaterial apparitions”. Through it, the resurrection of the body, the divine apparitions, and all prophecies are manifested. From certain souls of average people, to whom freely soaring apparitions are imparted, whose locations of appearance are Heavenly spheres, go forth, according to various classes of spheres, innumerable classes of angels, level by level. The Saints, however, who are erudite in divine wisdom, ascend to a place that is higher than the angel world.

Resources:

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Jenkins, David; *Psellos’ Conceptual Precision*; in: Charles Barber; David Jenkins (editors); *Reading Michael Psellos*; Leiden, Boston 2006, pp. 131-151

al-Suhrawardi; *Philosophe der Erleuchtung, Hikmat al-ishraq*; aus dem Arabischen übersetzt und herausgegeben von Nicolai Sinai; Berlin 2011

Cheetham, Tom; *The World Turned Inside Out: Henry Corbin and Islamic Mysticism*; Woodstock 2003

Swami Narayananda; *The Primal Power in Man or Kundalini Shakti*; Odder, Yoga Trust (Denmark) 2001

Materials for Essay 6:
Plethon's and Bruno's Work as Spiritual Practice,
Analogy to Tibetan Kalachakra Tantra,
Practice of Cosmic Kundalini

Even more generally, esotericism is visualism of the mind and of mental processes. An interim function during the development of the light-being (while human) is the use of emblems, metaphors, symbols. These drop away as higher levels of awareness are reached. The internal universe stands as real - actually: far more real - than the "external" universe that humans deem to be "real" through their (deluded-external) physical-body senses. The reality of the "external" universe is, ultimately, nearly nil; it is mostly a delusion caused by the malfunction of the astral senses of the soul, blockaded by ego from reaching the physical body.

Spiritual cosmology is the field of the awakening soul, and fully, of the awakened soul which, due to its awakening, no longer has a place amongst human. The place of the awakening soul is the internal universe. It is, there, the counterpart of the human body of the external world. The life force of a human being can transfer through the barrier of transcendence from temporality to eternity that way. An indicator of its transfer is the mental visibility of the soul beyond the veil of Maya, inside the universe of Light.

The perception of the soul of its physical body is as a shadow, an external view from within the internal. Awakening in the world of Light-Logos, the soul incarnates there in a new body. That is a resurrection body if one accepts that loaded term. In Buddhism, that is the same as the "rainbow body" that can actually let the physical body in the external world vanish. The transference of one's life force from the external to the internal forms "Buddha nature", which is a new and far advanced form of one's life compared to the old physical life form with a contaminated Kundalini, trauma, etc. Positive immortality is only possible through such an awakened internal Heavenly double, either one or several. (That is not the same as the "Higher Self" but is a type of bilocation straddling worlds leading to a multidimensional self in strong connectivity with the divine.)

There are helpful preliminaries for this presentation. A well-known word today is "yoga". That can be used to convey some general, universal ideas about changing oneself spiritually. It is possible to change oneself spiritually due to the fact that every individual human being has an individual free will. Spiritual change is an exercise of the individual free will.

A yoga sage, Patanjali, in early medieval India, developed a system of yoga. It is called the "Ashtanga" (which means, literally: "eight branch structure"). The Ashtanga has eight branches. That structure contains the general wisdom of yoga when one understands to read it, which takes a long time to gestate.

Hidden in Patanjali's eight limb structure is an even more general structure, a structure of "two". It is:

ONE: CALMING THE MIND (with 1 to 4 of 8)

TWO: SEEING THE MIND (with 5 to 8 of 8)

"Calming the mind" means to relax a perturbed soul. The strongest symptom of a perturbed soul is fear. ONE is designed to release the soul from fear, in particular, from the fear of death. Fear is an overpowering emotion. ONE drives a wedge between fear and the individual self, namely, be reflecting, thinking, being silent, listening.

TWO is a four-step of visualizations that leads up to mystical union with one's personal Higher Self.

The full structure, including the hidden top-level bifurcation (ONE, TWO), and the total of eight limbs, is, thus, as follows:

ONE: CALMING THE MIND

- 1. the "dos,"*
- 2. and the "don'ts"*
- 3. the physical postures ("asanas")*
- 4. breath control to block fear ("pranayama")*

TWO: SEEING THE MIND

- 5. awakening the inner universe ("pratyahara")*
- 6. concentration ("dhyana")*
- 7. finding the void in meditation ("dharana")*
- 8. union with your Higher Self ("samadhi")*

That simple system contains the spiritual wisdom of ages. The "yoga" is often, in the west, in particular, identified only with the "postures". Outright stupid westerners (in this respect) make it an athletic contest. Firstly, a competitive sense is counterproductive in yoga. Secondly, of the three aspects of physical exercise (cardiovascular training, strength training, and stretching), yoga belongs, principally, neither to the first nor to the second but belong to the third (stretching), for the purpose of physical yoga is

flexibility.

In India, traditionally, you are considered biologically as old as your flexibility indicates. Yoga in the west is often misused to decrease flexibility, for example, as a form, primarily, of strength training. The purpose of yoga postures ("asanas") is to

cultivate inner stillness.

That is best done in silence and solitude. The second yogic body work, the breath control ("pranayama") is specifically geared to take fear-control out of your breathing. If you breath slowly, calmly, deeply (with many details here untold) then over time (with continuous practice, such as, in bed before going to sleep) you can overcome deep fears. That is very good for the condition of your heart, for example, which is attacked by fear. The actual psychosomatic fear center is near the front of the body one or two fingers beneath the navel (at the third chakra). Just as fear blocks you,

you are able, alone, to block fear.

It takes technical knowledge for this. It can, today, be found on the internet, and in yoga books (most acknowledged author is Yogi B.K.S. Iyengar). Imagine a life, perhaps not without fear, but a life in which fear can no longer control you and can no longer hijack your heart, because

liberating knowledge of technical spirituality

has made you stronger! How much money would you be willing to pay for alleviating your inner emotions fears – but it is for free just for the learning-it-yourself and the doing-it-yourself!

The ONE is the rational half of yoga. The TWO, however, raises the practitioner into the supra-rational, and awakens the supramental (in the sense of Sri Aurobindo). The beginning step of the TWO (which is, 5, "pratyahara") is the least understood of the Ashtanga. Information is available, but it is rather scattered. One general result of studying Byzantine philosophy is, a vastly improved understanding of pratyahara ("awakening the inner universe").

Much that is said in this book belongs, technically, into branch 5 of the Ashtanga, pratyahara (awakening the inner universe). There is, today, a quantity of relevant technical knowledge that I would briefly like to present in the following.

There are pertinent writings by David Frawley in some of his books:

In “Yoga and Ayurveda” (1999/2009), Frawley dedicates chapter 16 to: Pratyahara, The Forgotten Limb of Yoga”. That can also be found online as a web page and as a pdf. That says most of what one needs to now in strictly technical terms about pratyahara. The noted lack of understanding concerning pratyahara is part of the phenomenon of a special “pratyahara barrier”, which is the same as the “pre-astral barrier” (of soul awakening, astral awakening). (I do not want to repeat the freely available text here.)

In “Ayurveda and the Mind”, Frawley remarks that Pratyahara can employ “internal objects” in order to take the mind of the senses off the external reality and can thereby redirect it to inner worlds (p. 282). The key requirement is, thus, the quasi-sensate nature of the internal objects. That is a big subject in Giordano Bruno and his intellectual forbears (Ramon Llull, Plethon, Ficino and the Italian Renaissance Platonists). Pratyahara is, as is a standard description, “control of the senses”, just like pranyama (nr. 4 in the Ashtanga) is control of the breath and of its fear factor (cf. p. 281). Pratyahara is meditative and is described with an alternate term, simply, as “visualization” (pp. 290 f.). Under that aspect, all of the Byzantine millennium is, in its mental development, an approach to, and through, the pratyahara barrier (pre-astral barrier), into the astral world (world of the souls, of the “Lights”).

BKS Iyengar defines pratyahara thus: “withdrawal and emancipation of the mind from the domination of the senses and exterior objects” (Light on Yoga, p. 21). His great yoga book is predominantly about the ONE, not so much the TWO of yoga.

In textbook descriptions of pratyahara, as far as I am aware of them, there is always something missing. The question is: If I “withdraw” my senses (pratyahara, withdrawal), what else do I direct them to? Pratyahara, after everything said in this book and my two “Framework” volumes, is the awakening of the inner universe. That is what takes our external senses away from a false reality image, and redirects our sensory awareness to the energetic (if you want: quantum) back side of reality, which is the astral world (plasmatic world of souls).

The Christ Consciousness of Guru Jesus was an extremely highly developed “Cosmic Consciousness of the Heavenly Father” (Paramahansa Yogananda, vol. 1, p. 22). That is another way of terming the “internal universe”. The “Second Coming of Christ” is the awakening of precisely that same universal consciousness in man.

Vesna Wallace is a scholar of the cosmic consciousness in Tibetan Buddhism (in its “Kalacakra” tantra, that is, Tibetan spiritual cosmology). Cosmic consciousness is a high and very advanced form of inner mental space that can be practiced (not merely “known” in an intellectual or rational sense) in meditation. It is an advanced practice of the mundus imaginalis, utilizing the individual free will to influence cosmic change. She points out that Kalacakra tantra is a north Indian group of writings, and practices, not limited to Tibet. Her book is a scholarly book published in the Oxford University Press. No secrets of meditational practice can be expected from it; it is in that sense, like practically all western scholarship, incomplete to the point of being of little or no practical use.

The Kalacakra tantra is a Tibetan/Indian twin of Aristotelian cosmology, especially in Metaphysics, book lambda (the “Unmoved Moving”). Both (Kalacakra tantra, and Aristotelian metaphysics), transmit, with parts missing, pre-ancient teachings from Lemuria and Atlantis (see my Framework Commentary, vol. 2, in its entirety).

What is missing in both of the transmission lines today is the utilization of the key visualization device of the Lemurians and Atlanteans, which is the geometry of the “Flower of Life”. That geometry has strong theurgic properties, attracting, expanding and uplifting the soul, in a sense, a gate-opener into the astral

realms. The Flower of Life geometry, including such features as squaring the circle more geometrico, etc., has been released on the internet (Tomo Perisha, sacred geometry, cited earlier in this book).

It is my contention that a full practice of pratyahara/metaphysics/Kalacakra requires a sound and learned working knowledge of the said pre-ancient geometry. That geometry alone enables meditators to access the cosmic center in meditation. It is center of blue light at the middle of the universe (external and internal).

The primal power, Kundalini, is the force of the “Unmoved Moving” (“Supreme Unchanging”) in man. It unfolds mainly through visualizations of the internal Light-Logos, externalizing into the internal (and thus, withdrawing drastically from the external of the physical senses) through instruments such as Aristotelian logics, when they are understood, as in Sohrevardi, Hekmat al-eshraq, esoterically.

There is “sense withdrawal” and, additionally, “prana withdrawal” of the life force of an individual human being. The latter, when it leads to transfer of the life force into the world of light, is the stepping stone of biological immortality, of beings on the fifth dimension (counted when we are on the third dimension) of materialized existence. The essential shift is made through the awakening of the soul (astral body, fifth body, fourth energy body, cf. my Framework vol. 2) and its rebirth in the internal universe.

We may conjecture that Plethon’s and Giordano Bruno’s work was spiritual work along these lines. It was performed in secret and at great risk of running afoul of the sinister control Church. Those sad times of darkness are coming to an end in the smoldering ruins of manas, the old egoic mortal mind. It is up to us to complete the work of the pioneers of the spirit to build a new world of conscious awakening, awareness, peace and happiness, under the internal guidance of beings from the higher worlds. It is no longer appropriate for a population who are fully in the grips of spiritual blindness and fear to despoil this beautiful world.

Resources:

Frawley, David; *Yoga and Ayurveda: Self-Healing and Self-Realization*; Twin Lakes 1999 (reprint 2009)

-----; *Ayurveda and the Mind: The Healing of Consciousness*; Twin Lakes 1997 (third printing 2007)

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