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“Unshapely Bodies and Beautifying Embellishments”: The Ancient Epics in Byzantium, Allegorical Hermeneutics, and the Case of Ioannes Diakonos Galenos*

Abstract: This article focuses on the obscure Byzantine scholar Ioannes Diakonos Galenos and his allegorical interpretation of the ancient Greek epics (of Hesiod’s *Theogony* and of *Iliad* 4.1–4). Michael Psellos is shown to be an exceptionally influential source of inspiration for Ioannes Diakonos’ reading of the *Iliad* as well as for his overall allegorical approach to ancient Greek texts, and the twelfth century is proposed as the most probable date of his intellectual activity. In addition to issues of chronology, theoretical intertexts (mainly Neoplatonic philosophy), and hermeneutic methodology related to the work of this specific author, this article explores questions of broader historical anthropological significance related to the possible “deep” cognitive structures and patterns of thought that allowed Byzantine intellectuals to Christianize examples of pagan literature.

Like many medieval Greek authors, Ioannes Diakonos Galenos remains an obscure figure in Byzantine studies and has escaped the attention he deserves.¹ We know almost nothing about him except that at some point in his life he became a clergyman (as the epithet “Diakonos” indicates), lived most probably in Constantinople, and wrote an allegorical commentary on Hesiod’s *Theogonia* and a short piece on *Iliad* 4.1–4.² To these texts some brief scholia of his on the *Aspis* may be added.³ Before G. J. C. Muetzell’s discussion of the manuscript tradition and transmission of *Theogonia*, Galenos was at times confused with Ioannes Peditasimos, another commentator of Hesiod.⁴ Muetzell’s opinion that Ioannes Diakonos Galenos and Ioannes Peditasimos were different persons was endorsed and further corroborated by Krumbacher.⁵ Lack of conclusive or even strong evidence makes it impossible for us to determine the precise period in which Ioannes Diakonos Galenos lived. Muetzell proposed an

* For Greg Nagy, teacher, friend, and colleague-on the occasion of his (seventy-second) birthday.

¹ Despite some passing references to Ioannes Diakonos Galenos (on which, see discussion below), modern scholarship has almost entirely ignored him. For the importance of his contribution to Byzantine allegoresis, see P. ROILOS, *Amphoteroglossia: A Poetics of the Twelfth-Century Medieval Greek Novel (Hellenic Studies 10)*. Cambridge, Mass. 2005, 128–130. A detailed study of his works and their connections with other medieval Greek commentaries on the ancient epics is undertaken in my book on him that will appear in 2015. I would like to thank John Duffy for his most helpful comments on this article. Thanks I owe also to Elizabeth Jeffreys, Paul Magdalino, Anthony Kaldellis, Athanasios Markopoulos, and the two anonymous readers of this article.

² That Ioannes Diakonos Galenos lived in Constantinople may be inferred, I argue, from the epilogue of his commentary on *Theogonia*, where he states that [the music of] “Attic Muse, although originated in Athens, is (through spirit) played in the City of Byzas” (H. FLACH, *Glossen und Scholien zur hesiodischen Theogonie mit Prolegomena*. Leipzig 1876, 365). His commentary on *Theogonia* has been edited by Gaisford (T. GAISFORD, *Poetae minores Graeci* (2). Leipzig 1823, 544–608) and FLACH, *Glossen* 295–365; I use the latter’s edition. His text on *Iliad* 4.1–4 (from Vindob. 128) is available in FLACH, *Glossen* 420–424; cf. *ibidem* 417–419 and 16. It is worth noting that in the manuscript tradition of these works, Ioannes Diakonos Galenos’s name is accompanied by the epithets σοφώτατος (“most wise”; in both texts) and λογιώτατος (“most learned”; in the commentary on *Theogonia*).

³ N. LIVADARAS, *Ἱστορία τῆς παραδόσεως τοῦ κειμένου τοῦ Ἡσιόδου*. Athens 1963, 202.

⁴ G. J. C. MUETZELL, *De emendatione Theogoniae Hesiodae libri tres*. Leipzig 1833, 295–301. For the life and literary activity of Peditasimos, known also as Ioannes Diakonos Peditasimos or Pothos, see C. N. CONSTANTINIDES, *Higher Education in Byzantium in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries (1204–ca. 1310)*. Nicosia 1982, 116–128. A systematic study of Peditasimos’s works remains a significant *desideratum*.

⁵ K. KRUMBACHER, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur von Justinian bis zum Ende des östlichen Reiches (527–1453)*. Munich 1897 (2nd edition), 557–558.

eleventh-century dating but not on firm grounds, as Krumbacher rightly observes.⁶ Dimitrios Triklinios's edition of Hesiod (preserved in Marcianus gr. 464), which was completed some time between 1316 and late 1319 and which provides also a compilation of older scholia including those by Galenos,⁷ constitutes the only safe *terminus ante quem* for the latter. Given the revival of a systematic interest in allegorical readings of ancient Greek literature and mythology in the mid-eleventh century (as this is evinced most notably in the work of Michael Psellos) and its further development in the twelfth century, I find it tempting to speculate that Ioannes Diakonos's allegorizations of the Hesiodic epic and of the Homeric passage may well have been the products of that intellectual environment. Hunger, too, was in favor of a twelfth-century dating, as a passing reference of his to Ioannes Diakonos clearly suggests.⁸

There are some intriguing intertextual connections between Ioannes Diakonos Galenos's interpretation of Iliad 4.1-4 and Michael Psellos's comments on the same passage that contribute to the dating of the former's literary activity. Although strong views about the chronological sequence of these authors are doomed to be entrapped in circular argumentation, I would prefer to see Galenos's piece on the Homeric scene as a development of Psellos's corresponding text. This preference of mine is due not to a partial promotion of the intellectual astuteness of the more famous writer (a bias not rarely detected in discussions of similar problems in the history of Byzantine literature), but rather to the fact that the latter's hermeneutic method seems to have become the object of some debate in later Byzantine allegoresis – a fact that indicates his impact in that area of intellectual activity as well. Ioannes Tzetzes, in his Exegesis of Homer's Iliad, unequivocally castigates Psellos's Christianization of ancient Greek literary examples and specifically of Iliad 4.1-4.⁹ Tzetzes, who elsewhere extolls Psellos's philosophical acumen,¹⁰ is steadfast about this criticism and repeats it in his Allegories on the Iliad – where once more he rejects Psellos's interpretation of the assembly of the gods described in the Homeric passage as an allegory of the angelic orders of Seraphim and Cherubim that accompany God – as well as in the Proemium to his Allegories on the Odyssey, in which he disapprovingly refers to the Christian interpretation of the same detail, but this time without naming Psellos.¹¹ In this

⁶ MUETZELL, De emendatione Theogoniae 295–301. Muetzell's dating is adopted by Flach as well (FLACH, Glossen 151); cf. KRUMBACHER, Geschichte 557–558; M. WEST, Theogony. Oxford 1966, 70–71. In his short entry on Ioannes Diakonos Galenos in *Tusculum-Lexikon griechischer und lateinischer Autoren des Altertums und des Mittelalters*, Armin Hohlweg also adopts a twelfth-century date for him (most probably but tacitly following Hunger).

⁷ FLACH, Glossen vi; LIVADARAS, Ἱστορία τῆς παραδόσεως τοῦ κειμένου 202; cf. WEST, Theogony 59. The fact that in the manuscript (Marcianus gr. 464), Ioannes Galenos's scholia on Hesiod immediately precede the indication of the date of the completion of Triklinios's work indicates that Ioannes's comments were the last to be included in that edition.

⁸ H. HUNGER, Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner, II. Munich 1978, 61, n. 27. It should be noted also that the same century witnessed a revival of the studies of the ancient Greek epics. For the reception of Homer in that period, see A. VASSILIKOPOULOU, Ἡ Ἀναγέννησις τῶν γραμμάτων κατὰ τὸν 12^ο αἰῶνα εἰς τὸ Βυζάντιον καὶ ὁ Ὅμηρος, Athens 1971, which, albeit outdated in several respects, remains useful; cf. R. BROWNING, Homer in Byzantium. *Viator* 6 (1975) 15–33. Concerning Hesiod, special reference must be made to Ioannes Tzetzes, who devoted a considerable part of his philological work to him (see I. BEKKER, Die Theogonie des Johannes Tzetzes aus der Bibliotheca Casanatensis (*Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philos.-hist. Klasse*). Berlin 1840, 147–169; C. DAHLEN, Zu Johannes Tzetzes' Exegesis der hesiodeischen Erga. Uppsala 1933; A. COLONNA, I 'Prolegomeni' ad Esiodo e la 'Vita esiodea' di Giovanni Tzetzes. *Bollettino del Comitato per la preparazione dell' Edizione Nazionale dei Classici Greci e Latini* 2 (1953) 27–39; cf. IDEM, Homerica et Hesiodica. *Bollettino del Comitato per la preparazione dell' Edizione Nazionale dei Classici Greci e Latini* 3 (1954) 45–55. For more recent editions of other commentaries on the Hesiodic works, cf. A. PERTUSI, Scholia vetera in Hesiodi Opera et Dies. Milan 1955, and L. DI GREGORIO, Scholia vetera in Hesiodi Theogoniam, Milan 1975. For allusions to Hesiod in the Komnenian novels, see ROILS, Amphoteroglossia 171–174.

⁹ Text in M. PAPATHOMOPOULOS, Ἐξήγησις Ἰωάννου γραμματικοῦ τοῦ Τζέτζου εἰς τὴν Ὅμηρου Ἰλιάδα. Athens 2007, 5.8–12.

¹⁰ Text in J. DUFFY, Tzetzes on Psellos, in: *Dissertationunculae criticae*. Festschrift für Günther Christian Hansen, ed. Ch. F. Coltz. Würzburg 1998, 4.1–445.

¹¹ Allegories on the Iliad: text in J. F. BOISSONADE, Tzetzae Allegoriae Iliadis. Paris 1851, 102. 47–49; Allegories on the Odyssey: text in P. MATRANGA, *Anecdota Graeca*. Rome 1850, 225–226.46–53 and, preferably, in H. HUNGER, Johannes Tzetzes,

last case, Tzetzes is particularly vehement and characterizes the interpretive method that he refutes as “mendacious elevated discourse” (or, rather, “pseudo-elevated discourse”; ψευδουψηγόροις λόγοις). In general, Tzetzes adheres to the inherited tripartite schema of allegoresis, while refusing to view ancient examples as prefigurations of Christian ideas and expectations. In Χρονική Βίβλος, he explicates the traditional method that he follows: a pagan theme may be construed in terms of physical, ethical, or pragmatic (historical) allegorization.¹² In his opinion, only untrue, fabricated discourses and (in part) what he calls metaichmioi logoi (“liminal discourses”) lend themselves to allegorical interpretation. By contrast, true facts and persons (like, for instance, the saints Petros and Paulos) can by no means be interpreted allegorically; whoever undertakes such a hermeneutic enterprise must be deranged, Tzetzes emphatically argues.¹³

To what extent Psellos himself was convinced of the validity of Christianizing readings of ancient Greek literary and mythical examples is, I contend, open to question. His allegorization of the figure of the Sphinx concludes with a daring, almost self-subversive statement: “if such is the meaning that the myth wanted to convey, I do not know. And if I have understood something that may be superfluous, even this is philosophical and Pythagorean” (εἰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ὁ μῦθος τοιοῦτον ἐβούλετο, ἀγνοῶ, εἰ δ’ ἐγὼ περιττόν τι ἐννόησα, καὶ τοῦτο φιλόσοφόν τε καὶ Πυθαγόρειον).¹⁴ In his interpretation of the Homeric description of the cave of the Nymphs (Odyssey 13.102–112), he heavily draws on Porphyrios’s influential allegorization and follows a similar hermeneutic argumentation and method –¹⁵ only to undermine it at the very end of his discussion, where he also superciliously explains that, although he similarly “could transfer the story to our own true theories” (i.e. to Christian ideas), he refrained from doing so, because he did not think that in this case the “mendacious” discourse of the original myth should be shown to manifest some truth.¹⁶ These highly sophisticated, self-referential comments of Psellos on the discursive flexibility of his allegorizations, which verges upon arbitrariness, bespeak, I argue, a certain rhetorical playfulness, which, albeit not necessarily precluding a serious engagement with inherited modes of allegorical hermeneutics, brings to the fore not as much the alleged original, ‘intended’ meaning of the allegorized text/theme but, rather, the creative authority of the interpreting subject. It is worth noting that Tzetzes, perplexed by Psellos’s Christianization of Iliad 4.1–4, is undecided as to whether “that most wise” man composed it as a serious or playful interpretation:

Allegorien zur Odyssee, Buch 1–12. *BZ* 49 (1956) 254.47–53: οὕτω τὴν Ἰλιάδα μὲν, σύμπασαν Καλλιόπην/λόγοις ἠλληγορήσαμεν εὐλήπτοις, σαφεστάτοις/καὶ συντελοῦσι πρὸς αὐτὴν τὴν συγγραφὴν Ὀμήρου/ἀλλ’οὐ κατὰ τινὰς αὐτῶν ψευδουψηγόροις λόγοις/εἴ τ’οὖν σκιαῖς πλὴν ἀμυδραῖς καὶ μερικαῖς δὲ πλεόν./οὐδὲ θεοὺς τὰ Χερουβὶμ καὶ Σεραφὶμ καλοῦντες./οὕτως ἠλληγορήσαμεν ἤδη τὴν Ἰλιάδα. See also discussion below.

¹² Text in H. HUNGER, Johannes Tzetzes, Allegorien aus der Verschönerung. *JÖBG* 4 (1955) vv. 67–69. On Tzetzes’s overall method, see also IDEM, Allegorische Mytheninterpretation in der Antike und bei Johannes Tzetzes. *JÖBG* 3 (1954) 44–52.

¹³ Text in HUNGER, Verschönerung vv. 14–59. For Tzetzes’s tripartite taxonomy of discourse, see ROILLOS, Amphoteroglossia 124–127. That fabricated or otherwise problematic discourse calls for allegorical interpretation is an old *topos* in allegorical hermeneutics in both pagan and Christian contexts. For instance, Proklos argues that the “dramatic” (τραγικόν), “monstrous” (τερατώδες), and “unnatural” (παρὰ φύσιν) character of “poetic fabrications” (ποιητικὰ πλάσματα) causes people to search for the truth and not to adhere [only] to “foregrounded concepts” (“... μένειν ἐπὶ τῶν προβεβλημένων ἐννοιῶν”; Kroll 85.17–26); on the Christian side, cf. Gregory of Nyssa’s substantiation of the validity of an allegorical reading of the Song of Songs and other biblical texts in his commentary on the Canticle, especially in his introduction to it (see text in H. LANGERBECK, Gregorii Nysseni in Canticum Cantorum. Leiden 1960, 5–11). That real events and persons (like Petros and Paulos) were subjected to allegorization is evinced by Psellos’s pieces on the New Testament (P. GAUTIER, Michaelis Pselli Theologica. Leipzig 1989, 70, 162–165). It would be tempting to speculate that in his vehement critique of this hermeneutic practice Tzetzes had in mind precisely Psellos (see ROILLOS, Amphoteroglossia 125).

¹⁴ Text in J. DUFFY, Michael Psellus. Philosophica Minora, I. Stuttgart – Leipzig 1992, 161.111–112.

¹⁵ On Psellos’s debt to Porphyrios, see P. CESARETTI, Allegoristi di Omero a Bisanzio. Ricerche ermeneutiche (xi–xii secolo). Milan 1991, 90–122.

¹⁶ Text in DUFFY, Michael Psellus 164.82–86; for the conclusion of Psellos’s interpretation of this topic, see ROILLOS, Amphoteroglossia 123.

Μὴ Χερουβίμ, μὴ Σεραφίμ ὧδε θεοῦς μοι νόει,
ὥσπερ Ψελλὸς ἐδίδαξεν ὁ πάνσοφος ἐκεῖνος,
οὐκ οἶδα πῶς εἰπεῖν παίζων ἢ καὶ σπουδάζων ἄρα.¹⁷

According to Tzetzes, the two discursive domains, the Homeric text and Psellos's Christian explication, constitute fundamentally opposite categories, like life and death:

οὐδὲν γὰρ πρὸς Ὅμηρον ἄπερ φησὶν ἐκεῖνος,
ἀσύντροχα πρὸς δόξαν γὰρ εἰσὶν τὴν Ὀμηρείαν,
ὥσπερ ζωὴ καὶ θάνατος, καὶ τῶν ἀντιθετούντων.¹⁸

Tzetzes contends that the real allegorical meaning of the Homeric passage is of an astrological nature: it refers to certain astronomical phenomena, particularly the quadrature of Kronos and Ares, which are related to the outbreak of the violent war between the Greeks and the Trojans.¹⁹ The fact that certain explications of Psellos had some pedagogical function (they were composed as responses to relevant requests and inquiries on the part of his students) indicates that their main purpose was to familiarize their intended audience with the 'otherness' of pagan cultural heritage (including most notably Neoplatonic philosophy) through the application of established strategies of allegorization. It seems that Psellos was not a pioneer (or at least not alone) in the use of Christianizing allegorization for pedagogical reasons in his time: in his epitaphios on Niketas, maistor at the school of Saint Petros, he emphasizes that the deceased was a dexterous interpreter of the Homeric works, always searching for the actual meaning lying in the adyta of the texts. Niketas would apply both Christianizing hermeneutics and traditional methods of allegorization (psychological and physical/natural exegesis) to the epics. For instance, for him Ares signified thymos; the golden chain symbolized the resting of the universe's movement; and Ithaca was an allegorical allusion to the heaven ("Jerusalem above").²⁰ As a rule, Psellos appears similarly skeptical or perhaps playful in his allegorical readings of elements of what may be described as "popular" Byzantine culture. With the exception of his intriguing elaboration of the "feast of Saint Agathe,"²¹ these pieces, which Konstantinos Sathas published in his *Μεσαιωνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη*, have not attracted the scholarly attention they deserve both as sources for generally neglected or suppressed aspects of Byzantine cultural life and as additional evidence for Psellos's strategies of allegorical hermeneutics. Detailed exploration of these texts that are attributed to Psellos and of his overall use of allegoresis is beyond the scope of this article; I intend to discuss it further in a different study. Here I wish to stress that I find it intriguing that Psellos – generally a man of elitist intellectual preferences – decided to allegorize those 'humble' products of popular wisdom.²²

¹⁷ Text in BOISSONADE, *Tzetzae Allegoriae* 102. 47–49.

¹⁸ Text in BOISSONADE, *Tzetzae Allegoriae* 102. 50–52. On Tzetzes's critique of Psellos's interpretation of the specific passage, cf. also the scholia on the former's *Τὰ πρὸ Ὁμήρου καὶ ὅσα παρέχει Ὁμηρος μέχρι καὶ τῆς ἀλώσεως ἤτοι ἡ μικρομεγάλῃ Ἰλιάς* (text in P. A. LEONE, *Ioannis Tzetzae Carmina Iliaca*. Catania 1995, 160.19–21; 162.18–20–163.1–4). On Tzetzes's critique of Psellos, see also the interesting discussion in CESARETTI, *Allegoristi di Omero a Bisanzio* 129–140.

¹⁹ Text in BOISSONADE, *Tzetzae Allegoriae* 102. 53–104.86.

²⁰ Text in K. SATHAS, *Μεσαιωνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη*, V. Venice–Paris 1876, 92. See also CESARETTI, *Allegoristi di Omero a Bisanzio* 29–43.

²¹ A. LAIOU, "The Festival of Agathe: Comments on the Life of Constantinopolitan Women," in: *Byzantion. Aphieroma ston A. Strato*, ed. N. Stratou, II. Athens 1986, 111–122. However, Laiou, who focuses on the possible identity and commercial dimensions of the feast described in Psellos's piece, is not interested in his hermeneutic method. Cesaretti's otherwise informative study (which offers the only systematic discussion of allegorical interpretation of the Homeric epics in the 11th and 12th centuries so far) does not explore these pieces either (CESARETTI, *Allegoristi di Omero a Bisanzio*).

²² It is my belief that the idiosyncrasy of these texts renders their authorship rather problematic. Paul Moore seems to accept the attribution of those pieces to Psellos, since he includes them in his category of Psellos's "Grammatical and Philosophical

Since Galenos’s texts remain almost entirely unknown even to specialists in the field of Homeric allegorizations, I provide here a full English translation of his interpretation of Iliad 4.1-4:²³

Certain bodies which are particularly unshapely and dark are beautified by means of embellishments applied to them; being covered with cosmetic colors they get rid of ugliness and are so polished that they finally get invested with impressive beauty. The extraordinary accounts of ancient pagan literature should be perceived in similar terms; no doubt, the mendacity of its twisted texture lies far away and differs from our own pure truth much more than the Mysians from the Phrygians. However, if it is proper to transform a wild tree into a cultivated one through grafting, it is similarly appropriate for us to change the ugliness and saltiness of pagan myths into endless sweetness, and to render attractive the hue of their repulsive appearance.

Homer, the master of all kinds of wisdom, the Ocean of discourse,²⁴ in his poetry included a scene of the gods in communion with Zeus, the superior deity whose might is unyielding. They lay on a golden floor, Hebe was serving them wine, and they pledged him and one another with golden cups. While being engaged in that conviviality they were also watching Troy, which was suffering from the Achaeans. Such is the base and charmless character of that myth. But since rhetorical discourse is capable of drawing food for argument even from deformed subjects, we should not hesitate to elevate as far as possible the earthly matter of the myth to a higher discursive level and transubstantiate it into a more divine concept. In any case no querulous man will criticize us, as he would not criticize us, if we tried to extract water from a precipitous rock and change the bitter drink into a new, drinkable, sweet beverage. It would be neither a daring novelty nor an improper mistake for us to identify the uppermost Zeus with God, who is omnipotent and superior to any intellect; for the cause of life of all things is not dependent upon anything else except for the omnipresent God, who is identical with self-existence itself. His statement “I am the life and truth” is divine and truthful. The forces that accompany Him, I mean the Cherubim and Seraphim, and all the other cohorts of the immaterial entities that surround Him are worthy of a similar characterization and of the offering of a pledge to the first light. For, if, thanks to the abundance of His goodness, He does not seem to deny the many and great manifestations of His benevolence to those who have sinned, but He allows them to share in His own name and leads those who have fallen into the bottom of forgetfulness and reached even the point to ignore His glory to the recollection of it, and rebukes their earthly and human weaknesses, it is only to be expected that He would so more readily grant communion with His name to the superior entities that accompany Him. However, to all beings God is invisible and unnamable and absolutely uncontainable and unapproachable, and with regard to all, He is their creator and producer, but He does not exclude from unity with

Works” in his *Iter Psellianum* (P. MOORE, *Iter Psellianum*. Toronto 2005, 396–400. It is worth noting that Sathas publishes also a number of similar pieces in political verse that in manuscript tradition are attributed to Psellos or, alternatively, to Prodromos (SATHAS, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη* 544–560; Sathas’s edition is based on Paris gr. 3085 [sic]); according to Sathas, they most probably were authored by Michael Glykas (*ibidem* 544). Moore includes one of those texts in his category of Psellos’s “Poetical Works” (MOORE, *Iter Psellianum* 521 [1148]).

²³ In my translation I have tried to be as faithful to Ioannes Diakonos Galenos’s convoluted style as possible.

²⁴ In his *Chiliades*, Tzetzes describes Homer as “the sea of discourses” (ἡ θάλασσα τῶν λόγων; XIII 626 LEONE). In his *proemium* to his commentary on The Iliad, Eustathios of Thessalonike compares the “flowing of discourse” from Homer and its impact on wise men with the deriving of “all rivers, all springs, and all wells from the Ocean” (1.9–11 VALK). This metaphorical use of the image of the Ocean is well-established in Byzantine rhetorical tradition and does not constitute a firm piece of evidence for intertextual dialogue amongst different authors; cf. Ioannes Sikeliotēs’s characterization of Ioannes Chrysostomos as “the Ocean of the Church” (6.472.8–19 WALZ); cf. P. ROILOS, *Ancient Greek Rhetorical Theory and Byzantine Discursive Politics: Conceptual Homologies and Politikos Logos in John Sikeliotēs: Commentary on Hermogenes*, in: *Reading Byzantium*, ed. I. Toth *et alii*. Cambridge [forthcoming].

Himself those to whom He first granted their original emergence into being; instead, He knows how to make them return to Him and assigns the government of everything to them in ineffable ways; not to mention that on account of their turning toward God and their acknowledging His will with regard to everything that they have administered they may be described as being in communion with God. Ἐν χρυσεῷ δαπέδῳ: all divine things are incomparable and absolutely unparalleled to anything else. Since, being bound by the shackles of flesh and unable to know anything about our world beyond what is present, we are used to taking whatever is most beautiful and most brilliant as an icon of what transcends the world, it therefore is not improper to call, in agreement with Holy Scripture, Christ – the Son and Word of God – sun of justice and light and brightness; it is thus also appropriate that gold depicts the splendor of all spaces above the heaven, whether the utmost radiancy of ethereal nature, or the distinctive features of something else of the same kind, or of some other unlimited territory pertinent to those immaterial essences. As for Hebe, I hold a similar view: through her, the intenseness and eagerness of the intellectual apprehension of divine and ineffable matters is denoted, I mean the undivided division of the particular existences and their unconfused union. For there is no time at which they will cease gazing at God and indulging in the splendor emanating from Him, and this is why a certain Hebe serves them, and [on top of this] she serves them nectar, which, according to the Greeks, was the most pleasant of all drinks and the most pertinent to the gods; to us nectar should mean the ineffable beauties that are to be found there – in fact, the divine Providence and God’s condescension, which supersedes rational thinking, and the future Judgment – with which the angels are invested in perpetuity. Nectar is the sphere of heaven, the nature of fire, the movement of the air, the flowing of the waters, the protruding masses and the plains of the earth, and the ineffable, simultaneous union and differentiation of all these. Nectar is also our apprehension of the divine words; “how sweet your words are to my throat, sweeter than honey to my mouth,”²⁵ he says, but those words are like this to the minds that are receptive, since to the ones that are differently disposed they seem to be worthless and unpleasant, because such minds literally suffer from the symptom of those suffering from jaundice, whose sense of taste has been entirely damaged and to whom even honey seems to be bitter. ἀλλήλους δειδέχατο. Not only do the greater and superior entities give a share of the divine light to the ones situated below, as the great Father Dionysios says, but also the ones below make the service of the ones on the lower levels known to those above. This is so with regard to each other, but as for God, they offer Him their continuous and divine doxology and the thrice Holly, Cherubic hymn, which concludes with the glorification of the only lordship. And it by no means is out of order to portray angels receiving God, for we are also told that we should act with pure heart, contrite spirit, restrained belly and tongue, abstaining from avarice, the metropolis of the sins, and from all other vices. Τρώων πόλιν εισορόωντες. Being strained within the depth of our body, either we exert ourselves to devote ourselves only to God or we grieve over (our) earthly nature. But to be in both states simultaneously, this would not be possible even for those who possess penetrating minds. By contrast, the angels both guard the heavens, since they happen to have been so ordered by God, and [at the same time] administer and oversee our matters and our worldly state (a symbol of which is the city of Troy), which is not inclined toward intelligible and mystical subjects but toward the embellished and notorious beauty of Helen – of pleasure and vanity, that is, which entice and drag the intellect. For it has been contended by the wise men that pleasure is nothing but that force which excites and impels the soul and diverts her from the course which leads back to the intellect. However, there is also another kind of pleasure, which is produced in

²⁵ Psalms 119.103.

the soul through works of divine nature, and which enters the intellect and propels it toward God. It is this one to which we should rather pay attention and we should not prefer the bad pleasure to the better one, being misled by the homonymy of the terms. For the swarm of evils attacks us through pleasure, which a wise man has compared to honey in which wasps – that is to say evil-doers and enemies of our salvation – indulge, like the Achaeans who fought the Trojans because of Helen. But we shall certainly beg God that we never attract that pleasure to ourselves through the sea of worldly affairs. But if such a thing happens, we should drive that pleasure far away as soon as possible, lest our city, I mean our soul, ends up in the hands of the enemies, if we wish to strive for and cling to it [that kind of pleasure], and, having been captivated, we spend our lives under the yoke of slavery. Such is the meaning of the myth that we have detected, as a pearl in a shell, and plucked, like a rose from the thorns.

The allegorical trope of the myths has been defined in three ways, for we may allegorize them physically, ethically, or theologically. Physically, when we reduce them to natural elements, like, for example, when in Homer the gods are engaged in war against each other (for in this way, I believe, the strife among the elements is enigmatically signified); ethically, when we produce philosophical arguments about our vices and virtues (as when in Homer Athena fights against Ares, and Hermes against Leto, and any other virtue that opposes some vice); and theologically, in the manner in which we have allegorized this particular myth and many others elsewhere.

Galenos begins his explication of the Homeric passage by offering a rather idiosyncratic version of the topos of apparent meaning that is often used in similar interpretive contexts in the tradition of Greek allegorical hermeneutics: instead of adopting the usual antithetical structure ‘misleading appearance vs. true content,’ he focuses only on the category of appearance and develops a novel contrast, that between inherent ugliness and cosmetic intervention in the original discursive corpus. The process of beautification consists not in the revelation of the actual beauty hidden under the first level of signification – as the established practice of allegorization would have it – but in the attachment of embellishments to the “body” of the text under consideration. He proceeds to substantiate the validity of his interpretive enterprise with caution – an attitude that, as Tzetzes’s criticism of Psellos’s method indicates, was certainly justified: Galenos notes that he is aware that the truth of the Christian dogma is very different from the “lies” of ancient mythology. He highlights this disparity by employing the proverbial comparison between the Myssians and the Phrygians, which significantly appears also in Psellos’s interpretation of the same Homeric passage.²⁶ The phantom of negative criticism recurs later in Galenos’s discussion, this time in clearer terms, when he refers to some possible *mempsimoiros* man who might disapprove of his allegorization. Once more he resorts to the established figurative ammunition of similar interpretive attempts and employs the metaphor of the transformation of bitter water into sweet drink, which also Psellos, drawing on Platonic vocabulary, had memorably exploited on a number of occasions.²⁷ Galenos supplements this image with that of the grafting of a wild olive tree, an analogy that he employs also in his commentary on Theogonia. Both these metaphors indicate that for him, as often for Psellos, pagan myths represent ‘wild’ cultural topoi that can (or need to) be domesticated and subjected to the redeeming husbandry of Christianizing logos – a discursive and ideological process which other commentators such as Ioannes Tzetzes

²⁶ Text in DUFFY, Michael Psellus 149: 11–12. For this proverbial expression, see E. L. LEUTSCH – F. G. SCHNEIDEWIN, *Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum*, I. Göttingen 1839, 377.

²⁷ On this metaphor in Psellos, see J. DUFFY, Bitter Brine and Sweet Fresh Water: The Anatomy of a Metaphor in Psellos, in: *Novum Millennium. Studies in Byzantine History and Culture dedicated to Paul Speck*, ed. C. Sode – S. Takács. Aldershot – Burlington 2001, 89–96.

may reject but which Galenos, like Psellos before him, views as perfectly legitimate. It is worth noting that the latter, in his explication of the same Homeric passage, would go as far as to argue with marked pomposity that wise is not the man who produces elevated discourses about “divine matters” in accordance with their proper nature, but rather he who transforms the opposite (pagan) views into more sacred ideas (καὶ σοφὸς οὐχ ὁ τὰ θεῖα κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν φύσιν ὑψ<ηλ>ογούμενος ἀλλ’ ὅς καὶ τὰ ἐναντίως ἔχοντα εἰς θειοτέραν ἰδέαν μεταποιεῖ).²⁸

In the main corpus of his exegesis, Galenos draws heavily on the interpretation of the Homeric scene by Psellos, who had already argued for symbolic connections between Zeus and God; the other Olympian gods and angelic orders; Troy and the earthly world. It is in his discussion of the multiple meanings of the nectar where Galenos appears to be more creative than his predecessor. Albeit (tacitly) agreeing with the latter’s interpretation of nectar as an allegorical allusion to metaphysical/theological ideas (the understanding of “divine matters”; divine Providence and Judgment), Galenos notes that the same divine beverage stands also for the basic natural elements: fire, air, water, earth.²⁹ The attribution of these additional allegorical associations to nectar indicates that Galenos wished to combine his “theological” exegesis with the more established “physical” one, with which he was especially familiar, as his commentary on Theogonia shows; in fact, “physical” explication constitutes the main corpus of that work, whereas Christianizing, “theological” interpretation plays a secondary, although marked, role in it. Another aspect of Galenos’s discussion of nectar’s allegorical connotations is also worth noting: the effectiveness of divine discourse’s “sweetness,” to which this drink alludes, depends, he argues, on the recipients of such a discourse: if they are adequately disposed, they can feel the pleasant impact of inspired words on them, otherwise they can sense nothing. This emphasis on the predisposition of the recipients of a particular discourse recalls a similar criterion that both pagan and Christian allegorists employ in their defenses of ambivalent or potentially scandalous elements of the texts they interpret. For instance, Proklos bases his allegorical approach to the Homeric epics on the premise that their elevated meaning is accessible only to mature and appropriately educated people, whereas children are attracted (and misled) by the texts’ first level of signification. According to his rather sophistic rearticulation of Plato’s arguments, this difference was the reason for the latter’s disapproval (through Socrates) of Homer (Kroll 72–85). “The mystical knowledge of divine matters,” Proklos emphasizes, requires appropriate receivers, whereas it remains unapproachable to “alien receptacles” (ὅλως γὰρ ἐν ἀλλοτρίαις ὑποδοχαῖς ἢ μυστικῇ τῶν θεῶν γνῶσις οὐκ ἂν ποτε ἐγγένοιτο; Kroll 82.7–8).

In his exegesis of the Song of Songs, Gregory of Nyssa comparably insists on the correlation between the moral and intellectual qualities of the readers and their interpretations: those who are not purified of carnal fantasies and desires are bound to read the sacred text in a sacrilegious manner; by contrast, people interested in divine matters and ready to study them are in the position to apprehend the real, elevated meaning of the Song. Gregory of Nyssa compares the degree of the readers’ intellectual maturity with man’s bodily and physical growing: as an infant is not expected to function as an adult and the latter is not to be cuddled by a wet nurse, so man’s “soul” should be treated according to the different stages of its development. This is the reason, Gregory of Nyssa contends, why Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs are intended for different audiences. He discerns a climactic transition from the straightforward discourse of the first work, which is appropriate for people of no advanced intellectual capacities, through Ecclesiastes, to the Song of Songs, which ar-

²⁸ Text in DUFFY, Michael Psellus 149.9–11; also *ibidem* 149. 13–15.

²⁹ In his comments on the Homeric passage, Eustathios of Thessalonike focuses on nectar’s possible physical allegorical associations, although he also allows for an allegorical interpretation (but not Christianization) of ambrosia and nectar as terms invested with divine connotations (1.691.17–692.5 VALK).

ticulates an elevated philosophical discourse and requires corresponding training from its readers.³⁰ It seems that this basic, early ‘reader-response theory’ informed also Ioannes Diakonos Galenos’s theoretical apparatus.

Later in his explication of the Homeric passage, Ioannes Diakonos includes some comments on the anagogical thinking that has determined his exegetical method: since humans are constricted by their own nature and thus cannot have direct access to transcendental truth, he argues, they employ the symbolic connections that the visible world provides them through the senses. It is by means of this process that Christ is associated with the sun and light, or brightness; in similar terms, the golden color of the floor in the Homeric description of the gods’ gathering refers to the world that lies above heavens and to the immaterial essences that are not accessible to human senses without some kind of mediation. Galenos’s brief theoretical justification of his hermeneutics as well as of elevated, symbolic discourse in general is in accord with the long ancient Greek allegorical tradition and especially with its later developments in Neoplatonic and Christian contexts, as his use of the marked term εἰκόν in this context indicates. Galenos’s interpretation exemplifies “theological” allegorization, one of the three kinds of allegorical interpretation that he mentions at the end of his piece, the other two being the physical and ethical allegorizations. The number of the hermeneutic methods that Galenos discerns conforms to traditional theoretical schemata, including also Tzetzes’s taxonomy of allegoresis, but with an important difference: in Galenos’s work, historical explication is replaced by the theological one. No doubt, in this context “theological” interpretation refers to the original text’s possible relevance for the *Christian* doctrines that may be established through allegorization. However, it should be stressed that the idea about the “theological” value of the ancient epics was foregrounded in pagan hermeneutics as well, most notably in Proklos.³¹

The concluding paragraph of Galenos’s text and especially his emphasis on the paradigmatic character of his specific interpretation indicates, I believe, that its main purpose is instructive – at least in the broader meaning of the term, since, unlike Psellos’s similar pieces, there is no reference here to any particular *educational* interaction between the author and his intended audience. Galenos’s epilogue provides also the important piece of information that he had composed theological allegorical explications of many other examples of ancient mythology. The only other systematically organized work of his that has come down to us, his commentary on Theogonia, confirms this. That commentary had an instructive function too: it was addressed to a certain Ioannes, a student at an advanced academic level, “nourished by Attic Muse.” Galenos calls his addressee *teknon*, a marked term which, even if not necessarily employed in its literal meaning here, suggests at least a close spiritual connection between the author and the intended recipient of his text.³² The instructive character of this commentary is alluded to already in the *proemium*, where Galenos emphasizes that young men who are going to be introduced to “the only true piety” should not be subjected to the pleasure that derives from ancient Greek “nonsensical discourses.” The argument about the potential detrimental impact of myths on young people is a *locus communis* in Christian approaches to pagan learning; however, in the history of Greek allegoresis, it finds a systematic and exceptionally forceful application in a pagan context, in Proklos’s defense of Homeric poetry, to which I referred above. Although Galenos’s endorsement of this general idea does not constitute evidence of a direct inter-

³⁰ Text in LANGERBECK, Gregorii Nysseni in Canticum Cantorum 17–18; see also *ibidem* 15, 25.

³¹ R. LAMBERTON, *Homer the Theologian. Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition (The transformation of the classical heritage 9)*. Berkeley 1986 remains an informative study of this topic.

³² In his brief reference to that commentary in his 1966 work on Theogonia, Martin West, following Muetzell and Flach, (unnecessarily) takes *teknon* literally and believes that Ioannes Diakonos Galenos intended his work for his namesake son (WEST, *Theogony* 71; see also MUETZELL, *De emendatione Theogoniae* 298; FLACH, *Glossen* 153).

textual allusion to Proklos here, there is no doubt that the Byzantine commentator was very familiar with Neoplatonic philosophy. In fact, in his introduction, Galenos mentions Plotinos (along with Sokrates) as a paradigm of educational practice, and later in his exegesis his use of the concept of nous echoes, I argue, Neoplatonic ideas.

Galenos's interpretation of Theogonia is consistently allegorical. From the beginning he makes it clear that his main purpose is to show that the Hesiodic work actually constitutes a *Physiogonia*. His punning on the title of the text sets the tone to his overall exegesis, which in general belongs to the traditional type of physical allegoresis: mythological figures are explicated mainly in terms of natural forces and phenomena. In his commentary, this method is often supplemented by psychological/moral interpretation, while more originality is displayed when he proposes Christianizing ("theological") readings of specific elements of Theogonia. Galenos's "theological" interpretations recall the method that he follows in his comments on Iliad 4.1-4; however, here, in contrast to that piece, Christianization does not condition his whole explication but is restricted to two major points. First, it is the myth of Prometheus that he invests with allegorical Christian connotations. Galenos begins his exegesis of the specific myth by drawing on traditional ethical/psychological allegoresis: Prometheus – the son of Iapetos, an allegorical embodiment of the velocity of nous, as, according to Galenos, the etymology of his name indicates – represents *praktikos nous*, whereas his brother Epimetheus stands for *phantastikos* or *pathetikos nous*.³³

Galenos proceeds to explain the eagle's eating Prometheus's liver in psychological terms. For him, the consumption of the Titan's liver during the day symbolizes the distraction and division of the rational part of the soul, which, "according to some men of old," resides in that part of the human body. By contrast, the regeneration of Prometheus's liver at night symbolizes the strengthening of that function of the soul due to the fact that, at that time of the day, the senses calm down and, as a result, the mind becomes sharper.³⁴ Prometheus's attempt at deceiving Zeus by offering him a dinner of bones and fat is interpreted by Galenos along similar lines as an allegorical depiction of the soul's lapse to the most pathetic state of irrationality or its "falling down" into the body – the latter being an idea, as Galenos indirectly suggests, of Neoplatonic origins.

The Byzantine allegorist elaborates on his psychological interpretation by identifying the "column" at which Prometheus was tied with the human body; the eagle with ordeals in life; Herakles with the recovered *nous*, which restores man's weaknesses to perfection. In accordance with established hermeneutic practices, Galenos corroborates his argument by explicating the etymology of Herakles's name, which, to his mind, signifies the one who "glorifies" (*kleizein*) "the earthly body" (*era*). These two phases of his psychological exegesis are supplemented by a creative Christiani-

³³ The term and concept of *pathetikos nous* is employed by Aristotle in *On the Soul* (430a10–25) to illustrate the function of that kind of nous which "becomes everything" (according to the different objects that it perceives) and which is opposed to active nous. It is worth noting that, not unlike Ioannes Diakonos Galenos, Ioannes Sikeliotes, too, identifies the function of *phantasia* with that of *pathetikos nous*, following the development of the relevant Aristotelian idea in Neoplatonic philosophy (C. WALZ, *Rhetores Graeci*, V. Stuttgart 1836, 87. 23–30). For a discussion of Sikeliotes's gnosiological ideas, see ROILOS, *Ancient Greek Rhetorical Theory and Byzantine Discursive Politics. On pathetikos nous in Neoplatonism and its connections with Aristotelian philosophy*, see H. J. BLUMENTHAL, *Aristotle and Neoplatonism in Late Antiquity: Interpretations of the De Anima*. London 1996, 17, 87.

³⁴ Text in FLACH, *Glossen* 334–335. The Old Scholia on Theogonia provide a similar interpretation (text in FLACH, *Glossen* 261). There, however, another, historical/pragmatic alternative is also put forward: Prometheus's liver is said to signify a fertile land that was governed by someone called Prometheus; the eagle stands for a river that flooded and carried away that land; Herakles was the hero who managed to channel the waters of the river into different places (text in FLACH, *Glossen* 262). The association of the liver with the functions of the intellect goes against Plato's ideas about that organ, which he describes merely as a kind of mirror that receives the impressions deriving from the mind (*Timaios* 71b). However, Plato notes that, if the liver receives positive impressions from reason, it may get some access to truth through sleeping at night, thus functioning as an instrument of divination (71d–e).

zation of the myth: “the correct understanding” of the story, Galenos suggests, involves “importing” it into “our” (i.e. Christian) “courtyard” (aule).³⁵ According to this new reading, Prometheus stands for Adam, who deceived the Creator and broke His commandment. As a result, the “first created man” was expelled from Paradise, invested with flesh, and cursed to earn his bread by sweat. His ultimate punishment was his subjection to death, from which Christ eventually liberated him. Herakles represents, therefore, the Savior, in Galenos’s Christian rendering of the story.

This allegorical identification of Herakles with Christ should be viewed, I argue, in light of a long tradition of reconciling elements of esteemed pagan culture with the theological and moral doctrines of the new religion. Already in the first centuries of Christianity, God’s Son would be associated, for instance, with Orpheus, both in art and in theoretical discourses.³⁶ Klemes of Alexandria describes Christ’s teaching as the “new Song,” which is to be distinguished from the old and deceitful one of Orpheus (Protrepitkos 1.2,4–1.3,1). In the same work, ancient Greek parallels to the Savior such as the Dioskouroi, Asklepios “the healer,” or Herakles who defeated evil, are explained as deviations from God’s true will, which was eventually fulfilled thanks to Christ (Protrepitkos 2, 26.7–2, 27.1). Ioustinos, in his First Apology (21), parallels Christ’s passion to the sufferings of Dionysos, Herakles, and Asklepios. In his Dialogue with Trypho, Ioustinos attributes such similarities, especially those concerning these three mythical figures, to the imitation of biblical truth by the ancient Greeks, who, in his view, were misled by the devil (69.3).³⁷ The complex ways in which ancient Greek myths, and specifically those connected with Herakles, were assimilated into Christian contexts are illustrated, for instance, by the emergence of a new type of Christ in the iconography of the Resurrection during the Macedonian Renaissance: Christ’s dragging out Adam from Hell, a pictorial theme which appeared in that period, has been rather convincingly interpreted as an allusion to the story of Herakles and Kerberos.³⁸

The myth about Briareos, Gyges, and Kottos provides Galenos the material for his second major “theological” intervention in Hesiod’s original story. True to his introductory promise that his commentary will reveal that *Theogonia* in fact constitutes a *Physiogonia*, Galenos first interprets the role of the three Hekatotgeires at the battle between the Olympians and the Titans as an allusion to meteorological phenomena. His detailed physical allegoresis, which echoes many aspects of previous approaches to the text, focuses on the ways in which here Hesiod allegedly describes the causes of bad weather during winter and “the battle among the elements.”³⁹ Worth mentioning is especially

³⁵ Aule refers to the familiar religious/discursive space of Christianity to which the allegorist “transfers” the original ancient story, thus revealing its “real” meaning. The term is employed in a comparable metaphorical sense already in Klemes of Alexandria, *Stromata* VI 14.108. In an interesting but neglected allegorical interpretation of the popular saying “sit and look at the courtyard and not at the sea” (κάθου και βλέπε την αυλήν και μη την θάλασσαν; text in SATHAS, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη* 541–542), Psellos explicates *aule* as an allusion to the “paternal courtyard” (πατρώα αυλή), that is Paradise, or to “practical virtue,” which is indispensable for men’s progression toward “theoretical intellect” and “God’s adobe.” In fact, Psellos employs the phrase “our courtyard” (ἡμετέρα αυλή) in this marked meaning in a number of cases, as, for instance, in a piece addressed to his students, in which he elaborates on the ideal use of pagan tradition and its relation to Christian dogmas (A. R. LITTLEWOOD, *Michael Psellus. Oratoria Minora*. Leipzig 1985, orat. 24, 88; cf. GAUTIER, *Michaelis Pselli Theologica*, opusc. 5.19; opusc. 21.71; opusc. 29.126; opusc. 95.31).

³⁶ For the depiction of Christ as Orpheus in early Christian art, see I. J. JESNIK, *The Image of Orpheus in Roman Mosaic*. Oxford 1997.

³⁷ For a discussion of the manipulation of such parallels in the works of early Christian authors, see J. DANIELOU, *Message evangelique et culture hellenistique aux IIe et IIIe siècles*. Paris 1961, 76–79.

³⁸ K. WEITZMANN, *The Survival of Mythological Representations in Early Christian and Byzantine Art and Their Impact on Christian Iconography*. *DOP* 14 (1960) 62. The same scholar has argued that a depiction of Sampson’s fighting with a lion in an eleventh-century manuscript (an illustration of the relevant incident described in the fourteenth chapter of Judges) draws from the iconography of Herakles’s similar feat.

³⁹ Text in FLACH, *Glossen* 377.

Galenos's explication of the allegorical connotations of the nectar and ambrosia that Zeus offered to the three Hekatotgcheires, which considerably differs from his interpretations of the same items of divine diet at other points of his commentary: to his mind, in this case ambrosia and nectar signify the fumes emanating from the earth and the waters that strengthen the winds in winter and cause thunderstorms or earthquakes.⁴⁰

At this point, Galenos decides to turn to "a more pious" reading of the original myth for the sake of his addressee, who, as he notes, takes pleasure in interpretations of this sort. This transition from physical allegoresis to "theological" exegesis is introduced through the metaphor of the transformation of the wild olive tree into a domesticated one,⁴¹ which, as I noted above, is also employed at the beginning of his comments on Iliad 4.1-4. According to this new approach to the myth, the confinement of the three Hekatotgcheires by their father Ouranos to the Erebos is to be read as an allusion to the era when "human nature was cast into hell and hidden under the earth." Galenos adduces (par) etymological arguments to substantiate this interpretation: the name of Κόττος, he contends, alludes to the fact that in that distant period man "was indignant (ἐγκοτεῖσθαι) at the Father" and alienated from him. "Γύγης" refers to the "earthly" (γήϊνη) and "perishable" nature of man's body. On the other hand, "Βριάρεως" signifies "the highness, the rising, and the immortality of the soul" (τὸ ὑψηλὸν καὶ μετέωρον τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τὸ ἀθάνατον).⁴² Earlier in his commentary, Galenos interpreted the name of this Hetakogcheir as meaning the one that "derives from the north pole" (ἐκ τοῦ βορείου πόλου ἴεσθαι) and "reaches excessive height and is raised up, as if to the north" (ὑπερβαίνειν ἐφ' ὕψους καὶ μετεωρίζεσθαι, οἷον ἐν τῷ βορρᾷ). At that point, Galenos insisted on the negative ethical analogies of the spatial connotations of the "etymology" of "Briareos," since, in addition to its meteorological associations, this name was said to signify those who are "proud and supercilious."⁴³ This interchangeability of diverse (but equally valid) interpretations of the same semantic unit of an original text or myth is not unique with Galenos: it exemplifies a discursive strategy legitimized by the long tradition of Greek (pagan and Christian) allegoresis and brings to the fore the authority of the interpreting subject and the flexibility of his allegorical methods, which are allowed (or, in certain cases, even expected) to manipulate the semantic potential of the original topic.

According to Galenos's theological reading of the specific episode, the period during which human beings were alienated from God, "hidden under the earth, and imprisoned in Hades," all the world "below the moon" was occupied by the "Titanic and Demonic races" (τὰ Τιτανικὰ καὶ Δαιμονικὰ φύλα), which destroyed all beings through the "desiccating, burning heat of the sin" (τῷ ξηραντικῷ τῆς ἀμαρτίας καύσωνι). Galenos employs here imagery that connects aspects of his preceding "physical" allegorization with the theological one: the reference to the "drought" caused by those destructive races, the burning heat, and the moon reduces the disparity between these two levels of interpretation while foregrounding their anagogical interrelationship. The era ruled by the Titans, Galenos continues, was followed by a new one governed by Zeus, the son of Kronos, the "messenger of the great will of the father" (ὁ τῆς μεγάλης βουλῆς τοῦ πατρὸς ἄγγελος). Once more Galenos indulges in (par)etymological allegorization: Kronos's name signifies, he argues, the father, who is "pure intellect" (koros [κορός] nous) and incomprehensible, either because his wish is "hidden and unknown and secret [even] to the angels" or because "the birth of the son from the father is beyond comprehension."

⁴⁰ Text in FLACH, Glossen 338, 339–340.

⁴¹ Text in FLACH, Glossen 340.

⁴² Text in FLACH, Glossen 340.

⁴³ Text in FLACH, Glossen 339.

Here, Galenos draws his etymological arguments directly from the (Neo)Platonic tradition. The etymology of Kronos’s name that Galenos adopts was already suggested by Plato, through Socrates, in *Kratylos* (396b). This association of Kronos with intellect was further developed in Neoplatonic philosophy. According to Plotinos, Kronos embodies the ultimate intellectual principle, which encompasses everything that is immortal and divine and which is identified with eternity, since in its future and past coincide with perpetual present.⁴⁴ In his *On Plato’s Theology* (5.3), Proklos elaborates on the idea that Kronos symbolizes pure intellect: he reigns over all intellectual gods, whose father he is, thus being “the first intellect,” which contains all intelligible entities in itself and illuminates everything with “intelligible light” (5.6).

Galenos’s option for this (Neo)Platonic association of Kronos with pure nous stands in stark contrast to the “psychological” allegorization of the same Titan adopted, for instance, by Tzetzes, who, in his *Χρονική Βίβλος*, interprets him as a symbolic embodiment of “ignorance and the darkness of the intellect.”⁴⁵ However, the (most probably) later anonymous author of *Exegesis of Hesiod’s Theogonia* adopts the (Neo)Platonic etymology and elaboration of the name of Kronos, whom he also identifies with “the first intellect.”⁴⁶ Galenos’s explication of the myth of Kronos is highly creative and is developed into a fully-fledged Christianization of the Titan’s relation to all his children too: the gods born of him and Rhea (except for Zeus, who is identified with Christ) are allegorical embodiments of the men who, despite their inherent mortality, were acknowledged by God as His children and became immortal thanks to His grace.⁴⁷ Those men are identified as the prophets and the Apostles, who resisted the spiritual enemy (the “Titanic phalanges”) and, by travelling all over the world, fought against all possible adversaries, including those in political power. In an intriguing twist of the allegorical homologies that Galenos has established so far, he metaphorically describes these inspired, brave people as Hekatogcheires and “fifty-headed” creatures – a clear reference to Kottos, Gyges, and Briareos.⁴⁸

In this context, Hesiod’s reference to the consumption of nectar and ambrosia by the Hekatogcheires is also subjected to a new explication which diverges from Galenos’s meteorological discussion of the same topic earlier in his commentary. Ambrosia and nectar are now said to symbolize several possible ideas: 1) the immortalization and deification of the human body through the incarnation of Christ; 2) the steadfast belief in Christ; 3) the sign of the cross; 4) the abolition of the curse of Adam; or 5) men’s potential ascendance to Heaven. These meanings are further corroborated by Galenos’s (par)etymological interpretations of the words ambrosia and nektar. In his view, the former denotes “the upward-going flow” (ἀμβροσία δὲ ἡ ἀναβαίνουσα ῥοή), that is, the energy of the pure intellect that enables it to elevate the perishable body and bring it to its own state, thus immortalizing it; anabrosia (ἀναβροσία) is the term that he employs to describe this transcendental movement. Nektar is discussed in connection with *ne-kros* and *ne-keros*: as the last two terms signify the one

⁴⁴ Πάντα γὰρ ἐν αὐτῷ τὰ ἀθάνατα περιέχει, νοῦν πάντα, θεὸν πάντα, ψυχὴν πᾶσαν, ἐστῶτα αἰεὶ [. . .] ἔχει οὖν πάντα ἐστῶτα ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ, καὶ ἔστι μόνον, καὶ τὸ “ἔστιν” αἰεὶ, καὶ οὐδαμοῦ τὸ μέλλον – ἔστι γὰρ καὶ τότε – οὐδὲ τὸ παρεληλυθός – οὐ γὰρ τι ἐκεῖ παρελήλυθεν – ἀλλ’ ἐνέστηκεν αἰεὶ (Enneades 5.1.4.10–11, 21–24 HENRY – SCHWYZER). Plotinos, who accepts the idea that Kronos is pure *nous*, adheres also to the associations of the latter’s name with κόρος: [. . .] Κρόνου [. . .] θεοῦ κόρου καὶ νοῦ ὄντος (Enneades 5.1.4.9–10 HENRY – SCHWYZER); νοῦς ἐν κόρῳ (Enneades 5.1.7.35 HENRY – SCHWYZER).

⁴⁵ Text in HUNGER, *Verschönerung*, vv. 122–125.

⁴⁶ Text in FLACH, *Glossen* 399; see also *ibidem*: 370 (Κρόνου, ἦτοι καθαροῦ νοός [κορὸς γὰρ ὁ καθαρὸς]). Dating this work is also problematic; according to Flach – who accepts Muetzell’s view that Ioannes Diakonon Galenos lived in the eleventh century – the anonymous *Exegesis* is later than Galenos’s work and was most probably composed in the eleventh or twelfth century.

⁴⁷ Note that this “theological” interpretation of the nature of the Olympians considerably differs from Galenos’s allegorization of the gods’ assembly in *Iliad* 4.1–4.

⁴⁸ Text in FLACH, *Glossen* 342.

who is dead, that is, “devoid of *ker*” (ἔστερημένος κηρός), so *ne-ktar* refers to the functioning of the intellect that has achieved the highest possible level of perfection by having been divested of any passion that may weigh it down (νέκταρ τὸ ἐστερημένον νόημα τοῦ καταρρέοντος καὶ καταβαρύνοντος πάθους).

Galenos’s emphasis on *nous* and its function, which recalls his other references to this philosophical principle in the commentary, should be read in view of his strong attachment to Neoplatonism. Later, he proceeds to explain also the thunderbolt of Zeus as a symbol of the sign of the cross, through which the prophets and Apostles “burnt down” the demons and cast them to Tartarus. This relatively detailed “theological” allegoresis of the myth of the Hekatocheires is complemented by some comments on the declension of the name of Zeus (the symbolic pagan embodiment of God’s Son), which echo long-established allegorical arguments going back to Plato:⁴⁹ Zeus is thus named, Galenos argues, because he is “the cause of life (*zoe*)” (ὡς μὲν ζωῆς αἴτιος Ζεὺς προσαγορεύεται); his alternative name Kronides denotes his relationship to the Father, the *koros nous*, Who was never born and with Whom the Son shares the same essence and power (ὁμοούσιος καὶ σύνθρονος). The genitive of Zeus *Dios* is explained first in grammatical terms and later in “philosophical and more elevated ones” as an allusion to the fact that it is through (*dia*) Zeus that all creatures live. Galenos concludes his allegorical commentary on Theogonia by asking Christ to inspire the “instrument” of the harmony deriving from the “Attic Muse” with His “forceful breath” and to make it (with His “all-mighty” hands) produce rhythmical sounds.⁵⁰

The replacement of the traditional type of “historical” (or “pragmatic”) explication, which was inherited from pagan antiquity, by the theological one in the theory and practice of Christianizing hermeneutics of ancient Greek texts and myths raises several questions of wider cultural significance: To what extent was that interpretive model related to the long tradition of Christian acculturation of the Hellenic past – a process that was most influentially inaugurated already in the first centuries of the new religion, in the works of authors such as Klemes of Alexandria (who had also allegorized elements of pagan culture), Ioustinos, the Cappadocian Fathers, or Ioannes Chrysostomos? Despite wider correspondences, the allegorical “transubstantiation” of pagan beliefs and characters into Christian ones differs considerably from the cultural/educational politics of the Cappadocian Fathers and their likes, who endorsed certain aspects of ancient Greek cultural heritage without, however, subjecting them to allegorical Christianization. Did the intellectuals who endorsed the Christianizing allegoresis of pagan cultural products view the latter in terms somehow comparable to the prefigurative function that traditional Christian exegesis attributed to events and characters of the Old Testament? The early example of Ioustinos and the assimilation of major figures of ancient Greek philosophy like Plato and Socrates into the canon of religious pictorial discourses in later periods indicate that this possibility should not be excluded; however, how was this Christianization reconciled with Christian dogmatic and ethical principles in those cases in which such an ideological/theoretical justification cannot be established? Was it practiced (and expected to be received) as a performance of discursive dexterity similar to that exhibited in rhetorical progymnasmata?⁵¹ Did rhetoric function as a discursive alibi for an otherwise daring or even insincere reading of esteemed exempla of pagan culture? It is no doubt important that the Christianization of elements of ancient Greek culture was more often than not (but not always) undertaken in educational contexts, which

⁴⁹ In Kratylos (396a–b), Plato provides similar comments on the name of Zeus and his relation with Kronos.

⁵⁰ Text in FLACH, Glossen 365.

⁵¹ Rhetorical exercises could accommodate daring erotic topics such as incest and bestiality, as the work of (the clergyman!) Nikephoros Basilakes in the twelfth century illustrates (on Basilakes and his progymnasmata, see ROILLOS, *Amphoteroglossia* 32–40).

may justify the discursive and ideological liberty that this process involved: that interpretive strategy was perhaps intended to exemplify the applicability of rhetorical and philosophical ideas and methods to esteemed paradigms of ancient Greek literature – a cultural territory that (because of its utmost intellectual and, most significantly, religious alterity, and by contrast to Christian texts) was safe enough to be approached with considerable hermeneutic license and creativity. In this context, it is worth noting that in the anathemas that were appended to the Synodikon of Orthodoxy following the trial of Ioannes Italos (March 1082), an intriguing distinction is drawn between the use of ancient Greek letters for educational purposes and the adoption of the (philosophical) concepts transmitted through them: in the relevant anathema, the first function is endorsed as legitimate, whereas the second one is condemned.⁵²

Especially intriguing is the case of Psellos, who, despite or perhaps because of his close and most probably dissenting (for Christian standards) attachment to ancient philosophy (especially to Neoplatonism),⁵³ indulged in a rhetorically determined dialogue with established allegorization. As I noted above, in some of his exegeses of examples of ancient Greek literature and myth, he clearly states that he was urged by his students to produce them. He employs the same argument to explain (and legitimize) his deep familiarity with different domains of human knowledge (including those of pagan origins) in his encomium on his mother (1054).⁵⁴ The self-referentiality of several of his allegorical interpretations indicates, I contend, that they should be also viewed as instantiations of an overarching ‘amphoteroglossic’ approach to discursive creativity.⁵⁵

Did allegorists of pagan literature of this sort – like Niketas (the maistor at the school of St. Petros), Michael Psellos, Ioannes Diakonos Galenos, Alexios Makrembolites (14th c.), who allegorized an almost pornographic text (Lucian’s *Loukios or the Ass*) from a Christian perspective, or Ioannes Eugenikos (15th c.), who based his allegoresis of Heliodoros’s *Aithiopika* on premises expressly similar to those adopted in the established Christian hermeneutics of the *Song of Songs*⁵⁶ – compromise the fundamental Christian virtue of truthfulness for the sake of a broader cultural politics that required or advocated the assimilation of ancient cultural capital into Christian tradition? Should we assume that the wider cognitive system which determined the discursive efficacy (production and consumption) of the constructs of this hermeneutic method presupposed epistemological or ethical principles (e.g. logical and hermeneutic consistency, gnosiological validity, sincerity, veracity, factuality) that were subjected to criteria markedly different from our modern ones? To my mind, related to the issues addressed here are indeed broader cognitive, conceptual, and socioaesthetic⁵⁷ structures and operations such as the construction, negotiation, and manipulation of *vraisemblance* and verisimilitude in “grand” cultural narratives or in more localized discourses. As I argue elsewhere, at times even hagiographical texts such as the *Life of Saint Andrew the Fool*, the *Life of Saint Makarios* of

⁵² “Anathema upon those who go through a course of Hellenic studies and are taught not simply for the sake of education but follow these empty notions and believe in them as the truth [. . .]” (trans. in N. WILSON, *Scholars of Byzantium*. London 1983, 154).

⁵³ For Psellos as a dissenting (for religious standards) philosopher, see A. KALDELLIS, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformation of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition*. Cambridge 2007, 191–224; IDEM, *Byzantine Philosophy inside and out: Orthodoxy and Dissidence in Counterpoint*, in: *The Many Faces of Byzantine Philosophy*, ed. K. Ierodiakonou – B. Byden. Athens 2012, 142–144.

⁵⁴ U. CRISCUOLO, *Michele Psello Autobiographia: Encomio per la madre*. Naples 1989, 29a.

⁵⁵ For the notion of amphoteroglossia and its importance as a discursive strategy in secular Byzantine literature, see ROILOS, *Amphoteroglossia*.

⁵⁶ I discuss the rather neglected cases of Alexios Makrembolites and Ioannes Eugenikos in ROILOS, *Amphoteroglossia* 133–135, 183, 223.

⁵⁷ The useful concept of socioaesthetics is put forward in D. YATROMANOLAKIS, *Sappho in the Making: The Early Reception* (*Hellenic Studies* 28). Cambridge, Mass. 2007.

Rome, or the Life of Saint Leo of Catania put to the test the ethical limits of narrative verisimilitude by (more or less intentionally) negotiating the established Christian criteria of veracity and truthfulness for the sake of a broader, habitually internalized and reenacted cultural and religious, discursive politics.⁵⁸

Systematic allegorical hermeneutics of ancient or secular literature was revived in the mid-eleventh century and reached its culmination in the next one, with occasional instantiations in later periods. It may be no coincidence, I argue, that this intense, often theoretically informed, critical response to ancient Greek literary and mythological tradition started in the eleventh century – a century which at its beginning saw the production of the monumental, but as yet unexplored, theoretical Christianization of ancient Greek rhetoric by Ioannes Sikeliotēs in the 1020s,⁵⁹ and the second half of which was marked by the prolific intellectual presence of Psellos. The latter's allegorical readings owe a great deal to his close familiarity with, and admiration for, Neoplatonism and especially Proklos's work. Proklos had developed a systematic and theoretically substantiated allegorization of Homeric poetry, most notably in his Commentary on the Republic, in which he reformulated and interpreted Plato's approach to poetry through an almost sophistic redefinition of the latter's argumentation against Homer. Psellos's contribution to the revival of the interest in Neoplatonism, also through his allegorizations, may well have influenced later Byzantine allegorical hermeneutics of ancient Greek literature in general and Galenos's explications of epic poetry, in particular. In the mid-twelfth century, Neoplatonism (especially Proklos's philosophy) exerted a considerable impact on the intellectual production of the time and contributed a great deal to the allegorical modulations and the overall amphoteroglossia of the contemporary novel (Eumathios Makrembolites's *Hysmine and Hysminias* and Niketas Eugenianos's *Drosilla and Charikles*) – arguably the most multilayered literary manifestation of the Komnenian Renaissance.⁶⁰ It is highly probable, although not provable, I suggest, that Galenos lived and flourished in that highly fervent intellectual environment, which would have been particularly congenial to his hermeneutic project.

⁵⁸ See P. ROILOS, *Phantasia and the Ethics of Fictionality in Byzantium: A Cognitive Anthropological Perspective*, in: *Medieval Greek Storytelling: Fictionality and Narrative in Byzantium*, ed. P. Roilos. Wiesbaden 2014, 9–30.

⁵⁹ For the systematic Christianization of ancient Greek rhetorical theory (especially of Hermogenes's *Peri Ideon*) by Sikeliotēs, see ROILOS, *Ancient Greek Rhetorical Theory and Byzantine Discursive Politics*.

⁶⁰ The revival of the interest in Proklos's philosophy in the Komnenian period and its relevance for the genre of the novel are explored in ROILOS, *Amphoteroglossia* 175–182, 198–201, 296–299.