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The Ethical Dilemmas of Euripides's Hippolytus: Sophrosyne and Shame

Abstract | In this paper we attempt a philosophical analysis of Euripides's *Hippolytus*, first presented in 428 BC. The characters of this play face strong ethical dilemmas, which make their conflict unavoidable. However, there is an employment of certain ethical aspects in the thought of Euripides that go beyond the sphere of deontological observations. While for Hippolytus, there is a normative context regarding his life, a plan that does not tolerate any change or difference, Phaedra is consumed with passions that are improper for a royal wife and stepmother. Euripides takes the opportunity to explore how the ethical is imbued in the metaphysical only with a view to transforming the powers of the gods and Fate into the realm of human action where the capability for rational choice is still preserved. Thus, human virtue remains the central characteristic that can alter the circumstances. *Sophrosyne*, one of the major virtues, is not easy to attain; in this tragedy its different interpretations are what causes most of the chaos and pain.

Keyvords | Euripides – Hippolytus – Ethics – Virtue – Sophrosyne – Shame – Tragedy

Prologue

Dishonored by Hippolytus, Aphrodite revenges herself by inflaming Phaedra, his stepmother, with love for him. Betraying her confidence, her nurse reveals her desire to Hippolytus, who is infuriated. Phaedra commits suicide upon becoming aware of the betrayal. A tablet around her neck accuses Hippolytus of rape, which outrages her husband Theseus, who exiles his son. Hippolytus is killed when his father's curse is fulfilled by Poseidon. While in his death agonies, Artemis convinces Theseus that Hippolytus is innocent. Father and son are reconciled.

Three Interpretations

Our approach analyses the three scholars whom we believe come closest to our interpretation of this extraordinarily controversial play: Helen North, Adrian Poole and Bernard Williams. By piecing together their insights, in accordance with our own views, we contend that many of

the difficult philosophical questions this tragedy has stimulated can be better understood, if not resolved. Let us begin with the most straightforward of the scholars, Helen North.[1]

As befits a monograph on *sophrosyne* (σωφροσύνη), Helen North argues that *Hippolytus* turns on the inability of the protagonists to employ properly this cardinal concept. We consider some of her most important ideas regarding *sophrosyne*:

a) "Feminine *sophrosyne* (chastity, modesty, obedience, inconspicuous behavior) remains the same throughout Greek history."[2]
b) "The tension between the heroic and the moderate, the spirited and the gentle, the *agathos* and the *sophron* [is] one of the persistent themes of Greek literature."[3]
c) "*Sophrosyne*: soundness of mind, that is, the state of having one's intellect unimpaired."[4]
d) "*Sophrosyne* does not acquire religious significance until its meaning is expanded to include the fear of overstepping boundaries, since it is this offense, above all others, that calls down the anger of the gods."[5]
e) "It is in the growth of the *polis* that we see conditions especially favorable to the development of *sophrosyne*."[6]
f) "By the end of the sixth century a link was established between *sophrosyne* and the general idea of restraint or even abstinence, as is clear not only from its connection with sobriety […] but also from the even earlier usage of *sophrosyne* to designate feminine *arete*. The qualities expected in women in Homeric society (beauty, domestic skills, and chastity) continue to comprise feminine arete throughout antiquity […]."[7]

To these general findings, she specifies that:

g) "To Euripides *sophrosyne* is one aspect of the rational element, eternally in conflict with the irrational. As such it has a wide scope but appears chiefly as the control of the emotions and appetites, and now becomes predominantly moral rather than intellectual. Only for Euripides among the tragic poets does *sophrosyne* normally mean self control."[8]

Although we have no difficulty with accepting these ideas as a general context, some differentiating remarks still need to be made. First of all, regarding comment (a) it needs to be taken into consideration that *sophrosyne* cannot safely be interpreted on gender difference. "Control of desire," "prudence" and "moderation" are the core of the meaning of the word and therefore apply to both sexes.[9] In Euripides, as Adriaan Rademaker upholds, there are eighteen different meanings of *sophrosyne*, and often the drama unfolds exactly through the conflict of the different meanings of the term.[10] Rademaker avoids a strict dichotomy between an intellectual and an ethical sense of the term *sophrosyne*, something that partially contradicts North's comments ([c] & [g]). *Sophrosyne* as "soundness of mind" cannot be taken only to mean an "unimpaired

[1] Helen North, *Sophrosyne: Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966).
[2] Ibid., 1.
[3] Ibid., 2.
[4] Ibid., 3.
[5] Ibid., 4.
[6] Ibid., 12.
[7] Ibid., 21.
[8] Ibid., 33.
[9] *A Companion to Tragedy*, ed. Rebecca Bushnell (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), passim.
[10] Adriaan Rademaker, *Sophrosyne and the Rhetoric of Self-Restraint: Polysemy and Persuasive Use of an Ancient Greek Value term (Mnemosyne Suppl. 259)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 1–14.

intellect." It can be the opposite of "mania"[11] but also describes a psychological approach towards responsibility and shame (key terms that will be discussed in the references of Bernard Williams). The radical problem remains that the meaning of the term *sophrosyne*, along with a multitude of other terms (such as *Aidos*), cannot be easily transferred to the English language. So, even if (according to Rademaker) for men *sophrosyne* generally means "control of desire" and for women "fidelity," both are invariably (even to different degrees) expressions of human action, common to both genders. The same goes for *sophrosyne* regarding the Polis or social status (cf. North, comment [e]), or the religious significance of *sophrosyne* (cf. comment [d]). Thucydides [8.64] gives meaning to *sophrosyne* as "a moderate form of government" whereas *sophrosyne*, in the Euripidean tragedy, is also meant as the opposite of *Hubris*, or as piety.[12] It also appears that the *sophrosyne* of Phaedra is at certain times similar to the *sophrosyne* of Hippolytus while at other times it is completely different. However, it is quite clear that North's view that "for Euripides *sophrosyne* normally means self control" does not hold true. At least in *Hippolytus*, *sophrosyne* is also connected with a right decision and rational choice, responsibility, the psychological reflections of shame, and many other taints.

Considering the above initial thoughts, the application of North's ideas about *sophrosyne* on *Hippolytus* is rather disappointing. She does not seem to appreciate how the range of meanings she accords *Sophrosyne* (along with the others that we have provided) illuminate some of the central issues of the play: (1) the profound difference between Hippolytus and Phaedra, which far transcend normal tensions between genders in fifth century Athens; (2) the complexity of the concept of shame and its interpenetration with the concept of guilt, which *sophrosyne* masks, but which Euripides struggles to parse.[13]

North seems to take Hippolytus's final defense at face value. He says: "Phaedra behaved with self-control [esophronesen][14] although she had not the power to be chaste [sophronein], while I, who have the power, have not used it well"[15] (1034–5). North comments: "The play on two slightly different nuances of *sophronein*—'to control oneself' and 'to be naturally chaste'—is impossible to render into English."[16] However difficult it may be to deal with *sophronein* in English as a general matter, *Hippolytus* centers on making these "nuances" very distinct indeed. The distinction is perhaps inadvertently suggested by North by her usage of "naturally." Hippolytus repeatedly asserts that he has come by his *sophrosyne*, always meaning "chastity," "naturally" in the sense that no one taught it to him and that he was born with it and therefore comes by his attraction to Artemis naturally as well. North seems to accept this point: "In the *Hippolytus* Artemis is the divine force that attracts the young hero; this force is manifested in him as a fanatical chastity, and whenever he boasts of his *sophrosyne*, as he so often does (995, 1007, 1034–5, 1100, 1364–5),

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[11] Cf. the specific term in Henry Liddell and Robert Scott, *Greek–English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

[12] Piety in excess could, in that sense, be an avoidance of *sophrosyne* as certain moderation. For this reason, one of Hippolytus' failures is his "excessive" behavior to the gods.

[13] Cf. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Steven Lattimore (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), A. 1. 84: "αἰδὼς σωφροσύνης πλεῖστον μετέχει" [aidos partakes of sophrosyne a great deal]. Also cf. Douglas Laidlaw Cairns, "The Concept of Aidos in Greek Literature from Homer to 404 B.C." (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, 1987), 332: "In the *Hippolytus* aidos plays its most prominent Euripidean role, and it is a considerable motivating force in both the central characters."

[14] North here means that Phaedra behaved with self-control by choosing to die.

[15] Respectively, Hippolytus has "not used it well" because he has kept his oath to be silent and thus he will be punished by Theseus, not for being chaste. Here it is not chastity that causes any punishment. Hippolytus also has no apparent reason to admit such a thing (that chastity brought him to disaster).

[16] North, *Sophrosyne*, 81.

it is chastity that he means."[17] Hippolytus is not overpowered by Artemis. Hippolytus does not need to control himself to either worship or deny Artemis or Aphrodite. He worships the one and denies the other *naturally*.[18] Phaedra, on the other hand, practices the *sophron* attitude of a mother, wife and queen, things expected by her role,[19] although there is a strong inner reference imbued by *aidos* (shame). Thus we are facing the confrontation, if not collision, of the natural *sophrosyne* of Hippolytus (however justified he is to believe in it) and the acquired *sophrosyne* of Phaedra that leads her to protect her name and her family. It is noteworthy that both types of *sophrosyne*, if they are indeed comprehended as such by the two protagonists, lead them to tragedy. Neither the "natural" *sophrosyne* of Hippolytus safeguards his life, nor the regal and feminine (but always taken as acquired) *sophrosyne* of Phaedra protects her life and good name.

North appreciates that Phaedra is in a radically different situation:

> Unlike Hippolytus, Phaedra cannot claim to be *sophron* by her very nature. Her *Sophrosyne* is an acquired virtue, which proves to be just as inadequate as the "natural" virtue of Hippolytus (400–1), but in a different way. Phaedra confesses that, in common with the rest of humanity, she knows what is right but cannot put it into practice (380–1).[20]

Evidently, just like in *Medea*, another strong example in Euripides of the same confession, knowledge of the good does not suffice for *sophrosyne*. Phaedra refers to that with great clarity in the verses 373–430, where she also refers to the curse that women have brought on their homes and on their husbands. Nonetheless, North's remark that Phaedra is not *sophron* by her very nature may, indeed quite antithetically, shed some light on the social and gender roles that she has undertaken; yet by no means is it a justified comment in an overall theorization of the queen's character and praxis.

North appreciates the fanaticism of Hippolytus: "His *sophrosyne* is genuine but pitifully limited. Chastity alone is not the total virtue: *Meden agan* […] and *Gnothi sauton* are inseparable from *Sophrosyne*, but Hippolytus is without moderation or self-knowledge."[21] More to the point, he is without "masculine" *sophrosyne*, by North's own understanding of the term. "While masculine and feminine chastity are both described by the word *Sophrosyne*, they derive from different aspects of this virtue: the masculine from self-control, resistance to excess, the opposite of *hubris*; the feminine from obedience or dutifulness."[22] And remember her words quoted at the beginning of this section: "The qualities expected in women in Homeric society (beauty, domestic skills and chastity) continue to comprise feminine arete throughout antiquity […]."[23] In the context of her own analysis of *sophrosyne*, it is difficult to conclude as she does that: "In the futile effort to overcome her passion by self-control […] Euripides sees another failure of the

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[17] Ibid., 79.

[18] Cf. verses 79–80 [Euripides, *Hippolytus*, ed. and trans. David Kovacs (Cambridge, MA ; London: Harvard University Press, 1995) All quotations from this edition unless cited by another author.]. Hippolytus has αἰδώς [shame], piety, and natural *sophrosyne* as he says. Since they are natural, obviously they do not come from teaching. But Phaedra μαθήσεται σωφρονεῖν (731) "is going to teach him," and he also uses the term διδαξάτω [to be taught] for women. They both want to teach others *sophrosyne*. The one who does not have natural *sophrosyne* is an inferior. That is why Hippolytus feels morally superior.

[19] Cf. Elaine Fantham, *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 68–127.

[20] North, *Sophrosyne*, 81.

[21] Ibid., 80.

[22] Ibid., 76.

[23] Ibid., 21.

rational" (949–57). We would say that rather than a failure of the rational it seems to be a failure of the human life within the cosmos, an evident lack of stability, a clear sign of existential anguish and pain inflicted by the gods.

First of all, does not Phaedra restrain herself, in the face of an overpowering desire implanted in her by Aphrodite, to the point of denying her own life? She does not approach Hippolytus, declare herself, much less sleep with him. If this be not chastity, it definitely is a behavioral equivalent. *Pace* St. Augustine. It certainly is self-control, unless self-control is defined as an ability to resist an all-powerful goddess in league with natural and necessary human sexual desire.[24] An odd definition to say the least. Secondly, we cannot see how this is a failure of the rational. Phaedra makes a rational choice that she cannot live with the public knowledge of her desire. She is similar to Ajax, who cannot live having committed shameful acts, however unintentional. Although she is not responsible for the desire in the sense of intention, she feels, like Ajax, responsible for its consequences.[25] We will have more to say about this in our discussion of Williams. In conclusion, North seems to make Hippolytus and Phaedra equivalents in terms of *sophrosyne*. By failing to apply her own meanings of *sophrosyne*, she not only distorts an important theme of the play, but North is unfair to an admirable woman.

Like Helen North, Adrian Poole[26] is not engaged in a full-scale analysis of *Hippolytus*. We do not therefore know what he might think of a great many of the issues the play entails. Nevertheless, his unusual defense of Hippolytus is suggestive and useful in our effort to understand the philosophical underpinnings of this tragedy. Far from softening Hippolytus's misogyny, Poole emphasizes it, seeming to raise it to a spiritual, almost metaphysical, level: Hippolytus fears more than contact with sexual fluids; he cannot abide the idea of being touched by a woman in the flesh, in speech, or in his imagining. The very idea of the feminine is anathema. Of course, with the dubious exception of the virgin and recluse Artemis, Poole believes that Hippolytus's attraction and worship of Artemis, a goddess that one cannot touch and who will not touch him is a "relation of beauty."[27] Whatever their aesthetic appeals to Hippolytus or Poole, this relationship reinforces abhorrence of the feminine.[28]

Hippolytus loathes the idea of mortal women sharing in the exchanges of sex and language, the body and the mind or spirit. It would be tempting but too simple to say that Hippolytus fears and hates women because he wishes to live purely in the realm of the spirit and to deny the realm of the body.[29]

Poole, however, finds something admirable in Hippolytus:

> What he does aspire to is the idea of a perfect regulation of the body. The physical activities in which he indulges are all determined by the idea of control, over his own body, over the

[24] Hans Licht, *Sexual Life in Ancient Greece* (New York: Dorset Press, 1993), passim.

[25] The moral is that human beings feel responsible although gods lead their actions. However, the human feeling of responsibility is the source of their *aidos*.

[26] Adrian Poole, *Tragedy: Shakespeare and the Greek Example* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 156.

[27] Or, we would say, a renunciation of sexual beauty.

[28] It seems in our analysis that Hippolytus is unholy and not *sophron* because he does not turn against the particular action of Phaedra and of her nurse. He turns against the whole feminine sex and this is not a *sophron* understanding of things; this is a clear exaggeration on his part (as opposed to moderation). In essence, he notes some impiety of women against him, thus rising himself to the level of a god (see also his friendship with Artemis which is quite improper for a mortal), and this comprises a severe hubris. He hates wise women (σοφήν δέ μισώ) [verse 640] or those who can speak and act wisely.

[29] Poole, *Tragedy*, 155. However, as we mentioned above, Hippolytus in verse 640 upholds that he despises wise woman, not only the body of a woman.

> horses he trains and the wild beasts which he hunts. There is an admirable aspect to this ideal of *sophrosyne*: the restraint, control, prudence, temperance that requires the subordination to the mind.[30] There is even a kind of beauty to it that far surpasses the narrowly sexual aspect of a preserved chastity. There is also a profound risk in the way such an ideal underestimates the forces it seeks to subordinate or ignore. Hippolytus shuns being "touched." He does not mind touching[31] as long as he is in control […]. Thus, of him, the beauty of his own relation with a woman, the goddess with whom he only exchanges words, whom he cannot see, let alone touch—and will not touch him.[32]

This arresting set of ideas fully captures Hippolytus's "fanatical chastity," yet does not quite concur with North's understanding of Hippolytus as "an extremely unbalanced character."[33] Hippolytus becomes admirable, even "beautiful;" by his "surpass[ing] the narrowly sexual aspect of a preserved chastity."[34] Nonetheless, no fifth century Athenian male would see male chastity as a "kind of beauty." And female chastity, if it means "virginity" and not "modesty" or "faithfulness to a husband," was a provocation to human and divine males alike. The rape of virgins is a *leitmotif* of Greek mythology. Our criticism, however, does not rest on a matter of taste regarding chastity. It deals, we believe, decisively with *sophrosyne*. Poole defines *sophrosyne* as: "restraint, control, prudence, temperance that requires the subordination to the mind." Of course, this is the normal range of meanings of male *sophrosyne* as North demonstrates. The problem with applying it to Hippolytus is that of the many references to *sophrosyne* (413, 431, 667, 949, 995, 1007, 1100, 1365, 1402), most bear the meaning of "chastity," as any effort to substitute the "masculine" renderings plainly substantiates. Significantly, Phaedra refers to *sophronein* in the sense of "moderation"[35] in the hope that her suicide will teach it to Hippolytus (731). Phaedra does not refer to what Hippolytus does wrong. It is evident that her only motive is her fear that he may announce her truth. He certainly needs no instruction in "chastity."

Given the discussion so far, it might seem eccentric that Bernard Williams[36] does not use the term *sophrosyne* in his analysis of Hippolytus. Although the term ascribed to Hippolytus, most often by himself, can only mean "chastity," Williams apparently does not believe "chastity" is a proper attribute of Hippolytus. If "chastity" were synonymous with "virginity" or "sexual purity" then *sophrosyne* would be an attribute of Hippolytus.[37] "Chastity," in the sense of "restraint" or "avoidance of temptation," does not describe Hippolytus for the simple reason that he is not tempted by sexual activity. Absent the desire for sex, restraint is unnecessary. In this sense,

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[30] In our view, that all does not seem to connote any subordination to the mind. It may as well be an alternative way of approaching the physical.

[31] We disagree with Poole here as there is no textual evidence for this.

[32] Poole, *Tragedy*, 156.

[33] North, *Sophrosyne*, 78. We think that this is a much exaggerated remark, mainly for two reasons: a) we cannot say that Hippolytus is unbalanced because what he does is reject his stepmother's erotic feelings and b) to a certain point, both Hippolytus and Phaedra have their virtues, they do things right up to a certain degree. In fact they are fine people, but they are trapped in the vengeance of Aphrodite and that makes their faults look magnified and unnecessary.

[34] Cf. Licht, *Sexual Life*, 130.

[35] Phaedra wants Hippolytus to become less "ὑψηλὸς," smaller. The lesson she wishes to teach Hippolytys is not to be "ὑψηλὸς τοῖς ἐμοῖς κακοῖς," so superior to her sufferings. "Ὑψηλός" here seems to be opposed to "δυσδαίμων" [unhappy] but also opposed to "μέγας." Hippolytus has been arrogant to both Phaedra and Aphrodite.

[36] Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 1993).

[37] Cf. Douglas Laidlaw Cairns, *Aidos. The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greek Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 316.

when Hippolytus describes himself as *sophronesterous* (995), he is mistaken. And this mistake is supported by his own understanding of the source of his "chastity." He comes by it "naturally" (80).[38] He might as well say that as a blond, he has restrained himself from becoming a brunette, without being tempted by darker hair.

This is why Williams uses "purity" as Hippolytus's leading attribute: "Hippolytus, accused of wrongs he has not committed, becomes so desperate that when his *purity* is not understood and accepted that at the climactic moment of his attempt to justify himself his wish is to be his own audience."[39] Lest it be thought that we are making too much of what might be a loose comment by Williams, he repeats the term:

> Hippolytus's view of himself, in his confrontation with Theseus, represents the truth about what he has done as opposed to what others falsely think: at this point, "inner" is to "outer" as reality is to appearance. Theseus's criticism of Hippolytus, however, and of his private virtue of self-protection and *purity*, identifies the "inner" as devotion to self that is contrasted with a proper concern for others.[40]

Defending himself, Hippolytus says:

> By one thing I am untouched, the very thing in which you think you have convicted me: to this very moment my body is untainted by sex. I do not know this act save by report of seeing it in painting. I am not eager to look at it either, since I have a *virgin* [*parthenon*] soul [1002–6, emphasis supplied].

Understood in this fashion, Hippolytus is far worse than a silly prig. He is an over-aged adolescent, who believes society, taken as others in general, exists to provide him eoyj an arena for self praise and adulation. Worse, he believes virginity trumps "moderation" and the need to "know oneself," as North indicates above. Moreover, he believes sexual purity grants him a special status, a claim to adoration by lesser men: "I for my part would wish to be first in the Greek games and to enjoy continuous blessedness with my noble friends" (1016–8). And even worse, from the standpoint of the Athenian *polis*, he not only slanders, by implication at least, his father and king, Theseus, but he denies the obligations of citizenship and the political in general by asserting that kingly power "has corrupted the minds of all who love it" (1014–5) and "but the absence of danger gives greater pleasure than being king" (1019–20). It is difficult to imagine a more anti-Athenian idea than the shirking of political responsibility because of its "danger." This was the age of Hoplite democracy, when male citizens from twenty to sixty were subject to call up to defend the *polis*. Earlier, we suggested that Hippolytus does not have "male" *sophrosyne*, as North understands the term. Here, we suggest that Hippolytus does not understand the first responsibilities of citizenship, especially by the privileged.[41] He glories in his skills as horseman and hunter, yet eschews bringing these obviously military virtues to bear in defense of the *polis*. He claims to honor and obey his father, which by his own narrow lights follows. Yet his father is king and he is a member of the *polis*. To their implied obligations, he offers slanderous avoidance. He would rather play games with his adoring friends, honoring or, in our view, hiding behind,

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[38] That may mean that for Hippolytus the term is vague and confusing. He takes his abstinence as an overall *sophrosyne* but he is proven wrong in continuation.

[39] Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 96.

[40] Ibid., 97. Cf. Cairns, *Aidos*, 268–272.

[41] In contrast, Phaedra understands that part of *sophrosyne* as "dutifulness."

virginity. Practically, he wants to remain second in the city. Thus his being a good son is not enough to prove him a *sophron* prince. Furthermore, his managing of the "crisis" in his father's house again proves that he is not competent in his acquired role.[42] Hippolytus would indeed need to be taught *sophrosyne* in that aspect as well.[43]

Although Williams does not devote many words to Phaedra, his larger analysis suggests a much more sympathetic portrait of her than she is afforded by most scholars. What is important is not his sympathy for her, however welcome, but that Phaedra, as conceived by Euripides, supports Williams's main thesis regarding guilt and shame.

> By the later fifth century the Greeks had their own distinctions between a shame that merely followed public opinion and the shame that expressed inner personal conviction[44]. In Euripides' *Hippolytus*, such a distinction is not only expressed but does much, in a complex and sophisticated way, to structure the action. Phaedra destroys herself and those around her in her determination to secure for herself an unambiguous and undoubted good reputation.[45]

The reasons why Phaedra destroys herself are critical to an understanding of the tragedy and to an understanding of Williams's analysis, so we need to spend some time on them.[46]

Let us begin with the much more straightforward case of Ajax. Having been deceived by Athena, Ajax kills and tortures cattle and sheep, believing he is taking revenge on Odysseus, Menelaus and Agamemnon:

> Ajax wakes up and shows that he has recovered his mind. There is a passionate lyric outburst of despair and, above all, shame: he has made himself, apart from anything else, utterly absurd. It becomes increasingly clear to him that he can only kill himself. He knows that he cannot change his *ethos*, his character, and he knows that after what he has done, this grotesque humiliation, he cannot live the only kind of life his *ethos* demands.[47]

Compared to Ajax, "being a warrior under the heroic code, balanced that identity on a narrow base of personal achievement," whose code in his own words requires that "the noble man should either live finely or die finely,"[48] Phaedra's character and her predicament are far more complex. Like Ajax, she has humiliated herself in two senses: to herself and to others. For both reasons she is ashamed.[49] But, unlike Ajax, she has done nothing to fulfill her desire for Hippolytus, whereas Ajax attempted to torture and kill his enemies, killing innocent animals instead. Unlike Ajax, whose deeds were known to all almost immediately, her desires were known only to her nurse

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[42] It should be noted, however, that (see 1033–1035) Hippolytus honors his oath even under the danger of being killed. He is a moral person, grown by Pittheus in the right manner, noble, with reasonable arguments against Theseus, obedient to the father, etc. Hippolytus is almost a model young man, from many other aspects.

[43] Cf. Barbara Goff, *The Noose of Words. Readings of Desire, Violence and Language in Euripides' Hippolytos* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 47–48: "Hippolytus' discourse actively refuses difference and is always of the same: he wishes his life would continue as it is (87), he remains the same in the presence or absence of his philoi (1001), and wishes only for friends that are like him."

[44] Cf. *A Companion to Tragedy*, ed. Rebecca Bushnell (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005).

[45] Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 95–96.

[46] We also need to note that it is fundamental that Phaedra is not *sophron* when she takes revenge from Hippolytus but from some other aspect she might be *sophron* when she protects her good name by revenging Hippolytus. So it might be paradoxical but it seems quite obvious that she *is* and at the same time *is not sophron*.

[47] Ibid., 72–73.

[48] Ibid., 101, 85.

[49] Cf. Cairns, *Aidos*, 303–305.

and to Hippolytus. It would soon become generally known when Artemis explained to Theseus that his son was innocent.

The question then becomes: if knowledge of Phaedra's "disease," as she terms her desire for Hippolytus, could have remained restricted to her nurse and Hippolytus, would she have been shamed like Ajax, that is, to believing suicide was her only honorable choice? We believe that the best answer is, "yes." The reasons, however, are complex. First, she was already humiliated from the perspective of an "internalized other."

> It is a mistake to take the reductive step and to suppose that there are only two options: that the other in ethical thought must be an identifiable individual or a representative of neighbors, on the one hand, or else be nothing at all except an echo chamber for my solitary moral voice […]. The internalized other is indeed abstracted and generalized and idealized, but he is potentially somebody rather than nobody, and somebody other than me.[50]

Williams also says: "Even if shame and its motivations always involve in some way or other an idea of the gaze of another, it is important that for many of its operations the imagined gaze of another will do […]. To overlook the importance of the imagined other is what I just called a silly mistake."[51] We would emphasize that this "imagined other" can be a self-reflection and need not be another person literally. The implication for Phaedra is clear. Even if her desire could have been kept within a narrow circle or even within herself, we doubt that she could have avoided shame.[52] "The silly mistake is to suppose that the reactions of shame depend simply on being found out, that the feeling behind every decision or thought that is governed by shame is literally and immediately the fear of being seen."[53] Shame is too complex an idea to be reduced simply to revelation to others. It has an internal component. "Shame looks to what I am."[54] Williams's central thesis can now be understood: "We can feel both guilt and shame towards the same action. In a moment of cowardice, we let someone down; we feel guilty because we have let them down, ashamed because we have contemptibly fallen short of what we might have hoped for ourselves."[55]

The significance of this sort of shame which centers on reputation is difficult for moderns to accept, especially given its imposition from the "outside," a source beyond her control. If we cannot warrant Aphrodite, consider an Aphrodisiac. Moreover, consider her heroic restraint. Under unendurable pressure, Phaedra controls her actions. This is an important point to remember: Phaedra cannot control her feelings; but she can control her actions.[56] Who can do better than that? Those without feelings like Hippolytus? The problem we moderns have, as heirs to Kant, aware of it or not, and a Judeo/Christian morality, observant or not, is that we cannot warrant the Greek shame culture, which applies so severely on the one hand to a woman, who does not

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[50] Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 84. Practically, it is about the inherent question in all Ethics: "am I moral in the presence of others or am I also moral in the presence of me?" We do not think that the internalized other takes the place of "somebody other than me." That would reduce *my* understanding of *my* crimes. The actual significance of the internalized other is that myself is as important an ethical judge as any other person around me or perhaps even more.

[51] Ibid., 82.

[52] This has already been manifested at the beginning, when Phaedra is silently suffering due to her internal shame.

[53] Ibid., 81.

[54] Ibid., 93.

[55] Ibid., 92.

[56] To a certain extent of course, as Aphrodite has already decided on Phaedra's disaster. It is perhaps a human illusion that a person can turn destiny to another direction. Heraclitus emphasizes that even the Sun follows the norms and rules of *Heimarmene* [Heraclitus, B 94].

act according to her desires, and on the other, which seems to be indifferent to the moral outrage of a false accusation. We seem to agree with the nurse, however much we might resist her advice to give into the natural feeling of love. "Why," we ask, "make so much of so little?"

The answer is, of course, that Phaedra is not an ordinary woman; she is not a suburban housewife seeking sexual satisfaction from a personal trainer. She is a queen, the wife of an admirable man, and the mother of his sons, all of whom would be damaged should they become aware of her disease. Unlike Ajax, whose death makes his "wife" and child subject to the vagaries of his enemies, Phaedra cannot ignore her responsibilities. Fearing this devastation lies at the core of her need to be a respectable woman, wife and mother. So deep does this necessity go, that she accuses Hippolytus of rape, fully aware that her "death-bed" statement will carry great weight. Her false accusation lies at the heart of the modern condemnation of Phaedra. "A weak and obsessive woman, the argument goes, who tries to cover her flaws with a lie, a lie which has catastrophic effects for her husband, family and polis, to say nothing of the innocent Hippolytus.[57] Compounding her lust, she commits a crime. She is both shameful and guilty."

Because shame and guilt overlap, shame can have a moral element, but not one restricted, as moderns tend to do, to a voluntary misdeed, most clearly defined as a criminal act. Phaedra feels guilty, not because she has done anything wrong, certainly not because she has committed a crime. She feels guilty, because she has been the receptacle of shameful thoughts, thoughts which would impair her reputation and her family's standing in the polis. Williams believes the overlap of shame and guilt, along with not restricting guilt to voluntary actions, indicates the superiority of the Greek understanding: "In not isolating a privileged conception of moral guilt, and in placing [it] under a broader conception of shame the social and psychological structures […] the Greeks, once again, displayed realism, and truthfulness, and a beneficent neglect."[58] His reason is that the Greeks avoided the difficulties summed up in this trenchant paragraph:

> Certainly there are purposes that are served by discriminating between actions in terms of the voluntary, and in ways not known to the Greeks. Very importantly, they include some purposes of justice. But these purposes can be identified only by working back to what we require of the law and other agencies that ascribe responsibility, from more general considerations about the relations of the individual to social power. We deceive ourselves if we suppose that public practices of ascribing responsibility can be derived from an antecedent notion of moral responsibility, or that the idea of the voluntary is uniquely important to responsibility. It is also a mistake to think that the idea of the voluntary can itself be refined beyond a certain point. The idea is useful, and it helps to serve the purposes of justice, but it is essentially superficial. If we push beyond a certain point questions of what outcome, exactly, was intended, whether a state of mind was normal or whether the agent could at a certain moment have controlled himself, we sink in the sands of an everyday, entirely justified, skepticism.[59]

The skepticism is a consequence of never being able to be sure of why someone did something. The difficulty is that we are often constrained to hold people responsible for their actions and inactions despite our fundamental ignorance of ultimate motivations, to say nothing of a necessarily, but no less arbitrary break, in the chain of outcomes. The goodness or badness of an

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[57] As we indicated above, her attitude does not totally qualify as a product of free choice. Therefore, the issue of Fate should be considered again. All Greek tragedy seems imbued by it and here, as in other tragedies, Phaedra and the other protagonists are becoming instruments of revenge.

[58] Ibid., 95.

[59] Ibid., 67.

outcome is fundamentally unknowable in the absence of knowledge of all its consequences.[60] To be responsible is another way of acknowledging our tragic circumstances. It is fraught with its own errors, miscalculations and disasters. To be irresponsible, however, is or seems much worse, for then we descend to the triviality of the gods. Mortality conditions morality. And morality must traverse the road of responsibility.

Integration

At the beginning of this essay, we criticized North's application of *sophrosyne*, the inadequacy of which left some of the major issues of Hippolytus unanswered. Now is the time to deal with these issues. As we have shown, Williams has a more sophisticated understanding of the relations of shame and guilt as understood by the Greeks. Shame is the broader concept; it contains guilt in the general sense of feeling responsible for one's actions or inactions and in the particular sense of being criminally culpable. Since criminal sanctions are not relevant to Hippolytus, it is safe to ignore guilt in this legal sense. The distinction between voluntary and involuntary, however, must be considered. According to Williams, the Greek view is that we are responsible for our actions, intended or not, avoidable or not, divinely instigated or not, and however conditioned by circumstances. A human being is responsible for who he or she is, as much as their actions. Character and actions and inactions are inextricable. We are what we do and we do what we are.[61] Let us examine Hippolytus and Phaedra against this template.

Hippolytus claims that he was born chaste and is therefore naturally virtuous in the same sense that a person born beautiful has the natural virtue of beauty. For most moderns, most natural virtues do not have moral weight, although this point seems to apply more to physical attributes than to character traits. Moderns would be more tempted to consider chastity as a moral virtue than beauty; for the Greeks, this distinction is dubious. They often viewed physical traits as signs of character, if not the blessings of the gods. Hippolytus makes no such claim for his affinity for Artemis, although he clearly believes his worship of her is a virtue. Of course, since affinities have some source in character, they are to some degree natural, given the deep connection between character and action. Yet, for all that, it seems clear to Hippolytus and to the reader that his worship of Artemis is a matter of choice to a much greater degree than his chastity, however related; as is his seemingly gratuitous rejection of Aphrodite. As a matter of fact, this is exactly one of the reasons why Aphrodite announces at the beginning of the play that a) she will not tolerate those who treat her with disrespect and think too highly of themselves (verse 6), and b) that Hippolytus has found a *friendship*, *companionship* (ὁμιλία) (the one with Artemis) that is not worthy of a mortal (verse 19).

Beyond the overlap of moral and non-moral virtues, Hippolytus confronts moral choice when he chooses to keep true to his oath regarding Phaedra's desire for him and when he obeys his father, despite being summarily treated by him. Hippolytus retains a certain nobility as his companions attest. Not wishing to diminish these virtues, they nevertheless are subject to qualifications. Neither promise keeping nor obedience is absolute for moderns or Greeks. It seems reasonable to conclude that a "moral" code restricted to chastity, oath keeping and filial

[60] Returning to the issue of necessity and the ancient Greek conception of determinism, we would add that a certain idea of causality is implied here, as a causal nexus leading to specific results.

[61] It is noteworthy that both Hippolytus and Phaedra are practically acquitted of any responsibility by means of the speech of Artemis at the end. In lines 752–775, it is affirmed that because of her Fate Phaedra experiences these problems. In verse 207, the fate of people is to be tortured, the nurse suggests. The above makes the idea of Williams appear contradictory.

obedience seems narrow, simplistic and fraught with danger, especially when housed in a rigid, self-righteous, priggish and arrogant character.[62] Oblivious to the complexity of his existence within the polis and within Greek culture at large, worse, he seems to resent his contact (how many times does he say, "don't touch me"?) with others unless these others serve his sense of self-importance.[63] His rejection of Aphrodite and sexual activity as an inherent defilement is but a sign of his rejection of life as a Greek citizen, if not of life itself. His self-styled nobility, piety, and chastity debase the concepts of personal and civic virtue.

Phaedra is in an entirely different personal, social and moral set of circumstances. She is involuntarily infected with a passion for Hippolytus; the very unlikelihood of her attraction for him is itself testimony to the power of Aphrodite.[64] Having nothing against Phaedra,[65] Aphrodite uses Phaedra to avenge herself on Hippolytus, who despite warnings holds her in contempt. The "diseased" Phaedra, unable to sleep and eat, wastes away. Her only voluntary submission to her passion is her confession to her nurse, who betrays her to Hippolytus.[66] Even before Hippolytus is aware of her passion, Phaedra contemplates suicide, believing that only death will prevent her passion from manifesting itself sexually (400). Phaedra exhibits a heroic sense of moral responsibility up to this point. First, she feels responsible for her "infection," although caused by Aphrodite. Again, she seems to accept the idea that character, which includes feelings you cannot avoid, is a sign of moral virtue and not merely a natural attribute. How else can her guilt feelings be understood? Her massive self restraint is perhaps in her mind noble, but cannot assuage her sense that she has been receptive to Aphrodite in a way which would be inconceivable to Hippolytus.

If the play ended with her suicide, we believe this appreciation of Phaedra would be the norm. But the tablet, the false accusation of rape, what to do with this? Her "death-bed" testimony may not be a crime in the narrow sense, but surely it is a moral outrage in its utterance and in its consequences, even without Hippolytus's death. If we bring Williams's analysis to bear, we believe Phaedra's lie will seem less outrageous, if not justifiable. The overlapping of shame and guilt has indicated why Phaedra feels guilty for being a passive receptacle of Aphrodite's power. She undoubtedly feels guilty over her voluntary false witness. Now the power of shame, as understood by Williams, indicates the reasoning behind her false accusation and suggests why it is sufficiently powerful to override her guilt.

[62] Then despite virtues, *hubris* is still possible.

[63] It is important that Hippolytus respects others only when he chooses to. So he respects Artemis but not Aphrodite, he respects his father but not Phaedra, he respects his friends but not the Polis in his role as a prince. More specifically, regarding women, he shows his respect to Artemis only, but disregards the nurse, Phaedra and Aphrodite. Therefore he is "μὴ πᾶσιν φίλον" (verse 93), not a friend to everyone, ignoring thus the advice of the servant at the beginning of the play.

[64] Phaedra is not disrespectful to Aphrodite although she is destroyed by her. In fact she says "I am going to please Aphrodite with my death." On the contrary, she turns against the "bad" women. In that sense she is *sophron* at the point where Hippolytus failed to be. But that does not save her eventually. Aphrodite does not retreat, she goes on with her vengeful plan.

[65] It remains a mystery why Aphrodite chooses Phaedra. There is no direct answer in the text. One plausible answer could be that there is a "stain" already, a weakness, a curse in her ancestral line, that of her mother Pasiphae, or because Phaedra (by character or due to social status) can become the perfect instrument for revenge. Moreover, both Hippolytus and Phaedra follow some typological features of their ancestors, although Euripides does not seem to place great emphasis on that. Hippolytus is the son of an Amazon (a woman denying the equal existence of men) and Phaedra is the daughter of Pasiphae (who was absorbed by a monstrous and inappropriate love).

[66] Also latently, the fact that she does not prevent her nurse when the nurse says that she will reveal the truth to Hippolytus (verses 682 ff). In verse 503, Phaedra retreats: "you say good things but they are shameful." Eventually she does what she announced before: she knows the good but instead she pursues pleasure.

Phaedra repeatedly testifies to her concern with reputation, opening herself to the condemnation of many on the grounds that she is saving "face" at the expense of truth, the character of an innocent young man, and the risk of disaster to her community. Williams believes that the basis of such condemnation is almost always Kantian and flawed:

> In the scheme of Kantian oppositions, shame is on the bad side of all the lines. This is well brought out in its notorious association with the notion of losing or saving face. "Face" stands for the appearance against the reality and the outer versus the inner, so its values are superficial […]. These conceptions of what shame has to be, and of how ethical relations that are importantly governed by shame have to work, are all incorrect.[67]

Williams concedes that "Phaedra destroys herself and those around her in her determination to secure for herself an unambiguous and undoubted good reputation."[68] It therefore follows that there is a fundamental distinction between "face" and "an unambiguous and undoubted good reputation." Before we make this point, it might be useful to recapitulate her position.

It is important to note that Phaedra is not compelled by a god to lie. She intentionally accuses Hippolytus of rape and she knows that he would be harmed, even if she could not anticipate his death. Her false accusation separates her from Ajax, who could not have contemplated such a falsehood. This difference between the sexes animates much of Hippolytus's misogyny:[69] "O Zeus, why have you settled women, this bane to cheat mankind in the light of the son? If you wished to propagate the human race, it was not from women that should have provided this" (616). Hippolytus concludes his tirade: "I shall never take my fill of hating women, not even if someone says I am always talking of it. For they too are always in some ways evil. Let a man accordingly either teach them to be chaste or allow me to tread on them forever!" (664–8). Women are essentially deceitful, beings who trade on their importance to procreation, if not sexual desire, to fulfill their own interests in opposition to their spouses. It would be too easy and too simple to dismiss Hippolytus's outburst. Many Greek plays offer similar assessments. Of course, much of this is ritual speech and some of it uttered only to be destroyed by more moderate appreciations of the relations between the sexes. Nevertheless, such statements were made and undoubtedly believed by many men at least to some degree. Therefore their sentiments need to be treated seriously. In terms of *Hippolytus*, the connection between the false accusation and the general suspicion of women needs to be understood, if we are to understand the play. Phaedra is certainly aware of how males view females as essentially deceitful and unchaste, though few would countenance Hippolytus's extreme views. Therefore, other things equal, men would be believed rather than women; the burden of proof would always fall on the female. Thus Phaedra knows that if her word is to prevail against Hippolytus', she would have to offer irrefutable proof. This motivates her "death-bed" testimony. She could see no other way to protect her reputation and therefore the well-being of her family.[70]

Throughout the play, there are perplexed recognitions of each other's role and of each other's responsibilities. It is a nexus of countless moral relations and subsequently of countless moral

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[67] Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 78.

[68] Ibid., 96.

[69] Goff, *The Noose of Words*, 46: "This longing is so extreme in Hippolytos' tirade that what he dreads is not only adultery, but even marriage itself, the regular and legitimate exchange of females for reproductive purposes. Not only the adulteress, but the female itself, endangers Hippolytos' system. The female is the difference that Hippolytos is unable to accept."

[70] Cf. Cairns, "The Concept of Aidos," 347: "Phaedra places *aidos* [shame] before the good. She chooses to blame Hippolytus in fear of her disgrace and of the disgrace of her family."

issues that constantly emerge. In this context "reputation-as-face" is too simple a concept. It is far more than "being seen, inappropriately, by the wrong people, in the wrong condition. It is straightforwardly connected with nakedness, particularly in sexual connections."[71] If Hippolytus or anyone else for that matter had happened, inadvertently or not, to see Phaedra naked, it is impossible to believe that she would have been shamed to the extent of a false accusation of rape. Much more is at stake than bare flesh. Not knowing that Hippolytus will adhere to his promise not to reveal her passion, Phaedra believes that he will be believed and that this would be sufficient to destroy her reputation, not in the sense of physical nakedness, but in the sense of revealing her character, as one all-too-susceptible to Aphrodite's "infection." "Shame looks to who I am."[72] Her shame is overwhelming because of a combination of her character, her social position, and her obligations as wife and mother.[73] If she could have fulfilled these obligations by riding through the streets naked, she would have done it. After all she gave her life in an effort to save her husband, family and polis from participating in her disgrace.

We realize Phaedra's actions, especially the false accusation, might seem extreme or unforgivable to a modern audience.[74] Yet it is precisely the surface enormity of the false charge that underlines many of Euripides's warnings. The complexity of human personality, of the cross currents of a sophisticated society, the unpredictability of events, the randomness of disaster, and the appreciation of tragic existence—all of these factors make a hash of superficial, linear concepts of right and wrong, voluntary and involuntary, free will and fate, moral responsibility, honor, chastity, piety, nobility, and on and on. Under pressure, human beings, even the best of us, can make decisions which seem profoundly immoral.[75] We may not credit their reasons, we may have done differently, yet however this may be, it is incumbent upon us to empathize with these protagonists as much as we can. Only by understanding them can we understand our loved ones and ourselves. If a woman as noble as Phaedra feels compelled to commit a moral outrage, what might we be prepared to do under similar pressure?

It is important to note that upon Artemis's revelation of the entire situation to Theseus,[76] she does not condemn Phaedra, not withstanding full awareness of the catastrophe she partly precipitated:

> But it was for this purpose that I came, to make plain that your son's heart was guiltless so that he may die with a good name, make plain, too, the maddened frenzy of your wife or, if

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[71] Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 78.

[72] Ibid., 93.

[73] Cf. Licht, *Sexual Life*, 46–61.

[74] Phaedra acts in this dramatic way because she has been insulted and in fear of a greater insult. She has been denied the place of a lover, now she will be denied the great roles of a queen, a mother and a wife. Vengeance is the key process in Euripidean drama: see *Hecuba*, *Medea*, *Phaedra*. In these plays, Euripides warns the Athenian audience for two things: that the woman should not be insulted and that their roles are very sensitive within the family, but also in the political and social nexus, therefore not to be ignored.

[75] It is relevant that human beings may act like that due to the gods, not due to their own means. Man is manipulated by the gods, he lives "βίον βοσκημάτων," as Aristotle says in *EN* (1095 b). Man has to live with *sophrosyne* and has to be kept within the right proportions in order to be safer but also in order to be acceptable by the gods. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. and ed. Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).

[76] In verse 1282, it is noteworthy that Artemis appears exactly after the chorus's hymn to Aphrodite. It is like a defeat for her now that her disciple is lost. Artemis is one of the three goddesses, the others being Athena and Estia (cf. the Homeric hymn to Aphrodite 7–33), who managed to resist Aphrodite's power on love.

> I may call it so, her nobility.[77] For she was stung by the goad of that goddess most hated by us who take pleasure in virginity and fell in love with your son (1300–4).[78]

Moreover, she does not condemn Theseus:

> You have done dreadful things, but for all that it is still possible for you to win pardon for these deeds of yours. It was Cypris, sating her anger, who will that things should happen thus […]. Ignorance acquits your mistakes of baseness, and further your wife by dying made it impossible to test her words […] (1325–8; 1334–37).[79]

All are victims of Aphrodite's anger,[80] Artemis's judgment, however biased, makes important points. The gods have great power and cannot be interfered with; they act according to their own lights, not human values. Even the wisest humans like Theseus act in ignorance; even the noblest women can be maddened to the point of suicide and despicable acts; even pious virgins, under the protection of a powerful goddess, cannot avoid existential tragedy.[81] And yet for all that, reconciliation and forgiveness are possible. Even Hippolytus seems to have become less fanatical: he not only forgives his father, but softens to Phaedra. Is it too much to believe that Phaedra's dying wish that he learn *sophrosyne*[82] as moderation is fulfilled?

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[77] In 1300–1301, Artemis calls Phaedra's action as "οἶστρον" or "γενναιότητα" (craziness or bravery, not nobility).
[78] The evident tragic element here is that both Phaedra and Hippolytus die in order to preserve a good name.
[79] Therefore not only Hippolytus but also Phaedra is forgiven for exactly the same reasons. The good names of Hippolytus and Phaedra are protected.
[80] In 1461, it seems very interesting that Theseus closes the tragedy by saying that he will remember the evils/disasters of Aphrodite. Thus, in a sense, Hippolytus is justified for not liking her. Instead of a didactic ending with a word on "εὐσέβεια," Euripides closes with a claim on the pain that Aphrodite and Eros have inflicted.
[81] Cf. 1437–1438. The gods should not see the agony of a man's last hour. Death is only human, man is alone in his fateful unhappiness and disaster.
[82] Goff, *The Noose of Words*, 41: "But if *sophrosyne* should connote primarily a form of self-control or restraint, of desire or speech about desire, then the *sophrosyne* within the play that is a form of violence exercised against others is anomalous."

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Commentary on Alcibiades I: Towards an Explanation of Human Perfection Through Love

Abstract | This paper examines Proclus' exegesis on love in the platonic dialogue *First Alcibiades*. The notion of *providence* [πρόνοια], *return* [επιστροφή] and his own demonology, entirely inspired by the Neoplatonic spirit, contribute to a new approach of love by merging political (considered as public life) with personal life. Moreover, as I am going to analyse in this paper, Proclus captures not only Socrates' dominant role of the lover but also the way that he applies his erotic knowledge to that dialogue in order to lead Alcibiades to perfection.

Keywords | Divine – Perfection – Philosophy of Love – Proclus – Providence

Introduction

In general, Platonic *First Alcibiades* is a summarizing dialogue of Socratic doctrines concerning virtues, mindfulness of ourselves and the constant necessity of self-control. Socrates' main goal was to teach these principles to a young and ambitious man who wanted to overcome his political idol Pericles.[1] The challenge for Socrates, however, was to teach him how to be a politician, who is gifted with various virtues that he should practice in the public sphere, and mainly to explain to him the immediate relationship between the possession of knowledge and virtues.[2] Nevertheless, when the research comes to Neoplatonism and the commentaries on that dialogue, in our case Proclus' commentary, it seems that Neoplatonic exegesis has nothing to offer, or better said has less to contribute, to a firm understanding of Platonic political dialogue.[3]

What really drew my attention was Proclus' emphasis on the loving relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades. It is true that their relationship was a topic of discussion in classical Athens since Socrates' efforts to balance the unrestrained character of Alcibiades. That which

[1] Nicholas Denyer, *Plato: Alcibiades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 14–26; C. Christopher Gill, "Self-Knowledge in Plato's Alcibiades," in *Reading Ancient Texts, Vol. I: Presocratics and Plato, Essays in Honour of Denis O'Brien*, eds. S. Stern-Gillet and K. Corrigan (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 98.

[2] For Proclus, *First Alcibiades* is a text which examines absolutely the works of erotic knowledge, i. e., what erotic knowledge produces, *Commentary on Alcibiades*, 28.1–2. See also, Plato, "Alcibiades I," in *The Roots of Political Philosophy: Ten Forgotten Socratic Dialogues*, ed. Thomas L. Pangle (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 3–16; Andre Archie, *Politics in Socrates' Alcibiades. A Philosophical Account of Plato's Dialogue Alcibiades Major* (London: Springer, 2015), 37.

[3] The monograph by Dominique O'Meara proposes for the first time a discussion between Neoplatonic concepts and political science. Dominique J. O'Meara, *Platonopolis: Platonic Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2007).

is unknown, however, is the true meaning of Socrates' approach to Alcibiades by using specific words through an analysis of love's nature.[4] The contribution of Proclus, by adding in love's analysis between Socrates and Alcibiades the notion of *providence* [*pronoia*] and *return* [*epistorphē*], starts from that point.[5]

My analysis presupposes the deconstruction of the way that Proclus elaborates here the topic of love. He starts from the erotic meaning of Socrates' greeting to Alcibiades ("Son of Cleinias, I think that you wonder why, although that I was the first that I fell in love with you, I am the one who continues to do so, while the rest [i. e., the lovers] left you.")[6] and then he continues by dividing love in *reversive* and *providential*, demonstrating their association and in the end by explicating the role of Neoplatonic demonology on the matter of love.

In my approach here, I employ the benchmark of the above greeting and then unfold Proclean love by descending from demonology to *reversive* and *providential* love. I follow this productive way of thinking (in contrast with Proclus) because I believe that love's analysis starting from the upper (beings) to the lower, offers a deeper understanding of the core notions of *reversion* and *providence* since they are primarily metaphysical notions of love.

Reversion and providence in demonology

Proclus exposes already from the first pages of *Commentary on Alcibiades* the significance of the Socratic "thy yourself" defining it as the highest principle of philosophy which prepares humans for their purification and their perfection.[7] In short, it can be argued that this dialogue pays an attribute to self-knowledge since the famous "thy yourself" is identifying with "seeing our substance" [τήν ἑαυτῶν γνῶσιν καί τήν αὐτοφανῆ τῆς οὐσίας ἡμῶν θεωρίαν][8] after receiving the divine order, as Proclus says.[9] The Neoplatonic philosopher here applies the technique of analogy, where each Platonic dialogue is interpreted via the analogy between cosmology and human existence,[10] i. e., Good is the *homoiōsis* [ομοίωσις] to the divine, Intellect [Νους] is self-knowledge, the soul [ψυχή] is all this evidence that leads to the discursive part of the dialogue, form corresponds to the human expression and to the verbal power, matter to the persons, the circumstances and generally the dialogue's topic.[11]

When Proclus discusses the ontology climax within the erotic way of living, he follows the Platonic doctrine about love. The nature of the association between the One and the lower beings is evaluative: One contains by all means (substantially and ontologically) the lower beings while acts prior, simultaneously and after them.[12] Thus One's supremacy in Proclus is explicit similarly with the Good's supremacy in Platonic philosophy. Here Proclus presents One, however, to invoke the divine lover[13] in order to demonstrate providence to the imperfect, thus lower,

[4] Paulina Remes, "Reason to Care: The Object and Structure of Self-Knowledge in the Alcibiades I," *Apeiron* 46, no. 3 (2013): 270.

[5] Harold Tarrant, "Olympiodorus and Proclus on the Climax of the *Alcibiades*," *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 1 (2007): 17.

[6] Ὦ παῖ Κλεινίου, οἶμαι σε θαυμάζειν ὅτι πρῶτος ἐραστής σου γενόμενος τῶν ἄλλων πεπαυμένων μόνος οὐκ ἀπαλλάττομαι, *Commentary on Alcibiades*, 18.14–16.

[7] Ibid., 5.17–18.

[8] Ibid., 9.7–8.

[9] Ibid., 6.6, 9.7–9.

[10] Ibid., 10.5–19.

[11] Ibid., 10.6–19.

[12] Ibid., 38.11–14.

[13] "The only true lover is the divine lover." Ibid., 49.17–18.

lovers. Imitatively, the divine lover shows such a providence for his beloved as One provides for the lower beings.

Apparently, on the ontological level, this implies that in the relation between the upper demon and the divine lover, the former shows providence to the latter as a result of the swiftness of the lover's position (i. e., he turns out to be the beloved one). Nevertheless, this remains obscure and unspecified in Proclean philosophy. From my point of view, the fact that Proclus does not mention the lover's possible low position in his relation to One, could be construed as a struggle within his own interpretation of Platonic texts. What I argue here is that although the traits of a loving relationship could be attributed ontologically both to demons and beings, the love per se for the Neoplatonic philosopher seems to be ascribed only to the subjects (divine lovers) and the objects (beloved) of love.

The above argument is reaffirmed by extract 39–40 where Proclus employs the notion of *methexis* [μέθεξις], a word indicative of the loving relationship but not of love by itself.[14] From Proclus's analysis it seems to be a word that both philosophy and theology are sharing in relation to soul and mind. In particular, in philosophy *methexis* between the divine lover and the beloved causes an intellectual [*noētikē*] union and ascendance,[15] while theologically *methexis* means souls' union between the pair of divine lovers (could also be god) and the beloved (who in the loving relationship between human beings is taking the position of the divine lover).[16] Here, he adds the significance of sacred rituals, keeping consistent to the Neoplatonic spirit, in order to underline the eminence of an unimpeded union between god and mystics.[17] The analogy between soul and mind is highlighted by arguing that lower demons interfere in the mystical union between god and the divine lover, in the same way that vulgar lovers interpose between the divine lover and the beloved.[18]

The above analogy only serves, however, Proclus' intention to refer to the intellectually "revealing" character of Platonic philosophy.[19] He employs specific words like *theasi* (looking thoroughly), *theoria* (observation) and *theatis* (observer) in order to demonstrate that the philosopher's life is, according to *theoria*, seeking knowledge independently from its practical meaning.[20] Thus, he confirms here *Phaedrus* (250c) where the visional character of *theoria* may lead to a supernatural conception of reality, i. e., to a kind of revelation.[21]

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[14] The process of *methexis* [μέθεξις] is not reciprocal, i. e., only the beloved is suitable to set himself in the process of *methexis* with his divine friend. This presupposes a kind of imperfectness by the beloved in order to receive the energy by the lover. Ibid., 39.4–7.

[15] In Plato's dialogues, *Phaedon*, *Republic* and *Parmenides*, *methexis* means the participation of man in the world of Ideas. This Platonic request was fulfilled by the Greek Church Fathers who preached the theology of *theōsis* [θέωσις]. See Nicolas Laos, *Methexiology. Philosophical Theology and Theological Philosophy for the Deification of Humanity* (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2016), vii.

[16] *Commentary on Alcibiades*, 39.10–21.

[17] Ibid., 39.22–23 and 40.5.

[18] Ibid., 40.9–12.

[19] The above-mentioned terms related to *theasis* denote that for Alcibiades, the way of life that Socrates suggests, is a revealed situation. Thus, the wise man who lives according to *theoria,* regardless of its practical applications, is conceiving a kind of hypersensual reality. The necessary precondition here is for the beloved (thus for Alcibiades) to purify his soul and be ready to accept the lover's approach. Ibid., 43.

[20] *Commentary on Alcibiades*, 20.–21.

[21] Plato, *Phaedrus* [250c]: "the most blessed of mysteries, which we celebrated in a state of perfection, when we were without experience of the evils which awaited us in the time to come, being permitted as initiates to the sight of perfect and simple and calm and happy apparitions, which we saw in the pure light, being ourselves pure and not entombed in this which we carry about with us and call the body, in which we are imprisoned like an oyster in its shell. So much, then, in honor of memory, on account of which I have now spoken at some

It is noteworthy to mention here the etymological meaning of the above words within this philosophical text. The above words (*theasi*, *theoria*, *theatis*) come from the verb *theomai* [θεῶμαι] which means "I am seeing thoroughly," while the noun *theos* (god) comes from it as well. The selection by Proclus of this verbal root instead of the verb *horō* [ὁρῶ], which only means "I see," is indicative of his intentions to associate Intellect with the action of deep and essential "seeing."

My above position here explains the fact that Proclus continues to unfold his demonology by inserting the meaning of *providence* [πρόνοια]. Etymologically, providence [πρόνοια] consists of the prefix *pro* [προ] (which indicates a prior action) and the noun *nous* [νους] which means "intellect." Philosophically the relationship between "Intellect," "see" and "god" is therefore explicit.[22] This applies primarily to the relationship between demons[23] and lower beings. As I have already mentioned above, Proclus implies a kind of loving relationship between demons and lower beings but not referring to existence of love per se between them. Thus, providence in his demonology is identified with a kind of full attendance, protection and guidance of human thoughts and actions.[24] Notably, the presence of demons in humans' lives cannot be seen but is there to support in a mystic way their lives. One of life's aspects is love, for which Proclus analyses further the meaning of providence.

Providential (*erōs pronoētikos*) and reversive love (*erōs epistreptikos*)

In order to approach Proclus' providential love, it is necessary to justify the meaning of *nous* in the loving relationship between the lover and the beloved. Socrates, as the divine lover in this dialogue, is rising to intellectual beauty, thus according to Platonic philosophy he puts himself in the position of the soul's Intellect. In contrast, the lower lovers, who try to seduce Alcibiades, represent the soul and its lower passions. In the middle stands Alcibiades, says Proclus, divided into two parts: the upper, which struggles to unify with the Intellect, and the lower which beguiles him to his passions and to the materialistic way of life.[25]

Nevertheless, the Intellect does not act by its own will. Without the soul's purification, the Intellect is not able to provide the light of knowledge and ascend souls to the vision of Good. Similarly, the divine lover renders his beloved participant of his intellect [*noēsis*] by demonstrating to him the nature of his love (provident, formed by th Good and complete).

Proclus initially explains the appeal to Alcibiades' father by means of a metaphysical connection between the two interlocutors.[26] Since according to the oracle "the father sows in everybody

length, through yearning for the joys of that other time." In Plato. *Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 9*, trans. Harold N. Fowler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1925), 45.

[22] In Proclus' *Ten Doubts Concerning Providence*, providence is exclusively coloured by moral meaning, i. e., its role is to make all human sufferings deserved. See Radek Chlup, *Proclus. An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 230.

[23] According to ancient Greek thought before Plato, demons came to humans by chance (Homer, *Iliad*, 23.79). Plato introduces, however, another kind of relationship between demons and humans. In *Republic* (617e), he argues that humans themselves choose their demon (*οὐχ ἡμᾶς δαίμων λήξεται, ἀλλ' ὑμεῖς δαίμονα αἱρήσεσθαι*). It is worth mentioning that the word demon in singular means the deity which is responsible for humans' destiny, while in plural it is identified with "gods."

[24] *Commentary on Alcibiades*, 40.20–25.

[25] Ibid., 43.19–21.

[26] It is argued that the reference to the father's name in Ancient Greece and especially in Plato's works has a social and political meaning. It indicated either a kind of aristocratic title or an attempt/reaction by new citizens to prove that although they did not come from Athens, they wanted to incorporate into the political community of Athens and become "real" citizens See Plato. *His Life and his Works*, trans. X. Armiros (Κάκτος, 2005), 36.

that relation which is full by love's fire" [ἐνέσπειρεν ὁ πατήρ δεσμόν πυριβριθῆ ἔρωτος],[27] this means that the loving approach presupposes the existence of mutual respect in the beloved's soul. Particularly, the reference to the father's name causes in the first place a kind of familiarity between the beloved and himself and in the second place the beloved becomes acquainted with the lover (in that case Socrates).

The above approach does not exceed Plato's metaphysics of love, but it gives rise to a question about the significance of this kind of familiarity between the beloved and himself. The response is given initially by the connection between eros and beauty, which shines from the higher levels into our world. Both are merging into each other, consisting of the process of reversion: "the whole order of erotic desire is for all beings the cause of reversion to the divine beauty, on the one hand elevating to, uniting with and establishing in it all that is secondary, and on the other filling with this beauty all the lower things and irradiating from thence the communications of divine light that proceed from it."[28] This kind of movement creates between humans the type of *returning* love, where the lover evokes to the beloved reminiscences [*anamnēsis*], i. e., the latter desires to return this love back to his lover.

Proclus' contribution, however, is the application of the concept of *erōs* in the whole circle of procession (*prohodos*) and reversion, which led to an entire different world-view where gods are related to the cosmos actively and keep looking after it. This providential care for the world is accomplished in the following ways: "(a) it passes through all things from the top to the bottom, leaving nothing, not even the least, without a share in itself, (b) it neither admits into itself any thing if controls nor is infected with its character nor is confused therewith."[29]

Socrates in his "erotic" relation to Alcibiades therefore behaves like gods do, by demonstrating his providential love for him and expressing his transcendence.[30] Furthermore, the role of the lover here seems to be dominant in a way: while he creates love's impression, at the same time he acts as a means between divine beauty and the beloved who needs his [lover's] *providence* in order to be connected with the Good[31] and ultimately to be saved.[32] This kind of love is not related to passion but is presented by Proclus as the result of the endless goodness that the cause gives to its result. The lover therefore supports ontologically his beloved in order for the latter to find the power to revert to him (*reversive love*). Moreover, for Prolcus this loving desire (providential love) does not attain perfection for the lover, but its role is to provide affection to others.[33] It is as a result of the providential love which every cause has for its effect that the effect in turn will love its cause and desire to return, i. e., that is *reversive love*.

Conclusion

Proclus in *Commentary on Alcibiades* adds the notion of providence and reversion in the matter of love in order to demonstrate the downward and the upward movement of eros which is considered as energy. Both kinds of eros develop a dialectical relationship where the ultimate goal is the shaping of a perfect being by all means. Proclus, by arguing that eros is a unified power

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[27] *Commentary on Alcibiades*, 26.4–5.

[28] Ibid., 30.14–18, 32.9–33.16, 45.4–6, 55.10–17.

[29] Ibid., 53.17–54.8.

[30] Ibid., 55.4–6.

[31] "And this is the way of life that Socrates presents with excellent way in this dialogue." Ibid., 27.1–4, 10–12.

[32] Ibid., 32.16.

[33] This Proclean position seems to abstain from Platonic eros and be closer to the Christian concept of *agapē* which is considered to be very opposite of eros. See Chlup, *Proclus*, 242.

which raises beings from their distinctness into their own identification, places erotic relationships into the true philosophical life, i. e., living according to the Intellect or even beyond it.

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Plethon and Machiavelli: On the Same Side of the "Mirror"?*

Abstract | The aim of this paper is to revisit the role of one of the greatest figures of Byzantine philosophy, George Gemistos Plethon (1355/60–1452/4) in a reconfiguration of Platonic tradition of the late Byzantine world. Plethon's relationship with the previous tradition exhibits intriguing and profound affinities with Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527). Specifically, he embraces a pragmatic approach to the exercise of political power, the contribution of religion in the sociopolitical organisation of the state, and the qualities of an ideal ruler. Writing in response to the decline of the Byzantine Empire, Plethon's project is similar to Machiavelli's endeavour to unite the fragmented Italian states.

Keywords | Georgios Gemistos Plethon – Niccolò Machiavelli – Mirror for Princes – Ideal Ruler – Nation – Criticism of Religion

Research on Plethon's thought has flourished in recent years: international conferences, articles, publications and new critical editions attest to a revival of interest in the work and influence of the Philosopher of Mystra. While prior scholarship has pointed to the general affinities between the political anthropology of Plethon and Machiavelli, no attempt has yet been made to bring the commonalities of the two authors into sharper focus in light of the political and social conditions that prevailed in Mystra (Peloponnese) and Renaissance Florence.[1] The two thinkers do not speak theoretically, but propose immediate solutions to urgent situations and try to motivate

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[1] See Dimitris Dedes, "Θρησκεία και πολιτική κατά τον Γεώργιο Γεμιστό Πλήθωνα," *Φιλοσοφία* 5–6 (1975–76): 42, note 21; Ioannis Theodorakopoulos, "Η θέση του Πλήθωνος στην Ιστορία της Φιλοσοφίας," *Λακωνικαί Σπουδαί* 2 (1975): 75; Neoklis Kazazis, *Γεώργιος Γεμιστός Πλήθων και ο κοινωνισμός κατά την Αναγέννησι* (Athens: Eleftheri Skepsis, 1994); Vana Nikolaidou-Kyrianidou, "Ο πολιτικός κατά τον Γεώργιο Γεμιστό-Πλήθωνα. Είναι πλατωνική η κατά Πλήθωνα πολιτική φιλοσοφία," *Βυζαντιναί Μελέται* 4 (1992): 400, note 11; Giorgos Steiris, *Η θεωρία του Niccolò Machiavelli για την ηθική και το νόμο* (Athens-Komotini: Ant. N. Sakkoula, 2003), 36–37; Niketas Siniossoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), esp. 377, as well as 335, 350–1, 370, 374. The only paper which sheds light on the affinities of the two thinkers, focusing on their economic ideas, is the following: C. Baloglou and A. D. Karayiannis, "The Economic Thought of Georgios Gemistos-Plethon and Niccolò Machiavelli: Some Comparative Parallels and Links," *Archives of Economic History* XVII/1 (2005): 5–29.

their readership into action. This is obvious in two *Memoranda*[2] of Plethon, addressed to King Manuel and Despot Theodore II,[3] and in the notorious *The Prince* of Machiavelli, dedicated to Lorenzo de' Medici. Although the two *Memoranda* and *The Prince* exhibit considerable differences in terms of structure and content, we will discuss those key political ideas of Plethon which are timidly formulated, in other words, those ideas which stopped short of innovating, of radically altering, the prevalent field of political thought.

I. Thesis

Religion and Statecraft

The Synod of Ferrara–Florence (1438–39) on the union of the two churches,[4] in which Georgios Gemistos Plethon participated as a member of the delegation of Emperor John VII (1370–1408), was a milestone for the theological ideas of the philosopher.[5] Plethon himself was on the side of the anti-unionists, but zealously supported and promoted the positions of the Orthodox Church. His tactics were driven by deeper motives, and for this reason he did not contradict his theological and political positions or his critical attitude towards Christianity. He recognized that controversy not so much at the religious level as at the national level,[6] since the issue at stake was the independence and self-determination of the Greek nation. His frustration with the intra-Christian controversy and the abortive deliberations of the Synod reaffirmed, in his eyes,

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[2] The scholarship has never classified Plethon's *Memoranda* in the literary genre of "mirror for princes," a tradition that was flourishing both in the East and West. The genre of "mirrors for princes" derives its origin from the literature of the classical tradition; more specifically, from the work of Xenophon (*Cyropaedia*) and Isocrates' speeches (*Evagoras*, *Ad Demonicum*, *Ad Nicoclem*, *Nicocles*). With regard to Byzantine literature, Herbert Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, vol. I (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1978), 120–132 and 157–165, distinguishes between "praiseworthy speeches" and "mirrors for princes," defining as the main criterion the content and the purposes of the texts. In short, the texts that provide "genuine advice" and formulate "serious warnings" belong to the second category. Cf. Pierre Hadot, "Fürstenspiegel," *RAC* 8 (1972): 555–632, who erroneously overlooks the above distinction. Odorico, who moves in the opposite direction, "Les miroirs des princes à Byzance. Une lecture horizontale," in Paolo Odorico, ed., *L'éducation au gouvernement et à la vie. La tradition des règles de vie de l'antiquité au Moyen-Âge, Actes du Colloque International (Pise 18 et 19 mars 2005)* (Paris 2009), 223–246, denies the genre of "mirrors" in Byzantium, considering that texts, such as *Ἔκθεσις κεφαλαίων παραινετικῶν* of Agapetus (deacon), do not correspond to Hunger's categorization. For more about this literary genre, see Geert Roskam and Stefan Schorn, eds., *Concepts of Ideal Rulership from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Brepols Publishers, 2019); Regula Forster and Neguin Yavari, eds., *Global Medieval: Mirrors for Princes Reconsidered*, Ilex Series (Ilex Foundation, 2015); Lynette Mitchell and Charles Melville, eds., *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies on Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Brill, 2013).

[3] The original titles are "Εις τον Βασιλέα Εμμανουήλ Παλαιολόγον περί των εν Πελοποννήσω πραγμάτων" (henceforth *Memorandum to Manuel*) and "Συμβουλευτικός προς τον Δεσπότην Θεόδωρον περί της Πελοποννήσου" (henceforth *Memorandum to Theodore*).

[4] Deno J. Geanakopoulos, "The Council of Florence (1438–1439) and the Problem of Union between the Greek and Latin Churches," *Church History* 24 (1955): 324–346.

[5] C. M. Woodhouse, *Gemistos Plethon. The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1986), 12; Basil Tatakis, *Byzantine Philosophy*, trans. and introd. Nicholas J. Moutafakis (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003), 237, where the author points out that the Synod was not only a significant episode in Plethon's life, but also "in the rebirth of Platonic philosophy in the West."

[6] See François Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1956), 326: "La politique ecclésiastique de Pléthon n'est sans doute, disions-nous, qu'une application particulière de ses vues nationalistes. Ainsi, son opposition à l'Union ne serait pas due, en ordre principal, à une volonté sournoise d'affaiblir l'Église, pour mieux assurer lit libre expansion du platonisme de Mistra. Néanmoins, comme on vient de le constater, tout machiavélisme n'est pas absent des entreprises de Pléthon dans le domaine religieux."

the deadlock of Christian ontology.[7] After his return from Italy, his views on the divine seem to have been crystallized and he explicitly formulates his own theological schema, which came into direct conflict with that of the official religion of the Byzantine Empire.

According to Plethon, the religious issue is inextricably linked to that of national identity.[8] The rejection of Christian doctrines and the establishment of a new religious model of faith is largely due to the attitude of the official religion towards the question of national consciousness. Characteristic is the statement of Gennadius Scholarius (c. 1400 – c. 1473), Plethon's spiritual rival, that he is not a Greek, but if he wished to identify himself then he would claim to be a Christian.[9] The attitude of the latter is indicative and most revealing of the disgrace to which the terms "Greek" and "national" had fallen, since both concepts had been identified with idolatry and paganism. The actions of Plethon are moving in this direction, proposing a state and theological model in order to "revive Hellenism in all its dimensions and to form a living religious and philosophical, at the same time, consciousness of the modern Greeks."[10] In other terms, his reform programme is aimed at releasing the mentality of Byzantine society from the static nature of the Christian tradition.[11]

In addition, Plethon's theological concepts are related to the Neoplatonic and Christian controversy over the creation of the world. This controversy seems to have led to the closure of the Academy of Athens in 529 AD by Emperor Justinian. Despite the differences and contradictions expounded in the theories and doctrines of the representatives of Neoplatonism, there is a certain degree of convergence in their respective programmes which, in addition to capitalizing on pagan tendencies, aimed at the release of philosophical thought, on the one hand, from the Byzantine

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[7] George Zofrafidis, "Ο Παντοκράτωρ Ζευς του Πλήθωνος: ενολογία, μοναρχία, πολυθεϊσμός," in *Proceedings of the International Congress on Plethon and His Time: Mystras, 26–29 June 2002*, eds. Linos Benakis and Christos Baloglou (Athens: Parousia, 2003), 143.

[8] On Hellenic identity, see Anthony Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformation of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); George Steiris, "Byzantine Philosophers of the 15th Century on Identity and Otherness" in *The Problem of Modern Greek Identity: From the Ecumene to the Nation-State*, eds. Georgios Steiris, Sotiris Mitralexis, and Georgios Arabatzis (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016); Jacek Raszewski, "Georgios Gemistos Plethon and the Crisis of Modern Greek Identity" in *Georgios Gemistos Plethon. The Byzantine and the Latin Renaissance*, eds. Jozef Matula and Paul Richard Blum (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2014), 433–456.

[9] Scholarios, *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 3, eds. L. Petit, X. A. Sidéridès, and M. Jugie (Paris: Maison de la bonne presse, 1928–1936), 253. See also, Woodhouse, *Gemistos Plethon*, 45–47, 71–78.

[10] Bargeliotis, *Ελληνοκεντρική Φιλοσοφία*, 41; D. A. Zakynthinos, *Le Despotat grec de Morée, tome II: Vie et institutions* (Athènes: L'Hellénisme contemporain, 1953), 356. See also, Paul Richard Blum, "Plethon the First Philhellene: Re-enacting the Antiquity" in *Georgios Gemistos Plethon. The Byzantine and the Latin Renaissance*, eds. Jozef Matula and Paul Richard Blum (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2014), 391–413.

[11] Ioannis Theodorakopoulos, "Η θέση του Πλήθωνος στην Ιστορία της Φιλοσοφίας," *Λακωνικαί Σπουδαί* 2 (1975): 74. The order of monks, for example, gives an idea of how religion wants people. Thus, in the eyes of Plethon, the monastic order is a passive force and objectively incapable of regenerating the Modern Greek nation. The monastic way of life is an example to be avoided as believers are led into a passive, fatalistic behavior, accepting enslavement by a non-religious people as punishment sent by God. There was a widespread perception that any act of overthrowing this order would amount to disobedience to the divine will, disrespect for God's decision. Scholarios, as well as a great majority of Christians, shared this view that justifies the fact of the Turkish advance, that is, God wanted to test the Christians and for this reason abandoned them (Scholarios, Œuvres Complètes, vol. 1, 185). Moreover, he exalts the martial qualities and the political stability of the Turks (Lambros, Παλαιολόγεια και Πελοποννησιακά (Athens, 1912–30), iii, 310). For a general discussion about monastic life in Byzantium, see Alexander Kazhdan and Giles Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium. An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 33–34.

conservative tradition, i. e., Platonizing Christianity and the movements of mysticism, and, on the other hand, from the Aristotelianism of the Scholastic tradition.[12]

More specifically, the neo-Platonic thinkers rejected the *ex nihilo* Creation of the World of Christian *didascalia* and projected an intra-cosmic Creator, from whom all the other beings draw their essence.[13] Their philosophical programmes envision a world in full order with overlapping grades, so that the distance from the higher level of the "Divine" to the lower level of the "Human" does not seem bridged and cut off. Based on this graded and scaled hierarchy of the divine entities, with a completion from the top to the bottom, and not by submission, Plethon formed his own Pantheon.[14] He refrains from using Christian terminology, but his language remains clearly theological, as politics are built on theological foundations.[15] To reconstitute the state, one needs to work out a theological model in which the divine world functions as an effective hierarchy and not as a mere pyramidal articulation of empty titulars.[16]

Plethon attempts to substantiate secular power by reducing it to the model of Twelver theology, according to which Zeus, the "Father himself" (*αὐτοπάτωρ*), the "Father of all the other beings" (*τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντων πατὴρ*), "the King," (*βασιλεῦς, ἀρχηγέτον*), is presented as the absolute regulator of the universe.[17] The universe is a strictly hierarchically structured entity, whose pyramidal arrangement[18] allows us to perceive the way in which the distribution and dispersal of power from the top, the power, to its lower levels, the rulers, is achieved.

At the top of the pyramid is Zeus, whose role is not identified with that of the *primus inter pares*, but of the *pater familias* of the Roman *auctoritas*. This means, on the one hand, that his power is absolute and, on the other, that there is no recognition of equality between members and that decision-making is therefore not the product of a democratic process. At the base of the pyramid, or at the lower level of the universe, is human society, which is nothing more than a palimpsest of rational beings trying to regulate their relations on the basis of their degree of kinship to Zeus – since all beings are descendants of the same transcendental principle – and each individually to reach the "happy life," imitating the example of Father Zeus. The organisation of the world, according to Plethon, refers to the Stoic conception of the *cosmopolis*, where the universe, the world is a common place of gods and people and was created just for both to enjoy.[19] From the political reading of the Plethonian cosmopolis, we come to the following:

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[12] Bargeliotes, *Ελληνοκεντρική φιλοσοφία*, 13.

[13] Siniossoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium*, 248, 250–253.

[14] George N. Vasilaros, "Η Ελληνική μυθολογία στο έργο του Γεωργίου Γεμίστού Πλήθωνος," *Βυζαντιναί Μελέται* 4 (1992): 646–671.

[15] Krasker, *Plethon, La retour de Platon*, 117.

[16] Ibid., 124.

[17] *Nomoi* III, 100 sqq.

[18] Hannah Arendt provides us with the image of the pyramid which perfectly describes the political system of *auctoritas* in her essay "What is Authority?" in *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: The Viking Press, 1961), 98–99.

[19] Cicero, *De natura deorum* II, 3, §154: "Principio ipse mundus deorum hominumque causa factus est, quaeque in eo sunt, ea parata ad fructum hominum et inventa sunt. Est enim mundus quasi communis deorum atque hominum domus aut urbs utrorumque."

a) the ability to "govern" and "be governed" are evaluated and authorized by the degree of kinship to Zeus;
b) the degree of affinity is famously attributed to the shape of the pyramidal arrangement which reveals the geometrically equal distribution and dispersion of power, since it is distributed from top to bottom in a manner directly proportional to the distance from the top,[20] and
c) father Zeus[21] is also a criterion of correctness for every act.

Regarding Machiavelli's theological concepts, there has been a great deal of misunderstanding and controversy over what his attitude was towards official or non-official religion. Since it is accepted that Machiavelli explicitly introduces the founding act of modern times by eliminating the ecclesiastical factor from the realm of politics, there is a reasonable impression that he was hostile and opposed to any form of religiosity. Such an impression is enhanced by a number of bibliographic references but also inaccurate descriptions, which came to the fore immediately after the publication of his work *The Prince*. The modern readings of his work highlight, however, a complex, and less one-dimensional, truth about it.[22]

According to Machiavelli, three factors initially contributed to the greatness of ancient Rome: a *strong army*, *good laws* and *good fortune*;[23] to add elsewhere that *religion* is what validates and ensures the above three conditions.[24] Therefore, it can only be legitimate and necessary. As the Florentine author puts it: "Whoever considers well the Roman histories sees how much religion served to command armies, to animate the plebs, to keep men good, to bring shame to the wicked;"[25] it is also argued that religion is the one that "brought good laws" and never a legislator was found to legislate unprecedented laws for a people, without resorting to God, since otherwise no one would accept them. For this reason, he believes that the legislator Numa offered more to Rome than its founder, Romulus.[26]

Also of interest is the chapter "On Ecclesiastical Hegemony" of *The Prince*, which seems to have been silenced or crushed under the weight of the Machiavellian ideas of the final chapter. There the Florentine author argues in favour of ecclesiastical hegemony, arguing that "they are sustained by orders that have grown old with religion, which have been so powerful and of such a kind that they keep their princes in the state however they proceed and live."[27] The usefulness

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[20] Vana Nikolaidou-Kyrianidou, "Καταγωγή και πολιτική εξουσία κατά τον Γεώργιο Γεμιστό-Πλήθωνα," *Ελληνική Φιλοσοφική Επιθεώρηση* 10 (1993): 34–35.

[21] It is noteworthy to mention that the power of Zeus, however authoritarian and centralized, should not be conflated with that of the tyrant, because obedience to the monarch Zeus is not achieved through violence and coercion, as in the case of the latter, but through voluntary desire to comply with the advice of the one who is the source of the Good. See, ibid.

[22] As an indication, see: Antonio Gramsci, *Note sul Machiavelli sulla Politica e sullo Stato moderno* (Torino: Einaudi, 1955); Claude Lefort, *Le travail de l'oeuvre machiavel* (Paris: Tel gallimard); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Note sur Machiavel," *Les Temps Modernes* 48 (Octobre 1949): 578–593; Michel Senellart, *Machiavélisme et raison d'État* (Paris: PUF, 1989); Pierre Manent, "Machiavel et la fécondité du mal" in *L'Histoire intellectuelle du libéralisme* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 1997); Paul Valadier, *Machiavel et la fragilité du politique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1996); Isaiah Berlin, "The Originality of Machiavelli" in *Against the Current. Essays in the History of Ideas* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 33–100.

[23] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, I, IV, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[24] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, I, XI.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, XI, trans. and introd. Harvey C. Mansfield (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

and expediency of religion is not entirely absent from political life, especially when Machiavelli explicitly urges that "princes of a republic or of a kingdom should maintain the foundations of the religion they hold; and if this is done, it will be an easy thing for them to maintain their republic religious and, in consequence, good and united."[28]

Machiavelli sees religion as the cohesive link between the various parts that make up a political entity. Religion helps forge strong institutions, enhances the military spirit and, to some extent, controls fortune. Religious sentiment plays a catalytic role in cases where the individual is called upon to serve a higher idea, such as defending the territorial integrity of his homeland, and all that entails – cultural and religious heritage, freedoms, etc. The French philosopher Régis Debray describes the role of religion as the art of the collective, the architecture of building collectivities, the power that transforms an ephemeral cluster of individuals into a lasting and durable "whole" that is recognized as a common "we."[29] The religious mind is the one that shields the soul, makes it courageous, and banishes fear and cowardice. Such a problem could not be solved satisfactorily by legal means. This psychological argument seems to have been successfully reflected in the case of the Spanish king Ferdinand of Aragon, who in all his endeavours invoked religion. In this way, he justified the brutal violence and extremism against other peoples, but still managed to keep the hearts and minds of the citizens, constantly occupied and full of admiration, busy with these events.[30]

Savonarola's case had a direct impact on the Italian philosopher's thought. The Dominican clergyman assumed power after the expulsion of the Medici in 1494, establishing a Christian Commonwealth whose mission was to purify the souls of its citizens. The religious purification promised a clear struggle against pagan religions, organising acts of repression, such as the burning of works of art and objects that testified to the relaxation of morals. The new standard of living recommended for all the people of Florence was a simple and ascetic life, the renunciation of material pleasures, so that their souls, purified, may enter the kingdom of God. The relentless spirit that distinguished his reformist programme was radically opposed to the spirit of sinfulness of the court of Pope Alexander XI.

Machiavelli would fully agree with the strident critique expressed by the Dominican clergyman in the Church of Rome, because the latter seems to have deviated from its essential mission. Their approaches overlap. "Thus we Italians have this first obligation to the church and to the priests that we have become without religion and wicked" or "Nor can one make any better conjecture as to its decline than to see that those peoples who are closest to the Roman church, the head of our religion, have less religion."[31] Resigned from any effort compatible with the spirit of the ecclesiastical texts, the heads of the papal church manifested the same signs of weakness and lack of self-control with the uneducated and ignorant people. Moving away from the true word of God creates an unstable political environment throughout Europe, while the great superpowers, the admittedly Christian ones, should live in a spirit of cooperation and peaceful coexistence, respecting each other's national integrity. "If such religion had been maintained by the princes of the Christian republic as was ordered by Its giver, the Christian states and republics would be more united, much happier than they are."[32] In other words, his own vision of "eternal peace," at least in Europe, could have the Christian religion as a cornerstone.

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[28] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, I, XII.

[29] Régis Debray, *Les communions humaines: Pour en finir avec «la religion»* (Paris: Fayard, 2005).

[30] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, XI.

[31] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, I, XII.

[32] Ibid.

Machiavelli could not fully agree, however, with the Dominican monk. Their essential difference lies in the clear distinction between Christian ethics and politics and the precedence of the religious factor in state planning. Savonarola does not act in accordance with political motives. His programme is not formulated in terms of political change, but in terms of theology, as if it were a heavenly command. The revival of a Christian commonwealth seems like a utopian endeavour, since the exercise of Christian morality leads to political weakness. For example, Savonarola's reform programme failed to last, because the strength and the determination of other men (King Ferdinand of Spain, Medici) succeed in dominating, because they knew how to consolidate their power, even if they deemed it necessary to resort to the use of dubious methods. Even, in his *The Prince*, Machiavelli makes it clear that he does not reject Christian morality. Referring to virtues such as goodness, generosity, compassion, he writes: "And I know that everyone will confess that it would be a very laudable thing to find in a prince all of the above-mentioned qualities that are held good. But because he cannot have them, nor wholly observe them, since human conditions do not permit it."[33] He points out that such a moral attitude is doomed to fail when it is called upon to serve political and social purposes.

Among so many contradictory roles attributed to the Florentine official, Pierre Manent sets forth the bold view of Machiavelli more as a religious anti-religious reformer than as a thinker.[34] According to Emmanuelle Cutinelli-Rendina, Machiavelli was the founder of a sociology of religion.[35] He is not an infidel or an atheist, as Strauss wants him to be,[36] but he will prefer virtues, like Plethon, of a mystical, pagan religion:

> Thinking then whence it can arise that in those ancient times peoples were more lovers of freedom than in these, I believe it arises from the same cause that makes men less strong now, which I believe is the difference between our education and the ancient, founded on the difference between our religion and the ancient. For our religion, having shown the truth and the true way, makes us esteem less the honour of the world, whereas the Gentiles, esteeming It very much and having placed the highest good in It, were more ferocious in their actions.[37]

If his morality is dualistic, it is because, indeed, Christian morality and politics are two different systems. The originality of the Florentine thinker, according to Berlin's analysis, consists of the distinction between two types of ethics: the ethics of Christianity and the ethics of paganism. The ethics of the pagan world, advocated by Machiavelli, have the following values: "courage, vigour, fortitude in adversity, public achievement, order, discipline, happiness, strength, justice, above all assertion of one's proper claims and the knowledge and power needed to secure their satisfaction."[38] The above distinction echoes the argumentation of Plethonian criticism to Christian religion.

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[33] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, XV.

[34] Manent, *Histoire intellectuelle du libéralisme*, 48. Machiavelli's innovation lies in highlighting the ambiguous character with which religion is presented to people. Manent observes that, on the one hand, religion leaves the political communities free to organise as they wish, and, on the other hand, it degrades the political communities. In other words, it refuses to govern people but also underestimates those who have been charged with this responsibility, and the only thing that it succeeds in is preventing proper governance.

[35] Emmanuelle Cutinelli-Rendina, "Quelle religion pour les modernes?," *Magazine Littéraire*, no. 397 (2001): 26.

[36] Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (University of Chicago Press, 1978), 142, 204–205. Cf. Hannah Arendt, "Un viatique pour lire Machiavel (un cours inédit)," *Magazine Littéraire*, no. 397 (2001): 52.

[37] Machiavelli, *The Discourses on Livy*, II, II.

[38] Berlin, "The Originality of Machiavelli," 56, 67–68, 80. On the contrary, the values of Christianity are: "charity, mercy, sacrifice, love of God, forgiveness of enemies, contempt for the goods of this world, faith in the life hereafter, belief in the salvation of the individual soul as being of incomparable value."

The Ideal ruler and Constitution according to Plethon

Carl Schmitt in his celebrated work *Political Theology* aptly states that "the metaphysical image that a definite epoch forges of the world has the same structure as what the world immediately understands to be appropriate as a form of its political organisation."[39] In this context, the Byzantine Empire is the "earthly copy of the Kingdom of Heaven," where the monarch is "either an emanation of God or a descendant of God, or at least His High Priest, the man appointed by God to look after the people."[40] Moreover, since man is made in God's image, man's state should be made in Heaven's image. It becomes clear from the outset that political concepts in the Byzantine period constitute, in Schmitt's words, "secularized theological concepts."[41] The "politicization" of theological concepts consists, after, all, in a work of the ecclesiastical authorities and part of a broader theological conflict, that between Christianity and the ideological currents that promoted polytheism.[42] The authority of one is preferred over the authority of many, unity over versatility and dispersion. The earthly political model must be exemplified by the successful Kingdom of Heaven and the authority of the One.

In this context, in his *Memorandum to Theodore*, Plethon explicitly states that the monarchy seems to be the ideal political constitution: παρὰ μὲν τοῖς τὰ βέλτιστα φρονοῦσι κράτιστον κέκριται πάντων μοναρχία,[43] the middle ground between oligarchy and democracy, between the despotism of the upper class and the despotism of people. What is required, in this case, is not equality between citizens, but the idea of administrative competence.[44] In short, pluralism, diversity of views and beliefs lead to relativism and from there to doom.[45] Such an eventuality is prevented by the rule of One. Moreover, when dangers are threatening the community, monarchy appears to be more secure and useful (*ἀσφαλεστάτην καί λυσιτελεστάτην*).[46] Plethon is clearly influenced by Plato's *Statesman*.[47] According to the analysis of A. Taylor, the question in this dialogue is which state constitution is preferable for humanity, the personified government or the impersonal constitutionality. He will distinguish in Plato's intentions that he clearly

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[39] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 46.

[40] See Steven Runciman, *The Byzantine Theocracy* (Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 1.

[41] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 65.

[42] On this controversy, see Siniossoglou, *Radical Platonism*, 49 sqq. Cf. Vojtěch Hladký, *The philosophy of Gemistos Plethon. Platonism in Late Byzantium, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 269–285. For Plethon's paganism in general, see Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra*, 208–225; ibid., "La restauration du paganisme par George Gemiste Plethon" in *Il modo antico nel Rinascimento. Atti del V Convegno Internazionale di studi sul Rinascimento, 2–6 Settembre 1956* (Firenze: Editore G. C. Sansoni, 1958), 57–62; Woodhouse, *Gemistos Plethon*, 62–78; Reneé et François Masai, "L'Œuvre de Georges Gémiste Pléthon, Rapport sur des trouvailles récentes: autographes et traités inédits," *Bulletin de l'Académie royale de Belgique* (Classe des Lettres, 1954): 547.

[43] PG 160, 848 C.

[44] Tatakis, *Byzantine Philosophy*, 240.

[45] On subjectivity and diversity of opinions, see also *Nomoi* I, 16–26.

[46] PG, 160, 841 A.

[47] Plato, *Statesman*, 292d–303b. See, Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra*, 72; and Nikolaidou-Kyrianidou, "Ο πολιτικός κατά τον Γεώργιο Γεμιστό-Πλήθωνα," 401–402. He has also been influenced by Plutarch in terms of the distinction of constitutions and the preference for the monarchy, see *On Monarchy, Democracy and Oligarchy*. It should also be noted that Plethon seems to have read specific passages from Plato's *Statesman* and not to know the dialogue in depth. See Nikolaidou-Kyrianidou, "Ο πολιτικός κατά τον Γεώργιο Γεμιστό-Πλήθωνα," 402–403; Theodoros S. Nikolaou, *Αι περί πολιτείας και δικαίου ιδέαι του Γ. Πλήθωνος Γεμιστού* (Thessaloniki: Centre for Byzantine Research, 1989), 69.

favours constitutionality and, in particular, "limited monarchy."[48] However, his political experience forced him to clarify that without "constitutional law" the "limited monarchy" could slip into an irresponsible and uncontrollable totalitarianism. The criterion of obedience to the law also shapes the form of government. In the dialectical examination of constitutions, the two interlocutors, the Foreigner and the young Socrates, seeking the definition of politics and political art, distinguish between six types of constitution. The monarchy, the aristocracy and the democracy, when the law is obeyed and the tyranny, the oligarchy and the democracy, when the law is completely catalysed (these are essentially the vicious versions of the first three regimes). The Stranger, who sets the axes of dialogue, under the discreet and silent presence of Socrates, provides the definition of the best form of social existence: "Monarchy, then, when bound by good written rules, which we call laws, is the best of all the six; but without law it is hard and most oppressive to live with."[49] In the same dialogue again, Plato identifies the royal monarchy with political art: βασιλικὸν ταὐτὸν κληθὲν καὶ πολιτικόν.[50] As Nikolaou observes, Plethon defends monarchy for a metaphysical reason, that is, since among gods there is a king, respectively a king should be superior among men.[51]

Although his constitutional preference is not an original concept, but an echo of Platonic notions, Plethon innovates in the choice of king, which makes him a bold thinker and confronts him with Christian political theology. An ideal ruler, according to the philosopher of Mystras, is the one who not only proves in practice his kinship with King Zeus but the one who manages to be the most faithful image of the Creator. In other words, the moral duty of a ruler consists in voluntary obedience to the divine will. Thus, moral virtue emerges primarily as a political virtue.[52] The great ruler possesses the virtue of *θεοσέβεια* (godliness),[53] so he creates by following faithfully and successfully the model of the Father-Creator. Consequently, the ability of the ruler (One) lies in the ability to take care of the Many.[54] This presupposes that he has tamed his base, animal Self through the virtue of *σωφροσύνη* (prudence).[55] If he controls the higher Self, he is the most competent to take over the fortunes of the uneducated crowd. His concern is to restore the lost pedagogical character of the *polis* and return to the laws their omnipotence. At this point, the teaching of Plethon breaks with one of the most important conceptions of the Byzantine world, both politically and theologically. As for assuming power, he rejects the arbitrary coupling of the emperor and the divine. The analysis of *heimarmene*[56] revealed that the Plethonian universe is characterised by an absolute determinism where everything is a predetermined decision of the

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[48] Taylor, *Plato*, 449.

[49] Plato, *Statesman*, 302e: "Μοναρχία τοίνυν ζευχθεῖσα μεν γράμμασιν ἐν γράμμασιν ἀγαθοῖς, οὗς νόμους λέγομεν, ἀρίστη πασῶν τῶν ἕξ", trans. Harold N. Fowler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1921).

[50] Plato, *Statesman*, 267c και 294a: "Τρόπον τινὰ μέντοι δῆλον ὅτι τῆς βασιλικῆς ἐστιν ἡ νομοθετική" "τὸ δ' ἄριστον οὐ τοὺς νόμους ἐστὶν ἰσχύειν ἀλλ' ἄνδρα τὸν μετὰ φρονήσεως βασιλικόν". See also *Phaedrus*, 266c: "βασιλικοὶ μὲν ἄνδρες" and *Euthydemus*, 291c: "ἡ πολιτικὴ καὶ ἡ βασιλικὴ τέχνη ἡ αὐτὴ εἶναι".

[51] Nikolaou, *Αι περί πολιτείας και δικαίου ιδέαι του Γ. Πλήθωνος Γεμιστού*, 86.

[52] Nikolaidou-Kyrianidou, "Καταγωγή και πολιτική εξουσία," 36.

[53] PG 160, 872 B.

[54] Nikolaidou-Kyrianidou, "Καταγωγή και πολιτική εξουσία," 36.

[55] PG 160, 872 AB. John Wilson Taylor, "Gemistus Pletho as a Moral Philosopher," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 51 (1920): 86, notes that the virtue of σωφροσύνη "is not limited, as by Aristotle, to self-control regarding the pleasures, nor is it broadened, as by Plato, to mean the harmony which keeps each part of the soul in its place. It is the virtue by which the desires are restricted to what is necessary and easy to obtain."

[56] *Nomoi* (PG 160, 961–966). For the Plethonian notion of *heimarmene*, consult Pangiotis Pantazakos, *Πλήθων, περί ζώων και ψυχής* (Athens: Kardamitsa, 2012), 133–146; Linos G. Benakis, "Ελευθερία και Αναγκαιότητα

divine will. Absolute predestination cannot include in its system the miraculous intervention of divine grace, that is, what Byzantine political theology accepts. Therefore, the idea of divine grace is abandoned.[57]

The genealogical criterion for the assumption of power suggested by Plethon, and which should be in complete agreement with the father-creator Zeus, consists of the ability of man to govern. Therefore, he is related to Zeus who is able to take initiatives that will lead the crowd to its salvation. The εὐπραξία (good action, good conduct) of the politician is responsible for the well-being of the citizens of a community. In *Memorandum to Theodore*, describing the qualities and abilities of the great man, he characteristically states that he should "τὰ καθεστῶτα κινεῖν ***καὶ*** ἐπανορθοῦσαι" and "πάντα κινῶν καὶ πάντα πειρώμενος."[58] For this reason he should act immediately and on a large scale, avoiding half measures that will temporarily relieve the evil, but will not cure it completely. The leader he describes must have as his main concern the "salvation of *genos*" (τό γένος σῶζειν). A constant exhortation to the despot Theodore II, son of Manuel Palaiologos, is to think only of the common good, the welfare of *patria*, and if necessary to cut off a sick arm or leg in order to save the rest of the body. Also, at the beginning of his *Memorandum to Manuel*, he urges the captain of the ship and the General of the Army to use all means for the salvation of the state and this victory over its enemies.[59]

The above-mentioned set of counsels proffered by Plethon summarises the content of what has been called *reason of state* (*raison d'état*, *Staaträson*, *ragion di stato*).[60] In this sense, his political ideal meets the core of Machiavellian political science: the only possible form of social existence is none other than the prosperity of *res publica*, the welfare of the *patria*.

> That advice deserves to be noted and observed by any citizen who finds himself counselling his fatherland, for where one deliberates entirely on the safety of his fatherland, there ought not to enter any consideration of either just or unjust; merciful or cruel, praiseworthy or ignominious; indeed every other concern put aside, one ought to follow entirely the policy that saves its life and maintains its liberty.[61]

In a nutshell: the art of governance is defined in terms of the feasible.

στην Βυζαντινή Φιλοσοφία" in *Texts and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy* (Athens: Parousia, 2002), 159–176; Leonidas Bargeliotes, "Fate or Heimarmene according to Plethon," *Diotima* 3 (1975): 137–149.

[57] Christian political theology required that there be no rule of succession on the basis of the kinship between father king and son. It should be the divine grace and not the father to prove that the son is worthy to succeed him on the throne.

[58] PG, 160, 864 CD.

[59] PG, 160, 841 A.

[60] For a detailed analysis of the notion of *reason of state* in correlation with Machiavellian political theory, see Michel Senellart, *Machiavélisme et raison d'État* (Paris: PUF, 1989).

[61] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy* III, XLI.

II. Synthesis

What these two political doctrines have in common is the attempt of the two authors to construct a Rational I that can materialise the vision of a powerful nation. The implication in both cases for strategy is that it is the product of a genius, a mind that stands above the average.[62] This suggests two things for the two thinkers. Firstly, each charismatic personality has to control its inferior self, before it can control other people.[63] Secondly, each genius has to master the art of politics, i. e., the techniques, the already verified set of empirical knowledge. Under these conditions "the empiricist of politics fully undertakes the activity of constructing, calculating to the last detail the reasons, the means, the ways, and the processes that are going to lead to the materialization of the undertaken goal."[64]

More precisely, the examination of the Plethonian concept of state organisation demonstrates the necessity for the shaping of a collective "we" under the auspices of a charismatic leader. The principal duty of a leader seeking to respond to the needs of this time – which in this case is to save his country – consists of turning a fragmented mass of people into an organised and structured whole. This is because the relationship between rulers and ruled rests on interdependence. No matter how charismatic a leader may be, he cannot achieve the materialization of his vision without his people's support. Similarly, the happiness of a certain people depends upon the virtue of their leader. The social *consensus*, both amongst governed, and between governed and governors can be achieved by shaping a common identity, a common national consciousness.[65] In Plethon's view, the act of forging national consciousness alludes to turning to the ancient Greek tradition. In the context of his broader vision of recreating the spirit of Hellenism, Plethon presents a reformative programme, consisting of a series of radical social changes on an economic, political, and class level, criticizing at the same time the existing political system and its relationships to the powerful Orthodox Church.[66]

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[62] Christos Soldatos, *Γεώργιος Γεμιστός Πλήθων, συμβολή εις το εθνικόν έργον του φιλοσόφου εις τον Μυστράν και την θεμελίωσιν υπ΄αυτού των πλατωνικών σπουδών εις την Φλωρεντίαν* (Athens: Grigoris, 1973), 106.

[63] Such a perception has its origins in Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1967), 491d 7–12: "Socrates: I mean that every man is his own ruler; or is there no need of one's ruling oneself, but only of ruling others? Callicles: What do you mean by one who rules himself? Socrates: Nothing recondite; merely what most people mean—one who is temperate and self-mastering, ruler of the pleasures and desires."

[64] Evgenia Nikolaidou-Kyrianidou, "Η πολιτική ως τέχνη: πράξη και κατασκευή" in *Politics and the Statesman*, ed. K. Voudouris (Athens, 1990), 219.

[65] In this regard, Plethon proposes the creation of a national, patriotic army that will defend the interests of the homeland. In his *Memorandum to Theodore* (PG, 160, 852), he notes: "Τὸ πολὺ δὲ τῆς στρατιᾶς καὶ τὸ ἀναγκαιότατον ὁμόφυλόν τε εἶναι καὶ οἰκεῖον, ἀλλὰ μὴ ξενικόν· ἄπιστα γὰρ τὰ πολλὰ τῶν ξενικῶν, καὶ στρεφόμενα πολλάκις, αὐτὰ πολέμια, ἀντὶ σωτήρων τε καὶ φυλάκων φιλεῖ γίγνεσθαί" [Most of the army and the most necessary must be of the same race and familiar and not foreign; because most mercenaries do not inspire confidence and often change and tend to become hostile instead of savior and guardian.]. For a short discussion on Plethonian concept of native army, see Nevra Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins: Politics and Society in the Late Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 274–6. Machiavelli reiterates the same idea in his *Discourses on Livy*, XLIII: "From this example one can know in part the causes of the uselessness of mercenary soldiers, which do not have cause to hold them firm other than a little stipend that you give them. That cause is not and cannot be enough to make them faithful and so much your friends that they wish to die for you. For in those armies in which there is no affection toward him for whom they engage in combat that makes them become his partisans, there can never be enough virtue to resist an enemy who is a little virtuous. Because neither this love nor this rivalry arises except from your subjects, it is necessary to arm one's subjects for oneself. If one wishes to hold a state – if one wishes to maintain a republic or a kingdom – as one sees those have done who have made great profit with armies."

[66] H. F. Tozer, "A Byzantine Reformer," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 7 (1886): 353–380.

There are similar problematic features in Machiavelli's work. On the one hand, in his major work *The Prince* the qualities of the successful leader are defined by Machiavelli's advice offered to Lorenzo de' Medici. On the other hand, in his *Discourses on Livy*, he affirms the importance of producing good citizens who are going to contribute to the common goal, prescribed by the ingenious personality of the leader. His argumentation is based both upon the achievements of his ancestors, i. e., the Romans, and upon the ancient Greek tradition. In the work of both thinkers, we can observe that tradition functions primarily as a factor of social stability.[67] Machiavelli notes that what's missing from his time is the devotion to the notion of *patria*. Italy is fragmented into smaller states and, as a result, enervated and unable to resist foreign conquerors. His vision is to see the revival of the corrupted and decadent people, the revival of a nation with a glorious past. In that sense, the virtue of devotion to one's patria is immediately related to the prosperity and the welfare of this patria.

In other words, the two thinkers recognize the role of passions in the sphere of human activity, and, thus, attempt to achieve their political scopes based upon a psychological criterion, the so called "identification process" according to Freudian psychoanalytical theory.[68] That is to say, that in order for human beings to act on a political level, they need to identify with a collective identity, promoting an image for themselves which is allowing them to invest it with values. In that case, one of the key functions of the political discourse, other than shaping politics, is that of creating identities, that is to say creating strong identifications amongst the members of a society, providing them with a deeper understanding of their experiences and hope for a promising future.[69]

The above contestation allows us to argue that both thinkers express "positive freedom," according to the scheme proposed by Isaiah Berlin.[70] The positive sense of the word "freedom," which is also obvious in Plato's political anthropology, tries to answer questions such as "by whom am I to be governed" or "who is to decide what I should or shouldn't do, or be."[71] Their political anthropology is based upon the superior human nature, the autonomous self, the Reason which lead to right judgement and is identified with the best possible version of the self. The dominant self, at times, is identified with a collective institution, like the State, the Church, political parties, etc., which aims to control the lower self, that is to say, the person. In the case of Plethon, the act of realising once more the Greek consciousness represents resistance and reaction to the fall of the Empire, and foreruns the future of the Greek nation.[72] In the case of Machiavelli, his political ideology is not presented as a cold utopia or a theoretical abstraction, but as a concrete fantasy acting upon a dispersed people, in order to awaken and activate its collective will.[73]

Taking into account Arendt's analysis, the political ideology of both thinkers focuses on construction, which means that they do not define politics as a specific field of action, where citizens

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[67] Berlin, "The Originality of Machiavelli," 136.

[68] Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 25–29.

[69] Ibid., 25.

[70] Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty" in *Liberty. Incorporating Four Essays on Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 212.

[71] Berlin, *Liberty*, 39.

[72] Tatakis, *Byzantine Philosophy*, 235. On Plethon's nationalism, see Tomasz Labuk, "'Nationalist' discourse and the political myth in the *Memoranda* of Georgios Gemistos Plethon," in *Miscellanea Byzantina I*, eds. Tomasz Labuk and Przemysław Marciniak (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2016), 81–130; Niketas Siniossoglou, "Plethon and the Philosophy of Nationalism" in *Georgios Gemistos Plethon. The Byzantine and the Latin Renaissance*, eds. Jozef Matula and Paul Richard Blum (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2014), 415–431.

[73] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Q. Hoare and G. N. Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1992), 126.

can participate in the procedures of governing or being governed freely and equally. Replacing action with construction is due to Plato's political programme, according to which the wisdom of the King-philosopher is able to dilute the perplexities of action as if they were solvable problems of cognition.[74] According to Plethon, the godly ruler, similarly to Father Zeus, is entitled to the role of the teacher and the legislator.[75] He is the only one who can understand how things work, and, thus, knows what he must do; like Plato's King-philosopher, who has undertaken the mission to lead his people outside the cave, the Plethonian ruler is the one called upon to protect the community, by preserving the right perception of religion, as the community's salvation depends upon the perception its members have upon God.[76]

The Machiavellian prince is also an absolute ruler, because he is the only one who knows how a state can acquire glory and power. This leads to the conclusion that the end justifies the means. Therefore, since a goal superior to the individual interests has been set, like founding a nation, rescuing the people, etc, everything is allowed and everything is possible. In that sense, violence replaces reason and emerges as a technically legitimate means, used by the charismatic leader in service of his goal. The ruler's wisdom, not trusting human nature as such, allows him to turn to violent means in order to lead people to an order/scheme preconceived by Reason.

In summary, Plethon formulates four political axioms that we will encounter in Machiavelli's work:

1. The criterion for assuming power is the ability of the leader to govern and not his traditional legitimacy;
2. the concept of the formation of the crowd into an organised whole (concept of national identity/consciousness);
3. the great laws[77] and the national army effectively contribute to the prosperity and salvation of the "excellent state;"
4. the inadequacy of the Christian religion to serve political purposes.[78]

III. Antithesis

The question we are called upon to answer is the following: can Plethon be considered representative of the modern political tradition? The answer cannot be positive and this is because the political thought of Plethon remains, despite the bold positions he expressed, captive to the Stoic political concept. The philosopher of Mystras highlights the virtue of godliness as a major political virtue. The political ruler of Plethon must, due to his kinship with Zeus, be godly, that is, consent to the divine will and constantly confirm his integration into the divine state system. God occupies a central place in the philosophical system of Plethon. Both the politician and the

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[74] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 221.

[75] *Memorandum to Theodore* (PG 160, 848).

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ancient Sparta and the Roman Empire, where the king/emperor rules with the help of a Senate, are model regimes for both Plethon and Machiavelli. See *Memorandum to Theodore* (PG 160, 845 E and 848 C) and the chapter "Περὶ ἡγεμόνων τῶν βελτίστων λόγων" of *Nomoi* (PG 160), as well as Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy* VI. The greatness of these regimes is largely due to their legislative design by the legislators Lycurgus and Numa, whose names are pointed out by both thinkers.

[78] F. Masai, when he is referring to the Plethonian criticism to Christianity, notes the following: "Christianity did not possess the secret of *virtù*, the means that make states and personalities powerful." Such an ascertainment describes perfectly Plethon's argumentation. However, Masai's anachronism, using the term *virtù* for Plethon allows us to consider that the author speaks in Machiavellian terms, thus identifying Plethon's critique of Christianity with that of Machiavelli.

citizen of the Plethonian state live according to virtue and take care of the beauty of their soul. Plethon remains faithful to the concepts of the Stoic intellect for an additional reason. Man's action as a rational being is determined by his principles, regardless of the success or failure of his purposes. In other words, the good politician is not judged by the result, as Machiavelli would like, but by his intentions. Therefore, in Plethon's political anthropology, the interrelation of ethics and politics remains intact, which leads us to the conclusion that Plethon belongs to classical political philosophy and not to Machiavellian-based modernity.

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Jewish Sources in Pico's Concept of Felicitas Supernaturalis

Abstract | The main goal of this study is to focus on Pico's concept of felicitas supernaturalis, especially on his idea of divine wisdom, realized in the form of an eternal Logos (i.e. the Second Person of God / Christ). In this context we must point out that Pico was also drawn into a polemic bout with his contemporary Jewish intellectual Y. Alemanno, who presented a similar concept of the old wisdom (Hokhmah) in his works (e.g. Hay ha-ʿOlamin). Using an analysis of Pico's texts (e.g. Conclusiones, 1486, Apologia, 1487, and Heptaplus, 1489) I examine his syncretic model of the eternal Logos (inspired by Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophy as well as by Jewish and Christian mystical tradition (e.g. Dionysius, Abulafia, Recanati).

Keywords | Giovanni Pico della Mirandola – Yohanan Alemanno – Supreme Happiness – Mors Osculi

Introduction

G. Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) created his *Oration* in 1486.[1] It should be said that he began working on it in September of that year, which he spent mainly in Fratta (between Perugia and Todi). In parallel with the conception of *Oratio* itself, however, he also worked on the structure of another work which later became known under the title *Commento sopra una canzone de amore di Girolamo Benivieni*.[2] We can therefore assume that some anthropological-philosophical-theological motifs overlap and complement one other in these two unfinished works. One of the topics Pico offers for discussion here is the question of supreme human happiness.

[1] G. Pico della Mirandola, *Oratio (De hominis dignitate)*, in G. Pico della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno e scritti vari*, ed. E. Garin (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1942), 101–165; G. Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man. A New Translation and Commentary*, eds. F. Borghesi, M. Papio and M. Riva (Cambridge–NY–Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 108–277. For a report of Pico's life, see Giulio Busi, *Vera relazione sulla vita e i fati di Giovanni Pico conte della Mirandola* (Torino: Aragno, 2010); Francesco Borghesi, "A Life in Works," in *Pico della Mirandola: New Essays*, ed. M. V. Dougherty (Cambridge–NY–Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 202–219.

[2] Pico, "Commento dello illustrissimo signor conte Joanni Pico Mirandolano sopra una canzona de amore composta da Girolamo Benivieni cittadino fiorentino secondo la mente et opinione de'platonici," in *De hominis dignitate*, ed. Garin, 445–581.

Apart from the "Platonic" sources of this concept,[3] modern researchers focus on the reception of Jewish sources based on the assumption that Pico prepared the edition of *Oratio* and *Commento* and was at the same time in contact with the Jewish scholars Elia del Medigo (1458–1493) and Flavius Mithridates (1450–1490?).[4] Thanks to the latter, Pico not only earnestly studied Hebrew, Aramaic and Chaldean,[5] but he also gained access to an enormous quantity of Hebrew manuscripts that Mithridates gradually made available to him as he translated them into Latin.[6] In this context, we can talk about the work *Sitrei Torah* (*De Secretis Legis*) by the ecstatic Kabbalist Avraham Abulafia (1240–1294), which was revised by Mithridates. He also translated Abulafia's letter for one of his disciples, *We-zot li Jehuda* (*Summa brevis cabale que intitulatur Rabi Jeude)*, where he criticizes the doctrine of the Sefirot and voices a preference for the doctrine of *Semot*, as we will see below.[7] However, in Pico's library there are other important works (*Liber de secretis orationum et benedictionum cabale* and *Be'ur 'al ha Torah*) by Menahem Recanati, a Kabbalist from the thirteenth century, who elaborated the concept of theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah,[8] in some aspects differently from Abulafia. While Abulafia desired to attain mystical

[3] For example, see Michael J. B. Allen, *Studies in the Platonism of Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico* (London–New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 151–183.

[4] B. Kieszkowski, "Averoismo e platonismo in Italia negli ultimi decenni del secolo XV," *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* 2, 1, 14 (1933): 286–301; B. Nardi, *Saggi sull'aristotelismo padovano dal secolo XIV al XVI* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1958), 127–146; F. Secret, "Nouvel précisions sur Flavius Mithridates mâitre de Pic de la Mirandole et traducteur de commentaires de kabbale," in *L'opera e il pensiero nella storia dell'Umanesimo: Convegno internazionale, Mirandola, 15–18 settembre 1963*, II. (Firenze: Istituto nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento, 1965), 169–187.

[5] *Supplementum Ficinianum. Marsilii Ficini florentini philosophi platonici opuscula inedita et dispersa / primum collegit et ex fontibus plerumque manuscriptis edidit Paulus Oscarius Kristeller*, ed. P. O. Kristeller (Firenze: Olsckhi, 1937 [reprint Firenze, 2000]), 2, 272: "Postquam enim Hebraicae linguae perpetuum mensem invilagivi, ad Arabicae et Chaldaicae totus me contuli, nihil in eis veritus me profecturum minus quam in Hebraica profecerim, in qua possum quidem cum laude dictare." See also Pico, *Opera omnia (1557–1573)* (Baisleae, 1557 [reprint Hildesheim: Olms, 1969]), 385–386: "Nam ille docere me Chaldaicam linguam nulla voluit ratione, nisi adiuratum prius, et quidem conceptis verbis, ne illa cuiquam traderem, facere fidem huius rei tibi potest noster Hieronymus Benivenius, quid cum adesset forte dum me ille docebat furens Mithridates hominem eliminavit."

[6] Mithridates' translations include: Azriel of Gerona, *Quaestiones super decem numerationibus cum responsibus suis*; *Sepherabaik cum expositione celi enar.*; Abraham ibn Waqar, *Liber de radicibus seu terminis cabalae*; *Expositio Decem Numerationum*; *De proportione divinitatis*; *Liber combinationum in cabala et alia manuscripta in papiro*; Abraham Axelrad, *Corona nominis boni*; Gersonides, *Cantica Canticorm Salmonis per Fl. Mithrodatem ad Picum traductio*. F. Lelli, "Umanesimo Laurenziano nell'opera di Alemanno," in *La cultura ebraica all'epoca di Lorenzo il Magnifico: celebrazioni del v centenario della morte di Lorenzo il Mgnifico: Convegno di studi, Firenze: Academia Toscana di scienze e lettere La Colombaria, 29 novembre 1992*, eds. Dora Luisa Bemporad and Ida Zatelli (Firenze: L. S. Olschki, 1998), 53–54. See also Recanati, *Commentary on the Daily Prayers. Flavius Mithridates' Latin Translation, the Hebrew Text, and an English Version*, ed. G. Corazzol (Torino: N. Aragno, 2008); Gikatilla, *The Book of Punctuation. Flavius Mithridates' Latin Translation, the Hebrew Text, and an English Version*, ed. A. Martini (Torino: N. Aragno, 2010); *The Book of Bahir. Flavius Mithridates' Latin Translation, the Hebrew Text, and an English Version*, ed. S. Campanini (Torino: N. Aragno, 2005); *The Great Parchment. Flavius Mithridates' Latin Translation, the Hebrew Text, and an English Version*, eds. G. Busi and S. Campanini (Torino: N. Aragno, 2004).

[7] Abraham Abulafia, *Imrey Shefer* (Leipzig, 1854), I, 37–38. Compare with "We-zot li Jehuda," in Saverio Campanini, "Talmud, Philosophy, Kabbalah: A Passage from Pico della Mirandola's Apologia and its Sources," in *The Words of A Wise Man's Mouth are Gracius. Festschrift for Günter Stemeberger on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, ed. Mauro Perani (Berlin–NY, 2005), 442: "Nec est dubium quod prima pars prior est in esse temporis discendi in cabala, quam secunda pars. Et secunda prior est gradu et nobilitate quam prima, quia est finis in creandis individui humane speciei et fieri similis heloim, et qui pervenit ad hunc est cuius intellectus exit in actum solus."

[8] Kabbala is Jewish mystical teaching, characterized as the reception of tradition by oral transmission, involving two main parts. The first is speculative and dominated by the doctrine of Sefirot (from *safar*–calculate), while

union with God via the Kabbalistic technique gematria,[9] Recanati aimed to unite with God with the help of the system of the ten Sefirot, which emanate from Ein Sof.[10]

It is important to state that Pico seems to offer far more potential Jewish sources, as pointed out by Ch. Wirszubski in his book *Pico della Mirandola's Encounter with Jewish Mysticism*. Pico was also influenced, in his view, in terms of his concept of *felicitas* by Rabbi Yohanan Alemanno (1434/35–1504). Wirzsubski's thesis is currently supported by M. Idel arguing that the two thinkers met in Florence in 1486, when Pico was working on his commentary on love (*Commento*) and *Oratio.*[11] This paper focuses thus on how Pico develops the concept of felicitas supernaturalis in these mentioned works. Two main topics will be focused on. First, we examine Pico's philosophical-theological kabbalistic project, confronting it with Alemanno's vision. Second, we consider additional Jewish potential sources (especially Alemanno, Recanati, Abulafia), which Pico uses, and then how he incorporates them into his syncretistic concept of supreme happiness (motifs such as "Wisdom of Christ"/"sapientia Christi;" "Metatron," etc.).

Pico' and Alemanno's Definition of Kabbalah

The following two Hebrew names appear in the third part of *Commento*: "Manaen e Johanan."[12] The first of these belonged to the Medieval scholar Menahem Recanati, while "Johanan" corresponds to the name "Yohanan" and, according to F. Secreta, belongs to Alemanno, who was active in Florence. He was there first from 1455 to 1462, and returned in 1488, when he worked in the home of the banker Jehiel da Pisa as a tutor. This is why M. Idel is of the opinion that Pico knew some of Alemanno's works two years earlier.[13] We can highlight, for example, his commentary on *Song of Songs*, which the Rabbi began working on in 1469 and subsequently, at Pico's suggestion, returned to it during his second stay in the City of Lilies (Florence). We can

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the other is practical Kabbalah with the doctrine of names (*Shemot*) as the lower world are founded and united by Ein Sof (Infinity). There are ten Sefirot, represented by the number ten: *Keter*, *Hokmah*, *Binah*, *Hesed*, *Din*, *Tiferet*, *Nesah*, *Hod*, *Yesod* and *Malkut*. See one of Pico's Jewish sources: *Corona Nominis Boni of Abraham Axelrad*: "Audivi tamen quosdam qui addunt super numero decem numerationum ipsam Ensoph per unam numerationem quia dicunt postquam omnes numerationes sunt decem in numero suo habent omnino finem numero idem est dicendum quod creavit coronam superiorem tamquam ens id est quoddam ocultum ipso ensoph et est causa causarum seu adinventio adinventionum" (Chaim Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola's Encounter with Jewish Mysticism* [Cambridge, MA. and London: Harvard University Press, 1989], 236.)

[9] Gematria – one of the kabalistic mystical techniques (*notarikon*, *themurah*), where the letters of the Hebrew alphabet are represented as numbers. Compare with Blau's definition of gematria: "the sum of numerical equivalents of the letters of two or more worlds was the same, the worlds might be considered identical and used interchangeably." (Joseph Blau, *The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1944], 8–9.)

[10] Recanati, *Commentary*, 70: "Et iam sapientes nostri dicunt quod, antequam creasset deus sanctus et benedictus mundum suum, erat ipse deus sanctus et benedictus et nomen eius solum tantum, ut etiam dicit magnus rabi eliezer in amphorismis suis itaque ascendit in cogitatione sua velle producere et facere esse decem numerationes, quarum vita et nutrictio est ab ipso benedicto et excelso vocato ensoph, et in virtute essencie est essencia prime numerationis, a qua procedit virtus omnium numerationum."

[11] Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola*, 256–257; G. Dell'Acqua and L. Münster, "I rapporti di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola con alcuni filosofi ebrei," in *L'Opera e il pensiero di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola* (Firenze: Leo Olschki, 1965), 149–168; M. Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, Ladders* (Budapest – New York: Central European University Press, 2005), 185.

[12] Pico, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno e scritti vari*, 535: "[…] e però Johanan e Manaen ebrei e Jonathan caldeo dice, che fra tutti e' cantici della scrittura sacra quello è el più sacro e el più divino."

[13] François Secret, *Les Kabbalistes Chrétiens de la Renaissance* (Paris: Dunod, 1964), 43; Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola*, 256–257.

point to his work *Collectanea* (a commentary on a work of the Arabian philosopher ibn Tufayl), which should demonstrate numerous parallels with the works *Commento* and *Oratio*. Alemanno's work was to serve Pico together with the treatise *On Immortality* during the creation of his work *Heptaplus* (1489).[14] We shall investigate whether any of Pico's "kabbalistic" theses (from 1485–1486) also agree with Idel's opinion. Pico presents such a project of *scientia cabalae* in his first thesis: "Whatever the rest of the Kabbalists may say, the first distinction that I would make divides knowledge of Kabbalah into knowledge of Sefirot and Shemot, similar to practical and visionary [speculative] knowledge."[15] Furthermore, he clarifies it in a more detailed manner in his *Apologia*: "In universali autem duas scientias hoc etiam nomine honorificarunt unam quae dicitur 'ma'aséh ha-seruf' idest ars combinandi […] Illa enim ars combinandi est quam ego in conclusionibus meis voco alphabetariam revolutionem."[16] The science of names is assigned to the speculative part of Kabbalah and according to Pico the fact that it works with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet is characteristic. While the practical branch is connected with the science of the ten Sefirot, acting as mediators of divine power that emanate from the higher celestial sphere to the earth.

We come across a similar arrangement of Kabbalah in Alemanno's *Heshek Shlomo*, where Moses is presented as a magus who knows how to make use of kabbalistic principles:

> The kabbalists believe that Moses, peace be with him, had precise knowledge of the spiritual world which is called the word of Sefirot and divine names or the world of letters. Moses knew how to direct his thoughts and prayers so as to improve divine efflux which the kabbalists call channels. Moses' action caused the channels to emanate upon the lower world in accordance with his will. By means of that efflux, he created anything he wished, just as God created the world by means of various emanations. Whenever he wanted to perform signs and wonders, Moses would pray and utter divine names, words and meditations until he had intensified those emanations. The emanations then descended into the world and created new supernatural things. With that Moses split the sea, opened up the earth and the like.[17]

Therefore in Alemanno's kabbalistic project Moses – as the first of the ancient theologians (*prisca theologia*) – becomes a sage to whom God grants the true wisdom (*prisca sapientia*)[18] and the power to perform great wonders through it. Alemanno, however, requires that a magus should observe all the commandments of the Torah. It is thus not for him to be a scientist, but rather that he should become a humble servant who uses his spiritual power from the higher Sefirotic

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[14] Fabrizio Lelli, "Umanesimo Laurenziano nell" opera di Alemanno, in *La cultura ebraica all'epoca di Lorenzi il Magnifico*, eds. D. L. Bemporad and I. Zatelli (Firenze: Olschki, 1998), 53–55.

[15] Pico, *Opera omnia*, 107–108: "Quicquid dicant caeteri Cabaliste, ego prima divisione scientiam Cabalae in scientiam sephiroth et semot, tanquam in practicam et speculativam, distinguerem." (Trans. B. Copenhaver, *Magic and the Dignity of Man. Pico della Mirandola and His Oration in Modern Memory* [Cambridge, Mass. – London: Harvard University Press, 2019), 496–497. See Moshe Idel, "Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations of the Kabbalah in the Renaissance," in *Essential Papers in Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. D. B. Ruderman (New York – London: New York University Press, 1992), 118.

[16] Pico, *Opera omnia*, 181.

[17] Alemanno, *Hesheq Shlomo* [Ms. Oxford, Bodleiana, 1535, fols. 104b–105a], trans. M. Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy, 1280–1510* (New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 2011), 186.

[18] Charles B. Schmitt,"Prisca theologia e Philosophia Perennis:" due temi del Rinascimento italiano e la loro fortuna, in *Il pensiero italiano del Rinascimento e il tempo nostro: atti del 5. Convegno internazionale del Centro di studi umanistici: Montepulciano, Palazzo Tarugi, 8–13 Agosto* 1968, ed. G. Taragi (Firenze: Olschki, 1970), 219–220; Cesare Vasoli, "Der Mythos der 'Prisci Theologi' als Ideologie der Renovatio," in *Das Ende des Hermetismus. Historische Kritik und neue Naturphilosophie in der Spatrenaissance*, ed. M. Mulsow (Tübingen, 2002), 19–60.

world to transform his own nature. A sage should go through a process of self-recognition, which should first purify him morally and spiritually, and only then embark on the path of improvement. After its successful completion, he should be able to understand all the secrets concealed in the book of law and the book of nature. In the final stage, he should also perceive divine beauty and unite with it.[19]

How should such a process be carried out? Alemanno answers this question in his work *Collectanea*:

> After the external cleansing of the body and an inner change and spiritual purification from all and the taint, one becomes as clear and pure as heavens. Once one has divested oneself of all material thoughts, let him read only the Torah and the divine names written there. There shall be revealed awesome secrets and such divine visions as may be emanated upon pure clear souls who are prepared to receive them as the verse said: "Make ready for three days and wash your clothing." For there are three preparations: of the exterior, of the interior, and of the imagination.[20]

Here the rabbi highlights his Neoplatonic inspiration, comparable to Pico's three-stage path of pseudo-Dionysian purification: *purificatio* (moral philosophy), *illuminatio* (natural philosophy), and *perfectio* (theology).[21]

After the successful purification, a magus gains the opportunity for self-improvement through studying selected disciplines. Alemanno therefore sketches out a study programme, which includes, inter alia, the study of the Torah, rabbinical writings and the natural sciences (geometry, astronomy, and philosophy) and culminates in the study of the divine sciences (magic and Kabbalah). Similarly to Pico, the Rabbi also rejects a mere literal interpretation of the Torah as that serves to make ordinary people obey its instructions and commands.[22] A sage should proceed in his philosophical contemplation *via alegorica* directly to the interior of the living organism of the Torah. According to Idel, it is not definitely by coincidence that Mithridates translated, at Pico's request, only those Hebrew sources included in Alemanno' study programme.[23]

Pico already demands in his *Oratio*, just like the Jewish scholar, that *homo* must not hesitate and should immediately begin striving for his moral and spiritual growth (*perfectio*). Indeed, compared to animals, his nature is not firmly affixed in a hierarchically ordered universe. On the contrary, he has the unique opportunity to shape it in his own image and form:

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[19] Alemanno, *Collectanea* [Ms. London, Jew's College, Montefiore 316, c. 28], trans. Idel, *Kabbalah*, 186. Compare with Idel, "The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations," 123–124.

[20] [Ms. Oxford, Bodleiana 2234, fol. 164a], trans. Idel, ibid., 119.

[21] Compare with Pico's *Oration*, 150–152; *Corpus Dionysiacum*, II, eds. Heil and Reiter (Berlin, 1991, 30 [*De caelesti hierarchia*, 209c]).

[22] Compare with Pico's *Apology*, 175, 178: "Denique duplicem accepisse legem Moysen, in monte, literalem et spiritalem, illam scripsisse, et ex praecepto Dei populo communicasse, de hac vero mandatum ei a Deo, ne ipsam scriberet, sed sapientibus solum qui erant septuaginta communicaret, quos idem Moyses ex praecepto Dei elegerat ad custodiendam legem, eis itidem praeciperet, ne eam scriberent, sed successoribus suis viva voce revelarent […] Ita est et apud Hebraeos literalis apud eos dicitur Pesat […] allegoricus Midras […] Tropologicus dicitur Sechel […] Anagogicus dicitur Cabala, et hoc quia illa expositio quae dicitur ore Dei tradita Moysi, et accepta per successionem, modo predicto, quasi semper sensum sequitur Anagogicum, qui etiam inter omnes est sublinior et divinior […]"

[23] Moshe Idel, "Appendice 3," in *La cabbalà in Italia (1280–1510)*, ed. and trans F. Lelli (Firenze: La Giuntina, 2007), 419–422.

> We have given you, Adam, no fixed seat or form of your own, no talent peculiar to you alone. This we have done so that whatever seat, whatever form, whatever talent you my judge desirable, these same may you have and possess according to your desire and judgment. Once defined, the nature of all other things beings is constrained within the laws We have prescribed for them. But you, constrained by no limits, may determine your nature for yourself, according to your own free will, in whose hands We have placed you. (Pico, *Oration*, 117).[24]

Although endless horizons of free decision-making are open to man, these are associated with an important commitment. He must choose whether he wants to descend to the level of animals, to be imprisoned by his bodily lusts, or whether *homo* will rather rise up Jacob's Ladder of Knowledge to the empire of angels (Angelic Mind). If he chooses the latter way, he must forsake everything sensual and concentrate exclusively on caring for the intellectual part of his soul: "If he cultivates his sensitive seeds, he will become a brute animal. If he cultivates his rational, he will become a heavenly being. If he cultivates his intellectual seeds, he will be an angel and a son of God." (Pico, *Oration*, 120)[25]

In the work *Commento*, Pico develops the same subject, while he draws inspiration from Plato's dialogue *Symposium*, which, however, he combines with Hebrew sources. In summary, we argue that his main goal is to find the ideal beauty. Man should therefore free himself from all admiration for the beauty of the body and set out to discover its spiritual dimension. Pico thus invites us to a six-stage path of knowledge, once again up Jacob's Ladder of Knowledge, the purpose of which should be to seek and rest in the true beauty. The basic condition, however, is that at the first stage the soul detaches itself from the material beauty connected with the body (for instance the particular beauty of Alcibiades and Phaedrus, or some attractive body). At the fourth stage, a magus seeking perfection will be able to see the image of the ideal beauty (heavenly love). At the fifth stage, he meets the heavenly Venus, who is the own form of beauty If he proceeds to another, higher stage, he reaches the peak of his endeavour and finds himself at the source of beauty, if indeed man can reach it.[26]

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[24] Pico, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno e scritti vari*, 104–106: "Nec certam sedem, nec propriam faciem, nec munus ullum peculiare tibi dedimus, o Adam, ut quam sedem, quam faciem, quae munera tute optaveris, ea, pro voto, pro tua sententia, habeas et possideas. Definita ceteris natura intra preascriptas a nobis leges coercetur. Tu, nullis angustiis coercitus, pro tuo arbitrio, in cuius manu te posui, tibi illam praefinies." See also Antonio Ansani, "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's Discourse on Eloquence. A Rhetorical Reading," *American Journal of Italian Studies* 22 (1999): 81–98; Brian Copenhaver, "Magic and Dignity of Man: De-Kanting Pico's Oration," in *The Italian Renaissance in the Twentieth Century: Acts of an International Conference. Florence Villa I Tatti, June 9–11, 1999*, eds. A. J. Grieco, M. Rocke, and F. Gioffredi (Firenze: Olsckhi, 2002), 295–320.

[25] Pico, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno e scritti vari*, 106: "Si sensualia, obrutescet. Si rationalia, caeleste evadet animal. Si intellectualia, angelus erit et Dei filius […]" See Michael Sudduth, "Pico della Mirandola's Philosophy of Religion," in *Pico della Mirandola*, ed. M. W. Dougherty, 70–72; Henri de Lubac, L'alba incompiuta del Rinascimento. *Pico della Mirandola* (Milano: Jaca Book, 1994), 195–205.

[26] Pico, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno e scritti vari*, 567–569: "E questo ordine nel Commento nostra sopra el Simposio diffusamente trattaremo. Sequendo dunque lo autore, questo ordine mostra come per sei gradi, da la materiale beltà incominciando, al primo fine suo l'uomo si conduce. All'anima a'sensi conversa prima per li occhi se gli presenta la particulare beltà di Alcibiade, di Fedro, o di qualche altro corpo spezioso […] E così in sè conversa vede la immagine della beltà ideale a sè dall'intelletto participata, come fu nel secondo libro dichiarato; e questo è il quarto grado, perfetta immagine dello amore celeste, come di sopra fu detto […] è nel quinto grado, ove la celeste Venere in propria forma e non immaginaria, ma però con totale plenitudine della sua beltà, che in intelletto particulare non cape, se gli dimostra; de la quale avida e sitibunda l'anima cerca el proprio e particulare intelletto alla universale e prima mente coniungere, prima delle creature, albergo ultimo e universale della ideale bellezza. Al quale pervenendo, grado in ordine sesto, termina el suo cammino, nè gli

Pico connects this ascendant approach to the true beauty conceived in a "platonic" manner not only with elements drawn from Jewish sources, but also from the Arabic-Aristotelian philosophical tradition. Its initial phase is casting aside the body as a changeable substance doomed to extinction. Then follows the search for a purely intellectual form, through which a scholar can penetrate to the gates of the true beauty. In his work *Commento*, Pico therefore considers three powers of the human soul: vegetative, sensitive and intellectual. He believes, however, that there must be an even higher component, namely intellectual, through which man can connect with the Angelic Mind.[27] In aliis verbis, there would be a process of unifying human potential and angelic active intellects, as follows from Pico's thesis according to Averroes:

> Supreme human happiness comes when the Agent intellect connects with a potential intellect as its form; other Latin writers that I have read have interpreted that continuation wrongly and perversely, and especially John of Jandun, who on nearly all points of philosophy has completely corrupted and distorted the teaching of Averroes.[28]

Yet the view of some Arabic thinkers is problematic as they judged that the "Divine" spirit, illuminating the human intellect, is only present in man in connection with the body and thus disappears together with its death.[29] Pico is not fully in accordance with this interpretation. This is probably why he also distinguishes between two types of *felicitas* in his work *Heptaplus*: "There is, as theologians assert, one felicity, which we can attain through nature and another which we can attain through grace. The former they call natural, the latter supernatural […] Felicity I define as the return of each thing to its beginning." The guarantor of the former is Moses who, in six days, introduces a scholar to all the mysteries of the natural laws, while *felicitas supernaturalis* is then brought by Christ on the seventh day in the form of the word (logos).[30]

è licito nel settimo, quasi sabbato del celeste amore, muoversi più oltre, ma quivi debbe come in suo fine a lato al primo Padre, fonte della bellezza, felicemente riposarsi […]"

[27] Ibid., 479: "Poi è in lui la vegetativa, per la quale questo corruttibile corpo si genera, si nutrisce e cresce, e quello eterno vive di perpetua vita. Tertio, è la parte sensitiva e motiva, per la quale ha convenienzia con gli animali irrazionali. Quarto, è la parte razionale, la quale è propria de gli uomini e de gli animali razionali, e da' Peripatetici latini è creduta essere l'ultima e la più nobile parte, dell'anima nostra, cum nondimeno sopra essa sia la parte intellettuale ed angelica per la quale l'uomo cosi conviene con gli Angeli, come per la parte sensitiva conviene con le bestie. El sommo di questa parte intellettuale chiamano e' Platonici unità della anima e vogliono essere quella per la quale l'uomo immediatamente con Dio si congiunge, e quasi con lui convenga, come per la parte vegetativa conviene con le piante."

[28] Pico, *Opera omnia*, 3, 67–68: "Foelicitas ultima hominis est cum continuatur intellectus agens possibili, ut forma, quam continuationem et latini alii quoa legi et maxime Iohannes de Gandauo perverse er erronee intellexit, qui non solum in hoc, se ferme in omnibus quaesitis Philosophiae, doctrinam Avenrois corrupit omnino et depravavit." Trans. B. Copenhaver, *Magic and the Dignity of Man* (Avr 2), 486. Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 34–43.

[29] Pico, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno e scritti vari*, 274–276: "Unde nobis maximum dogma de anima reseratur. Intellectum enim, qui est in nobis, illustrat maior atque adeo divinus intellectus sive sit Deus (ut quidam volunt), sive proxima homini et cognata mens, ut fere omnes Graeci, ut Arabes, ut Hebraeorum plurimi volunt. Quam substantiam et Judaei philosophi et Abunasar Alpharabius, in libro quem scribit de principiis, expressis verbis Spiritum Domini appellavit. Nec factum sine causa ut, priusquam hominem ex animo et corpore vinculo lucis constituisset, huius rei meminerit, idest delationis spiritus super aquas, sed ob id factum, ne forte crederemus non adesse spiritum hunc nostro intellectui, nisi cum esset corpori copulatus. Quod et Moses Aegyptius et Abubacher Arabs et quidam alii falso crediderunt." Compare with Crofton Black, *Pico's Heptaplus and Biblical Hermeneutics* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2006), 178–189.

[30] Pico, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno e scritti vari*, 324–326: "Est autem felicitas (ut theologi praedicant) alia quam per naturam, alia quam per gratiam consequi possumus. Ilam naturalem, hanc

Pico in the section of natural felicity includes precisely Alexander of Aphrodisias[31] and the Arabic scholars (Averroes, Ibn Tufayl, etc.), who viewed the function of human *ratio* and its copulative function within the unification of human passive intellect and divine active intellect. According to Pico, however, they do not deal with the topic of supreme human happiness: "sed neque hi hominem ad suum principium, nec ad suum finem adducunt."[32] Alemanno also offers the same list of Arabic intellectuals in *Hay ha-olamin* (Averroes, Ibn Tufayl, etc.). These also present ways to grasp divine active intellect.[33] The Rabbi nevertheless thought that they usually never reached the final stage. He therefore turns to his Jewish tradition and emphasises the name of Abraham Abulafia, a Medieval Jewish representative of the ecstatic Kabbalist branch. According to Lelli, this is not an unexpected step as the two thinkers had much in common. We can mention in particular the definition of Kabbalah, where in both Abulafia and Alemanno's case the science of names predominates.[34] Such a kabbalistic plan would then also be reflected in Pico's kabbalistic project. Let us consider how legitimate Lelli's conclusions are.

We already know that Pico associates the science of Sefirot with the practical Kabbalah, while its speculative branch is linked to the science of names. We find a more detailed definition of this part of the Kabbalah in the second "kabbalistic" thesis:

> Whatever other Kabbalists may say, I would divide the visionary [speculative] part of Kabbalah into four, corresponding to the fourfold division of philosophy that I have usually proposed. First is what I call knowing how to revolve the alphabet, corresponding to the part of philosophy that I call comprehensive philosophy […].

The art of revolving the Hebrew alphabet is the same as *ars combinandi*, as we have already come across in Pico's *Apologia*.[35] And it corresponds with Abulafia's linguistic-kabbalistic exegesis, which uses a mystical technique called *gematria*, which is based on a permutation and

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supernaturalem appellant. De prima, idest de naturali, satis dictum a Mose […] Felicitatem ego sic definio: reditum uniuscuiusque rei ad suum principium."

[31] See e. g., Pico's *Heptaplus* (Caramichael, 148: "For felicity is the highest good, and the highest good is what all things seek; what all things, however, seek is that which is the beginning of all things, as Alexander of Aphrodisias, in his commentary of the first philosophy […])."

[32] Ibid., 330: "De homine autem, etsi diversi diversa senserint, omnes tamen intra humanae facultatis angustias se tenuerunt, vel in ipsa tantum veri vestigatione, quod Academici, vel in adeptione potius per studia philosophiae, quod Alpharabius dixit, felicitatem / hominis determinantes. Dare aliquid plus visi Avicenna, Averrois, Abubacher, Alexander et Platonici, nostram rationem in intellectu, qui actu est, aut aliquo superiore nobis tamen cognato, quasi in suo fine firmantes […]"

[33] Alemanno, *Hay ha-olamin* [MS Mantua, fol. 102r-v]: "When the passive intellect cleaves to the Active Intellect by intellectual apprehension, it might also apprehend the other separate intellects and the First Cause, according to the opinion of Averroes and Abu Bakr ibn Tufayl […]"

[34] Fabrizio Lelli, "Pico i Da Pisa e 'Elyyà Hayyim da Genazzano," in *Giovanni Pico e la cabbalà*, ed. F. Lelli (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 2014), 102.

[35] Pico, *Opera omnia*, 2, 108: "Quicquid dicant alii cabaliste, ego partem speculativam cabalae quadruplicem dividerem, conrespondenter quadruplici partitioni philosophiae quam ego solitus sum affere. Prima est scientia quam ego voco alphabetariae revolutionis, conrespondentem parti philosophiae quam ego philosophiam catholicam voco […]" Trans. B. Copenhaver, *Magic and the Dignity of Man*, 2K2, 497. Compare with Pico's *Apology*, 180–181: "[…] idest ars combinandi, et est modus quidam procedendi in scientiis, et est simile quid, sicut apud nostros dicitur ars Raymundi, licet forte diverso modo procedant. Aliam quae est de virtutibus rerum superiorum, que sunt supra lunam, et est pars Magiae naturalis suprema. Utraque istarum apud Hebreos etiam dicitur Cabala, propter rationem iam dictam, et de utraque istarum etiam aliquando fecimus mentionem in conclusionibus nostris. Illa enim ars combinandi est quam ego in conclusionibus meis voco, Alphabetariam revolutionem, est ista quae de virtutibus rerum superiorum, quae uno modo potest capi, ut pars Magiae naturalis,

combination of letters of the Hebrew alphabet.[36] Such a method allows a scholar to achieve a true prophecy and ultimately also to unite with the active intellect (alias *Metatron*).[37]

Chaim Wirszubski was also convinced of the affinity of their opinions, assuming that Pico drew mainly from Abulafia's commentary *Sitre tora* on Maimonides' work *Guide for the Perplexed*.[38] Campanini refers, however, to another source, Abulafia's letter *Wezot-li Jehuda*, addressed to his disciple Jehuda. According to Idel, he mediated the knowledge of Abulafia's terminology, based on Maimonides'Aristotelian-oriented philosophy. Back in 1486, his translator Fl. Mithridates very intuitively discerned that Pico needs source materials for his philosophical-theological purposes.[39] In Abulafia's texts, we therefore frequently find Mithridates' interpretative interventions which, in the form of textual interpolations, are intended to underline their Christological character. It should be added that in the original Hebrew sources such topics certainly do not occur.[40]

Although Mithridates' game of mystification had a considerable influence on Pico's emerging kabbalistic concept, as noted by Corazzol,[41] we cannot overlook his efforts to offer a different

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alio modo, ut res distincta ab ea, est illa de qua loquor in praesenti conclusione, dicens, Quod adiuvat nos in cognitione divinitatis Christi **ad modum iam declaratum**."

[36] Abulafia, *De Secretis Legis*, fol. 422r, (Wirszubski, 137): "Et quidem continet etiam opus currus Revolutionem legis seu spheram legis a qua poteris secreta omnia sua probatur quia numeri utriusque correspondent nam mahase merchabe ut dictum est continet numeros 682 […] Confirmatur ex libro venerando sepher iesire, qui incipit Abraam pater noster primum verbum dicitur bixloxim, idest cum triginta […] cuius numeri [2.300.30.300.10.40] representant maase merchaba, nec aliud intellexit per vocabulum bixloxim idest cum triginta nisi opus currus divini."

[37] Moshe Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), 1–31; Copenhaver, *Magic and the Dignity of Man*, 439–441; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 377–38. See Abulafia, *De Secretis Legis*, fols. 377r–378v, (Wirszubski, 232): "Itaque sapientes nostri vocant eum ut plurimum Henoch. Et dicunt quod Henoch est Mattatron et sic dixit Ionethes Chaldeus. Et dixit Rabi Eliezer Gormacensis in libro de anima quod septuaginta nomina habet Mattatron, sicut excitarunt nos sapientes nostri sanctissimi de hoc in aphorismis septem adytuum, hebraice xiba hechaloth, et in aliis libris ex compositione sanctissimi rabi Aquibe et rabi Ismaelis summi pontificis super quibus pax dei sit. Omnia quidem illa nomina conveniunt invicem tum per combinationem tum per numerum licterarum."

[38] Ibid., fol. 336 (Wriszubski, 94–95): "Incipit liber de secretis legis quem composuit Abraam (mihi videtur Abulhafia) super 36 secretis que revelavit Rabi Moises tempore sui obitus. In nomine domini dei Israel intendo scribere expositionem triginta sex secretorum que occultavit sapientissimus Rabi Moises filius Maimon in suo libro venerabili dicitur More per viam cabale et licet dixit ea tibi ibi per viam philosophie alibi innuit ea esse per viam cabale, unde voco librum hunc de secretis legis." Compare with one of Pico's thesis: "Sicut Aristoteles diviniorem philosophiam quam philosophi antiqui sub fabulis et apologis velarunt ipse sub philosophicae speculationis facie dissimulavit et verborum brevitate obscuravit, ita Rabi Moyses Aegyptius in libro qui a Latinis dicitur dux neutrorum dum per superficialem verborum corticem videtur cum philosophis ambulare per latentes profundi sensus intelligentias mysteria complecitur Cabalae" (Pico, *Opera omnia*, 63, 113).

[39] Moshe Idel, "Flavius Mithridates: 'Vetus Talmud' and other Askenazi tradition," in *Flavio Mitridate mediatore fra culture nel contesto dell'ebraismo siciliano del XV secolo*, eds.Mauro Perani and Giacomo Corazzol (Palermo: Officina di Studi Medievali, 2012), 84.

[40] For instance, Abulafia's *Summa brevis cabale* [Cod. Vat. Ebr. 190, fol. 125v]: "propter hoc amice notifico tibi quod domini Cabale numerationalis tenent unitatem dei sub denario numero non sub trinario. qui numerus fugitur ab omnibus scientibus Cabale. est bene verum quod sunt Christiani qui *sunt fundati super hac sciencia inperfecte quamvis auctores eorum perfecte eam noverant*. dicunt deum esse trinum et unim. et Trinitatem esse unam sic quidam domini Cabale credunt et dicunt quod divinitas est denarius seu decem numerationes et denarius est unus." (Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola*, 106–113); Corazzol, "L'influsso di Mitridate sulla concezione pichiana di cabala," 169–200.

[41] "Pice videtur mihi scribere hunc testum in hebraico quia est nimis difficilis [Chig. A. V. I, 244v]." "Non possunt tradi quia non sunt tot vocabula in latino [Vat. Ebr. 189, f. 166v]." "Hec verba Pice sunt difficillima ad traducendum, visum est mihi scribendum ea in hebraico quia sunt Abraami patriache [516v]." "Scio quod

version of the Christian Kabbalist exegesis, which is most evident from his *Conclusiones* and *Heptaplus*. Pico had already complained in *Oration* and *Apologia* that he had to pay the ambitious and devious Mithridates considerable sums of money for the translations of kabbalistic books.[42] We should not therefore be surprised that he gradually tried to reduce his explanatory and translation role. He eventually succeeded in this in Rome in 1487, where Mithridates was imprisoned on suspicion of murder. Their cooperation consequently came to an end. Pico now had to find, however, an adequate replacement for him, which Alemanno undoubtedly was. According to Idel, we can no longer unfortunately completely objectively evaluate the countless meetings and debates the two scholars had together. Nevertheless, it is certain that at that time the interest in Abulafia's ecstatic Kabbalah could also have linked them.[43]

The affinity between their concepts can be illustrated by Pico's third "kabbalistic" thesis: "Knowledge that is the practical part of Kabbalah puts into practice all of formal metaphysics and lower theology." (Copenhaver 2K3, 497)[44] According to Blum, however, the function of lower theology "can easily be understood as that part of theology that deals with the conduct of life (compare with Aquinas' *Summa theologiae*)."[45] In such a view, Pico is characterised as a thinker who works brilliantly with scholastic terminology and paradoxically makes perfect use of it for his concept of humanist philosophical theology. Chaim Wirszubski refers, in contrast, to the Pseudo-Dionysian cataphatic theology associated with the doctrine of names.[46]

It would seem, however, that Campani has succeeded in uncovering the real source of Pico's thesis. This is the already-mentioned letter by Abulafia's *Wezot-li Jehuda* (*Summa brevis cabale*), in which the ecstatic kabbalist distinguishes between the Talmud and hidden wisdom. The latter is conceived as the art of meditating on God's name through the ten Sefirot and as an art that makes it possible to penetrate the mystery of the Tetragrammaton through the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. While the science of Sefirot originated earlier, the latter is, according to Abulafia, more noble and also has a higher status. It allows scholars to embark on the trail of a true prophecy along a mystical exegetic path.[47] As with Pico, its culmination is the perception of

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sine me non intelliges [Vat. Ebr. 190, f. 423]." "Dico tibi Pice quod non est possibile invenire hominem qui ita optime interpretaretur hec quod cum non sint intelligibilia vix in hebraico redit ea intelligibilia in latino ideo si intelligis […] gratias Mithridati […] [Chig. A. VI, 190, 272r–272v]." "Putasne Pice te sine Mithridate intelligere posse? Amen dico tibi si non curaveris rectum numquam exponam tibi hec et vade ad alios et docebunt te [379r]. nemo a Mithridates hoc rect potuisset traducere ex hebraico adeo obscurum est [f. 210v]." "Nolo ut scias hec secreta nisi ambo fuerimus [415v]. Magnum secretum est sed sine me non intellegeris [379r]." "Scias Pice quod non intelligit Abraamam patriarcham solum sed etiam se ipsum quia sic vocabatur et vere magnus homo fuit […] Ego scio quod hic auctor fecit multa mirabilia Panhormi hoc anno et celebratur in monumentis Hebreorum Panhormitanorum in Sicilia mirum in modum et scio que sunt." ([Cod. Vat. Ebr. 190, fol. 336v]; Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola*, 62, 70–73.) Giacomo Corazzol, "Introduction," in Recanati, *Commentary on the Daily Prayers. Flavius Mithridates's Latin Translation, the Hebrew Text, and an English Version* (Torino: Nino Aragno, 2008), 13–161.

[42] Pico, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno e scritti vari*, 160: "Hos ego libros non mediocri impensa mihi cum comparassem, summa diligentia, indefessis laboribus cum perlegissem, vidi in illis – testis est Deus – religionem non tam Mosaicam quam Christianam."

[43] Idel, *Ascensions*, 185.

[44] Pico, *Opera omnia*,, 3, 108: "Scientia quae est pars practica cabalae practicat totam metaphysicam formalem et theologiam inferiorem."

[45] P. R. Blum, "Pico, Theology, and the Church," in *Pico della Mirandola: New Essays*, ed. M. V. Dougherty (Cambridge–NY–Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 52–53.

[46] Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola*, 254.

[47] Abulafia, *Summa brevis cabale* [Cod. Vat. Ebr. 190, fol. 121v–122v] in S. Campanini, "Mitridate traduttore di opere cabbalistiche," in *Guglielmo Raimondo Moncada alias Flavio Mithridate. Un ebreo converso siciliano*, ed. M. Perani (Palermo: Officina di Studi Medievali, 2008), 56–57: "Dico igitur nunc quod hec sapientia cabale occulta

the true beauty. Yet a sage must first go through a process of physical, moral and spiritual purification. There is also a clear parallel in this point of view with Abulafia and Alemanno's concepts.[48]

Pico's Concept of the Wisdom of Christ

In *Sefer Yetzirah*, it is further assumed that God created the world through the thirty-two paths of his wisdom.[49] This is understood by means of the ten Sefirot and the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Pico adheres to this dictum: "Bereshit, that is, in the beginning he created, is the same as if he said, he created in wisdom." (Farmer, 28.25, 357)[50] In the sephrotic system, wisdom is represented by the sephirot *Hokhmah*. This, in Pico's conception, symbolises Christ, alias the non-created and eternal son of God, to whom everything returns: "Through the same conclusion one can know that the same Son, who is the Wisdom of the Father, is he who unites all things in the Father, and through whom all things were made, and whom all things are converted, and in whom at last all things sabbatize." (Farmer 11.61, 547)[51]

The work of creation is then also elaborated in the last part of the work *Heptaplus*. In the introduction, Pico does not neglect to emphasise that: "it seems we should have explained at the very first, that is, what is meant by the first phrase of law, 'In the beginning' (*bereshit*)." What is revealed to him? Using the mystical technique of *gematria*, we encounter the combination and permutation of the Hebrew word *bereshit*, as follows from this dictum:

> Ab means "the father," bebar "in the son" and "through the son" (for the prefix beth means both), resit "the beginning," sabbath "the rest and end" […] All Christians know what is meant by saying that the Father created in and through the Son, and likewise that is meant by saying that the Son is the beginning and end of all things. For He is Alpha and Omega (as John writes) and He called himself the beginning[…] (Carmichael's translation, 170).[52]

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quidem est a multitudine doctorum nostrorum qui exercentur in sapientia alia nostra que dicitur Talmud. Et dividitur quidem in duas partes, in universali que sunt scientia nominis dei Tetragrammaton per modum decem numerationum que vocantur plante inter quas qui separat dicitur truncare plantas, et hi sunt qui revelant secretum unitatis. Secunda pars est scientia magni nominis per viam viginti duarum licterarum a quibus et ab earum punctis et ab earum accentibus composita sunt nomina et caracteres seu sigilla que nomina invocata sunt que locuntur cum prophetis, in somniis et per hurim et tummim, et per spiritum sanctum et per prophetias […]"

[48] Abulafia, *Sheva*, 8.

[49] *Comentum Sepher Iesire*. [Cod. Vat. Ebr. 191, fol. 23r] (Wirszubski, 36): "Et hic mundus creatus est cum litera he, que est quinarius, et iam indicavimus secretum denarii ideo indicatur nunc secretum quinarii quia cum denario et quinario dominus formavit secula." Compare with Recanati, *Commentary*, 249: "Et hoc est indicium eius quod dixerunt sapientes nostri, quod hoc seculum creatum est cum littera he, seculum vero venturum creatum est cum littera iod. Verum tame<n> expositio huius rei est quod leticia tipherepth, que est hassamaim, idest celi, cum iod he est, quod indicat diadema."

[50] Pico, *Opera omnia*, 25, 82: "Idem est Bresith, id est in principio creavit, ac si dixisset et in sapientia creavit."

[51] Ibid., 61, 112: "Per eandem conclusionem sciri potest quod idem filius, qui est sapientia patris, est qui omnia unit in patre, et per quem omnia facta sunt, et a quo omnia convertuntur, et in quo demum sabbatizant omnia."

[52] Pico, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno e scritti vari*, 378–380: "Ab patrem significat; bebar in filio et per filium (utrumque enim significat beth praepositio); resit, principium; sabath, quietem et finem […] notum omnibus Christianis quid sit, Patrem in Filio et per Filium creasse, quidem item sit, Filium principium esse et finem omnium. Est enim α et ω (ut scribit Ioannes), et ipse principium se appellavit […]" Compare with "Ab means 'the father,' bebar 'in the son' and 'through the son' (for the prefix beth means both), resit 'the beginning,' 'sabbath' 'the rest and end' […] All Christians know what is meant by saying that the Father created in and through the Son, and likewise what is meant by saying that the Son is the beginning and the end of all things. For He is the Alpha and Omega (as John writes) and He called himself the beginning […]" J 1:8.

The Triadic: av – the father – ben – the son – sabbath is very close to the Proclus' modus: *processio*, *reversio* and *reunio*.

What other sources does Pico draw from? According to Wirszubski, he invokes Recanati's commentary on the Torah, where the same triad appears. However, as Ogren points out, in Pico's concept we lack the Hebrew letters *kuf* and *resh* (the word *kever)*.[53] *Aliis verbis* we do not see in him an effort to put the human soul on the path to its supreme human happiness, where the victorious Shabbat should come in the form of the secret of the great jubilee: "Whoever knows in the Cabala the mystery of the gates of intelligence will understand the mystery of the great jubilee" (Farmer 28.13, 351).[54] Crofton assumes that Pico may derive his inspiration from Recanati's commentary, or from the anonymous work *Liber combinationum* (probably from Abulafia's circle).[55] The forty-fourth "kabbalistic" thesis is also problematic: "When the soul grasps whatever it can grasp and is joined to a higher soul, it will rub off its earthly covering and will be rooted up from its place and joined with divinity."[56] Here Pico meditates on the Son of God as a macrocosm with whom man as a microcosm unites. While Wirszubski views Recanati's commentary on the Pentateuch as a direct source, B. C. Novak and later F. Lelli find it in Alemanno's *Heshek Shlomo*.[57]

If we return to the characteristics of *Metatron*, perhaps we will succeed in finding at least a partial solution to this problem. Pico describes this figure not only in his *Oratio* and *Commento*, but also in his tenth thesis: What Kabbalist call [Metatron] is beyond doubt what Orpheus names

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[53] Recanati, *Commentary on the Torah*, in Ch. Wirszubski, *A Christian Kabbalah Reads the Law* (Jerusalem, 1977), 17–18: "[…] it is Av, i. e., a 'Father' for all the generations of those things that come into existence from its emanation by way of its nursing from the alef, which is an allusion to Keter Elyon. And when if flows forth onto the letter nun, which is in the middle of the alphabet, a son is born from its conjuction there. And when it enters between kuf and resh, then it is a kever, i. e., a 'grave,' and it enters there to relinquish the soul from its body and to seek rest for it, and to bring it into the palace of the King. It further operates and enters between the two last letters in order to arrive at the supernal light, the rest of the souls, and then it is Shabbat. Then it stands still from giving birth and from operating, for this is the secret of the Great Jubilee […]." B. Ogren, *The Beginning of the World in the Renaissance Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 49–50.

[54] Pico, *Opera omnia*, 13, 81: "Qui noverit in Cabala mysterium portarum intelligentia, cognoscet mysterium magni Iobelei." Compare with another of Pico's thesis, ibid., 69, 113: "Ex fundamento praecedentis conclusionis sciri pariter potest secretum quiquaginta portarum intelligentiae et millesimae generationis et regni omnium saeculorum." See also M. Recanati, *Commentary*, 248–249: "Omnis generatio est quiquaginta annorum ex quibus co<n>stat iobeleus, ac si dixisset ad quinquaginta milia annorum, quod est magnum iobeleus. Et hoc est secretum iobelei, de quo scribitur anno iobelei huiusmodi redibit dominus et cetera [300r] et omnia redibunt ad tesuvam. Et ideo dicitur thesuva reductio et alio nomine iobel […] Et ideo dicitur in psalmo quod regnum tuum est regnum quiquaginta securolum hebraïce chol. Quod sic probatur […] Unde sapientes nostri in libro sepher azohar dicunt quod spacium quo deus sanctus et benedictus revocabit animam vel spiritum suum ad se est quinquaginta milium generationum, prout scribitur verbum iussit millesime generationi quia nostrum non est ea hic declarare sed tantum innuere. [7.5] Quod vero sequitur letentur asamaim et exultet ha>a<res, idest terra cum articulo, tu poteris cognoscere quid sit ex eo quod innuitur in principio dictionum et est nomem proprium tetragrammaton quia tunc erit omnium unio […]"

[55] Pico, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno e scritti vari*, 380: "[…] et nos demonstravimus finem omnium rerum esse, ut in principio suo restituantur […] Neque enim statim in promptu omnibus videre hic explicatam mundorum quattor, de quibus egimus, omnem rationem, cognationem item et felicitatem de quibus postremo nos disputavimus. Primum igitur illud advertendum, vocari a Mose mundum hominem magnum. Nam si homo est parvus mundus, utique mundus est magnus homo." Black, *Pico's Heptaplus*, 216.

[56] Pico, *Opera omnia*, 44, 83: "Cum anima comprehenderit quicquid poterit comprehendere, et coniungetur animae superiori, expoliabit indumentum terrenum a se, et extirpabitur de loco suo et coniungetur cum divinitate." Trans. B. Copenhaver, *Magic and the Dignity of Man*, 1K44, 490.

[57] Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola*, 50; Fabrizio Lelli, "Un collaboratore ebreo di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: Yohanan Alemanno," *Vivens homo* 5/2 (1994): 427.

Pallas, Zoroaster the Father's Mind, Mercury God's Son, Pythagoras Wisdom, Parmenides the Intelligible sphere.[58] Pico helps himself with Greek sources (mostly of the Neoplatonic provenience), identifying the Son of God with the god Pan (*quod totum significat*).[59] Such a motif is nothing new. It can be found, for example, in Eusebius of Caesarea or Isidore of Seville.[60] It is also captured by Renaissance authors. According to Campanini, Pico draws his inspiration from Ficino (*De religione christiana*) and characterizes it as *sphaera intelligibilis*, which is the beginning and the end of all things.[61] Apart from Ficino's "hermetic" dictum the same motif appears in Mithridates' *Sermo de passione Domini*. This means that Pan, i. e., God, which is all-encompassing, dies. It is thus not surprising that this model is later placed into Pico's concept: "By boy in the translators, understand nothing other than intellect" (Copenhaver 2Z13, 494).[62]

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[58] Pico, Opera omnia 10, 108: "Illud, quod apud Cabalistas dicitur Matatron, illud est sine dubio, quod ab Orpheo Pallas, a Zoroastre paterna mens, a Mercurio Dei filius, a Pythagora sapientia, a Parmenide sphaera intelligibilis nominatur." Compare with Farmer's translation (Farmer 11.10, 525): "That which among the Cabalists is called Metatron is without doubt that which is called Pallas by Orpheus, the paternal mind by Zoroaster, the son of God by Mercury, wisdom by Pythagoras, the intelligible sphere by Parmenides." Pico, 466: "Questa prima mente creata, da Platone e così dalli antichi philosophi Mercurio Trimegisto e Zoroastre è chiamato hora figliuolo de Dio, hora mente, hora Sapientia, hora ragione Divina […]" *De dign. hom.*, 108: "Nam et Hebraeorum theologia secretior nunc Enoch sanctum in angelum divinitatis, nunc in alia alios numina reformant."

[59] G. A. Gerhard, "Zum Told des grossen Pan," *Wiener Studien* 27 (1915): 323–352; Moshe Idel, *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism* (London – New York – Jerusalem: Continuum Shalom Hartmann Institute, 2007), 507–509. See also Francesco Zorzi, *De harmonia mundi* / *L' armonia del mondo*, ed. S. Campanini (Milano: Bompiani, 2010), I, 1, 5.

[60] Isidorus Hispalensis, "Etymologiae," in *Patrologia Latina 82*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1850), 8, 11: "Pan dicunt Graeci, Latin Silvanum, deum rusticorum, quem in naturae similitudinem formaverunt; unde et Pan dictus est, id est omne. Fingunt enim eum ex universali elementorum specie. Habet enim cornua in similitudine radiorum solis et lunae. Distinctam maculis habet pellem, propter caeli sidera. Rubet eius facies ad similitudinem aetheris. Fistulam septem discrimina vocum, propter harmoniam caeli, in qua septem sunt soni et septem discrimina vocum. Villosus est, quia tellus convestita est / agituentibus /. Pars eius inferior foeda est, propter arbores et feras ut pecudes. Caprinas ungulas habet, ut soliditatem terrae ostendat, quem volunt rerum et totius naturae deum; unde Pan quasi omnia dicunt." Eusebius, *Preparatio Evangelica*, ed. T. Gaisford (Oxford, 1843), 3, 11, 43: "Universi symbolum Pana esse affirmant, cui cornua dederunt propter solem et lunam, variam Pantherae pellem propter varietatem caelestium." Boccaccio, *Genealogiae Deorum Gentilium Libri*, ed. V. Romano (Bari, 1951), 1, 4: "Alii vero sensere aliter: solem scilicet per hanc imaginem designari, quem rerum patrem dominumque credidere. Quos inter fuit Macrobius. Et sic eius cornua volunt lunae renascenti indicium, per purpuream aeris mane seroque rubescentis aspectum, per prolixam barbam ipsius solis in terram usque radios descendentes. Per maculosam pellem caeli ornatum a solis luce derivantem. Per baculum seu virgam rerum potentiam atque moderamen. Per fistulam caeli armoniam a motu solis cognitam prout supra […] eumque dixere Pana a pan, quod totum latine sonat."

[61] Ficino, *Opera* (Basilea, 1576), 1309. Compare with Zorzi's dictum (Zorzi, *Problemata* [f. 322v, 5, 3], 296: "Cur Deus ab Hermete dicitur sphaera intelligibilis cuius centrum est ubique, circumferentia vero nusquam? Nonne quia ipse Deus vera sphaera est, in ipsum terminans a quo et principium habet? Nam ipse est principium et finis omnium. Hinc omnia creata quae Dei vestigium gerunt, ad rotunditatem tendunt, ut de coelis, terra caeterisque elementis manifeste patet. Et hoc idem est de aliis. Quamvis id non ita clare appareat. Centrum autem sphaerae huius, quod est tota haec mundana machina, est ubique quia omnem locum occupat, cum ultra mundum non sit locus. Circumferentia vero, quae est ipse Deus omnia ambiens, nusquam est, quia a loco non capitur, sed ipse omnia capit." (Reuchlin, *De arte cabalistica*, 52v-53r.)

[62] Mithridates, *Sermo de passione domini*, ed. Ch. Wirszubski (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1963), 125–126: "Tunc iussus est cum ad paludem veniret nunciaret Magnum Pana interiisse. cum ventum est ad locum Thamnus magna voce inclamavit, interijt Pan. statim ululatus et gemitus auditus est. hec etiam relata Tyberio Cesari fidem habuere, cuius iussu perquisitus quisnam esset iste Pan, responsum est eum fuisse qui fuit filius Mercuij et Penelope. Pan igitur deus est qui omnia quae sunt in mundo comprehendit: unde nomen habet […]" (Platon, Cratyl. 408 b-d.) Pico, *Opera omnia*, 13, 104; 28, 107: "Frustra adit naturam et Protherum, qui Pana non attraxerit." Compare with Farmer's translation (Farmer 8. 13, 491): "By the boy in

Pan is considered here as a boy perceived to be the Son of God, entering human history again as the wisdom of the father (*prisca sapientia*). Moreover, Pico refuses to accept Ficino's idea of the Son of God as a "higher created angel,"[63] which is why he refers to the Medieval kabbalists who believed that the Biblical Henoch transformed into *Metatron*, i. e., into the angel of divinity. One of these is Abulafia, who considers his name, composed of seventy-two Hebrew letters, as sacred (*nomen ineffabile*). He presents him further as the Son of God and our saviour, ruling over the whole world.[64]

Metatron is also the beginning, through which God created heaven and earth: "From this conclusion and from the thirtieth above, it follows that any Kabbalist must grant that Jesus, when asked who he was, gave exactly the right answer, saying, *I who speak to you am the Beginning*."[65] Pico here applies this Biblical dictum: "Who are you?" they asked him. Jesus answered, "What I have told you from the beginning" (John 8,25). "Principium" is synonymic with the wisdom, as mentioned above. And it relates to the divine and physical nature of Jesus. *Hokhmah* is thus the beginning of divine wisdom, which emanates into the human intellect. We can further define it as the first cause, which surpasses any speech, as we, according to Pico, read it in the anonymous Medieval work the *Book of Causes*.[66] Similarly, in Abulafia's *Imrei Shefer* the first cause stands above all things.[67] Its concept was later interpreted by Y. Alemanno, who linked it to the Biblical dictum: "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever" (*Ps* 111, 10) and with Aristotle's concept of reason. He therefore considers wisdom as the beginning, which is "the median of existence, between that which is actual and that which is potential. And it is the beginning and the first

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the interpreters understand nothing but the intellect." (Farmer 10. 28, 515): "Whoever does not attract Pan approaches nature and Proteus in vain (825)."

[63] Pico, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno e scritti vari*, 466–467: "Ed abbi ciascuno diligente avvertenzia di non intendere che questo sia quello che da' nostri Theologi è detto figliuolo di Dio, perchè noi intendiamo per il figliuolo una medesima essenzia col padre, a lui in ogni cosa equale, creatore finalmente e non creatura, ma debbesi comparare quello che e' Platonici chiamano figliuolo di Dio al primo e più nobile angelo da Dio creato." (Ficino, *Theologia platonica*, 11, 4.)

[64] Abulafia, *De Secretis Legis* [Cod. Vat. Ebr. 190, fols. 377r–378v] (Wirszubski, 232): "Et ipse est […] hu Goel idest redemptor. quia est ipse in toto corde tuo… et ipse est qui regit totum mundum… sicut cor quod regit totum corpus et secretum eius est in mari […]" Ibid.: "Itaque vocatur intellectus vel Intelligentia in idomate nostro Malach idest angelus vel cherub. Etiam in multis locis vocabitur elohim ut diximus ub misterio illius quod habet nomen simile nomini magistri sui. Itaque sapientes nostri vocant eum ut plurimum Henoch. Et dicunt quod Henoch est Mattatron et sic dixit Ionethen Chaldeus. Et dixit Rabi Eliezer Gormacensis in libro de anima quod septuaginta nomina habet Mattatron, sicut excitarunt nos sapientes nostri sanctissimi de hoc in aphorismis septem adytuum, hebraice xiba hechaloth, et in aliis libris ex compositione sanctissimi rabi Aquibe et rabi Ismaelis summi pontificis super quibus pas dei sit. Omnia quidem illa nomina conveniunt invicem tum per combinationem tum per numerum licterarum."

[65] Pico, *Opera omnia*, 39, 111 and 30, 110: "Necessario habent concedere Cabalistae secundum sua principia quod verus Messias futurus est talis, ut de eo vere dicatur quod est Deus et dei filius." Compare with Copenhaver's translation (Copenhaver 2K30, 499): "Following their own principles, Kabbalists must necessarily grant that the true Messiah will have been such that one may truly say of him that he is God and God's Son."

[66] Pico, *Opera omnia*, 5, 100: "Cum dixit Abucaten, causam primam superiorem esse omni naratione, non tam propter id habet veritatem quo primo affert, quia scilicet causam ante se non habet, quam propter id quod secundario innuit, quia omne intelligibile unialiter antecedit."

[67] Abulafia, *Imrei Shefer,* 193 [Ms. Paris BN 849, 91a, 123a]: "The First Cause, cannot be described, since it is above all description. And speech does not reach it, since description is only by means of speech; and speech is by means of the intellect; and the intellect is by means of thought; and thought is by means of the immagination; and the immagination is by means of the senses. And the First Cause is above all of these things, since it is their cause. As a result of this, it does not fall under sense or imagination or thought or intellect or speech. Consequently, it is not describable."

of all existents […]"[68] It is also the first cause of everything (as in Abulafia and Pico's case), to which everything naturally returns.

We nevertheless find one fundamental difference in the kabbalistic project of the two scholars, Pico is convinced that only Christ can be the true Messiah,[69] alias the Son of God, who is also the guarantor that God created everything in good covenant: "This pact is good, therefore, because it is directed and oriented toward God, who is the good itself, so that just as within itself the whole world is one, so also it is, in the end, one with its Maker."[70] It is thus the old wisdom, alias the beginning and the end of all things (*Metatron*), which a sage can attain and unite with (the concept of *mors osculi*):[71] "From the mystery of the three letters in the word shabbat, that is, שבת, we can interpret Cabalistically that the world will be sabbatize when the Son of God becomes man, and that ultimately the Shabbath will come when men are regenerated in the Son of God" (Farmer 11. 16, 527).[72]

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[68] Ogren, *The Beginning*, 27–28. See Aristoteles, *De Anima*, III, 5, transl. A. Kříž (Prague, 1995), 96–97.

[69] Pico, *Opera omnia*, 38, 111: "Effectus qui sunt sequiti post mortem Christi, debent convincere quemlibet Cabalistam, quod Iesus Nazarenus fuit verus Messias." Compare with Pico's seventh thesis (7, 108): "Nullus hebraeus cabalista potest negare quod nomen Iesu, si eum secundum modum et principia cabalae interpretemur, hoc totum precise et nihil aliud significat, id est, deum dei filium patrisque sapientiam per tertiam divinitatis personam, quae est ardentissimus amoris ignis, naturae humanae in unitate suppositi unitum." (Harvey J. Hames, *Like Angels on Jacob's Ladder* [New York: State University of New York Press, 2007], 79–88.)

[70] Pico, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno e scritti vari*, 382. See Carmichael's translation (Pico, 174): "This pact is good, therefore, because it is directed and oriented toward God, who is the good itself, so that just as within itself the whole world is one, so also it is, in the end, one with its Maker."

[71] *Mors osculi* see (Song of Songs 1:2). "Another Interpretation:" "Let him kiss with the kisses of his mouth." Compare with the Zohar: What did King Salomon mean by introducing words of love between the upper world (sefira Tiferet) and the lower world (sefira Malkut), and by beginning the praise of love, which he has introduced between them, with "let him kiss me"? They have already given an explanation for this, and it is that inseparable love of spirit for spirit can be [expressed] only by a kiss, and a kiss is with the mouth, for that is the source and outlet of the spirit. And when they kiss one another, the spirits cling to each other, and they are one, and then love is one." (*The Wisdom of the Zohar*, Vol. I., ed, I. Tishby [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989], 364–365.) Compare with Pico's thesis (Pico, *Opera omnia*, 11, 108–109): "Modus quo rationales animae per archangelum deo sacrificantur, qui a Cabalistis non exprimitur, non est nisi per separationem animi a corpore, non corporis ab anima nisi per accidens, ut contingit in morte osculi, de quo scribitur: praeciosa in conspectu domini mors sanctorum eius."

[72] Pico, *Opera omnia*, 16, 109: "Ex mysterio trium litterarum quae sunt in dictione sciabat, id est שבת, possumus interpretari Cabalisticae tunc sabbatizare mundum cum Dei filius fit homo, et ultimo futurum sabbatum cum homines in Dei filium regenerabuntur.!" Compare with Pico's *Heptaplus*, (Pico, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno e scritti vari*, 372): "Nam si Baptismus Dei filios autem imago Patris, nonne totius Trinitatis virtus operans in Baptismo illa est quae dicit: <Faciamus hominem ad imaginem nostram>? Si igitur sumus ad imaginem Dei, sumus et Filii. Si filii et heredes sumus, heredes Dei, coheredes Christi. Scriptum a Paulo est, clamare nos abba (pater) in Spiritu Sancto. Qui igitur Spiritu vivunt, ii sunt filii Dei, ii Christi fratres, ii destinati aeternae hereditati, quam mercedem et fidei et bene actae vitae in caelesti Hierusalem feliciter possidebunt." Ibid., 332: "Vera autem et consumnata felicitas ad Dei faciem contuendam, quae est omne bonum ut ipse dixit, et ad perfectam cum eo principio a quo emanavimus unionem nos revehit at adducit. Ad hanc angeli atolli quidem possunt, sed non possunt ascendere. Quare peccavit Lucifer dicens: Ascendam in caelum. Ad hanc ire homo non potest, trahi potest; unde Christus de se, qui est ipsa felicitas."

Conclusion

It can be stated that in his concept of *felicitas supernaturalis* Pico combines Greek sources (mainly of the "Platonic" and Aristotelian provenience) with Arabic philosophy and Jewish mysticism. In this context, we can mention his Jewish collaborators, namely Eliyah del Medigo, Fl. Mithridates, and especially Y. Alemanno, who was not only his translator, but also the interpreter of Jewish philosophical and mystical texts. Pico thus creates a syncretic philosophy (*philosophia catholica*), which has many common features with Abulafia and Alemanno's concept of kabbalistic exegesis (that is the process of man's purification; the conjunction of the potential human intellect and the active divine intellect; *Metatron* and *mors osculi*). Moreover, in Pico's model, there is also apparent an apologetic aspect, which is emphasized by his desire to prove fundamental Catholic dogma with the use of so-called "authentic" Jewish sources, revised mostly by Mithridates.

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Cosmopolitan Ideas in Early Modern Europe and the Jewish Tradition

Abstract | This article aims to shed new light on Early Modern Jewish discourse on cosmopolitanism, by focusing on the works of Simone Luzzatto (ca. 1580–1663), a rabbi and prominent intellectual figure of Venice's Jewish community. I will reconstruct Luzzatto's theory of cosmopolitanism and address how he engages with Greek, Roman, and Early Modern European philosophical literature on this theme. I will also show that Luzzatto's discussion of cosmopolitan ideas is linked to the advocacy of religious tolerance towards the Jews and as a general philosophical position.

Keywords | Early Modern Jewish political thought – Cosmopolitanism – Simone Luzzatto – religious tolerance

Introduction

Recent years have seen a backlash against globalization and an upsurge in nationalism. In light of the traumatic experiences of World War II, cosmopolitanism has often been celebrated as being conducive to the creation of a global community. But in current debates, especially in Europe, about migration caused by military conflicts, economic devastation, and shrinking natural resources, it is often depicted as a sinister force threatening to erode national bonds and the religious and cultural values of the nation-state. Considerations of cosmopolitan ideas have a long lineage in European political and philosophical thinking, particularly in the Early Modern period, in connection with the Wars of Religion and a series of economic crises in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The objective of this article is to shed new light on Early Modern Jewish discourse on cosmopolitanism, by analyzing the works of Simone (Simḥa) Luzzatto (ca. 1580–1663), a rabbi and prominent intellectual figure of Venice's Jewish community, and a seminal theorist of religious tolerance and precursor of Spinoza.

Although Luzzatto's oeuvre has received increasing scholarly attention, in part thanks to the publication of the English translations of his major writings, there remains a need to situate his ideas in the history of European political thought. In this article, I will reconstruct Luzzatto's theory of cosmopolitanism and address how the Venetian rabbi engages with Greek, Roman, and Early Modern European philosophical literature on this theme. Additionally, I will demonstrate that his treatment of cosmopolitanism operates on two different levels, but that ultimately these two strains of his thought converge in the advocacy of religious tolerance towards the Jews and as a general philosophical position.

Luzzatto is at pains to show that the Jewish religion is not inimical to Christianity and that the Mosaic Law was promulgated for all of humankind. His apology for the Jewish presence in

Venice is premised on the notion that the Jews do not have their own state nor do they have a ruler that can protect them. For these reasons, they are usually loyal to the cities and countries that host them. Unlike other ancient nations that vanished over the course of history, the Jews lived scattered around the world and survived thanks to their commitment to preserving their rites and customs. Luzzatto considers this kind of Jewish "exceptionalism" as a source of strength, because it forced the Jewish nation to become more resilient and come to terms with the hardships and challenges associated with diasporic existence. At the same time, one of the most intriguing aspects of Luzzatto's thought is the treatment of cosmopolitanism beyond Jewish concerns and the emphasis on the importance of trade in terms of cultivating amicable relations between diverse societies and bridging religious differences.

The Observation of the Natural World and Cosmopolitanism

Information about Luzzatto's life is scarce. Some details about his family background and studies derive from his testament drawn up on June 20th, 1662, almost one year before his death. Luzzatto was born to a wealthy mercantile family and pursued rabbinic studies. He was appointed rabbi at the Scuola Grande Tedesca in 1606 and also served as head of the Talmudic Academy following Leon Modena's death in 1648.[1] Luzzatto's most famous work, the *Discorso circa il stato de gl'Hebrei et in particolar dimoranti nell'inclita città di Venetia* (*Discourse Regarding the Condition of the Jews and in Particular Those Residing in the Illustrious City of Venice*, Venice, 1638), was written in response to allegations about the involvement of Venetian Jews in a corruption scandal of Venice's judiciary.[2] The *Discorso* provides a set of general arguments about the advantages associated with the presence of the Jews in Venice. Luzzatto's second major work, the *Socrate overo dell'humano sapere* (*Socrates or on Human Knowledge*, Venice, 1651), is a fictional dialogue among various ancient Greek personages about human knowledge, which features three main characters: Socrates, Hippias of Elis, and Timon of Athens [of Phlius].[3] The *Discorso* exudes agony about the fate of Venice's Jewish community in the seventeenth century and the

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[1] For further details about Luzzatto's life and works, see the volume Giuseppe Veltri, ed., *Filosofo e Rabbino nella Venezia del Seicento: Studi su Simone Luzzatto con documenti inediti dall'Archivio di Stato di Venezia* (Ariccia: Aracne, 2015).

[2] Simone Luzzatto, *Discourse on the State of the Jews*, bilingual edition, eds., trans., and comm. Giuseppe Veltri and Anna Lissa (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019) (henceforth cited as Luzzatto, *Discourse on the State of the Jews*). I have also consulted the English translation of certain portions in Lester W. Roubey, "The *Discorso circa il stato degli Hebrei* (1638) of the Italian Rabbi Simone (Simha ben Isaac) Luzzatto with an Introduction on the Life and Works of the Author" (Rabbinical thesis, Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 1947).

[3] Simone Luzzatto, *Socrates, Or On Human Knowledge*, bilingual edition, eds., trans., and comm. Giuseppe Veltri and Michela Torbidoni (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019) (henceforth cited as Luzzatto, *Socrates*). Luzzatto has conflated the notorious fifth-century misanthrope and Socrates' contemporary Timon of Athens with the sceptic philosopher Timon of Phlius (ca. 325–ca. 235 BC), who was a disciple of Pyrrho of Elis. In the *Socrate*, the biographical information about Timon points to Timon of Athens' life, but the philosophical ideas he expresses in the dialogue derive from Timon of Phlius' teachings.

modes of accommodating religious differences in a period of political, economic and societal tribulations. The *Socrate*, by contrast, is driven by the quest for social harmony and personal constancy and stability, and is colored by the endeavor to mitigate the anxiety resulting from the insight that human learning is inherently limited.

In the *Socrate*, Luzzatto presents the sophist Hippias as a polymath, incorporating or reworking a variety of ancient sources, notably, Plato's *Hippias Major* and *Hippias Minor*, and Xenophon's *Memorabilia*.[4] A crucial feature ascribed to Hippias, as pictured by Luzzatto, is the philosophical justification of cosmopolitanism, which points to Plato's *Protagoras*: there Hippias appears as a proponent of cosmopolitan sentiments and addresses his interlocutors as fellow citizens whose bonds are sustained by nature and not by human laws.[5] Hippias, in Luzzatto's *Socrate*, notes that someone who has observed the inevitable concatenation of the causes and workings of fatality (*fatalità*) and opts to be dragged by them instead of obeying them by willingly following them, creates due to his tergiversation trouble for himself and inflicts self-punishment. Similarly, the examination of the universal caducity (*caducità universale*) in the sublunary world induces humans to become contemptuous of life and keen to sacrifice their lives for their homeland. The world changes its appearance, and the things that exist in it perish, come back to life, and are at our service. Humans, by witnessing this process of metamorphosis, become eager to sacrifice their lives and confront death head-on for the sake of their homeland. Human arrogance can be tempered so long as man observes the breadth of the skies and the greatness of the stars; man recognizes that, by comparison, the earth is as small as a grain of sand.[6]

Hippias echoes ideas about cosmopolitanism, which derive from ancient Greek philosophy, especially Stoic teachings, and reverberate in a number of Early Modern authors.[7] The vision of Socrates as the archetype of a world citizen is central to the Cynic teachings exemplified by Diogenes of Sinope (ca. 405–ca. 320 BC), who renounced allegiance to a specific city or a homeland.[8] Some of these views were incorporated in Stoic philosophy and served as the fulcrum for a variety of approaches to cosmopolitanism. As with Early Modern discoveries, Alexander the Great's conquests and encounters with new societies gave a powerful impetus to reflection on the unity of humankind, the limitations of the model of the city-state, and, most importantly, the need to redefine one's position and identity in the new heterogeneous political formations. Zeno

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[4] On the following, see [Plato], *The Hippias Major Attributed to Plato*, intro. and comm. Dorothy Tarrant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), xx–xxii.

[5] Plato, *Laches, Protagoras, Meno, Euthydemus*, trans. Walter R. M. Lamb (London/Cambridge, MA: W. Heinemann/Harvard University Press, 1914), 337C–D, 178–181.

[6] Luzzatto, *Socrates*, 420–23.

[7] The following account is based on Thomas J. Schlereth, *The Cosmopolitan Ideal in Enlightenment Thought: Its Form and Function in the Ideas of Franklin, Hume, and Voltaire, 1694–1790* (Notre Dame, IN and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), xvii–xx. On Greek and Roman cosmopolitan ideas, see, e. g., Daniel S. Richter, *Cosmopolis: Imagining Community in Late Classical Athens and the Early Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Greg R. Stanton, "The Cosmopolitan Ideas of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius," *Phronesis* 13 (1968): 183–95; Harold C. Baldry, *The Unity of Mankind in Greek Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965); Moses Hadas, "From Nationalism to Cosmopolitanism in the Greco-Roman World," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4 (1943): 105–11; William W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great and the Unity of Mankind* (London: Milford, 1933); and Hugh Harris, "Greek Origins of the Idea of Cosmopolitanism," *The International Journal of Ethics* 38 (1927): 1–10.

[8] John L. Moles, "Cynic Cosmopolitanism," in *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and Its Legacy*, eds. R. Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 105–20. See also Malcolm Schofield, *The Stoic Idea of the City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 64–65, 141–45.

of Citium (ca. 335–ca. 263 BC) formulated a plan for a utopia that would span the entire world.[9] Philo of Alexandria (ca. 15 BC–ca. 50 AD), in his work *De opificio mundi* (*On the Creation*), contends that the first man and original forefather of humankind should be declared the only citizen of the world (*kosmopolitēs*). For the entire world was his home, city, and country, where he lived without any fear and enjoyed absolute peace and safety. Given that every well-ordered city has a set of laws in place, the citizen of the world conformed to the same laws as the whole world, which are nature's right reason (*orthos logos*), a divine law, according to which all living creatures received what rightly pertained to them.[10]

For ancient thinkers who were inspired by Stoic ideas as well as for Luzzatto and Early Modern Libertines, involvement in civic affairs was a vehicle to expose and combat deep-rooted conventions, superstitions, and bigotry, all of which led to divisions and discord. Panaetius of Rhodes prefigures this tendency in his portrayal of the philosophers as proponents of cosmopolitan ideals. The seeds of Early Modern ideas about religious tolerance can be found in the philosophical doctrines of Posidonius, Panaetius' disciple and Cicero's teacher. Cicero argues that all humans have shared interests; as such, they are all obliged to follow the same law of nature.[11] Cicero's *Tusculanae Disputationes* (*Tusculan Disputations*) includes an account of Socrates as the embodiment of cosmopolitan values, which was reproduced by a number of Early Modern authors: when Socrates was asked about the country to which he belonged, he responded that he considered himself a native and citizen of the world.[12]

Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525), in his *De immortalitate animae* (*On the Immortality of the Soul*, 1516), visualizes all of humankind as a single body consisting of different members and parts: their functions differ, but they are all ordered to the general welfare. In Pomponazzi's view, the various members of humankind are interrelated and complement one another. Although they do not have the same degree of perfection, these arrangements guarantee the perpetuation of humankind. But, for all their differences, they all share some common characteristics and qualities – otherwise they would not belong to the same genus, and they would not all foster the common good like the bodily members and organs of a single person.[13]

The correlation established by Luzzatto's Hippias between the observation of natural phenomena and cosmopolitanism is strongly reminiscent of Erasmus' (1466–1536) use of celestial imagery in his discussion of cosmopolitan ideas in his *Querela pacis* (*The Complaint of Peace*, 1517). Erasmus notes that, although the motions of the celestial bodies differ and their force is not equal, they are and have always been in constant motion, in perfect harmony, without colliding. The elements, although they repel each other, are in a state of equilibrium and ensure eternal peace in the natural world. Despite the disparity of the constituent principles they enjoy,

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[9] Alfred C. Pearson, *The Fragments of Zeno and Cleanthes* (London: C. J. Clay, 1891; New York: Arno Press, 1973). For further discussion, see Robert Bees, *Zenons Politeia* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2011); Anton-Hermann Chroust, "The Ideal Polity of the Early Stoics: Zeno's Republic," *Review of Politics* 27 (1965): 173–83; Harold C. Baldry, "Zeno's Ideal State," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 79 (1959): 3–15.

[10] Philo, *Philo in Eleven Volumes*, vol. 1, trans. Francis H. Colson and George H. Whitaker (London/Cambridge, MA: W. Heinemann/Harvard University Press, 1929), 142–43, 112–15.

[11] Cicero, *De Officiis*, trans. Walter Miller (London/New York: W. Heinemann/Macmillan, 1913), III.28, 295.

[12] Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, trans. John E. King (London and New York: W. Heinemann and G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), V.xxxvii.108, 532–35.

[13] Pietro Pomponazzi, *Traité de l'immortalité de l'âme = Tractatus de immortalitate animae*, ed. and trans. Thierry Gontier (Paris: Les Belles Letres, 2012), 162–63; Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall, Jr., eds., *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 352–53. On the following, see Derek Heater, *World Citizenship and Government: Cosmopolitan Ideas in the History of Western Political Thought* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 48–51; as well as Luca Scuccimarra, *I confini del mondo: Storia del cosmopolitismo dall' Antichità al Settecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006).

through friendly intercourse and union, continuous concord.[14] The entire earth is, in Erasmus' eyes, the shared habitat of all those who live and breathe on it. All humans, notwithstanding their political or accidental differences, originate from the same parents.[15] Human life is afflicted by countless calamities, but a great part of human misery can be mitigated by mutual affection and friendship.[16] Similar sentiments are expressed by Étienne de la Boétie (1530–1563), in his *Discours de la servitude volontaire* (*Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*, written ca. 1550; published in 1570), who grounds the argument that all humans are naturally free in the idea that nature has created all human beings from the same mold, so that each person can recognize others as companions, or rather, brothers. Nature has offered humans the entire earth as their common abode, and has endowed them with the great capacity of speech so they can communicate with each other, build trust, and forge fraternal bonds. The common and mutual expression of thoughts generates a communion of wills, and nature enhances the ties among human beings and within human society.[17]

Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), in his *Essais* (*Essays*, 1580–1588), writes that frequent interaction with the world can be a source of light for human judgment, since all human beings are confined within themselves. Montaigne reiterates Socrates' statement that he (Socrates) did not come from Athens, but from the world. Socrates saw the entire world as his city, and he expanded his circle of acquaintances, his fellowship and affections to all of humankind.[18] Montaigne further asserts that he considers all men his fellow-citizens, that he would embrace a Pole in the same way as he would a Frenchman, and that he upholds the primacy of a common, universal bond over national ties.[19]

Finally, cosmopolitanism, loyalty, and dedication to one's homeland are important themes in Justus Lipsius' (1547–1606) *De constantia* (*On Constancy*, 1584), a philosophical dialogue aimed at the revival of Stoic ethics which the Flemish humanist saw as a remedy for the religious divisions that gripped Europe in the sixteenth century. One of Lipsius' main arguments in favor of cosmopolitanism is that all human beings are made of the same stock and seed, and that they live under the vault of heaven and on the same globe. Therefore, one's homeland should be the entire world, and not just a small part of it. The *De constantia* also mentions that Socrates proclaimed himself a citizen of the world. Lipsius concludes that most humans commit the folly of being attached to a specific part of the earth, while an affable and circumspect person defies common opinion, and through reflection he embraces the entire world as his own.[20]

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[14] Desiderius Erasmus, *The Complaint of Peace: Translated from the Querela Pacis (A.D. 1521)* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1917; repr. 1974), 3. The reception of Erasmus' works in Early Modern Italy is traced in Reinier Leushuis, "Antonio Brucioli and the Italian Reception of Erasmus: The *Praise of Folly* in Dialogue," in *The Reception of Erasmus in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Karl A. E. Enenkel (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2013), 237–59; Silvana Seidel Menchi, *Erasmo in Italia: 1520–1580* (Turin: B. Boringhieri, 1987; repr. 2001); and Augustin Renaudet, *Erasme et l'Italie* (Geneva: Droz, 1954; repr. 1998).

[15] Erasmus, *The Complaint of Peace*, 60.

[16] Ibid., 74.

[17] Estienne de La Boëtie, *De la servitude volontaire ou contr'un*, ed. Malcolm Smith (Geneva: Droz, 2001), 42; Étienne de la Boétie and Paul Bonnefon, *The Politics of Obedience and Étienne de La Boétie*, trans. Harry Kurz (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2007), 119–20.

[18] Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, trans. Michael A. Screech (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 176.

[19] Ibid., 1100.

[20] Justus Lipsius, *Justus Lipsius' "Concerning Constancy,"* ed. and trans. Robert V. Young (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2011), 42–45.

The Jews and Cosmopolitanism

Luzzatto's Hippias suggests that humans ought to follow the path of nature in their actions, and that each man should not only seek his own profit or that of his country, but also that of the "universal country," that is, of all of humankind. In his treatment of cosmopolitanism, Hippias employs the imagery of rivers flowing with force into the sea, whereby they lose not only the sweetness of their waters, but also their names. In doing so, they assist the ocean as their shared homeland and ensure that it does not diminish or dry out due to the vapors which are produced continuously either by the subterranean fire, which pushes them, or by the celestial superior, which pulls them.[21]

Borrowing a similar metaphor, Luzzatto contends in the *Discorso* that the Jews are dispersed around the world and resemble a river that flows through a large territory. Its waters receive an impression of the quality of the various lands through which they flow. Analogously, the Jews are exposed to and adopt diverse lifestyles and habits from the countries, in which they live. As a result, the manners of the Venetian Jews are different from the Jews who live in Constantinople, Damascus, and Cagliari. All these differ from the Jews who live in Germany or Poland.[22] Luzzatto associates, in this connection, the river metaphor with the Jewish exile and movement of population and circulation in general. In his regard, he intersects with the Portuguese Marrano Duarte Gomes Solis (1561–1630), who maintains that the silver in circulation in the Spanish Empire, Europe, Africa, and Asia is like a fast-flowing river that originates from the Indies, flows through Castile, from there runs through various veins and other rivers, and discharges in China, which is its center.[23]

The use of the river motif is a prominent feature of Niccolò Machiavelli's (1469–1527) idea that fortune resembles a powerful river, which, when angry, floods the plains, destroys the trees and buildings, and lifts soil from a certain land and moves it to another (*The Prince*, ch. XXV). More broadly, Luzzatto's invocation of this image is redolent of Gabriel Naudé's (1600–1653) discussion of the parallels between the river Nile and the secrets of the state, in his *Considérations politiques sur les coups d'Estat* (*Political Considerations on Coups d'Etat*, 1639): just as those located near the source of the Nile derive many commodities without necessarily being cognizant of its origin, in likewise manner, the people value and profit from the salutary effects of state secrets without having any knowledge of their sources.[24] An analog to this passage can be found in Luzzatto's *Socrate*: Socrates refers to the Nile to argue that if knowledge is contingent upon identifying the causes, then this process would either go on to infinity, which, by its nature, is incomprehensible and can never be penetrated by human reason; or it should end at a certain point without searching for further causes. Like Naudé, Luzzatto's Socrates mentions that in the case of the Egyptians, locating the rivers and canals, which irrigate and fertilize their land and derive from the Nile, would not satisfy their curiosity, since the first origin and source of the Nile itself would still remain unknown to them.[25] Similarly, Giovanni Botero (1544–1617) employs river imagery in the context of his discussion of utility: states and dominions acquired through force and violence cannot endure. For they resemble torrents that can suddenly rise and fall, because, unlike rivers, they do not have a spring which could provide a continuous supply

[21] Luzzatto, *Socrates*, 424–27.

[22] Luzzatto, *Discourse on the State of the Jews*, 100–01.

[23] Duarte Gomes Solis, *Alegación en favor de la Compañia de la India Oriental: Comercios ultramarinos, que de nuevo se instituyó en el reyno de Portugal*, ed. Moses Bensabat Amzalak (Lisbon: Editorial Império, 1955), 104.

[24] Gabriel Naudé, *Considérations politiques sur les coups d'État*, eds. Frédérique Marin and Marie-Odile Perulli (Paris: Éditions de Paris, 1988), 90.

[25] Luzzatto, *Socrates*, 328–29.

of water. In their spates, they can be dangerous to travelers, and then they dwindle to such an extent and dry up that one can walk through them without getting wet.[26]

Luzzatto stresses that, like all other living beings, the life span of peoples and nations is fixed. After reaching the apex of their growth and grandeur, they fall into oblivion. Their destruction can occur in two ways: through complete corruption, or through transformation, i. e., a thing can preserve its essence, or its shape is deformed due a dissolution of its continuity, as is the case with broken glass or separated water. The Chaldeans, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, and all other Gentile nations vanished or were transformed so radically that in certain cases only their names survived. In other cases, only relics of their memories were preserved, like planks left behind after a shipwreck. But the Jews (the Hebrew nation) did not experience any profound alterations. Although it was fragmented and divided into an infinite number of groups and lived dispersed around the world, its essence remained largely intact. Given that it would not have had sufficient strength to resist the passage of time and protect itself from the misfortunes that occurred over the course of 1,600 years, its survival is dictated by the divine will. Captivity and dispersion are the worst scourges that can afflict a people or a nation: they make it vile, abject, and the object of the scorn and derision of other nations. Such conditions can, however, also be an effective means of preserving a nation. For they remove jealousy and suspicion from the rulers; and they make the nation that is subjected to dispersion humble and pliant.[27]

Luzzatto's references to the Jewish exile point to the political ideas of another great author who emerged from the Venetian ghetto, Isaac Cardoso (ca. 1603–1684). In his work *Las Excelencias des los Hebreos* (*The Excellences of the Jews*, Amsterdam, 1679), Cardoso, like Luzzatto, refutes several accusations made against the Jews and elaborates upon some of their distinctive qualities. In Cardoso's view, dispersion has been a persistent phenomenon in the history of the Jewish people since the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. In order to atone for their violations of the Holy Law, the Jews had to suffer misfortunes and attacks on their lives and property in every kingdom, in which they lived. Cardoso declares the Jewish people to be the only truly universal nation that constituted a "separate republic," a "republic apart." The Jews were dispersed and entrusted by God with the mandate to transmit knowledge of God, while remaining loyal to the lands and sovereigns that hosted them. [28]

Whereas most Medieval and Early Modern Jewish writers lament the exile and expulsion from Spain,[29] Luzzatto and Cardoso exemplify a different line of interpretation and emphasize,

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[26] Giovanni Botero, *On the Causes of the Greatness and Magnificence of Cities*, trans. and intro. Geoffrey Symcox (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), I.7, 16. The different uses of the river metaphor in Early Modern political thought are explored in Katherine Ibbett, "Productive Perfection: The Trope of the River in Early Modern Political Writing," in *Perfection*, ed. Anne L. Birberick (Charlottesville, VA: Rookwood Press, 2008), 44–57 (on Botero's deployment of river imagery in the broader context of the growth of cities and trade, ibid., 50–52).

[27] Luzzatto, *Discourse on the State of the Jews*, 232–03. See also Vasileios Syros, "*Mercati ex Machina*: Prosperity and Economic Decline in Early Modern Jewish Political Thought," *Republics of Letters* 6 (2018): 12–13, https://arcade.stanford.edu/rofl/mercati-ex-machina-economic-prosperity-and-decline-early-modern-jewish-thought-0 (last accessed January 5, 2021).

[28] On the following, see Claude B. Stuczynski, "Ex-*Converso* Sephardi New Jews as Agents, Victims, and Thinkers of Empire: Isaac Cardoso Once Again," in *Paths to Modernity: A Tribute to Yosef Kaplan*, eds. Avriel Bar-Levav et al. (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2018), 209–31, esp. 221–22, and 230–31.

[29] Vasileios Syros, "All Roads Lead to Florence: Renaissance Jewish Thinkers and Machiavelli on Civil Strife," *Viator* 47 (2016): 349–63; idem, "Conflict and Political Decline in Machiavelli and Renaissance Jewish Historiography," in *Гвиччардини и Макиавелли у истоков исторической науки Нового времени. Материалы международной научной конференции, 23–24 сентября 2019 г.* (= *Machiavelli e Guicciardini alle origini della scienza storica dei tempi moderni. Materiali del Convegno Internazionale, 23–24 settembre 2019*), ed. Mark Youssim (Moscow: Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences, 2020), 368–92.

from different angles, the salutary effects of diasporic existence. A similar endeavor to rehabilitate Jewish exile was articulated by the Portuguese historian João de Barros (1496–1570) in his *Ropica pnefma* (*Spiritual Goods*, 1532), a fictional dialogue between will and reason: although exile was originally intended as a retribution and a source of suffering, the dispersion of the Jews among various countries and nations enabled them to eventually reach a level of economic growth and prosperity, higher than the one they had enjoyed earlier.[30] These interpretations are prefigured in Isaac (Yitzḥak) Polqar's *'Ezer ha-Dat* (*The Support of Religion*) in Medieval Spain. Polqar (fl. first half of the fourteenth century) embraces a naturalistic approach and depicts the Jewish exile as a favorable condition, because it gave the Jews an edge, in ethical terms, over other nations. It also allowed them to dedicate themselves to the study of the Torah and the theoretical sciences, which Polqar envisioned as the path to attaining human perfection. If, however, the Jews had been able to recover and return to their homeland, they would have lost their ethical advantage and been compelled to focus on cultivating the arts and strategies of war and turn away from the study of the Torah and the sciences.[31]

Trade and Cosmopolitanism

A salient facet of Luzzatto's apology for Venice's Jewish community is the connection between cosmopolitanism and trade. For Luzzatto, commerce yields five benefits for the *Serenissima*: the increase in duties and tariffs imposed on imports and exports; the transportation of various types of goods from faraway countries, which are intended not only to provide for basic material wants but also to adorn civil life; the abundant supply of materials, such as wool, silk, and cotton, which, in turn, increases the employment of the local workers and craftsmen, keeps them content, and, thereby, helps avert civil discord; the sale of a large amount of products made in Venice, which generates income for a substantial portion of the population; and the promotion of reciprocal trade, which are conducive to peace among neighboring states, since most of the time it is the rulers who are moved by their people to engage in war, and not the other way around.[32]

Luzzatto's ideas about the nexus of trade and cosmopolitanism share some theoretical ground with those of his French contemporary Émeric Crucé (ca. 1590–1648). Crucé considers free trade a means for extirpating inhumanity (*inhumanité*), the most common vice and the source of all other social and political ills.[33] Crucé's main political work, *Le Nouveau Cynée, ou, discours d'éstat*

[30] João de Barros, *Ropica pnefma. Reprodução fac-similada da ediçaõ de 1532*, ed. Israel S. Révah (Lisbon: Instituto de Alta Cultura, 1952–1955). On this point and for further discussion, see Claude B. Stuczynski, "Judaïcité et richesse dans l'apologétique des Conversos portugais: un argument contre-culturel," *Atalaya* 14 (2014), http://atalaya.revues.org/1295 (last accessed January 5, 2021).

[31] Isaac Polgar, "*The Support of Religion*," trans. Charles H. Manekin, in *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, 2nd edition, eds. Joshua Parens and Joseph C. Macfarland (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), 208–19, 217–19. For further discussion, see Racheli Haliva, *Isaac Polqar – A Jewish Philosopher or a Philosopher and a Jew? Philosophy and Religion in Isaac Polqar's 'Ezer ha-Dat and Tešuvat Epiqoros* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2020), 90–100. I am grateful to Racheli Haliva for earlier discussions on this point. Consider also Shlomo Pines, "Some Topics on Polqar's Treatise *'Ezer ha-Dat* and Their Parallels in Spinoza's View," in *Studies in Jewish Mysticism, Philosophy and Ethical Literature*, eds. Joseph Dan and Joseph Hacker (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1986), 395–457 [in Hebrew]; idem, "Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and the Jewish Philosophical Tradition," in *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, eds. Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 499–521; Shalom Sadik, "Negation of Political Success in the Thought of Rabbi Isaac Pulgar," *AJS Review* 39 (2015): 1–13 [in Hebrew].

[32] For further discussion, see Syros, "*Mercati ex Machina*," 16–17.

[33] Émeric Crucé, *Le Nouveau Cynée ou Discours d'Etat représentant les occasions et moyens d'établir une paix générale et liberté du commerce par tout le monde*, eds. Alain Fenet and Astrid Guillaume (Rennes: Presses

représentant les occasions et moyens d'établir une paix générale, et la liberté du commerce par tout le monde (*The New Cyneas, or, Discourse on the Occasions and Means to Establish a General Peace and the Freedom of Commerce throughout the Whole World*, Paris, 1623), a plan for a universal and durable peace, is addressed to the rulers of his time and has been interpreted to contain the vision for the creation of a league of nations.[34] Trade is, in Crucé's mind, the foundation of religious tolerance as well as of a network of interstate relations based on the equilibrium among the world's great powers.

Crucé describes a universal polity (*une police universelle*) that would be useful to all nations and agreeable to those who have some light of reason (*quelque lumière de raison*) and sentiment of humanity (*sentiment d'humanité*).[35] This task involves giving to each person what belongs to him, granting privileges to citizens, being hospitable to foreigners, and guaranteeing freedom of travel and commerce.[36] Crucé considers one of the ruler's prime concerns to be the promotion of trade, free movement and interaction among people from different countries.[37] He identifies religious differences as one of the major causes of hostility among various peoples. He ascribes hostilities among nations to political motives and the dissolution of the natural bonds among humans, which are the foundation of friendship and social cohesion. A threat to the unity of humankind is the person who adheres to common and inveterate opinions inherited from his ancestors to such an extent that he looks down on, taunts, and harasses the adherents of other religions.[38] The advocacy of consonance among various religious traditions stems from Crucé's conviction that all religions converge in the same mission, i. e., worship of the divine (*divinité*). Certain persons deviate from the right path because of simplicity and the influence of erroneous teachings rather than malice; such people deserve compassion rather than hatred or disdain.[39] Like Luzzatto, Crucé observes that too many people expect the entire world to embrace their persuasions and beliefs as an infallible rule. This is a misconception nourished, however, by the common people who have never travelled beyond the boundaries of their own towns, and who therefore expect that all other people should live like them. Sage and divine spirits should, in contrast, realize that the harmony of the world rests on diversity of opinions and customs.[40]

Certain polities accommodate a multitude of religions: for example, the Ottoman Empire, the Polish State, and the Spanish Empire are receptive to religious diversity. To sustain universal peace, Crucé proposes the creation of a general assembly of ambassadors, emissaries, and envoys of all governments, where differences between states would be adjudicated. Intriguingly, as the venue of the assembly he recommends Venice due to its geographical proximity to most

Universitaires de Rennes, 2004), 55; *Émeric Crucé, The New Cyneas*, ed. and trans. Thomas Willing Balch (Philadelphia, PA: Allen, Lane, and Scott, 1909), 3–4. On Crucé's ideas about universal peace and trade, see, e. g., Alain Fenet, "Émeric Crucé aux origines du pacifisme et de l'internationalisme modernes," *Miskolc Journal of International Law* 1 (2004): 21–34; Miriam Eliav-Feldon, "Universal Peace for the Benefit of Trade: The Vision of Émeric Cruce," in *Religion, Ideology and Nationalism in Europe and America*, eds. Hedva Ben-Israel et al. (Jerusalem: Historical Society of Israel, 1986), 29–44; Anna Lazzarino Del Grosso, "Utopia e storia nel *Nouveau Cynée* di Émeric Crucé," in *Studi sull'Utopia*, ed. Luigi Firpo (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1977), 99–155. Compare the sections "Of the Use and Benefit of Trade" and "Of the Chief Causes that Promote Trade" in Nicholas Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, ed. Jacob H. Hollander (Baltimore, MD: Lord Baltimore Press, 1905), 21–31 and 31–34, respectively.

[34] Crucé, *Le Nouveau Cynée*, 61; Crucé, *The New Cyneas*, 15–16.

[35] Crucé, *Le Nouveau Cynée*, 57; Crucé, *The New Cyneas*, 9–10.

[36] Crucé, *Le Nouveau Cynée*, 148; Crucé, *The New Cyneas*, 301–02.

[37] Crucé, *Le Nouveau Cynée*, 76; Crucé, *The New Cyneas*, 65–66.

[38] Crucé, *Le Nouveau Cynée*, 81–82; Crucé, *The New Cyneas*, 83–86.

[39] Crucé, *Le Nouveau Cynée*, 82; Crucé, *The New Cyneas*, 87–88.

[40] Crucé, *Le Nouveau Cynée*, 84; Crucé, *The New Cyneas*, 89–92.

kingdoms. The Pope would have the seat of honor and would be followed by the Ottoman emperor because of his excellence in majesty, power and the prosperity of his realm.[41]

Crucé exhibits a perspective similar to Luzzatto's idea that the way in which a ruler treats his Jewish subjects reflects his true feelings and intentions and is a measure of the quality of the government and that any justice, clemency, protection, and defense he uses towards the Jews can only be construed as the result of a heroic virtue of a genuine soul naturally disposed to aid the oppressed and the poor.[42] Specifically, Crucé suggests that a righteous sovereign ought to amiably receive those asking for his mercy or seeking refuge in his realm, especially traders and individuals who have been victims of persecution.[43] He counsels rulers to reach an agreement about different countries' trade activities with each other and the procedures to be followed by local authorities for resolving disputes. An integral aspect of Crucé's project for universal peace is the call to render justice to foreigners, and to ensure that they are not molested or harmed by the natives of a country during their visit, whether they travel for business or pleasure.[44]

Conclusion

In Luzzatto's *Socrate*, Timon's assault upon Hippias' philosophical program involves a sharp critique of cosmopolitanism: one of the most deleterious effects of the pursuits of those who engage in contemplation and the observation of the celestial phenomena is, in Timon's view, that they consider themselves to be part of a universal polity. As a result, they become contemptuous of their own homeland as if it were a "vile wasp's nest" or an "abject anthill." They declare, for instance, that they are equally affected by the ruin of their city and the smashing of a small stone on a huge mountain; or that they would be as discontent by the oppression of their own people as they would feel happy thanks to the victory of those who vanquished them, because all of them would be members of a great, all-encompassing republic on earth. Therefore, certain legislators prohibited the citizens from settling down and including themselves in a foreign republic. In doing so, they sought to keep the citizens more firmly attached to their own republic because otherwise the legitimate love for their homeland would grow weaker and fade. In another iteration of the river metaphor, Timon points out that just as a river with abundant water supplies, when divided into several branches, eventually dries up, so too when human emotions diffuse to multiple objects and in different directions, they dissipate. For this reason, some legislators, in order to reinforce the love and affection for their own citizens, infuse hatred and aversion against aliens who come from outside. Timon concludes that a citizen with his discourse should not wander beyond the boundaries of his own homeland and extend to the skies and aspire to embrace all of humankind, but rather remain within the confines of his own homeland.[45]

Timon's plea for loyalty to one's homeland displays striking affinities with the *Discorso dello amore verso la patria* (*Discourse about Love towards the Homeland*, Venice, 1631) written by Lodovico Zuccolo (1568–1630), a major Venetian exponent of the reason-of-state tradition. Zuccolo's *Discorso* is suffused with patriotic fervor, calls for the unification of Italy, and bemoans the fact that the Italian peninsula has become the buffer zone between Spain and France. Zuccolo formulates a definition of *patria* as something that is not simply the place of someone's birth or education. Rather, it connotes the right to partake of the honors and benefits prescribed by the

[41] Crucé, *Le Nouveau Cynée*, 87–90; Crucé, *The New Cyneas*, 99–110.

[42] Luzzatto, *Discourse on the State of the Jews*, 92–93.

[43] Crucé, *Le Nouveau Cynée*, 102; Crucé, *The New Cyneas*, 151–52.

[44] Crucé, *Le Nouveau Cynée*, 147; Crucé, *The New Cyneas*, 297–98.

[45] Luzzatto, *Socrates*, 436–39.

existing laws. The benefits emanating from civil legislation do not extend to the Jews, gypsies, and vagabonds who are scattered groups, unless perhaps a political community is corrupt and dysfunctional. The fact that the Jews and gypsies are protected from offenses is a privilege, which all humans, including the vulnerable members of society, should enjoy in accordance with common laws. But that does not entitle them to claim the city or country, where they reside, as their *patria*.[46]

In Luzzatto's *Socrate*, Socrates, albeit not an unalloyed proponent of radical skepticism, asserts that he sympathizes with many of the views expressed by Timon.[47] In his approach to cosmopolitan ideas, he, however, reconciles Hippias' and Timon's teachings: in his defense, Socrates argues that the guiding principle of his actions was to operate not just as the administrator of a household or a patrician of a specific republic, but as a citizen of the universe, who would be perceived to be at the disposal of the common people and contribute to the good of all of humankind.[48] At the same time, however, he declares that he has always been a loyal citizen and that he has always been respectful of the religious ceremonies and institutions stipulated by the city and that he has offered sacrifices in public in conformity with the rites in Athens, at appropriate locations, at the right time, and in legitimate ways.[49]

Luzzatto and Cardoso enunciated variants of Jewish cosmopolitanism that drew inspiration from Philo's analysis of the cosmopolitan elements of the Mosaic Law. Luzzatto remarks in the *Discorso* that the distinguished lawgivers and reformers of pagan nations in the ancient world, who laid down institutions and laws, were ordinary human beings, and that as such their thoughts and actions had their limitations: Solon created laws for Athens; Lycurgus for Sparta; and Romulus within the narrow place of his exile. As if they were bereft of humanity, they were not concerned with the rest of humankind. They allowed their citizens to tamper with the freedom and property of others and depredate, and some foreigners were sacrificed on the altars of their false gods. But the law of God promulgated by Moses encompasses all of humankind. As if a single nature were established by God in the world that all its constituent parts were united in harmonious concert and ruled in reciprocal affection, he decreed that all of humankind should co-exist in mutual amity, and that every human being should regard himself as a citizen of a single republic. Accordingly, Moses strove to instill in humans love and charity by teaching that man was created by a single God, descended from a single father (i. e., Adam), and proliferated thanks to Noah.[50] A similar comparison between Moses and pagan lawgivers and political leaders (Solon, Lycurgus, Numa and Caligula) occurs in Louis Machon's (ca. 1600–ca. 1673) *Apologie pour Machiavelle* (*Apology for Machiavelli*), a commentary on a set of maxims derived from Machiavelli's *Prince* and *Discourses*, which was dedicated to Cardinal Richelieu and survived in two manuscripts (1643 and 1668).[51] According to Machon, pagan lawgivers, unlike

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[46] Lodovico Zuccolo, *Discorso dello amore verso la patria* (Venice: Evangelista Deuchino, 1631), 2–5, 16–17, 34.

[47] Luzzatto, *Socrates*, 472–73.

[48] Ibid., 46–47; 480–81.

[49] Ibid., 478–79.

[50] Luzzatto, *Discourse on the State of the Jews*, 122–23. Early Modern Italian Jewish debates on Judaism as a universal religion are surveyed in Alessandro Guetta, *Italian Jewry in the Early Modern Era* (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2014), chapter "A Link to Humanity: Judaism as Nation and Universal Religion in Italian Jewry in the Early Modern Era," 92–104.

[51] The full title of the work is: *Apologie pour Machiavelle. La politique des Rois, et La science des souverains en faveur des Princes et des Ministres d'Estat* (*Apology for Machiavelli: The Political Art of Kings, and the Science of Sovereigns in Favor of Princes and Ministers of State*).

Moses, were bereft of divine grace and had to simulate that they communicated with deities in order to gain legitimacy.[52]

The commonality of religion is, according to Luzzatto, the most important bond and the most tenacious link that holds human society together. The Jews do not regard all those who are outside the observance of their rites and do not embrace their particular beliefs as being, however, entirely free from or devoid of any bond of humanity or reciprocal amity. The Jews consider that there are various levels of connections among men as well as within the same nation regarding the obligations of charity: the love of self comes first; then blood ties; and, finally, amity among citizens. As such, the Jews believe that foreigners and those outside of their religion partake together with them of a common humanity, by following the precepts of natural morality and having some cognition of a superior cause.[53]

Luzzatto's engagement with the philosophical ideas of his time, and his thinking on cosmopolitanism and religious tolerance is colored by his Jewish identity and the cultural and economic particularities of Early Modern Venice. What he perceived to be the shared characteristic of all human beings was a sense of agony and perplexity caused by the vicissitudes of life and the uncertainty characterizing human existence in a fluid, ever-changing world. Luzzatto developed a vision of Judaism that is very different from Cardoso's "particularist cosmopolitanism:"[54] the Venetian rabbi aspired to be part of a universal "republic of letters" that would promote an enlightened form of religious belief and defy and combat bigotry and religious extremism both in and beyond the Venetian context.

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[52] Louis Machon, *Apologie pour Machiavelle*, ed. Jean-Pierre Cavaillé (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2016), 154–56. See further, Peter S. Donaldson, *Machiavelli and Mystery of State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 202; and, in general, Jean-Piere Cavaillé, *Dis/simulations. Jules-César Vanini, François La Mothe Le Vayer, Gabriel Naudé, Louis Machon et Torquato Accetto: Religion, morale et politique au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2002), 267–332; Giuliano Procacci, *Machiavelli nella cultura europea dell'età moderna* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1995), 465–73; Giuliano Ferretti, "Machiavellismo e Ragion di Stato in un inedito di Louis Machon," *Il pensiero politico* 22 (1989): 288–300.

[53] Luzzatto, *Discourse on the State of the Jews*, 134–35.

[54] I am grateful to Claude Stuczynski for earlier discussions on this point.

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Frederick Douglass and Philosophy

Abstract | Frederick Douglass' *Narrative* was intended and has been read as a first-hand document on slavery and the power of an individual to gain freedom. It contains a wealth of information on the structure of American slavery and the means to overcome it. For a philosopher, the first-person narrative also contains valuable reflections and indications on what it means to be human in spite of, and in the face of, systematic de-humanization. In the first place, Douglass gives indications on what constitutes human dignity, which is contextualized in religion and the self, body and mind, altruism and morality. Being (potentially) sold and selling one's physical labor turns into an instrument of liberation. The famous master-slave dialectics is depicted in Hegelian patterns in the fight with Covey. Resistance appears as a quasi-natural feature of being human. Therefore, this document of a Maryland slave and fugitive can be read as a document of far-reaching topics of philosophy that merit generalization. Such a reading has the effect that the reader cannot escape by way of historicism ("that happened to that man back then") but can apply the fruits of Douglass' reflections to the understanding of humanity as such.[1]

Keywords | Frederick Douglass – Slave Narratives – American Slavery – Philosophical Anthropology – Existence – Rebellion

The somewhat flippant title of my paper, Frederick Douglass and Philosophy, can have two meanings, or even three. The first would be: What was Douglass' philosophy (if he had any)? The second would be: How would philosophers situate Douglass' writings and actions in the great network of available philosophies? And this meaning may in part overlap with the first, because Douglass did not produce any work that explicitly and intentionally was meant to be a philosophical work; hence we would need to cast a net of known philosophical methods and systems over his life and work and see what we find. On the way, we might even find particular philosophical sources that can be highlighted as shaping his thinking and acting. This second approach to reading Douglass philosophically has been exercised occasionally, for instance by Frank Kirkland, Roderick Stewart and Timothy Golden.[2]

[1] This study is the result of research funded by the Czech Science Foundation as the project GA ČR 14-37038G *Between Renaissance and Baroque: Philosophy and Knowledge in the Czech Lands within the Wider European Context*.

[2] Timothy J. Golden, "From Epistemology to Ethics: Theoretical and Practical Reason in Kant and Douglass," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 40, no. 4 (2012): 603–628; Frank M. Kirkland, "Enslavement, Moral Suasion, and Struggles for Recognition: Frederick Douglass's Answer to the Question – 'What Is Enlightenment?,'" in *Frederick Douglass: A Critical Reader*, eds. Bill E. Lawson and Frank M. Kirkland (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 243–310; Roderick M. Stewart, "The Claims of Frederick Douglass Philosophically Considered," in *Frederick Douglass: A Critical Reader*, eds. Bill E. Lawson and Frank M. Kirkland (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell

Bringing philosophy and Douglass together in this way helps one understand his role and his personal stature and, at the same time, puts philosophies to a test by measuring the reasoning of an outstanding activist and witness of his times with philosophical theories, and then probing those theories with one real experience. Such a merger of human agency with theory is commonly called "practical philosophy" or ethics and political philosophy. Since Douglass was embedded in the abolitionist movement,[3] even before the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* of 1845 and ever since, it is obvious that his production was meant to be political and moral. The abolitionist movement was inevitably educated by Christianity and the Enlightenment – whatever the tensions between the two might be, otherwise. Consequently, Douglass and his audience reveal those modes of argument, understanding, theory, and plausibility. Finding Kantianism and Christianity in Frederick Douglass is therefore like pressing murky water out of a sponge, while it is certainly more important to find out what it was the sponge was meant to wipe. For instance, when Douglass said: "[i]f I do not misinterpret the feelings and philosophy of my white fellow-countrymen generally, they wish us to understand distinctly and fully that they have no other use for us whatever, than to coin dollars out of our blood[,]" then it is obvious that he blames the slaveholder for exploiting fellow-citizens with a mentality of alchemy, which mysteriously turns liquid blood into malleable gold; and the abolitionist thus throws the white citizens back into the prescientific darkness while claiming for himself the "fundamental principles of the republic," that is, the French-revolutionary constitution of society.[4] But the orator is not philosophizing; he is agitating against bigotry and injustice. This is also expressly said in the second autobiography *My Bondage and My Freedom*, when Douglass reflects on his intellectual growth since his liberation. Commenting on the suggestion of a friend, "Give us the facts, […] we take care of the philosophy," he retorts: "It did not entirely satisfy me to *narrate* wrongs; I felt like *denouncing* them."[5] Narration was his originary goal and remained his method – agitation was now his framework.

So, if I had to compile a book for the book series "… *and Philosophy*" (like *The Hobbit and Philosophy*), I certainly would include chapters like "Was FD a Kantian?," "FD against Hobbes," "The Douglass–Hegel Dialectic,"[6] "What would Aristotle say about Slavery after Reading the *Narrative*?," or "Fear and Trembling with Douglass," and so on. But that is not what I am planning to do.

Publishers, 1999), 145–72 (with methodical observations, 145–148). Cf. also the "Introduction" to this volume by Lawson and Kirkland, 1–17; and Howard McGary and Bill E. Lawson, *Between Slavery and Freedom: Philosophy and American Slavery* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

[3] Nilgün Anadolu-Okur, *Dismantling Slavery: Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and Formation of the Abolitionist Discourse, 1841–1851* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2016). Testimonies are available in the many volumes of Frederick Douglass, *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, eds. John W. Blassingame et al., Series 1–3 (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 1999). Cf. John Stauffer, "Douglass's Self-Making and the Culture of Abolitionism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Frederick Douglass*, ed. Maurice S. Lee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 12–30.

[4] Frederick Douglass, "Excerpt" of a speech May 1853, in *Autographs for Freedom*, vol. 2, ed. Julia Griffiths (Auburn; Rochester: Alden, Beardsley; Wanzer, Beardsley, 1854), 251–255, 252f. Also as "A Nation in the Midst of a Nation: An Address delivered in New York (11 may 1853)" in Douglass, *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series 1, vol. 2, 425.

[5] Frederick Douglass, "My Bondage and My Freedom," in *Autobiographies*, The Library of America: 68 (New York: Library of America, 1994), chap. XXIII, 367.

[6] Actually, this title is already taken: Cynthia Willett, "The Master-Slave Dialectic: Hegel vs. Douglass," in *Subjugation and Bondage: Critical Essays on Slavery and Social Philosophy*, ed. Tommy Lee Lott (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 151–70.

A third approach to philosophy and Frederick Douglass

I therefore suggest a third way of looking at "Douglass and Philosophy," and that is reading his and other slave narratives as documents of humanity. One might object that the notion of a "slave narrative" appears to enforce the claim that the authors were slaves rather than free individuals; and the term appears to belittle the quality of the documents.[7] However, being or having been held as slaves and all the injury thereof is the very theme of the documents in question; and "narrative" is a generic term, specifically adopted by Frederick Douglass, that covers any quality of literary work by simply stating that the author is speaking from the first-person point of view. In saying "documents," I mean that they need to be taken as testimonies rather than theories – that is, as primary sources for a potential philosophy of humanity.

When speaking of the sorrow and joy contained and expressed in slave songs, Douglass remarks in his *Narrative*:

> This they would sing, as a chorus, to words which to many would seem unmeaning jargon, but which, nevertheless, were full of meaning to themselves. I have sometimes thought that the mere hearing of those songs would do more to impress some minds with the horrible character of slavery, than the reading of whole volumes of philosophy on the subject could do.[8]

With an analogous method I hope to distill, not quite a volume, but an essay of philosophy from his slave narrative, a philosophy that does not supplant or suppress the original intent of his writing but makes his work philosophically understandable. But immediately one has to ask: what is "philosophical" and "understandable"? Here I suggest reducing the philosophical question from the wide net of influences and traditions, and from the variety of philosophical disciplines and methods, to that of philosophical anthropology. The lead question is now: What does Douglass' *Narrative* say about humanity? My weak justification for that approach is the recurrence of the notion of "human nature" in the later elaborations of his autobiography, when from the comparatively terse narration of the major events of his life Douglass ventured into the didactic, propagandistic, and political aims of his view on his "Life and Times."[9] In the prefatory letter to his second autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom* of 1855, he states: "I have never placed my opposition to slavery on a basis so narrow as my own enslavement, but rather upon the indestructible and unchangeable laws of human nature, every one of which is perpetually

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[7] This is the case for Nilgün Anadolu-Okur in her presentation at the conference "375 Years of African American Presence in Maryland, 1642–2017," October 20–21, 2017, at Bowie State University, Maryland; she suggested calling these works "autobiographies." Structural observations in Robert B. Stepto, "Narration, Authentication, and Authorial Control in Frederick Douglass' *Narrative* of 1845," in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*, eds. William L. Andrews and William S. McFeely (New York: Norton, 1996), 146–57; William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760–1865* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), chap. 1, 1–31: "The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography: Notes towards a Definition of a Genre;" chap. 4, 97–166: "The Performance of Slave Narrative in the 1840s."

[8] Frederick Douglass, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself," in *Autobiographies*, The Library of America 68 (New York: Library of America, 1994), chap. II, 23f. (I will quote the three autobiographies from this edition with citations from chapters so that the quotations may be found in any other edition.)

[9] These were the first editions of the three autobiographies: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (Boston: Anti-slavery Office, 1845); Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom: Part I – Life as a Slave, Part II – Life as a Freeman* (New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855); Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Hartford, Conn.: Park Pub., 1884).

and flagrantly violated by the slave system."[10] Most importantly, introducing the pivotal episode of the fight with the slave-breaker Covey (more about it below), Douglass emphasizes its anthropological significance: "the change in my condition was owing to causes which may help the reader to a better understanding of human nature, when subjected to the terrible extremities of slavery."[11] Again, concluding the report on this "turning point" he states:

> I WAS A MAN NOW. It recalled to life my crushed self-respect and my self-confidence, and inspired me with a renewed determination to be A FREEMAN. A man, without force, is without the essential dignity of humanity. Human nature is so constituted, that it cannot honor a helpless man, although it can pity him; and even this it cannot do long, if the signs of power do not arise.[12]

Later, in chapter 19, we read: "It is the interest and business of slaveholders to study human nature, with a view to practical results, and many of them attain astonishing proficiency in discerning the thoughts and emotions of slaves."[13] Aristotle would have been pleased reading this, for he had established that the interest of the master and that of the slave coincide: "the union of natural ruler and natural subject [exist] for the sake of security (for he that can foresee with his mind is naturally ruler and naturally master, and he that can do these things with his body is subject and naturally a slave; so that *master and slave have the same interest*)."[14] It would be worth considering whether or not Aristotle was also saying this with irony.

In other words, when revisiting his own life and story, Douglass became aware that human nature is the thread that holds the events together and also that human nature ties the slave experience in discordant unison together with both the slaveholders and his abolitionist readers. If addressing humanity counts as a philosophical enterprise, then philosophy may even be acknowledged as Douglass' "authorial intention,"[15] at least in his later works.

Slave narratives and philosophy

When I suggest reading philosophically the *Narrative* as a representative of the literary genre known as American Slave Narrative, I am aware that this is not a philosophical but a literary genre that comprises the following components: it reports in first person the life of a slave in North America from around the Civil War (1861–1865) up until the end of the nineteenth century. Many of these slave narratives were put down in writing not by the slaves themselves but by a helpful person, many of whom were white Protestants. It is striking that many slave narratives have a woman as a hero. All those stories were narrated and published with an abolitionist agenda, that is to say, with the goal in mind to support abolition of slavery in North America through exposing the cruelty and injustice of slavery with personal examples. The first person perspective is therefore a crucial literary tool; rhetorical tropes include vividness of storytelling, pathos, details and also exaggeration. The rhetorical outlook does not disparage the content; on

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[10] Douglass, "Bondage," 105.

[11] Ibid.; cf. Frederick Douglass, "Life and Times of Frederick Douglass Written by Himself," in *Autobiographies*, The Library of America 68 (New York: Library of America, 1994), chap. XVI, 575.

[12] Douglass, "Bondage," chap. XVII, 286.

[13] Ibid., chap. XIX, 307.

[14] Aristotle, *Politics* I, 1252a, trans. H. Rackham, http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0086.tlg035.perseus-eng1:1.1252a; more literally: "[…] the same [thing] benefits the master and the slave."

[15] Stewart, "The Claims of Frederick Douglass," 148.

the contrary, the note-takers of the narratives, if not the authors themselves, thought it most compelling to have the people speak for themselves. They intended to impress their audience for the sake of the cause of anti-slavery. Nevertheless, we as readers who are no longer the target audience may well profit from the first person perspective by taking seriously what the speakers bring forward about their life and experience.

Some of the slave narratives are so eloquent, most conspicuously that of Harriett Jacobs, that doubts of their authenticity were raised.[16] An early reaction to Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* by one Mr. Thompson also flatly denied that the former slave could have "some knowledge of the rules of grammar, could write so correctly." However, faced with the factual existence of the book, the accuser surmises, "to make the imposition at all creditable, the composer has labored to write it in as plain a style as possible." Whereas Douglass responds with a proud "Frederick the Freeman is a very different person from Frederick the Slave," we may ponder the contortion made by the slanderer: an impostor pretending to be an illiterate slave had to have pretended to be a simpleton to the effect that any factual inaccuracy would unmask the forgery. This is where Douglass places his wedge: all alleged falsehoods are true, precisely because the events are outrageous; hence the narrative is as authentic as its author.[17] We should pay attention to the fact that Douglass does not bother explaining how it was possible for him to write, and in an elaborate oratory at that, for that is all in the *Narrative*; he rather emphasizes the very message of the book that makes it a testimony of philosophical anthropology: "You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man."[18] As a teacher, I would say, Mr. Thompson, you haven't done the reading! We should also not forego another paradox in Mr. Thompson's accusation in that he precisely fulfilled the abolitionists' expectation of the target audience in assuming that a former slave cannot possibly have erudition. As Douglass' friends advised him: "Better have a *little* of the plantation manner of speech than not; 'tis not best that you seem too learned." Authenticity means the same both for the friend and the foe of slavery; but for Douglass, the slave narrator, it means his self: "I must speak just the word that seemed to *me* the word to be spoken by *me*."[19] Little or no "plantation," "plain" or rhetorical – philosophy is a speech act.

With this observation, we enter the problem of the reliability of such slave narratives, both as to details and to the general direction of the plot. These are questions that can only be addressed for each specific text. But the general hermeneutical principles of reading historical documents apply. To put it shortly: if something is unusual, it is probably authentic and hence deserves special attention. On the other hand, recurring motifs and themes indicate recurring experiences. For instance, if many slave narratives state that the slave is ignorant of his or her date and place of birth, then in an individual text this may be used in a tropical manner; however, it has become a trope because, factually, most slaves do not know their birth dates. In that sense, this trope is worth considering under a particular perspective.

The perspective of my study of American slave narratives is nevertheless that of philosophy. Regardless of the specific body of sources, the philosophical question I am pursuing is that of

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[16] Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987); Jean Fagan Yellin, "Written By Herself: Harriet Jacobs' Slave Narrative," *American Literature* 53, no. 3 (November 1981): 479–86.

[17] Frederick Douglass, *The Frederick Douglass Papers. Series Two: Autobiographical Writings*, vol. 1: Narrative, eds. John W. Blassingame, John R. McKivigan, and Peter P. Hinks, (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 1999), 154f. and 158. The exchange is also in Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*, eds. William L. Andrews and William S. McFeely (New York: Norton, 1996), 88–96.

[18] Douglass, "Narrative," chap. X, 60.

[19] Douglass, "Bondage," chap. XXIII, 367. The context is the same as in "we will take care of the philosophy," quoted above.

philosophical anthropology: what does it mean to be human? In ordinary philosophical anthropology, the answer is derived from philosophical tenets such as the body-soul compound (man is an animal with reason) and from metaphysical hypostases (man is the intermediary level between pure spirits and matter). Sometimes a philosophical anthropology is based on the life and existence of humans and refers to their common way of behaving (man is a social animal, humanity equals existence, etc.). However, it occurred to me that – with the help of slave narratives – one could suspend the answer to the question: "What does it mean to be human?" and observe humans asserting their humanness.

Methodologically speaking, the task is not to apply theoretical anthropology to a given group of human beings. For instance, assuming that humans are social animals, one could find realizations of social patterns in any kindergarten, or the emergence of solidarity in a coal mine. Rather, since philosophical anthropology is philosophy in the first place, it has to find its object of study first and then elevate it to the level of abstraction at the extent of which the concepts build themselves on a level that does not apply merely to the empirical object of study but to the essence of it, that is, to the essential properties of being human.[20] In our context, that requires avoiding projecting any known philosophical system on Douglass and, instead, finding the philosophy he conveys in his writings. Slave narratives are utterly contingent products of individual human beings. But these human beings speak about their being human, even and preeminently when they speak about pain, sex, hunger, or gratification. They speak to the audience with the intent of asserting their being as humans and therefore their being exempt of slavery. The latter part is to be taken for granted, today. The first part, the assertion to be humans, is a possible source of philosophical anthropology.

More radically speaking, I suggest approaching philosophical anthropology from outside humanity, namely from a point of view as though humanity were not something known. An account of philosophical anthropology from outside humanity also entails philosophizing from outside philosophical methods, provided we know of human nature predominantly from philosophical definitions of humanness. The insistence of the autobiographer and the zeal of the abolitionist reveal pathways to understanding humanity philosophically from sources that are not intended to be philosophical; at the same time, they show that humanity may be captured at those points where humanity is questioned or outright denied.

Denial of humanity is, by all standards, one common denominator of slavery; even the slaveholders do not deny that. At times, to be human is denied explicitly, sometimes, performatively. Therefore, it is appropriate for an abolitionist to quote the battle cry of slaves: "Am I not a Man and a Brother?" as it had circulated in early nineteenth century England.[21] But the easy answer from the slaveholder was: "No!" Therefore we need to find a more complex response in the slave narratives. As a matter of fact, slaves like the early Douglass rarely thematized their being humans, but they asserted it in the actions they narrated. This is where philosophical interpretation starts. As twentieth century philosophical anthropology teaches,[22] to be human means to position oneself in the world with fellow humans. However, that is only an elementary feature of

[20] On the problems of this terminology, which is not topical here, see Teresa Robertson and Philip Atkins, "Essential vs. Accidental Properties," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2016), http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/essential-accidental/.

[21] The divulged image of a slave exclaiming "Am I not a Man and a Brother" was designed by Josiah Wedgwood in the late eighteenth century in Scotland; see Iain Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756–1838* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 75f.

[22] Max Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (Darmstadt: Reichl, 1928); English: Max Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, trans. Manfred S. Frings (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2009); Helmuth Plessner, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch: Einleitung in die philosophische Anthropologie*

humanness; it becomes philosophy only when analyzed and interpreted philosophically. Every human assesses environment and experience, but that turns into philosophy when it is interpreted as the peculiar agency that characterizes a human being. We also can safely say that it is this sort of anthropology that defines humans as essentially "eccentric," as Helmuth Plessner did. Consequently it also defines humanity as a non-given: the essence of being human consists in questioning one's own humanity. For assessing the world and fellowship amounts to taking them as "given" but not for granted – after all, granted by which authority and to whom?

This is why I suggest reading testimonies of humans who, by definition, were denied humanity. Obviously, the first person (the I) is the starting point of any investigation into human nature. This has been so at least since Augustine's *Confessions*. In our case, the first person is the slave speaking of himself or herself. While the narrative remains subjective, so to speak, the message can be philosophically objectified insofar as I, the reader, am not the subject of the story. However, as we will see in the case of Frederick Douglass, the author of a slave narrative objectifies experience in search of human dignity so that we as readers are factually invited to philosophize about slave humanity. This is why the self-awareness that the narrator gains in a narrative converges with understanding the philosophical nature of humanity.[23]

As I mentioned, of the three versions of Frederick Douglass' autobiography, the second and third turned into elaborate books against the institution of slavery that increasingly departed from the sheer telling of events in favor of ready-made interpretations of how the audience, the abolitionists, were to understand them. The author increasingly "processed" his experiences. Nevertheless the brute facts that he tells of his life as a slave give enough material to interpret philosophically.

While reading through Douglass and many other narratives, a list of recurring themes builds itself. Here I may mention just a few: naming, home, religion, sex, property and resistance. Whatever the slaves deemed worth telling can be taken to be essential for their understanding of themselves. Other things surprise the reader with some literary experience by their absence: slaves lack most early childhood memories (while being aware of this as a grave deficiency); they also rarely express consciousness of time in all forms: elapsing time, future, or history. The changes of seasons are structuring elements of their lives, as are the changes of their masters – however, as far as I see, without any temporal index.

In a nutshell, what emerges from reading slave narratives that constitutes a philosophical anthropology? A person is on a search to affirm his/her identity with the help of names, rudiments of family relations, masters, and those events that prove him/her an agent. Religion, rarely within any denominational frame, is the immediate and defining resource of meaning, consolation, hope and justification. Home is virulent through its absence; it is felt as a loss and a longing. Consequently, to be "at home" and to be "at peace with God" converge. Religion is the virtual home of humans. Family equally exerts an influence on the individual by way of endangerment and as a virtual bond that overcomes the gritty reality. To be sold "down the river" does not only entail deterioration of work conditions, it is the effective severance of human bonds. As unreal and ideal as the home is, so is family that for which it is worth longing, fighting, or suffering. Childhood, family bonds, and home constitute humanness by way of want. Sexual relationships are worth mentioning only as sexual slavery, that is, the exploitation by the slave owners. Any precariousness can be turned into a lever of resistance; that is also true with sex. Harriet Jacobs,

(Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928); Idem, *Levels of Organic Life and the Human*, trans. Millay Hyatt (New York: Fordham U. P., 2019).

[23] Cf. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story*, 23, 103.

for instance, deliberately accepts the courtship of a freeman, just to snub her master and frustrate his adulterous passes.

Frederick Douglass' account of the role of religion in slavery is exemplary, expressing the enlightened perspective of an abolitionist. He commented upon the scarce permission for slaves to observe the Christian holidays: "I believe them to be among the most effective means in the hands of the slaveholder in keeping down the spirit of insurrection".[24]

He sees religious feasts as "safety-valves"[25] for the suppressed spirits of the slaves. On the other hand, the secret meetings in which he discussed with fellow slaves the Scriptures were at the same time a means of education and – within his narrative – the seed of self-liberation. Many slave owners practiced religious apartheid: they effectively segregated salvation. In showing such blatant inconsistency, they spurned the craving for the transcendent. From Douglass' account it is obvious that for the slave, critique of religion was not within reach; it appears to be a post-liberation achievement, as is the case for Douglass himself. Upon writing his autobiography, he was able to observe that "after his conversion, [his master] found religious sanction and support for his slaveholding cruelty."[26] As a slave he twice ran a Sabbath school for the fellow slaves to learn "to read the will of God," as he whimsically explains, and he was not ashamed of ascribing the beginning of his self-liberation to the use of a magic root, which he obtained from a wise friend.[27]

On the theme of naming as an essentially negative experience Douglass reported:

> The slave is a human being, divested of all rights – reduced to the level of a brute – a mere "chattel" in the eye of the law […] – his name, which the "recording angel" may have enrolled in heaven, among the blest, is impiously inserted in a *master's ledger*, with horses, sheep, and swine.[28]

In this theoretical statement, Douglass locates the function of name between property, law and heaven. He takes for granted that a human being has a name, that the individuality of the person must have a guardian, for instance an angel, and that a name goes beyond bookkeeping. Let us assume the slaveholder knows all this. This means that the denial of a personal name denies humanity to a chattel-slave – ergo, a name is what makes up a human being.

Without engaging in Aristotle's famous definition of slaves as "tools with a soul," it is obvious that slaves were a specific kind of property, closer to domesticated animals than to dead tools. It happens, but mostly in jest, that modern people give utilities a name (especially cars, or very important devices); but to name a slave entails the paradox of denying and recognizing the humanity of a slave. So it is intuitively clear that the denial of a proper name instrumentalizes

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[24] Douglass, "Narrative," chap. IX, 66. Interestingly, this is also quoted in Sojourner Truth, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth: A Northern Slave, Emancipated from Bodily Servitude by the State of New York, in 1828*, ed. Olive Garrison Gilbert (Boston: Printed for the author [J. B. Yerrinton and Son], 1850), 64.

[25] Douglass, "Narrative," chap. IX, 66.

[26] Ibid., chap. IX, 52. The author felt compelled to justify his critical remarks in the Appendix of the book, pp. 97–102. On religion in Douglass, see Scott C. Williamson, *The Narrative Life: The Moral and Religious Thought of Frederick Douglass* (Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 2002).

[27] Douglass, "Narrative," chap. IX, 53, X, 70–72 (Sabbath School); X, 63 (root). On the Sabbath school, see Sterling Stuckey, "'My Burden Lightened:' Frederick Douglass, the Bible, and Slave Culture," in *African Americans and The Bible. Sacred Texts and Social Textures*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush (New York: Continuum, 2000), 251–65.

[28] Frederick Douglass, "The Nature of Slavery," in *African-American Social and Political Thought, 1850–1920*, ed. Howard Brotz (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 1992), 216.

the slave, while imposing a name on him or her is a second rate acknowledgment of the status of the slave, superior to any tool, but on par with a pet or livestock.

It is therefore possible to speculate that African slaves, as they appeared in the life of farmers in America, were immediately welcome as labor force, of course, but at the same time perceived to be livestock. On livestock René Girard says: "The domestication of animals requires that men keep them in their company and treat them, not as wild animals, but as if they were capable of living near human beings and leading a quasi-human existence."[29] A very similar structure occurred in American slavery: the Africans inevitably lived close to their masters so that they could not possibly be treated just as tools; rather, they had to be granted a quasi-human level of life. One move to keep the difference indelible was to deny the ownership of a name. It is also intuitively obvious that this paradox of closeness at a reinforced distance made the slave prone to victimization in the Girardian sense; but that is not at issue here.

We can glean here the importance of names on the anthropological level. The first thing that should be noted is that all slave narratives awkwardly refer to slaves not plainly by their names ("there was Jack," or "Jim") but with the epithet "a slave named Jack." It seems to have been wired in the grammar of slave narrative that names are always arbitrarily given and hence do not naturally and necessarily name one unique individual. Jack as a person cannot be a slave; the topic of the story is not Jack but the slave who happens to have that name.

Frederick Douglass changed his names haphazardly, and eventually accepted one suggested incidentally by a friend. Beyond the more sophisticated mechanisms of naming and necessity, we may state that contingency and fortuitousness come to the forefront in slave narratives. Interestingly, Frederick Douglass does not spend much time explaining the first occasions when he changed his name; he simply states in a footnote that at some point after his escape, he had changed his name from Frederick Bailey to Johnson.[30] He then explains that he had inherited the name Bailey from his parents, but he dropped the additional middle names that were given to him by his mother. Immediately after his departure from Baltimore, Frederick called himself Stanley – obviously a simple disguise. Then he picked the name Johnson, which incidentally was also that of the couple that received him in New Bedford. Since this name was all too common, he asked his host to find him a new name, or rather, he "gave Mr. Johnson the privilege" to do so:

> Mr. Johnson had just been reading the "Lady of the Lake" [a poem by Sir Walter Scott], and at once suggested that my name be "Douglass." From that time until now I have been called "Frederick Douglass;" and as I am more widely known by that name than by either of the others, I shall continue to use it as my own.[31]

Douglass, as a gifted writer, creates the punchline that emphasizes the claim that his name is what *he actively* adopts rather than being the object of adoption. A few lines earlier, Douglass emphasizes that this privilege of naming did not extend to his first name: "I must hold onto that [first name], to preserve a sense of my identity." It is surprising that Douglass underlined the philosophical notion of personal identity that is secured by a first name in the first autobiography only, whereas he emphasized the heroic "virtues of the Douglas of Scotland" in the second and third autobiographies.[32]

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[29] René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 69.

[30] Douglass, "Narrative," chap. XI, 91.

[31] Ibid., chap. XI, 92.

[32] Frederick Douglass, *Autobiographies*, The Library of America 68 (New York: Library of America, 1994), 651, cf. 354. Just to avoid misunderstandings that may come with the term "identity:" "A is identical with A," says

In this context, we may savor the irony with which Douglass countered the criticism of an early reader, the already mentioned Mr. A. C. C. Thompson, who doubted the narrative's author's identity by stating he had known him as Frederick Bailey. Douglass retorted: "You have completely tripped up the heels of your proslavery friends, and laid them flat at my feet. You have done a piece of anti-slavery work, which no anti-slavery man could do." For the slanderer had unintentionally confirmed the truthfulness of the narrative and the authority of the narrator.[33] This response and counter-response shows in a nutshell the importance of authorship for its impact on the audience. While the first name establishes the self of the person during and beyond slavery, the inherited as well as the "given"/chosen pen-name corroborates the truth of the narrated facts.

The first name is the person. Everything else may be an add-on. Speaking of pictures and exterior qualifications, Douglass said in a lecture on pictures (December 3, 1861) that the Catholic Church uses "symbolical representations." "Remove from the church of Rome her cunning illusions […] and her magical and entrancing power over men would disappear." And as an example he mentions: "Take the cross from before the name of the archbishop – and he is James or John like the rest of us."[34] For a former slave, to be "like the rest of us" means all the world; that's what is in a name. Although it might lead astray from the main purpose of this essay, a brief thought on Douglass's portraits is in order. As the editors of the book of portraits state, he was the most photographed man of nineteenth century America. The easy explanation for this is given in the just-quoted lecture in which Douglass says with a hint of irony, "if an author's face can possibly be other than fine looking, the picture must be in the book, or the book be considered incomplete." (Let us be reminded that at his time, an African face was certainly not "fine looking" to everyone.) He even adds, just to complete the self-mockery, a quotation from Lord Byron saying that "a man always looks dead when his Biography is written" and adds: "The same is even more true when his picture is taken."[35] But that would not explain the effort of publishing one's autobiography. In a similar lecture on pictures (ca. 1865), Douglass declares with authority: "Again the books that we write and the speeches that we make – what are they but extensions, amplifications and shadows of ourselves, the peculiar elements of our individual manhood? "

He summarizes his theory that human speech is the very humanity and personality of the speaker: "whatever may be the text, man is sure to be the sermon."[36] Thus, I hope, the digression

nothing about A; and yet, it entails a reflective act of identifying. In present-day social language, "identity" may mean "Who or what a person or thing is; […] a set of characteristics or a description that distinguishes a person or thing from others" (*Oxford English Dictionary*) and, consequently, the belonging of a person to a group of people definable by properties or shared values. The latter sense dominates in Robert S. Levine, "Identity in the Autobiographies," in *The Cambridge Companion to Frederick Douglass*, ed. Maurice S. Lee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 31–45; J. Kameron Carter, "Race, Religion, and the Contradictions of Identity: A Theological Engagement with Douglass's 1845 *Narrative*," *Modern Theology* 21, no. 1 (2005): 37–65, 37: "[…] identity—who we take ourselves to be and how we orient ourselves to others." In Douglass' text, "to preserve the identity" asserts the reflective sameness of the author, which is the theme of the autobiography.

[33] Douglass, *The Frederick Douglass Papers. Series Two*, 1: Narrative: 154–160, 157. On irony in Douglass, see Stewart, "The Claims of Frederick Douglass Philosophically Considered," passim.

[34] Frederick Douglass, "Lecture on Pictures," in *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American*, eds. John Stauffer, Zoe Trodd, and Celeste-Marie Bernier (New York: Norton, 2015), 126–41, 133. The text is also in Douglass, *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series 1, vol. 3, 452–473, 455. Here with the title "Pictures and Progress."

[35] Douglass, "Lecture on Pictures," 128.

[36] Frederick Douglass, "Pictures and Progress," in *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American*, eds. John Stauffer, Zoe Trodd, and Celeste-Marie Bernier (New York: Norton, 2015), 161–73, 163, 166. A summary of this in Douglass, *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series 1, vol. 3, 620.

on self-portraits comes full circle: having and defending a personal name converges with first-person testimony – and with the mere possibility of reaching the audience.

Frederick Douglass, with a keen eye for human nature, has written a monument to slave resistance in the description of his standoff with his master. Let us remind ourselves that for Douglass' fellow slaves it was "considered as being bad enough to be a slave ; but to be a poor man's slave was deemed a disgrace indeed," because slaves were trained to see themselves "transferring" the personal value of their master upon themselves.[37] To become conscious of the derivative nature of the self was an important step towards inner emancipation. Hence, to despise a slave owner could of itself be an act of rebellion long before any attempt at violence or evasion could only be envisioned. This is the background against which we should read Douglass' brawl with Mr. Covey, as narrated in the tenth chapter.[38] He alerts his reader about the importance of the event: "You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man."[39] Of course, it was the individual slave Frederick who was "made a man," and there may be implications regarding slave masculinity, but the event is also symbolic as it depicts an essential feature of being a man in the sense of being human. Later, as I quoted above, he extended the meaning of this fight to the nature of humanity. Still, I am not claiming to offer an exhaustive interpretation; rather, this event that has been recognized by a vast literature as emblematic is just a sample of how philosophy can be drawn from a narrative.

As Mr. Covey, the slave-breaker, tried to whip Douglass, "[h]e held on to me, and I to him." The slave manages to get at the master's throat "causing the blood to run." This standoff, I think, is crucial. The first slave who happened to pass by tried to help his master, but was kicked off by Douglass, which had the almost comical effect that Covey's "courage quailed" and he asked the slave if he "meant to persist in his resistance."[40] What a question! The next slave flatly refused to interfere, using the argument that he was not hired "to help whip" another slave. So we have the violent defeat of one slave and the legalistic opposition of another surrounding the stalemate. This is the point at which the slave breaker gives up "saying that if I had not resisted, he would not have whipped me half so much." Douglass adds immediately that Covey had not whipped him at all. Covey becomes ridiculous through his childish after-threat of tormenting only "half so much" leaving it open what the other half would have looked like.[41]

What Covey must have realized without understanding was the definite turn of superiority. In Douglass' words: "he had drawn no blood from me, but I had from him."[42] The brawl made it physically visible that the master was a coward and the slave "a man." We should notice that Douglass did not beat his master; the standoff was all he needed to assert his position: when two people get even they may return to their natural humanity. As Lewis Gordon observed: "The *physical* struggle dragged Covey into a moment of equilibrium; it was a point at which the only way for any of them to survive was by moving *upward*."[43] That is, the impasse opened the way

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[37] Douglass, "Narrative," chap. III, 28.

[38] Margaret Kohn, "Frederick Douglass's Master-Slave Dialectic," *The Journal of Politics* 67, no. 2 (May, 2005), 497–514, says correctly (500), "Although the fight with Covey did bring about a cessation to the brutal beatings he had endured, the emancipatory consequences were primarily psychological in nature." However, the anthropological meaning goes beyond the personal psychological effect. Kohn has the further relevant literature on the case.

[39] Douglass, "Narrative," chap. X, 60.

[40] Ibid., chap. X, 64.

[41] Ibid., chap. X, 65.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Lewis R. Gordon, *Existentia Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 61. (Italics in the original.)

back to humanity. The slave-breaker's fault was not violence as such but the inherent cowardice that consists in denying a fellow human a chance to be human. Therefore it was sufficient for the slave to exert as much violence as needed to show equality on the level of physical competition. Once again, what broke Covey's ability to subdue Douglass was the confluence of three types of resistance: the non-fatal violent back-fighting, the physical defeat of one slave by another, and the rational verbal defiance of another slave. These might be the major components of all and any resistance and rebellion. We should not be surprised seeing Douglass summarize the meaning of this moment in a hymnal religious tone: "I felt as I never felt before. It was a glorious resurrection, from the tomb of slavery, to the heaven of freedom."[44] The restoration of the human essence is expressed, if not caused, by the act of resistance.

Later, Douglass concluded that resistance as such might also persuade slaveholders to renounce slavery by appealing to their conscience when they learn to perceive slaves as not voluntarily submitting to their control, thus breaking the vicious circle in which slaves admit to being inferior through being submissive.[45] However, I think this is not a moral appeal but one that is rooted in the structure of self-assertion. "I did not hesitate to let it be known of me, that the white man who expected to succeed in whipping, must also succeed in killing me." This concluding remark to the Covey episode[46] may be read as a challenge, but it actually says that slavery (being whipped) is the negation of humanity (being killed). Hence resistance may be just, may be moral, may be a psychological urge, a habit, a duty, or a last resort – in the anthropological sense it is the feature of *being non-denied to exist*. In Douglass's terms it is a resurrection before death.

This brings us to general conclusions. Religion, onomastic identity, and resistance take on very strange forms on the level of slavery; and it is this we can learn from the slave narratives and the facts they convey. As we saw, critique of religion requires religious freedom. We may also state that onomastic identity is an absolute requirement of being human, so much that it does *de facto* not depend on a legitimate name-giver. Ultimately, humans are baptized as wanderers on this earth. And resistance and rebellion? In slave narratives we see that morality is not a condition of being human; it comes only after humanity ceases being questioned.

Reading Frederick Douglass' autobiography as a non-disciplinary philosophical text yields philosophical insights that are not standard but that are in search of philosophical categories that create a frame of understanding. Even if authors of slave narratives had had an academic education in philosophy, they would have set priorities very much at odds with the top ranking philosophical questions in the schools. Since they had been factually prevented from academic instruction, they also were exonerated from rebelling against the mainstream. Their rebellion was existentially human – and in that sense it was practical philosophy.

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[44] Douglass, "Narrative," chap. X, 65.

[45] Bernard Boxill, "Two Traditions in African American Political Philosophy," *The Philosophical Forum* 24, no. 1–3, (Fall/Spring 1992–93): 129f. Further considerations, derived from Douglass's later political stances in Bernard R. Boxill, "The Fight with Covey," in *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy*, ed. Lewis R. Gordon (New York: Routledge, 1997), 273–90. Cf. Bernard R. Boxill, "Douglass Against the Emigrationists," in *Frederick Douglass: A Critical Reader*, eds. Bill E. Lawson and Frank M. Kirkland (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 21–49, 38–41; "Frederick Douglass as an Existentialist" in Gordon, *Existentia Africana*, 41–61.

[46] Douglass, "Narrative," chap. X, 65.

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Style Sheet Rules

Submitted texts should be written in one of common text editors (doc, docx, rtf, odt), in the Times New Roman 12 font, line spacing 1.5; pictures and figures should be submitted separately in formats as jpg, tif, eps, and gif.

CSJH follows the Chicago Style Manual.

Publication Ethics

Guidelines for Editors

General Responsibilities

- Editors are accountable for all content published in their journal. Editors must be ready to publish corrections and apologies when necessary.
- Editors must follow transparent editorial policy. Submission guidelines and requirements for potential contributors to the journal must be published.

Conflict of Interest

- Editors require authors, reviewers and editorial board members to disclose potential conflicts of interest.
- Editors make decisions to accept or reject submissions based on the quality of the submission and its suitability for the journal. Editors must make sure that commercial considerations do not interfere with their editorial decisions.
- Editors must make sure that non-peer-reviewed sections of the journal are clearly marked as such.

Peer-Review Practice

- Editors must ensure that all research submissions are peer-reviewed. A description of the peer review practice must be published for the benefit of potential contributors to the journal.
- Editors are accountable for recruiting qualified reviewers. Editors must strive to obtain highly competent reviewers and discontinue using reviewers who consistently deliver poor quality reviews.
- Editors must ensure that reviews are relevant, courteous and timely. Reviewers should judge the quality of the research and not comment on the researcher's gender, race, beliefs and the like.

Academic Integrity

- Editors and reviewers must treat all submissions under review as confidential. Editors must protect the identity of reviewers and the identity of authors if a double-blind review process is used.
- Editors must ensure that all submissions comply with ethical research standards, particularly in research involving human or animal subjects.
- Editors must make sure that all submissions comply with academic integrity standards, particularly with respect to plagiarism, data falsification, image manipulation and the like. Suspicions of scientific misconduct must be promptly investigated and response from authors suspected of misconduct must be sought.

Guidelines for Authors

General Responsibilities

- Authors are accountable for all aspects of their research submitted for publication to a journal. Authors of a multi-author submission have joint responsibility for their research, unless stated otherwise.
- Authors must promptly notify editors if they discover any errors in their research. This applies to research that has been submitted, is under review or has been published. Authors must cooperate with editors to rectify any errors.
- Authors must comply with submission guidelines and requirements published by the editors.
- Authors are aware that failure to meet these requirements may result in rejection of their research for publication.

Conflict of Interest

- Authors must disclose potential conflicts of interest.
- Authors must publish all sources of their research funding, including both financial and nonfinancial support.
- Authors must disclose their relationship to the journal, particularly when editors and reviewers seek publication in a journal that they are affiliated with.

Peer-Review Process

- Authors must cooperate with editors at all stages of the publication process. Authors must notify editors if they choose to withdraw their submission at any stage of the peer-review and publication process.
- Authors must respond to comments of reviewers in a relevant and timely manner. Authors must carefully check proofs supplied by editors before authorising them.

Academic Integrity

- Authors must not seek publication of their research in more than one journal concurrently, unless all parties agree on co-publishing.
- Authors are accountable for the soundness and honesty of their research. Authors must use appropriate methods for reporting their research and provide sufficient detail for other researchers to repeat their experiments. Authors must publish the complete results of their research and not withhold findings that are inconsistent with their hypothesis.
- Authors must comply with ethical research standards, particularly in research involving human or animal subjects, and must be prepared to provide sufficient proof on request.
- Authors must comply with academic integrity standards, particularly with respect to plagiarism, data falsification, image manipulation and the like. Authors must appropriately quote and cite all sources used in their research and refrain from including indirect quotations from sources that they have not consulted.
- Authors must obtain permission to use any third-party images, figures and the like from the respective copyright holders.