

FLUMEN SAPIENTIAE

STUDI SUL PENSIERO MEDIEVALE

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La *sapientia* medievale, nella sua molteplicità, fluisce in un unico *flumen* ininterrotto dalla tarda Antichità al Rinascimento. Valorizzando la pluralità di temi e di tradizioni del sapere medievale, la collana contribuisce allo sviluppo degli studi di Storia della filosofia medievale, ospitando lavori monografici, collettivi ed edizioni critiche inerenti alla filosofia e alla teologia medievali.

Le pubblicazioni della collana sono sottoposte anonimamente alla valutazione di almeno due specialisti del settore.

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New Perspectives on the Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages

Sources and Doctrines

edited by

Elisa Bisanti

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Introductory Remarks on the “Platonic Tradition” in the Middle Ages

ALESSANDRO PALAZZO

The title of the book purposefully recalls two different, but equally important, contributions on the history of medieval Platonism: Raymond Klibansky’s classical study on *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition During the Middle Ages*¹ and the collection *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages. A Doxographic Approach*, edited by Stephen Gersh and Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen².

Both volumes address the Platonic tradition in the Middle Ages, providing two different approaches to it. Differing from other scholars of medieval Platonism, Klibansky emphasizes that there was a continuous Platonic tradition (or traditions, if we consider the plurality of medieval cultural and linguistic areas comprising the Arabic, Byzantine, and Latin traditions), from late Antiquity until the Renaissance. He argues that translations of Plato’s own works should be complemented by a wide and diversified corpus of indirect tradition, a corpus that was by far the most substantial part of Platonism in the Latin Middle Ages³.

Gersh and Hoenen focus less on the continuity of the Platonic tradition and more on the perceptions that medieval authors had of Plato’s ideas. According to Gersh and Hoenen, the medieval Platonic tradition, which was blended with other conceptions

1. R. KLIBANSKY, *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition During the Middle Ages I. Outlines of a Corpus Platonicum Medii Aevi*, The Warburg Institute, London 1939 (enlarged re-edition London, 1981).

2. *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages. A Doxographic Approach*, S. GERSH, M. J.F.M.HOENEN (eds.), de Gruyter, Berlin-New York 2002.

3. KLIBANSKY, *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition*, pp. 21–29.

and perspectives and channelled by three main sources (Augustine, pseudo-Dionysius, and Boethius), should be investigated using what they define as “a bottom-up approach”, starting from actual occurrences of terms like “Plato”, “Platonicus”, etc., rather than from the notions usually considered Platonic. This method has the undeniable advantage of offering a context-sensitive understanding of the complexity of the “medieval Plato”⁴.

The different approaches taken in these two books confirm, if any proof is still needed, just how arduous it is to define the concept of a “Platonic tradition in the Middle Ages”. What does this concept refer to? The answer to this question supposes a series of conceptual, historical, and historiographical problems that have been, and still are, painstakingly discussed by modern scholars, including: what sources and works define medieval Platonism; how did medieval scholars perceive Plato and his philosophy; how did they cope with the almost complete absence of Plato’s dialogues; whether it is appropriate to make a distinction between Platonism and Neoplatonism in the Middle Ages; if a diversified approach (considering Platonisms instead of Platonism) would be more appropriate to the plurality of medieval civilizations (Latin, Arab, Hebrew, and Byzantine); the different threads within the Latin Platonic tradition.

Some of these issues will be dealt with by the papers in the present volume. However, far from giving an exhaustive and definitive answer to the initial question, the aim of this volume is, more modestly, to explore a few sources, theories, and works that form a part of the Platonic heritage in the Middle Ages. The seven papers contained in this volume avoid general interpretations and instead focus on specific yet hitherto unexplored or less studied episodes related to the history of Plato and his philosophy in the Middle Ages. In this way, the volume offers new perspectives on that complex subject traditionally defined as the medieval “Platonic tradition”⁵.

4. GERSH, HOENEN, *Preface*, in *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages*, p. 5.

5. The contributors to this volume usually understand the concept of “tradition” in terms of sources, theories, authors, and works, more or less directly, related to Plato, rather than in the sense of a school of thought structured in

In Giovanni Catapano’s paper («Quotations from Plato in Augustine. A *Catalogue Raisonné*»), we do not find a general analysis of Augustine’s Platonism nor a reappraisal of the *vexata quaestio* of the *libri Platoniorum* used by Augustine. By contrast, Catapano accurately charts the intertextuality between Plato and Augustine by providing an analytical catalogue of Augustine’s quotations of Plato’s texts. In the methodological foreword to the catalogue, Catapano defines “text by Plato” as “a linguistic-conceptual unit that can be identified within the Platonic corpus”. This definition allows Catapano to also include non-literal, indirect, and multiple quotations in the list, at same time excluding what are only general and abstract references to both Plato’s writings and thought, as well as mere citations of his name. Consequently, far from exploring Augustine’s general attitude towards Plato in philosophical and doctrinal terms, an approach that many scholars have already adopted with varying results, Catapano delineates the exact outlines of Augustine’s concrete use of Plato.

From Catapano’s analysis we learn interesting factual elements that deserve detailed future investigation: first, that Augustine’s access to Plato was not circumscribed to the *Timaeus* translated by Cicero, even though Augustine quotes far more from this work than the others; second, that two thirds of the quotations are concentrated in the *De civitate Dei*.

Charles Burnett («The Influence of Platonism on the Arabic-Latin Translators of Early Twelfth Century Chartres and North-East Spain») brings us to the milieu of the twelfth-century Arabic-Latin translators (Adelard of Bath, Hermann of Carintia, Hugo of Santalla, and Plato of Tivoli). Burnett offers an innovative interpretation of the activity of these translators by claiming that their translation program was strongly motivated by their Platon-

an institutional setting. On the concept of philosophical tradition and the actual traditions in the Middle Ages, see: D. CALMA, Z. KALUZA (éds.), *Regards sur les traditions philosophiques (XII^e-XVI^e siècles)*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 2017 (Ancient and Medieval Philosophy I). For a concise overview of medieval Platonism, see: S. GERSH, *Platonism*, in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy. Philosophy Between 500 and 1500*, ed. by H. Lagerlund, Springer, Dordrecht-Heidelberg-London-New York 2011, pp. 1016-1022.

ic ideas and interest in the scientific sections of the *Timaeus*⁶. The very title of Adelard's "The same and the different" (*De eodem et diverso*) is a clear reference to the *Timaeus*' World Soul, made up of the same and different. Chalcidius' translation of the *Timaeus* was fundamental for Adelard's conceptions of the universe and the human being, his reliance on the search for reasons, his mathematical interests, and his decision to translate Euclides' *Elements*. Adelard's translations of scientific texts and works on astronomical talismans must be placed within the same Platonic context.

Hermann of Carinthia's translations were also influenced by Platonic ideas. His main work, the *De essentiis*, which incorporates the results of his translations, reframes the conception of the universe typical of Arabic astronomers and cosmologists in Platonic terms. Hermann's Platonism was behind his translation of Albu-masar's *Great Introduction*, where linguistic and conceptual borrowings from the *Timaeus* are transparent.

Platonic leanings also inform Hugo of Santalla's activity. Plato is evoked in the prefaces to the translations of two works of divination (*Book of Three Judges* and *Book of Nine Judges*). The translation of the *Secret of Nature* ascribed to Belenus is a cosmogony which resembles that present in the *Timaeus*. This also explains why Hugo uses terminology in this work reminiscent of that found in the *Timaeus*. Hugo's Platonic interests are also revealed in his translation of the *Book of the Cow*, a work of natural magic, whose Arabic original was attributed to Plato.

Finally, Burnett refers to Plato Tiburtinus, a translator of scientific works – among them Ptolomaeus' *Quadripartitum* and ps.-Ptolomaeus' *Centiloquium* – who decided to give himself the name of Plato. Burnett concludes by asking an unanswered but provocative question: since the program of scientific translations

6. On the medieval reception of the *Timaeus*, see the recent F. CELIA, A. ULACCIO (a cura di), *Il Timeo. Egesesi greche, arabe, latine*, Pisa University Press, Pisa 2012 (Greco, Arabo, Latino. Le vie del sapere, Studi II). This book offers a broad historical overview that complements more specific studies on the presence of the *Timaeus* in the Latin West: e.g., see: I. CAIAZZO, *Lectures médiévales de Macrobie: les Glosæ Colonienses super Macrobiūm*, Vrin, Paris 2002 (Études de philosophie médiévale, 83).

was motivated by the Platonism of the twelfth-century translators, should Plato be regarded as the reason Ptolomaeus was introduced into the Latin world?

Elisa Bisanti («Transmission and Reception of Platonic Texts across Cultural Networks in the European Space of Latin Culture») traces the circulation of the *Meno* and the *Phaedo* in the Medieval West. The two works were translated into Latin by Henricus Aristippus, well-known for his translation of Book 4 of Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, in the 12th century, thereby becoming, alongside the *Timaeus*, the only Platonic dialogues accessible to the Latin readership.

Bisanti analyzes the "networks of transmission and reception of the Latin *Meno* and *Phaedo*". As a consequence, she first accounts for the geographical distribution of the manuscripts, their production centers, the owners, and the readers. Then, Bisanti turns her attention to the reception of these works, documenting all the known cases in which the two Latin versions were used by medieval authors. While she confirms that the two works did not enjoy great success, her survey allows us to reassess the extent to which they circulated. Among the identified readers, there were both prominent authors and lesser known figures of the 13th and 14th centuries (Guido de Grana, John of Wales, Roger Bacon, Richard de Bury, Berhold of Moosburg, and Hieremias de Montagnone).

Marienza Benedetto («*Plato hebraicus*. Notes on the Reception of Plato in the Jewish Middle Ages»), deals with the so-called *Plato Hebraicus*. While studies on the Arab Platonic tradition have proliferated in recent years, the presence of Plato in the medieval Hebrew world has so far proven to be a neglected topic⁷. Therefore, Benedetto's paper constitutes a pathbreaking scholarly work. In particular, she identifies and studies all explicit mentions of Plato

7. This fact also contrasts with the interest scholars have shown in the Aristoteles Hebraicus. See: G. TAMANI, M. ZONTA (a cura di), *Aristoteles Hebraicus. Versioni, commenti e compendi del Corpus Aristotelicum nei manoscritti ebraici delle biblioteche italiane*, Supernova, Venezia 1997 (Eurasistica, 46); M. ZONTA, *La tradizione medievale arabo-ebraica delle opere di Aristotele: stato della ricerca*, «Elenchos» 28/2 (2007), pp. 369-387.

found in the Hebrew tradition, from Isaac Israeli to Shem ibn Tov Falaquera, through Ibn Gabirol, Mosheh Ibn Ezra, Yehudah ha-Levi, and Maimonides.

Benedetto claims that despite Maimonides advising Hebrew authors ignore Plato, the latter's name is scattered across the history of Hebrew medieval philosophy, even though only a few cases indicating direct access to his works have been attested. The *florilegia* of Plato's sayings, which circulated in both the Arabic and Hebrew traditions, played an important role in shaping his image.

According to Benedetto's analysis, perceptions of Plato underwent a substantial change in the work of the authors she examines. The first mentions in Ibn Gabirol's *Fountain of Life* – the dialogic form of his work is reminiscent of Plato's dialogues – concern the doctrine of universal hylomorphism and tend to convey an image of a Neoplatonised Plato, while the relationship between Plato and Judaism is thematized by Falaquera several times. In particular, Falaquera seems to entertain the idea that Plato agrees with Judaism on the crucial topic of the creation of the world and its eternity *ex parte post*. Maimonides, too, had already mentioned Plato as the advocate of one of the three positions within the debate on the eternity of the world, namely, that the world came into being from pre-existing matter, while the other two positions were creationism and Aristotelian eternalism.

The role of the *Timaeus*, examined by Catapano and Burnett in two radically different contexts, is also the focus of Fabrizio Amerini's paper («Alcune note sul rapporto tra Tommaso d'Aquino e Platone. Il caso del *Timeo*»), which is dedicated to Thomas Aquinas' interpretation and use of this Platonic work. Amerini agrees with the widely accepted thesis that Thomas had no direct access to Plato's works. This does not mean, however, that he did not play any role in the history of medieval Platonism.

It must be first highlighted that Thomas was an astute interpreter of Plato's philosophy, whose chief notions (concerning universal and separated forms, mathematical entities, the first self-moving mover, the soul, and the first matter) he described in detail. Thomas' attitude was generally negative as he tended to reject or modify the *opinio Platonis*.

Yet, according to Amerini, Thomas' main contribution to the medieval debate on Plato was his use of the Neoplatonic commentaries translated by William of Moerbeke (Themistius, Simplicius, and Proclus). Thomas is believed to have been the first to circulate these works in Paris and to have discussed the interpretations offered by these Neoplatonic commentators of Aristotele and Plato. Based on their commentaries (especially that of Simplicius), Thomas was able to better establish the contours of Plato's philosophy, how it differed from Aristotle's theories, and its relationship to later Neoplatonists.

Amerini makes his point by carrying out a thorough analysis of all the references to the *Timaeus* in the Thomistic corpus. Even though the *Timaeus* is mentioned directly very few times – which means that Thomas had direct access to this text, the great majority of quotations were mediated by other sources. Generally, references to Plato are made within or are related to arguments that are refuted by Thomas. This overall negative evaluation is evident in regard to the soul and the concept of *locus*. In some cases, Thomas holds that Aristotle only criticized the letter of Plato's words, but not his *intentio*. Most quotations from the *Timaeus* occur in the Commentary on the *De caelo* and are taken from Simplicius' Commentary on the *De caelo*.

The *Liber de causis*, Moerbeke's translation of Proclus' works (in particular, the *Elements of theology*), and the Latin works related to this Neoplatonic *corpus* have attracted particular attention from scholars of Platonism in the last few years⁸. It is in connec-

8. D. CALMA (ed.), *Neoplatonism in the Middle Ages. I. New Commentaries on Liber de causis* (ca. 1250-1350), Brepols, Turnhout 2016 (Studia Artistarum. Études sur la faculté des arts dans les universités médiévales XLII, 1); see esp. the historiographical remarks in Id., *The Exegetical Tradition of Medieval Neoplatonism. Considerations on a Recently Discovered Corpus of Texts*, pp. 11-52; 11-41. Id. (ed.), *Neoplatonism in the Middle Ages. II. New Commentaries on Liber de causis and Elementatio theologica* (ca. 1350-1500), Brepols, Turnhout 2016 (Studia Artistarum. Études sur la faculté des arts dans les universités médiévales XLII, 2); Id. (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes. Volume 1. Western Scholarly Networks and Debates*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2019 (Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition, 22); Id. (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes. Volume 2. Translations*

tion with the outpouring of publications on Neoplatonism that my paper («The Platonic Sources of Berthold of Moosburg's Science of the Soul: Proclus, Nemesius, and Macrobius») investigates the role that Nemesius' *De natura hominis* and Macrobius' *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* play in Berthold of Moosburg's *Expositio* on the *Elementatio theologica*. I devote particular attention to issues such as the soul's incorporeality and self-subsistence, soul-body union, the double condition of the soul (in Being and in becoming), as well as metempsychosis.

In *De natura hominis* chapters 2-3, Berthold not only finds detailed doxographies concerning ancient philosophical debates on the nature and properties of the soul, but also two long passages detailing the doctrine ascribed to Ammonius Saccas, master of Plotinus. These quotations, which in all likelihood were taken from Porphyry's lost *Miscellaneous Investigations*, condense fundamental concepts in the theory of the soul of early Neoplatonism, such as the soul's self-subsistence, the so-called *sunektikon*-argument, and the "unconfused union" between soul and body. Berthold integrates these ideas into the sophisticated system of the *Expositio* by combining them with the Proclean concepts of separation and self-return to explain the nature of both the rational soul («anima partialis») and the celestial soul («anima totalis») and, to a limited extent, the lower types of souls (even the vegetative soul is believed to be, as a soul, incorporeal).

The *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, in some cases read by Berthold through Thomas of York's *Sapientiale*, provide Berthold with the main doctrinal support he needs to elucidate the vital movement of the partial soul in relation to its body. The Macrobian theory of the astral origin of human souls, their descent to earth, and their return to «companion stars», reinterpreted by Berthold

and *Acculturations*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2020 (Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition, 26); E. KING, *Supersapientia: Berthold of Moosburg and the Divine Science of the Platonists*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2021; D. CALMA, E. KING (eds.), *The Renewal of Medieval Metaphysics. Berthold of Moosburg's Expositio on Proclus' Elements of Theology*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2021 (History of Metaphysics: Ancient, Medieval, Modern, 1).

in conjunction with the concept of the spiritual body of the Greek Fathers and the *Clavis physicae*, is used in the *Expositio* to comment on the propositions from the *Elements of theology* dealing with the «susceptaculum» of the soul. Interestingly, Berthold uses Macrobius to correct Proclus on the crucial issue of the return of the soul to the realm of Being. While Proclus holds that the soul experiences an endless succession of descents from Being to becoming and back to Being, Berthold believes that the soul, once it has attained the perfect contemplation of the One in Being, is unable to descend again to the realm of becoming.

The complex relationships Nicholas of Cusa had with two prominent adherents to 15th-century Albertism is the subject of Mario Meliadó's paper («Nicola Cusano e il platonismo di un'aristotelica secta: dibattiti incrociati con Eimerico di Campo e Johannes Wenck»). As the Middle Ages yielded to the Renaissance, Cusanus read several Platonic dialogues in Latin translation. This fact marks a substantial change in approach, since earlier medieval authors reconstructed Platonic thought from a limited corpus of primary sources (the *Timaeus* and, from the 12th century onward, the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*; then from the 13th century onward, some of Proclus' works).

Cusanus' Platonic – or better Socratic – leanings are evident in the *Apologia doctae ignorantiae*, written in response to the theologian Johannes Wenck, who had harshly criticized Cusanus' concept of learned ignorance. In particular, Wenck was hostile to the Cusanian *coincidentia oppositorum*, which he saw as colliding with Aristotelian logic and especially with the principle of non-contradiction. Cusanus replied that the rules of Aristotelian logic only applied to finite being, but not to the First Cause, whose transcendence is guaranteed by its *indistincta distinctio*. In Cusanus' opinion, Wenck was unable to grasp the real significance of the *coincidentia oppositorum* due to his ignorance or misunderstanding of all Platonic sources (Plato's *Parmenides*, ps.-Dionysius and his commentators, Eckhart, and Berthold Moosburg), which Cusanus regarded as providing the doctrinal basis for apophatism, the prelude to the *coincidentia oppositorum*.

In the paper, Meliadó carries out a detailed analysis that nuances the radicality of the conflict between Cusanus and Wenck. It is first

noted that both were associated with the Albertism, since Wenck was a master of the so-called *via Alberti*, while Cusanus was under the strong influence of his Albertist master Heymeric de Campo at the University of Cologne, where he enrolled in 1425. Moreover, the Albertists held the principle of non-contradiction in high esteem as the fundamental root of human learning. Meliadò also highlights Wenck's pursuit of an ambitious program of exposition of the *corpus Dionysianum*, based on Albert the Great's commentaries, which Cusanus, also used as a main source for his *De beryllo*.

All in all, it is finally claimed that the differences between Cusanus and the Albertists (Heymeric and Wenck) must be properly interpreted as a disagreement between partisans in a common tradition.

Quotations from Plato in Augustine

A Catalogue Raisonné

GIOVANNI CATAPANO*

1. Foreword

The aim of this contribution is to provide a *catalogue raisonné* of all the quotations from Plato in the writings of Augustine of Hippo. By “quotation from Plato” I mean here *an explicit reference to a text by Plato*. More precisely, by “text by Plato” I mean *a linguistic-conceptual unit that can be identified within the Platonic corpus*; the extent of this unit can range from the minimum of a single word to the maximum of an entire work. In this meaning of “quotation”, it is irrelevant whether the way Augustine refers to a text by Plato is literal or not-literal, direct or indirect, single or multiple¹. “Quotations” in this sense exclude all cases in which Augustine’s reference to Plato does not make it possible to identify specific texts, either because he refers to Plato’s writings in general, or because he refers to Plato’s thought in the abstract, or because he merely mentions Plato’s name. I provide a simple list of such unspecified references in section 4.

The quotations from Platonic texts are listed according to the chronological order of Augustine’s writings, as reflected in his *Retractationes*². Each quotation is presented according to the following

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1. On the meaning of “single” and “multiple” in this context, see the explanation below.

2. Letters and sermons are listed at the end. For the chronology also of these types of writings, not indicated in the *Retractationes*, and for dating hypotheses of all Augustine’s works, see the article by J. ANOZ, *Cronología de la producción agustiniana*, «Augustinus» 47 (2002), pp. 229-312.

scheme: progressive number, followed in brackets by abbreviations indicating the type of quotation; title of the Platonic work, with the Stephanus pagination of the passage(s) quoted (if the passages belong to more than one work by Plato, they follow the tetralogical order); title of Augustine's work, with page and line numbers of the passage containing the quotation in the critical reference edition³; Latin text taken from this edition. In the Latin text, quotations of any kind are highlighted in italics; literal quotations are also enclosed in inverted commas. Any commentary notes are placed at the foot of the page. For the reader's convenience, an index of the Platonic passages quoted by Augustine is given in paragraph 3, according to the tetralogical order of Plato's dialogues.

The quotations are classified according to the following typology:

- L = literal / N = non-literal: the quotation *reports* / *does not report* Plato's own words (albeit in translation);
- D = direct / I = indirect: the quotation *is* / *is not* explicitly mediated by another source. "Direct" quotations are all those that are *presented* by Augustine as such (i.e. directly), even if Augustine always knew the Platonic text through a translation and even if in some cases he may have known it through another source⁴;
- S = single / M = multiple: the text(s) to which the quotation refers or may refer *belong(s)* / *do(es) not belong* to a single Pla-

3. For the titles of Augustine's works and their critical reference editions, I follow the *Augustinus-Lexikon*: see list on webpage <<https://augustinus.de/images/pdf/WerkeverzeichnisAL4.pdf#page=11>> (date of access 25/03/2021).

4. Let me recall the following opinion of P. COURCELLE, *Les lettres grecques en Occident. De Macrobie à Cassiodore*, de Boccard, Paris 1948, p. 159: «Je crois donc qu'Augustin n'a lu du texte de Platon que la partie du *Timée* traduite par Cicéron; mais il est abondamment renseigné sur sa philosophie, d'une part par les Latins: Cicéron, Varron, Apulée, Cyprien, Ambroise, d'autre part les Néo-platoniciens grecs». Of the same opinion is F. VAN FLETEREN, *Plato, Platonism*, in A.D. FITZGERALD (ed.), *Augustine through the Ages. An Encyclopedia*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1999, pp. 651-654. See also M. ERLER, *Plato, Platonici*, in R. DODARO – C. MAYER – C. MÜLLER (Hrsg.), *Augustinus-Lexikon*, vol. IV, fasc. 5/6, Schwabe, Basel 2016, coll. 755-762.