

Augustine's *De Trinitate* in Byzantine Skepticism

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WHILE NO SCHOLAR would underestimate the influence of Augustine on the course of Latin philosophy and theology, the (quite belated) influence of Augustine on Byzantine thought has been the subject of little study. Thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Byzantium saw the translation of numerous Latin works: Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiae*, Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, even Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides*. At the same time, several more philosophically inclined translators turned their hand to Augustine, and we find his treatises translated by such prominent Greek scholars as Maximus Planudes, Demetrius Kydones, and Prochoros Kydones.¹ In 1280, Planudes undertook a most ambitious project, a complete translation of the *De trinitate*.

In spite of the many surviving manuscripts containing these translations, little research has been devoted to tracing Augustine's influence on Greek thought. Here I shall make a small contribution to this larger enterprise by identifying a previously unrecognized use of Augustine's *De trinitate* and briefly discussing its rôle in the Byzantine debate concerning skepticism.

There survives in two manuscripts a very peculiar treatise attributed to one 'Herennios' which purports to be a commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.² The neo-Platonic affinities of this work

¹ On the Greek translations of Augustine, see E. Dekkeus, "Les traductions grecques des écrits patristiques latin," *Sacri Erudiri* 5 (1953) 193-233; M. Rackl, "Die griechischen Augustinusübersetzungen," in *Miscellanea Francesco Ehrle* I (Rome 1924) 1-38; S. Valoriani, "Massimo Planude traduttore di S. Agostino," in *Atti dello VIII° Congresso internazionale di studi bizantini (Palermo 3-10 aprile 1951)* I (Rome 1953) 234; and H. Hunger, *Prochoros Kydones, Übersetzungen von acht Briefen des hl. Augustinus* (Vienna 1984).

² The text survives in two manuscripts (*B.O.Z. Cim.* 142, 1^r-98^v, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warsaw; and *Vat. gr.* 1442). The former was edited by the Polish humanist, Szymon Szymonowicz (1558-1629), also called Simon Simonides (Samość 1604), and the latter by A. Mai, *Classicorum auctorum e Vaticanis codicibus editorum* IX (Rome 1837) 513-93.

were noted in the last century, and it was at that time thought to be a work of a fifth- or sixth-century neoplatonist.³ In 1889, however, E. Heitz showed this to be a selection from earlier treatises containing passages from, among others, the Aristotelian commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias and the Neoplatonists Proclus and Damascius.⁴ One of the sources for the 'commentary' was the epitome of Aristotelian philosophy written by the Byzantine philosopher Georgios Pachymeres (1242–*ca* 1310). Since Pachymeres was active in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, we cannot assign a date to the compilation as a whole prior to the fourteenth century. Heitz attributed it to Andreas Darmarios. With the discovery of the derivative nature of this work, scholars turned their attention from it. Yet, as we shall see, it contains several interesting passages.

While Heitz succeeded in tracing most of the individual chapters of this treatise to their earlier sources, he was unable to discover the origin of the third chapter.⁵ This chapter attacked ancient skepticism; after a brief introduction, the author summarizes the skeptical arguments and provides refutation of that position. Heitz was able to show that the summary of the skeptical tropes was derived from Philo of Alexandria's *De ebrietate*, but he could find the sources for no other sections of the third chapter. Heitz thus concluded that the compiler of the treatise had contributed these sections. But the technique of the compiler, as witnessed in other chapters of this treatise, never involved a complicated synthesis of multiple texts as we find here. It is more plausible to postulate that it is a text incorporated whole (or with few changes) by the compiler. Thus, if the compiler was not responsible for the remainder of chapter three, we must continue the search for its sources in other texts.

I give here the Greek of Herennios 3.6. The text is that of Mai (*supra* n.2: 523f) from *Vat. gr.* 1442, which I have collated against *B.O.Z. Cim.* 142, 12^v–13^v (designated C).

³ The previous interpretations of this text are discussed by E. Heitz, "Die angebliche Metaphysik des Herennios," *SBBerl* (1889) 1167–90.

⁴ Heitz (*supra* n.3).

⁵ I identify Galen's *On Medical Experience* as an additional source for chapter three in "Byzantine Evidence for Galen's *On Medical Experience*," *BZ* (forthcoming). There I shall consider in more detail the context of chapter three and circumstances surrounding its production.

Πρὸς ταῦτα δὲ πάντα, ἀντυπάγομεν ἡμεῖς λόγους βραχυσυλλάβους
 μὲν, ἀλλ' ἰσχυροτάτους καὶ βεβαίους καὶ λίαν ἀναντιρρήτους, ἐν οἷς οὐ
 φοβηθησόμεθα τὸν τῶν ἐφεκτικῶν λόγον ὅτι ἀπατώμεθα· εἰ γὰρ εἶπω
 ὅτι ἀληθῶς καὶ βεβαίως γινώσκω ὅτι ζῶ, τί πρὸς ταῦτα φήσει ὁ
 5 ἐφεκτικός; εἰ γὰρ εἶποι ὅτι ἀπατῶμαι ταῦτα ὑπολαμβάνων, ψεύ-
 σεται· καὶ γὰρ καὶ ὁ ἀπατώμενος, ζῆ· εἰ δὲ ἴσως ἐρεῖ ὅτι καθεύδεις
 καὶ ἀγνοεῖς καὶ ἐν ὑπῶ βλέπεις ἄπερ λέγεις, κἂν τούτῳ ψεύδεται
 προδήλως· καὶ γὰρ καὶ ὁ καθεύδων, ζῆ, καὶ ὁ ἀγνοῶν· εἰ δὲ εἶποι ὅτι
 10 μαίνη καὶ ἀγνοεῖς, ὁμοίως ψεύδεται· καὶ γὰρ καὶ ὁ μαινόμενος, (13^p)
 ζῆ· οὐδέποτε ἄρα ἀπατηθῆναι, οὐδὲ ψεύσασθαι δύναται ὁ φάμενος
 εἰδέναι ἑαυτὸν ὅτι ζῆ· τοῦτο δὲ τὸ ῥῆμα εἰ καὶ ἀπλοῦν καὶ μονοειδές
 ἐστίν, ἀλλ' οὖν ἐπ' ἄπειρον δύναται προχωρῆσαι· ὁ γὰρ λέγων ὅτι
 οἶδα ἑμαυτὸν ὅτι ζῶ, ἐν μὲν τοι λέγει· εἰ δὲ εἶποι οἶδα ἑμαυτὸν εἰδότα
 ὅτι ζῶ, δύο δήπου λέγει· εἰ δὲ εἶποι πάλιν, ὅτι οἶδα ταῦτα δύο, τρίτον
 15 εἰδέναι ἐστίν· οὔτε δὲ δύναται καὶ τέταρτον προσθεῖναι καὶ πέμπτον·
 καὶ τοῦτο ἐπ' ἄπειρον χωρήσει ὡς εἴρηται· εἰ δὲ εἶπη πάλιν, ὅτι οἶδα
 ἑμαυτὸν καὶ ὄντα καὶ ζῶντα καὶ νοοῦντα, τίς ἂν ἔχων νοῦν ἀμφι-
 βάλλει; πάντες γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς γινώσκουσι καὶ νοοῦντας καὶ ζῶντας
 καὶ ὄντας· καὶ οὐδενί ἐστίν ἀμφίβολον τὸ μήτε τινὰ νοεῖν τὸν ζῶντα,
 20 μήτε τινὰ ζῆν τὸν μὴ ὄντα· ἐπόμενον ἄρα ἐστίν, καὶ εἶναι καὶ ζῆν τὸν
 νοῦν, ἔτι θέλοντας ἑαυτοὺς γινώσκουσι, καὶ μνημονεύοντας δὲ
 ἑαυτοὺς ἴσασι καὶ ἅμα ἴσασι, (13^v) ὧν οὐδεὶς ἂν μνημονεύοι, μὴ ὧν
 μὴ δὲ ζῶν μὴ δὲ νοῶν· περὶ πολλῶν μὲν πραγμάτων ἡμφισβήτησαν οἱ
 ἄνθρωποι· καὶ ἄλλος μὲν τοῦτο, ἕτερος δὲ ἐκεῖνο ἐδόξασεν· εἶναι δὲ
 25 ἑαυτὸν καὶ ζῆν καὶ νοεῖν καὶ μεμνήσθαι καὶ θέλειν καὶ λογίζεσθαι
 καὶ κρίνειν, οὐδεὶς ἀμφιβάλλει· ὁπότε καὶ εἰ διστάζει, καὶ ἔστι καὶ ζῆ
 καὶ νοεῖ· εἰ διστάζει, διστάζοντα ἑαυτὸν νοεῖ· εἰ διστάζει, μέμνηται
 ὅτι διστάζει· εἰ διστάζει, οἶδε ἑαυτὸν μὴ εἰδότα, καὶ πληροφορηθῆναι
 βούλεται· εἰ διστάζει, ἀναλογίζεται· εἰ διστάζει, κρίνει· ὅστις γοῦν ἐν
 30 ἑτέροις διστάζει, περὶ τούτων πάντων διστάζειν οὐκ ἂν δύναίτο.

1: ἀντεπάγομεν C 2: ἀναντιρήτους C 5: ἐφεκτός C 14: τὰ δύο C 17: ὄντως
 C 20 τὸν μὴ: τὸ μὴ C 29: βούλεται del. C

The refutation of skepticism is of particular interest to students of Augustine, for the argument used to refute the skeptic is a variant of *si enim fallor, sum* ("If I am mistaken, I exist"). The precise argument of our text is that by virtue of a variety of mental actions, such as doubting or being deceived, we must conclude that we live. Even in doubting, we are aware of ourselves as an existent entity now in the process of doubting. Through the continued application

of such doubt (*i.e.*, doubting that we doubt, then doubting that we doubt that we doubt), we can multiply our stock of discrete bits of certain knowledge *ad infinitum*. The arguments that constitute this refutation are in fact derived from Augustine; a comparison of the *si enim fallor, sum* argument found in our third chapter with the Greek version of Augustine's *De trinitate* translated by Planudes shows that this refutation of skepticism is composed of arguments from that work. Thus Planudes' translation of *De Trin.* 10.14:⁶

ζῆν δὲ ἑαυτὸν καὶ μεμνησθαι καὶ νοεῖν καὶ θέλειν καὶ λογίζεσθαι καὶ γινώσκειν καὶ κρίνειν, τίς ἀμφιβάλλοι· ὅποτε καὶ εἰ διστάζει, ζῆ. εἰ διστάζει, μέμνηται. εἰ δὲ διστάζει, διστάζον ἑαυτὸν νοεῖ. εἰ διστάζει, πληροφορηθῆναι βούλεται, εἰ διστάζει, ἀναλογίζεται· εἰ διστάζει, οἶδεν (145^r) ἑαυτὸν μὴ εἰδότα. εἰ διστάζει, κρίνει μὴ προπετῶς ἑαυτὸν δεῖν συντίθεσθαι. ὅστις ἄρα ἐτέρωθι διστάζει, περὶ τούτων πάντων διστάζειν οὐκ ἂν δύναίτο.

The refutation of skepticism found in Herennios is actually constructed from two separate passages, *De trinitate* 15.12 and 10.13f. The text of Herennios is not an exact copy of the Greek *De trinitate*, but simply reproduces short sections from it (namely, those arguments refuting skepticism). Often it adopts the vocabulary of its source while using different phrasing. It also adds to and expands upon the text of Augustine. In the case of *De trinitate* 10.14, for instance, the paraphraser entirely ignores Augustine's discussion of the philosophy of mind. While there can be no question of the dependence and chronological relationship of these two passages, it is worth a moment to ponder this influence.

To the mediaeval Greek, Augustine was little but a famous name. The recent discovery of correspondence between Augustine and the Patriarch of Constantinople shows that during Augustine's lifetime some Greeks in the East were at least marginally familiar with him.⁷ But this situation did not persist, and it is quite clear that none of Augustine's major writings was at that time translated into Greek.⁸ The influence of Augustine on the Byzantine debate con-

⁶ This tract has not been edited; I quote from *Bodl. cod. Laud.* 71, 144^r–145^r.

⁷ See H. Chadwick, "New Letters of St. Augustine," *JThS* 34 (1983) 425–52. Jerome, of course, knew of Augustine, but he is hardly evidence that the western theologian and philosopher was known among Greeks.

⁸ See Rackl (*supra* n.1) on the limited knowledge of Augustine in the East.

cerning skepticism can only have come via the new translations of his work that were being made by such scholars as Planudes. Our Byzantine author has recognized the use of the *si enim fallor, sum* argument in refuting ancient skepticism and transposed Augustine's argument from its fifth-century Latin context to his Byzantine treatise.

In contrast to the West, knowledge of ancient skepticism persisted in the Greek East.⁹ In the fourth century, for instance, Gregory of Nazianzus proclaims, "Sextuses and Pyrrhos and an opposing voice have crept into our churches as some sort of fearful and malignant disease."¹⁰ Unfortunately, nothing is known of the specific philosophical views of such skeptics, though it is clear that various authors through the centuries have some knowledge of the fundamental skeptical position. In the fourteenth century, there is a return to philosophical interest in ancient skepticism.¹¹ Theodore Metochites (*Misc. phil.* 370–77) reports a skeptical uprising among physicians, and a generation later Gregory Palamas recalls a dispute in which he engaged another follower of his teacher, the logician Barlaam of Calabria. Of this theological debate Palamas records, "that man gave free vent to words of wicked opposition, a technique which [he] had maliciously applied to things divine from the Pyrrhonic 'suspend judgment' method."¹² Palamas responds to this

⁹ For a summary of the continuing knowledge of skepticism in the East, as well as a discussion of its rediscovery in the West, see C. B. Schmitt, "The Rediscovery of Ancient Skepticism in Modern Times," in M. Burnyeat, ed., *The Skeptical Tradition* (Berkeley 1983) 225–51.

¹⁰ *Or.* 21 (*PG* 35.1096); tr. Schmitt (*supra* n.9) 234.

¹¹ Some suggestions on the rôle of our third chapter in the fourteenth-century debate can be found in "Byzantine Evidence" (*supra* n.5). For discussion of this phenomenon see Schmitt (*supra* n.9) 234f; A. A. Angelopoulos, Νικόλαος Καβάσιλας (Thessalonika 1970); P. Enepekides, "Der Briefwechsel des Mystikers Nikolaos Kabasilas," *BZ* 45 (1953) 18–46; D. M. Nicol, "The Byzantine Church and Hellenic Learning in the Fourteenth Century," *Studies in Church History* 5 (1969) 23–57; G. Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz* (Munich 1977) 152f; I. Ševčenko, "Nicolaus Cabasilas' Correspondence and the Treatment of Late Byzantine Literary Texts," *BZ* 47 (1954) 49–59. The relevant primary texts are Theodoros Metochites, *Miscellanea philosophica et historica*, ed. C. G. Müller and T. Kiessling (Leipzig 1821) 370–77; Nicephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina historia*, ed. L. Schopen (Bonn 1829–55) II 930 (§20.1); and Nicholas Cabasilas, Κατὰ τῶν λεγομένων περὶ τοῦ κριτηρίου τῆς ἀληθείας εἰ ἔστι παρὰ Πύρρωνος τοῦ καταράτου, in A. Elter and L. Radermacher, *Analecta graeca* (Bonn 1899).

¹² From an unpublished letter to Johannes Gabras; tr. Ševčenko (*supra* n.11) 51.

with polemics phrased in syllogistic form. It is unfortunate that we lack the specific arguments of this unnamed opponent, for of all these men this interlocutor of Palamas seems to have been the most philosophical in that he applied the skeptical methodology to the theological arguments of current concern.

But let us return to our author and an evaluation of his use of Augustine in his contemporary situation. The general orthodox response to the renewed threat of skepticism had been philosophically banal. The skeptics had seemingly attempted serious philosophical argumentation. Of the orthodox, it is only the author of our text who even attempts to give a rational refutation of skepticism; and, although one might find a number of serious defects in his attack on the skeptical position, he is nonetheless to be credited with presenting the only *philosophical* response to the enemies of the faith. For the moment this extraordinary philosopher-scholar must remain anonymous. But further study of the revival of skepticism in the fourteenth century might reveal the identity of the man who brought the fifth-century Latin arguments of Augustine to bear on the fourteenth-century Greek debate concerning skepticism. After the generation of Palamas, the eastern interest in skepticism waned, and this argument appears to have had no lasting influence on the Greek tradition.¹³

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