

PLETHON AND THE MALTESE DOGS

JOHN A. DEMETRACOPOULOS
UNIVERSITY OF PATRAS



I. Consuming Everything, Reimbursing Nothing: Maltese Dogs in the Court of Mistras

I.1 The Text

Plethon,¹ among his pieces of advice to the despot (1407–1443) of the Peloponnese, Theodore II Palaeologus (c. 1395–1448) in the *Συμβουλευτικός πρὸς τὸν δεσπότην Θεόδωρον περὶ τῆς Πελοποννήσου* (written between 1407 and 1415 or between 1416 and 1418),² issued an exhortation to the young despot. This advice, sound in principle, was particularly pertinent and urgent given the specific circumstances under which Theodore II was required to govern: to abstain from luxury and to prioritize readiness for defensive warfare.³ Following this admonition, Plethon

¹ 'Plethon' is the name he coined in order to allude to his pagan intellectual identity (see GEORGE SCHOLARIOS – GENNADIOS II, *Κατὰ τῶν Πλήθωνος ἀποριῶν ἐπ' Ἀριστοτέλει II*, in MARTIN JUGIE, LOUIS PETIT, XÉNOPHON A. SIDÉRIDÈS (eds.), *Œuvres complètes de Georges (Gennadios) Scholarios. Γενναδίου τοῦ Σχολαρίου ἅπαντα τὰ εὐρισκόμενα*, t. IV: *Polémique contre Pléthon – Œuvres pastorales, ascétiques, liturgiques, poétiques – Correspondance – Chronographie*, Maison de la Bonne Presse, Paris 1935, p. 114,17–115,30). For the implications of this name see, *inter alia*, JOHN A. DEMETRACOPOULOS, « Georgios Gennadios II – Scholarios' *Florilegium Thomisticum II (De fato)* and its anti-Plethonic Tenor », *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales*, 74/2 (2007), p. 301–376, at p. 369, n. 307.

² See FRANÇOIS MASAI, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistras*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1956, p. 387; BRIGITTE TAMBRUN, *Pléthon: le retour de Platon*, Vrin, Paris 2006, p. 40. On the date issue, see the bibliography collected in CHRESTOS P. BALOGLOU, *Γεώργιος Πλήθων – Γεμιστός. Ἐπὶ [sic] τῶν Πελοποννησιακῶν πραγμάτων. Βυζαντινὸ κείμενο – μετάφρασις – σχόλια*, Ελεύθερη Σκέψις, Athens 2002, p. 99. The issue remains unsettled; the text requires an annotated critical edition that would, among other matters, clarify its date. Nevertheless, the question of chronology does not impact my discussion.

³ PLETHON, *Συμβουλευτικός πρὸς τὸν δεσπότην Θεόδωρον περὶ τῆς Πελοποννήσου* 25: « Ἐξελεῖν τε μάλιστα καὶ σαυτοῦ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τρυφήν καὶ πολυτέλειαν, ἐπὶ δὲ τὰς πρὸς πόλεμον παρασκευὰς τὸ ἅπαν τρέψαι [...] » (*Παλαιολόγια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, ed. SPYRIDON P. LAMPROS, vol. IV, Athens 1930, p. 133,4–134,2; JACQUES-PAUL MIGNE (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus – Series Graeca*, Paris 1857–1866 [= PG], vol. 160, col. 861D14–862A5). I reproduce the paragraph separation as it appears in the PG, even though it does not accurately represent the structure of the work.

sharply criticized members of Theodore's court who drained the state's resources while lacking either the will or the ability to defend it when called upon. Plethon urged the despot to rid himself of such individuals. To emphasize his point, Plethon employed the following metaphor:

Εἰ δὲ καὶ ποιμένες ᾗτε, ποτέρως ἂν τῷ γάλακτι ἐκέχρησθε; Πότερα τοῦ μὲν αὐτοῖ μετρίως ἀπολαύοντες, τῷ ⁴ δὲ κύνας [1] ἂν τρέφοντες [2] ἀλκίμους τε καὶ « προβατευτικούς », τῷ ποιμνίῳ {3} ἐπὶ τὰ ἐπιβουλεύοντα {4} τῶν θηρίων [5] ἀμυννοῦντας [6], ἴνα δὴ ὑμῖν τὸ ποίμνιον {3} σωζόμενον παρείχeto ποιμέσι τε εἶναι καὶ ἐπὶ πολὺ ἀπολαύειν τῶν καρπῶν, ἢ ἀμελήσαντες τοῦ μὲν ἀμέτρως ἐνεφορεῖσθ' ἂν καὶ κατὰ τῶν ἱματίων κατεχεῖσθε, τῷ ⁵ δ' ἀντὶ κυνῶν [1] ἀλκίμων {7} Μελιταῖά [8a] τε κυνίδια [8b] καὶ ἀλώπεκας ἐτρέφετε [2] ἢ ἄρκτους, βορώτατα μὲν θηρίων, ἥκιστα δὲ φυλακτικά [9], ὑφ' ὧν ὑμῖν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἂν, τῶν ἔξωθεν ἐπιβουλεπόντων {4}, ταχὺ ἂν ἔμελλε τὸ ποίμνιον {3} διασπασθὲν οἰχήσεσθαι {10}; Παραπλησίους {11} γάρ μοι δοκεῖτε τρέφειν [2] τούτων ἐνίους τῶν πρὸς κολακείαν καὶ δόλον ὑμῖν προσφερομένων ἢ συλλήβην ἅπαντα καταπίεσθαι κεχηνότων {12} « οὐδαμοῦ » τε « τῆς ἐπιθυμίας στήναι δυναμένων ».

Let us suppose you were shepherds; how would you use the milk? Option one: You would sufficiently feed yourselves with a portion of it, and with the remaining of it you would feed strong « pastoral » dogs which would defend the flock against the wild animals that plot against it, so that the flock, preserved whole-safe, would keep you being shepherds and allow you enjoy the profits from that. Option two: in a careless way, you would fill in your belly with a portion of milk without measure (even slopping it on your clothes), and then, instead of feeding with the remaining of it strong and brave dogs, you would feed small Maltese dogs, foxes, or bears, which are the most voracious animals and at the same time the least defensive of all, because of which animals, in combination with those that lurk outside and plot, you would be doomed very soon to have your flock torn asunder and extinguished. I am bringing forward this dilemma, because I think you actually feed some of those such-like men, who are evidently prone to flatter you and plot against you,⁶ or, if

⁴ Ex editionum necnon codicum omnium τοῦ correxi; error ex imitatione τοῦ μὲν emersus esse videtur.

⁵ Ex editionum necnon codicum omnium τοῦ correxi; error ex imitatione τοῦ μὲν emersus esse videtur.

⁶ Cf. the *explicatio* of « δόλω » from AESCHYLUS's *Prometheus vinctus* 213 as « κολακεία »: « [...] παρό, 'ἀλλὰ ἐν δόλῳ'· παρό, 'ἀλλὰ κολακεία' » (*Aeschyli tragoediae superstites et deperditarum fragmenta*, t. III: *Scholia Graeca ex codicibus aucta et emendata*, ed. WILHELM DINDORF, E typographeo Academico, Oxford 1851 [repr. Olms, Hildesheim 1962], p. 198).

not plotting against you,⁷ stand with their mouths wide open to swallow everything at a gulp, « unable to restrain their greed at any point ».⁸

The three types of animals mentioned by Plethon appear to correspond one-to-one with the three kinds of vices he identified as afflicting the court. The *Μελιταῖα κυνίδια* correspond to *κολακεία* (cf. *infra*, p. 403: « [...] ἐπὶ τέρψει, ὡς τὰ Μελιταῖα »), the *ἀλώπεκες* to *δόλος*,⁹ and the *ἄρκτοι* to *ἅπαντα καταπίεσθαι κεχνηέναι*. However, while voracity is particularly associated with the *ἄρκτοι*, it is a characteristic shared by all three.

I.2 The Sources of Plethon's Reference to the Maltese Dogs

Plethon, in composing the above passage (p. 400–401), drew upon the Hesiodic didactic tradition, particularly its commentary on *Opera et Dies* 604–605¹⁰ as follows:

[...] τοῦ δὲ (sc. τοῦ κυνός [1]) τὸ ἀμυντικόν [6], ἵνα μὴ δι' ἀσθένειαν {7} μάτην τρέφεται [2]. Οὐ θηρατικόν οὖν οὐδὲ Μελιταῖον [8a] θρέψει [2] κύνα {8b} [1] γεωργός, ἀλλὰ τὸν πρὸς τὸ δάκνειν ἔτοιμον {6} καὶ τὸν « ἡμερόκοιτον ἄνθρωπον » φοβεῖν, ὃς διὰ νυκτὸς

⁷ Δόλος occurs three times in Plethon's *Ἐκ τῶν Διοδώρου καὶ Πλουτάρχου περὶ τῶν μετὰ τὴν ἐν Μαντινείᾳ μάχην ἐν κεφαλαίοις διάληψις* (X, 6; XLIV, 2 and 3; *Georgii Gemisti Plethonis opuscula de historia Graeca*, ed. ENRICO V. MALTESE, Teubner, Leipzig 1989, p. 6,28; 24,32; 25,8). In all instances, it refers to successful assassination plots.

⁸ PLETHON, *Συμβουλευτικός πρὸς τὸν δεσπότην Θεόδωρον περὶ τῆς Πελοποννήσου* 26 (ed. LAMPROS, vol. IV, p. 134,3–16; PG 160, col. 864B7–C7). My translation is partially based on the close summary of the passage by CHRISTOPHER M. WOODHOUSE (*George Gemistos Plethon. The Last of the Hellenes*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1986, p. 97). The Latin translation of the passage by GULIELMUS CANTERUS (*Πλήθωνος Πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα Ἐμμανουήλον περὶ τῶν ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ πραγμάτων. Τοῦ αὐτοῦ Συμβουλευτικός πρὸς τὸν δεσπότην Θεόδωρον περὶ τῆς Πελοποννήσου. Ex bibliotheca C. V. Ioannis Sambuci. Georgii Gemisti Plethonis de rebus Peloponnesiacis orationes duae, ex officina Christophori Plantini, Antwerpiae 1575*, p. 228–229; PG 160, col. 853B5–C2; in the reproduction of this edition in the PG, the *lacuna* at the last few lines of the translation, which was due to the *lacuna* in the Greek manuscript used for the edition, was emended), its German translation by ADOLF ELLISSEN (*Analekten der mittel- und neugriechischen Literatur*, pt. IV: *Byzantinische Paralipomena: Timarion – Mazaris – Plethon. Zweite Abtheilung: Plethon's Denkschriften über den Peloponnes*, Otto Wigand, Leipzig 1860, p. 128–129) and its German translation by WILHELM BLUM (*Georgios Gemistos Plethon. Politik, Philosophie und Rhetorik im spätbyzantinischen Reich*, Anton Hiersemann, Stuttgart 1988, p. 168) are fine. BALOGLOU's Modern Greek translation of the passage (*Γεώργιος Πλήθων - Γεμιστός*, p. 181) is not reliable.

⁹ Cf. *inter alia*, CLAUDIUS AELIANUS, *De natura animalium* XIII, 11, ed. MANUELA GARCÍA VALDÉS, LUIS ALFONSO LLERA FUEYO, LUCÍA RODRÍGUEZ, NORIEGA GUILLÉN, De Gruyter, Berlin – Novi Eboraci 2009, p. 314,15–16: « Σοφὸν γὰρ ἀπατᾶν ἀλώπηξ, καὶ δόλους οἶδεν ».

¹⁰ « [...] κύνα καρχαρόδοντα κομῆν, μὴ φείδῃ σίτου, / μὴ ποτέ σ' ἡμερόκοιτος ἀνὴρ ἀπὸ χρημάτων ἔλγεται [...] »; « [...] get a jagged-toothed dog / do not be sparing with its food, lest some day-sleeping man steal your things from you » (HESIOD, *Theogony. Works and Days. Testimonia*, ed. GLENN W. MOST, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA – London 2018, p. 137).

ἀποβλέπει {4a} οὐκ εἰς τὸ ἀπαμύνειν τὸ δῶμα, ἀλλ' εἰς {3b} τὸ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων {3} συλᾶν {10}.¹¹

The *glossa* is also preserved in a slightly different version attributed to Proclus Diadochus:

[...] τοῦ δὲ (sc. τοῦ κυνός [1]) τὸ ἀμυντικόν [6], ἵνα μὴ δι' ἀσθένειαν {7} μάτην τρέφεται [2]. Οὐ θηρατικὸν οὐδ' οὐδὲ Μελιταῖον [8a] θρέψει [2] κύνα {8b} [1] γεωργός, ἀλλὰ τὸν πρὸς τὸ δάκνειν ἔτοιμον {6} καὶ τὸν « ἡμερόκοιτον ἄνθρωπον » φοβεῖν, ὃς διαπαντὸς ἀποβλέπει {4a} οὐκ εἰς τὸ ἀναπαύειν τὸ σῶμα, ἀλλ' εἰς {3b} τὸ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων {3} συλᾶν {10}.¹²

[...] The advantage of the dog should be its defence ability, so that the farmer would not feed it in vain, because of its infirmity. Therefore, the farmer should feed neither a hunting dog nor a Maltese dog, but a dog which is eager to beat and cause fear to the « day-sleeping man », who during the night does not care about protecting his own home / giving rest to his body, but intends to steal things from the homes of the others.

Although Hesiod refers to farmers, whereas Plethon speaks of herdsmen, these professions share many similarities. As Xenophon notes in a passage where the rare term *προβατευτικός*, also used by Plethon, appears, the two professions are closely interconnected.¹³

¹¹ *Scholia vetera in « Opera et dies »* 600–605 (AGOSTINO PERTUSI (ed.), *Scholia vetera in Hesiodi Opera et dies*, Vita e pensiero, Milan 1955, p. 194,21–195,1). Numbers in brackets indicate verbal coincidences, while numbers in braces denote similarities *quoad sensum* (synonyms and paraphrases).

¹² PROCLUS DIADOCHUS, *Σχόλια εἰς τὰ « Ἔργα καὶ ἡμέρας » τοῦ Ἡσιόδου* CCXIX (ad ll. 600b–605), ll. 5–9; PATRIZIA MARZILLO (ed.), *Der Kommentar des Proklos zu Hesiods 'Werken und Tagen'. Edition, Übersetzung und Erläuterung der Fragmente*, Gunter Narr, Tübingen 2010, p. 222. Cf. *Scholia in « Opera et dies » vetera partim Procli et recentiora partim Moschopuli, Tzetzae et Joannis Galeni* 598 (THOMAS GAISFORD (ed.), *Poetae minores Graeci*, vol. II: *Scholia ad Hesiodum e codd. mss. Editio nova*, F.V. REIZII annotationibus in *Hesiodum, plurium poetarum fragmentis aliisque accessionibus aucta*, Kuehn, Leipzig 1823, p. 350,12–16). This is not the only instance where Plethon exploits Proclus. See the significant borrowings identified by VOJTECH HLADKÝ, *The Philosophy of Gemistos Plethon: Platonism in Late Byzantium, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy*, Ashgate, Burlington, VT 2014, p. 114–122; 124–125; 134; 168–180; 263–266; 275–276 (with a critical *Forschungsbericht*); see also TAMBRUN, *Pléthon*, p. 146–177; 187–188; 232 (who, however, reveals Plethon's discrepancies from Proclus's metaphysics); JOHN A. DEMETRACOPOULOS, « Christian Scepticism: The Reception of Xenophanes's B34 in Heathen and Christian Antiquity and its Sequel in Byzantine Thought », in ALISON K. FRAZIER, PATRICK NOLD (eds.), *Essays in Renaissance Thought and Letters in Honor of John Monfasani*, Brill, Leiden 2015, p. 243–445, at p. 415, n. 575.

¹³ XENOPHON, *Oeconomicus* V, 3: « [...] ἡ προβατευτικὴ τέχνη συνήπται τῇ γεωργίᾳ [...] »; « [...] the art of breeding stock is closely linked with farming [...] » (*Xenophontis opera omnia*, t. II: *Commentarii, Oeconomicus, Convivium, Apologia Socratis*. Editio altera, ed. EDGAR CARDEW MARCHANT, e typographeo Clarendoniano, Oxonii 1901, p. 187,1; XÉNOPHON, *Économique*, ed and transl. PIERRE CHANTRAINE, Les

The Maltese dogs are depicted and categorized in a strikingly similar manner in the *Suda* (likely composed in the 10th century AD):

Μελιταῖον [8a] κυνίδιον [8b] {1}. Τῶν γὰρ κυνῶν [1] οἱ μὲν ἰχνευταί, οἱ δὲ ὁμόσε τοῖς θηρίοις [5] χωροῦσιν, οἱ δὲ ἐπὶ φυλακῇ [9] τῶν κτημάτων {3} οἰκουροί, οἱ δὲ ἐπὶ τέρψει, ὡς τὰ Μελιταῖα [8a] κυνίδια [8b] {1}.¹⁴

‘Maltese small dog’. Some of the dogs are scouts; some others run after the quarries, some others look after the house as guardians, whereas certain other ones are used for the sake of pleasure, such as the Maltese dogs.

Plethon’s [1], [2] and [6] (as well as {3}, {4}, {7} and {10}) coincide exclusively with the wording of Proclus’s comment on Hesiod, whereas [5], [8], and [9] coincide exclusively with the entry from the *Suda*. This indicates that Plethon drew upon both passages.

The final element in Plethon’s depiction of the Maltese dogs is their voracity. I have identified only two relevant texts predating Plethon that address this characteristic. The first is a dictum attributed to Diogenes the Cynic, as recorded by Diogenes Laertius: « Ἐρωτηθεὶς ποδαπὸς εἴη κύων, ἔφη· ‘πεινῶν Μελιταῖος, χορτασθεὶς δὲ Μολοττικός [...] » (« [Diogenes], being asked what kind of hound he was, he replied; ‘When hungry, a Maltese; when full, a Molossian’ [...] ». Diogenes goes on by deciphering his allusive reply: « [...] two breeds which most people

Belles Lettres, Paris 1949, p. 51; XENOPHON, *Memorabilia. Oeconomicus. Symposium. Apology*, transl. EDGAR CARDEW MARCHANT, OTIS JOHNSON TODD, rev. JEFFREY HENDERSON, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA – London 2013, p. 427). Plethon concludes his *Συμβουλευτικός πρὸς τὸν δεσπότην Θεόδωρον περὶ τῆς Πελοποννήσου* with a passage from Hesiod’s *Opera et Dies*: « Οὔτε γὰρ ἐγγωρεῖ μέλλειν ἔτι [...] οὔτ’ ἄλλως ἀναβάλλεσθαι τὰ γε τοιαῦτα καλόν, οὐδ’ ὃ γε Ἡσίοδος φαύλως λέγοντι ἔοικεν, ‘αἰεὶ δ’ ἀμβολιεργὸς ἀνὴρ ἄτησι παλαίει’ » (ed. LAMBROS, vol. IV, p. 135,19–22); see HESIOD, *Opera et Dies* 410–413: « Μηδ’ ἀναβάλλεσθαι ἔς τ’ αὔριον ἐς τε ἔννηφι / οὐ γὰρ ἔτωσιοεργὸς ἀνὴρ πίμπλησι καλὴν / οὐδ’ ἀναβαλλόμενος μελέτη δέ τοι ἔργον ὀφέλλει / αἰεὶ δ’ ἀμβολιεργὸς ἀνὴρ ἄτησι παλαίει » (ed. MOST, p. 121). Plethon most likely derived the passage via SIMPLICIUS’s reproduction of it: « Καὶ τοῦτο προσήκον ἦν ἀκοῦσαι τὸν τυχόντα τέως τῶν παραινέσεων, τὸ μὴ μέλλειν λοιπὸν μηδὲ ἀναβάλλεσθαι. Αἰεὶ γὰρ ἀμβολιεργὸς ἀνὴρ ἄτησι παλαίει » (*Commentarius in Epicteti ‘Enchiridion’* LXIX, 3–5, in SIMPLICIUS, *Commentaire sur le Manuel d’Épictète. Introduction et édition critique du texte grec*, ed. ILSETRAUT HADOT, Brill, Leiden – New York – Köln 1996, p. 446–447). Cf. Plethon’s « οὔτε [...] ἐγγωρεῖ μέλλειν ἔτι [...] οὔτ’ [...] ἀναβάλλεσθαι [...] » (ibid.).

¹⁴ *Suda* M 519, in ADA ADLER (ed.), *Suidae Lexicon*, pt. III: *Lexicographi Graeci*, I.3, Teubner, Leipzig 1933, p. 355,24–27. For using Maltese dogs « for amusement », see also *Fabulae Aesopicae – Recensio prima sive Augustana* 73,1–2: « Ἔθος ἐστὶ τοῖς πλέουσιν ἐπάγεσθαι κύνας Μελιταίους καὶ πιθήκους πρὸς παραμυθίαν τοῦ πλοῦ » (BEN EDWIN PARRY (ed.), *Aesopica. A Series of Texts Relating to Aesop or Ascribed to Him or Closely Connected with the Literary Tradition that Bears his Name, Collected and Critically Edited, in Part Translated from Oriental Languages, with a Commentary and Historical Essay*, vol. I: *Greek and Latin Texts*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana 1952, p. 349 = *Fabula* 75,1–2 in AUGUST HAUSRATH, HERBERT HUNGER (eds.), *Corpus fabularum Aesopiarum. Volumen prius: fabulae Aesopicae soluta oratione conscriptae. Fasciculus prior. Editio altera*, Teubner, Leipzig 1970, p. 99). Cf. *infra*, n. 15.

praise, though for fear of fatigue they do not venture to hunt with them. So neither can you live with me, because you are afraid of the discomforts ».¹⁵ Apart from the fact that the verbal similarity of this text to Plethon's is limited to the terms *κύων* and *Μελιταῖος* – the minimal shared vocabulary necessary to link any passage to the Plethonic passage – these terms also appear in Proclus and the *Suda* ([8a/b]; see above, p. 380–381). Furthermore, Diogenes's point is irrelevant to Plethon's argument, as Plethon focuses exclusively on voracity as a defining characteristic of Maltese dogs.

The second and last – indeed, the only – possible source for the gluttony of the Maltese dogs is this brief sentence from Michael Psellos's *Oratoria minora*:

[...] ὥσπερ {11} τὰ Μελιταῖα [8a] κυνίδια [8b] {1} ὄλαις βάσει καὶ ὄλαις ὀσφρήσει περὶ τὴν λοπάδα λιχνεύη {12} [...].¹⁶

¹⁵ DIOGENES LAERTIUS, *Vitae philosophorum* VI, 55 (DIOGENES LAERTIUS, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, ed. TIZIANO DORANDI, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2013, p. 439; *Diogenis Laertii Vitae philosophorum*, ed. MIROSLAV MARCOVICH, De Gruyter, Berlin – New York 2008, p. 410,4–5; DIOGENES LAERTIUS, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, transl. ROBERT DREW HICKS, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA – London 1925, p. 57). See also *Fabulae Aesopi – Recensio prima sive Augustana* 91, 2: « Ἐχων τις κύνα Μελιταῖον [...] διετέλει [...] τῷ κυνὶ προσπαίζων [...]. [...] Ὁ δὲ κύων, ἐσθίων καὶ καθεύδων ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν καὶ μηδὲν ἐργαζόμενος [...] » (ed. PARRY, p. 357 = 93bis; ed. HAUSRATH, HUNGER, p. 119).

¹⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Oratoria minora* 18 (Εἰς τὸν Λογγίβαρδον Ἰωάννην καταναγκάζοντα αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ ἐρμηνεύσαι τάχιον τὰ μαθήματα) (To John the Lombard, Who Was Urging Him with Importunity to Faster Deliver the Lessons), ll. 7–8 (*Michaelis Pselli Oratoria minora*, ed. ANTONY ROBERT LITTLEWOOD, Teubner, Leipzig 1985, p. 65). By employing the phrase « ὄλαις βάσει », Psellos likely draws a contrast between the Maltese dogs and the reference to Laconian dogs found in SOPHOCLES's *Ajax* 5–8: « [...] μετρούμενον / ἵχνη [...] / [...] Εὖ δέ σ' ἐκφέρει / κυνὸς Λακαίνης ὥς τις εὐρινος βάσις » (see LITTLEWOOD, *ibid.*, app. font., ad loc.). In fact, Psellos explicitly mentions the Laconian dogs in this context (see the complete passage below, p. 417). Cf. THEMISTIUS, *Βασανιστής ἢ φιλόσοφος* 248C1–3: « [...] τὴν τε κύνα [...], εἰ Λάκαινα ὄντως γενναία καὶ μὴ πονηρὸν κυνίδιον, ἀλωπεκὶς ποθεν ἢ Μελιταῖα » (*Themistii Orationes quae supersunt*, ed. GLANVILLE DOWNEY, ALBERT FRANCIS NORMAN, HEINRICH SCHENKL, vol. II, Teubner, Leipzig 1971, p. 25,10–12); (Ps.-) PLUTARCH OF CHAERONEA, *De liberis educandis* 4, 3B4–7: « [...] προσαγαγὼν τοὺς δύο σκύλακας διαφῆκε, καταθεὶς εἰς μέσον λοπάδα καὶ λαγῶν κατευθὺ τῶν σκυλάκων· καὶ ὁ μὲν ἐπὶ τὸν λαγῶν ἦξεν, ὁ δ' ἐπὶ τὴν λοπάδα ὥρμησε » (*Plutarchi Moralia*, vol. I, ed. WILLIAM ROGER PATON, JOHANNES WEGEHaupt, praef. MAX POHLENZ, Teubner, Stuttgartiae – Lipsiae 1993, p. 4,26–28); (Ps.-?) PLUTARCH OF CHAERONEA, *Apophthegmata Laconica* 225F3–9: « [...] δύο σκύλακας ἀνέθρεψε ταύτου πατρὸς καὶ μητρὸς γενομένους· καὶ τὸν μὲν εἶθισε περὶ λιχνείας οἱκοὶ ἐάσας, τὸν δ' ἀπαγόμενος ἥσκησε περὶ κυνηγείας. Ἐπειτα [...] ἔθηκε [...] λιχνείας τινάς, ἀφῆκε δὲ καὶ λαγῶν· ἐκατέρου δ' ἐπὶ τὰ συνήθη ὀρμήσαντος καὶ θατέρου τὸν λαγῶν χειρωσαμένου [...] » (PLUTARQUE, *Œuvres morales*, t. III: *Traité 15 et 16: Apophthegmes de rois et de généraux – Apophthegmes laconiens*, ed. and transl. FRANÇOIS FUHRMANN, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1988, p. 200). Ps.-Plutarch does not refer to a Laconian and a Maltese dog but rather to two dogs born of the same mother and/or father yet raised under different conditions. (These passages are included in the apparatus fontium). – Χάσκω means to gape in eager expectation for food (see LSJ, s.v. 1 and 2); λιχνεύω means to gormandize (to eat greedily) and to desire greedily (see LSJ, s.v. II).

[...] like the small Maltese dogs, you gormandize to the dish by approaching it from all sides and with all of your smelling power [...].

Unless another source overlooked by me emerges as a plausible candidate for having captured Plethon's attention and accounting for his remarks on the Maltese dogs, Psellos's amusing description of their gluttony – like Plethon's simile, a critique of a human moral failing – stands as the most likely source.¹⁷ Moreover, Psellos's lines are part of a text that is significantly richer in content and more complex. As will be shown below (p. 417–420), this text was also utilized by Plethon in crafting his second and final moral application of the Maltese dogs simile, which targeted Scholarios.

1.3 The Covertly but Recognisably anti-Christian Tenor of Plethon's Denouncement of Greed

The final task in Part I is to elucidate the concluding clause of the passage from Plethon's *Συμβουλευτικός* cited above (p. 400), namely, « οὐδαμοῦ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας στήναι δυναμένων ». This phrase is a direct borrowing from its sole occurrence in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (hereafter; TLG), which appears in the following passage from John Chrysostom's (c. 350–407 AD) *Homilies on John's Gospel*:

Εἰ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι [sc. the pagans] διὰ δόξαν κενὴν τοσαύτην ἐπεδείξαντο φιλοσοφίαν, πολλῶ μᾶλλον ἡμᾶς [sc. the Christians] διὰ τὸ τῷ Θεῷ δοκοῦν χρητὴς πᾶσαν ἀρετὴν ἐπιέναι· νῦν δὲ οὐδὲ χρημάτων καταφρονοῦμεν. Ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνοι μὲν καὶ τῆς ἑαυτῶν πολλάκις ὑπερεῖδον ψυχῆς, καὶ παῖδας ἐπέδωκαν ἐν πολέμοις τῇ τῶν δαιμόνων μανίᾳ, καὶ τῆς φύσεως κατεφρόνησαν διὰ τοὺς δαίμονας, ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐδὲ « ἀργυρίου »

¹⁷ Undoubtedly, Plethon had opportunities to observe and interact with Maltese dogs in Constantinople, Mistras, and other locations, gaining knowledge of their behaviour through direct acquaintance. Nevertheless, as books are predominantly written based on other books, and considering the insightful observation that for Plethon, « books » were akin to « events » (AUBREY DILLER, « Pletho and Plutarch », *Scriptorium*, 8 (1954), p. 123–127, at p. 127), the texts cited in this paragraph were undoubtedly the primary sources for his remarks about Maltese lapdogs. A similar notion is articulated in the following Epictetean dictum from JOHN STOBÆUS's *Anthologium* IV, 5, 83: « Ὅσπερ εἰ λέοντας ἐβούλου τρέφειν, οὐκ ἂν σοι τῆς πολυτελείας τῶν ζωγρείων ἔμελεν, ἀλλὰ τῆς πράξεως τῶν ζώων, οὕτως εἰ πολιτῶν πειρᾷ προϊστασθαι, μὴ τοσοῦτον τῆς πολυτελείας τῶν ἀναστημάτων φρόντιζε, ὅποσον τῆς ἀνδρείας τῶν ἐνδιατριβόντων ἐπιμελοῦ » (*Ioannis Stobaei Anthologii libri duo posteriores*, ed. OTTO HENSE, vol. II, apud Weidmannos, Berlin, 1909, p. 225, 13–17 = *Stobaei Gnomologion Epicteteum* 62; *Epicteti Dissertationes ab Arriano digestae. Accedunt fragmenta, Enchiridion ex recensione Schweighauseri, gnomologiorum Epictetorum reliquiae, indices. Editio maior. Adiecta est tabula*, ed. HEINRICH SCHENKL, Teubner, Leipzig 1916, p. 491). Still, there is no verbal similarity between it and Plethon.

διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν¹⁸ οὐδὲ « ὀργῆς » διὰ τὸ δοκοῦν τῷ Θεῷ,¹⁹ ἀλλὰ φλεγμαίνομεν καὶ πυρεττόντων οὐδὲν ἄμεινον διακείμεθα. Καὶ καθάπερ ἐκεῖνοι τῷ κακῷ κατεχόμενοι διακαεῖς εἰσιν, οὕτω καὶ ἡμεῖς, ὥσπερ ἀπὸ πυρός τινος ἀγχόμενοι, οὐδαμοῦ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας στήναι δυνάμεθα, καὶ ὀργὴν καὶ φιλοχρηματίαν αὔζοντες. Διὰ ταῦτα αἰσχύνομαι καὶ ἐκπλήττομαι, παρὰ μὲν Ἑλλήσι βλέπων χρημάτων ὑπερορῶντας, παρὰ δὲ ἡμῖν μαινομένους ἅπαντας.

For if they, because of a vain precept, have shown so lofty a morality in their lives, much more ought we to practice all virtue, because it is God's precept to do so; but, in fact, at our time [sc. in the Christian era], we do not even despise wealth; while they have even been careless of their life, and in wars have given up their children to the madness of the devils, and have thereby despised even nature for the sake of their devils,²⁰ we, for our part, do not even despise money for the sake of Christ, nor do we leave anger aside on account of God's will, but are inflamed, and in no better state than the fevered. And just as they, when possessed by their malady, are all burning, so we, suffocated as by some fire, can stop at no point of desire, increasing both anger and avarice. On this account I am ashamed and astonished, when I behold among the Greeks men despising riches, but all mad for riches among us [sc. Christians].²¹

¹⁸ Mt. 10:9; Act. 8:20; 20:33; I Tim. 3:3; II Tim. 3:2; Hebr. 13:5.

¹⁹ Rom. 12:19; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8.

²⁰ John Chrysostom appears to reference Agamemnon, the king of Argos and general of the Greeks during the Trojan War, who sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia at Aulis at the behest of the goddess Artemis. Notably, many Christian authors before and after John Chrysostom regarded Artemis, like all the ancient gods, as a demon (cf. Ps. 95:5: « πάντες οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν δαιμόνια »). Additionally, Chrysostom seems to allude to the proverbial renunciation of wealth associated with certain Cynic philosophers. – Close to the Chrysostomian passage utilized by Plethon is the following excerpt from Plethon's disciple and staunch defender of Plato, Bessarion, where the ideal figure of the φιλόσοφοι (cf. Chrysostom's « φιλοσοφίαν ») is portrayed, explicitly and closely adhering to PLATO's *Republic* V, 485E3–486B7): « Οἷς ἔπεται σώφρονας αὐτοὺς εἶναι καὶ κοσμίους, χρημάτων καταφρονητάς [cf. Chrysostom's « χρημάτων καταφρονοῦμεν »; « κατεφρόνησαν »; « χρημάτων ὑπερορῶντας »]; φιλοχρηματίαν [cf. Chrysostom's « φιλοχρηματίαν »] γὰρ ἀνελεύθερον καὶ μικρόλογον εἶναι, ταῦτα δὲ ψυχῇ φιλοσόφου (cf. Chrysostom's « φιλοσοφίαν ») μελλούση τοῦ ὅλου καὶ παντὸς αἰὲ ἐπορέξεσθαι ἐναντιώτατα εἶναι. – Ἀδεεῖς θανάτου, οὐ δειλούς [cf. Chrysostom's « τῆς ἑαυτῶν πολλάκις ὑπερεῖδον ψυχῆς »] [...] » (BESSARION, *In Calumniatorem Platonis* IV, 3, 7; LUDWIG MOHLER, *Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist und Staatsmann. Funde und Forschungen*, Bd. II: *Bessarionis In Calumniatorem Platonis libri IV*, F. Schöningh, Paderborn 1927 [reprint: Scientia, Aalen 1967], p. 502,34–37). This is not the only instance where Bessarion drew upon Plethon; see, e.g., JOHN A. DEMETRACOPOULOS, « *Cydones Redivivus*: Bessarion's Self-placement between Greeks and Latins, the Scholastic *Quaestio*, and the Hard Quest for Truth », in SERGEI MARIEV (ed.), *Bessarion's Treasure: Editing, Translating and Interpreting Bessarion's Literary Heritage*, De Gruyter, Berlin – New York 2020, p. 23–87, at p. 59–63.

²¹ JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *In « Johannem » homiliae* LXXXIV, 3 (PG 59, col. 458–459); transl. CHARLES MARRIOTT, in PHILIPP SCHAFF (ed.), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. XIV: *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of John and the Epistle to Hebrews*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1889, p. 316, substantially emended. THOMAS AQUINAS GOGGIN's translation (SAINT

Plethon, through his exclusive and unmistakable allusion to the passage from John Chrysostom, implicitly conveys to his audience that a prominent Christian moralist like Chrysostom had, as early as the 4th/5th century, condemned the Christians' greed. He also highlighted the vices that often replace it when absent, such as θυμός (anger) and βασκανία (envy). According to Chrysostom, several pagans – remarkably, and to the Christians' shame – demonstrated moral superiority by embodying virtues like frugality, self-negation, and self-sacrifice. Plethon applies Chrysostom's critique of the average Christian to the members of the court, thereby imbuing his statement with a significance that surpasses the conventional notion that courtiers are typically motivated by personal gain at the expense of the very principles they are meant to uphold: Plethon goes further, attributing this moral failing specifically to the courtiers' Christian identity.

This implicit reference to Chrysostom provides additional independent evidence for Plethon's argument. The phrase οὐχ/μὴ ἴστασθαι τῆς ἐπιθυμίας appears frequently in Chrysostom's writings;²² however, it is only in the aforementioned

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist. Homilies 48-88*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, DC 1960, p. 425-426), which is employed by PASCHALIS GKORTSILAS in his brief discussion of the passage (« John Chrysostom and the Greeks: Hellenism and Greek Philosophy in the Rhetoric of John Chrysostom », Ph.D. Diss., University of Exeter 2017, p. 138), offers only marginal improvement.

²² See, e.g., JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *De Lazaro homiliae* II, 1: « Ὁ γὰρ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ στήσαι μὴ δυνάμενος ἐπιθυμίαν, κἂν τὰ πάντων [ex editionis πάντως correxi; see, *inter alia*, JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *In « Epistulam ad Romanos »*, prol. 4, PG 60, col. 400: « [...] ὁ πονηρὰ συνειδὼς ἑαυτῷ, κἂν τὰ πάντων περιβάλληται χρήματα, πάντων ἐστὶν ἀθλιώτερος »; cf. the passage in the Chrysostomian in origin *Ecloge i-xlvi ex diversis homiliis*, PG 63, col. 643-644: « [...] ὁ πονηρὰ συνειδὼς ἑαυτῷ, κἂν τὰ πάντων περιβέβληται χρήματα, πάντων ἐστὶν ἀθλιώτερος »; cf. Id., *In illud: « Salutate Priscillam et Aquilam »* I, 4, PG 51, col. 193: « [...] κἂν τὰ πάντα ἧς περιβεβλημένος πράγματα [...] ») περιβέβληται, πῶς οὗτος ἔσται ἐν εὐπορίᾳ ποτέ; » (PG 48, col. 982)]; Id., *In « Genesim » homiliae XXXII*, 7: « [...] τῇ τυραννίδι τῆς τῶν χρημάτων ἐπιθυμίας ἑαυτοὺς ἐκδεδωκότες οὐδέποτε ἴστανται τῆς ἐπιθυμίας, ἀλλ' ὅσω ἂν πλείονα περιβάλλωνται, τοσούτῳ μᾶλλον αἴρεται ἡ φλόξ καὶ σφοδρότερα ἡ κάμινος ἀνάπτεται » (PG 53, col. 292); Id., *In « Epistulam I ad Corinthios » homiliae XIV*, 5: « Ὁ φιλάργυρος οὐδέποτε στήσεται τῆς ἐπιθυμίας ταύτης [...] » (PG 61, col. 120). This is not the only instance that Plethon drew upon John Chrysostom (see JOHN A. DEMETRACOPOULOS, *Ἀπὸ τὴν ἱστορία τοῦ βυζαντινοῦ θωμισμοῦ: Πλήθων καὶ Θωμᾶς Ἀκινάτης* (Plethon and Thomas Aquinas; with four Appendices, including a critical edition of Plethon's *Extracta Thomistica*), Παρουσία, Athens 2004, p. 103-104; Id., « Georgios Gemistos-Plethon's Dependence on Thomas Aquinas' *Summa contra Gentiles* and *Summa Theologiae* », *Archiv für mittelalterliche Philosophie und Kultur*, 12 (2006), p. 276-341, at p. 318-319). Plethon was very likely introduced to Chrysostom's œuvre by Demetrios Cydones, who is plausibly believed to have been his teacher (see DEMETRACOPOULOS, *Πλήθων καὶ Θωμᾶς Ἀκινάτης*, p. 29, n. 22, with bibliography). Cydones composed an epigram for John Chrysostom (see GIOVANNI MERCATI, *Notizie di Procoro e Demetrio Cidone, Manuele Caleca e Teodoro Meliteniota ed altri appunti per la storia della teologia e della letteratura bizantina del secolo XIV*, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City 1931, p. 157-158), which is notably the only epigram he is known to have written (for an overview of Cydones's literary production, see FRANZ TINNEFELD, *Demetrios Kydones. Briefe. Übersetzt*

passage from the *Homilies on John's Gospel* that the full expression used by Plethon occurs; moreover, this particular passage is unique in that it employs this phrase within a moral comparison, where pagans – despite their ‘sacrilegious’ beliefs – are depicted as paragons of virtue, in contrast to the Christians, who are criticized for their moral shortcomings. Plethon, by invoking this passage, implicitly suggests that the moral accusation leveled against Christians by Chrysostom remains valid a millennium later, thus signaling that it is an ingrained vice within Christian society and governance. To address this moral failing, Plethon implies, a ruler must dismantle Christianity and replace it with a court inspired by the high moral ideals of the pagan figures whom even Chrysostom, despite his vehement anti-pagan rhetoric,²³ still praised.²⁴ In this framework, Plethon categorises the corrupt court members according to the specific vices each exhibits. He explicitly names these vices and also symbolically represents them through the use of three different animals. Among these, the Maltese dogs stand as a metaphor for the most egregious – and most vehemently condemned by Chrysostom – vice: greed.²⁵

II. On the Margins of the Mid-15th Century Plato-Aristotle Controversy: *Scholarios as a Maltese Dog*

II. 1 The Text

Plethon was to use a Maltese dogs simile once more, shortly before the end of his literary career and his life. He employed this metaphor in addressing Scholarios in the conclusion of his *Πρὸς τὰς Σχολαρίου ὑπὲρ Ἀριστοτέλους ἀντιλήψεις* (*Against Scholarios's Defence of Aristotle regarding Certain Particular Points*), a counter-reply

und erläutert. Erster Teil, Erster Halbband (Einleitung und 47 Briefe), Hierseemann, Stuttgart 1981, p. 63–72).

²³ Most of the relevant passages are compiled and analyzed in GKORTSILAS's *John Chrysostom*, p. 71–151.

²⁴ The *Συμβουλευτικός πρὸς τὸν δεσπότην Θεόδωρον περὶ τῆς Πελοποννήσου* has been convincingly argued by several scholars to embody a distinctly pagan spirit. See, e.g., TAMBRUN, *Pléthon*, p. 40–41; 182–183; DEMETRACOPOULOS, *Πλήθων καὶ Θωμάς Ἀκρινάτης*, p. 47–48; NIKITAS SINIOSOGLOU, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2011, p. 331–346 (though this should be read with caution; see, *inter alia*, CHRISTIAAN W. KAPPES, «Idolizing Paganism – Demonizing Christianity: à Propos: N. Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*», *Archiv für mittelalterliche Philosophie und Kultur*, 19 (2013), p. 210–243).

²⁵ This is not the place to speculate on why Plethon attributes such a deplorable privilege to Christians. One might conjecture that he believed an ill-organized state inevitably fosters greed among its citizens and that adhering to irrational beliefs – such as those upheld by Christians – undermines the rational part of the soul. This, in turn, necessarily allows the irrational parts of the soul, the *irascibilis* and the *concupiscibilis*, to be excessively agitated.

(1448/49)²⁶ to George Scholarios's extensive response (*Κατὰ τῶν Πλήθωνος ἀποριῶν ἐπ' Ἀριστοτέλει* / *Against Plethon's Impasses regarding Aristotle*) (1444/45)²⁷ to Plethon's short *Περὶ ὧν Ἀριστοτέλης πρὸς Πλάτωνα διαφέρεται* (*On the Issues on Which Aristotle Contentiously Disagrees with Plato*)²⁸ (early 1439), which reignited the Plato - Aristotle debate in the mid-15th century:

Εἰ δέ [1a] σε [2a] ὃ τε τυφός {3} ἔτι [2b] κατέχει {2c} καί, ἤτοι Ἀριστοτέλους [4] κηδομένῳ ἢ καὶ ὑπὸ βασκανίας [5] τῆς πρὸς [6] ἡμᾶς [7] δοκεῖ σοι {2a} ἔτι [2b] καὶ πρὸς ταυτὶ τὰ ἡμέτερα ἀντιγράφειν [i1] {i2}, καὶ δὴ ἀντίγραφε [i1] {i2} μάλα θαρρῶν, ὡς ἡμᾶς οὐκέτι οὐδ' {8a e contrario} ὁτιοῦν πρὸς γε τὰ σὰ ἐκεῖνα ἀντιγράψοντα. Ἰσμεν γὰρ ὡς, ὅσω ἂν πλείω γράψῃς {i2}, τοσούτω καὶ μᾶλλον ἀσχημονήσεις. Εἰ δέ τις καὶ δόξεις {9} τι λέγειν {i2}, ὅτι οὐκ ἄλλοις ἢ ἀμαθέσι τε ὁμοῦ καὶ μωροῖς {10} δόξεις {9} εὖ δὴ μάλα ἴσμεν· οἷων ἡμῖν ἀνδρῶν τῆς δόξης {9} οὐ πολὺ τι μέλει.²⁹ Οὐκ ὀλίγη δέ σοι εὐπορία {iii1} ἔσται λόγων [ii2]. Εἰ μὲν γὰρ « ἡκρίβους » τὰ « λεγόμενα », παγχάλεπον {ii2 e contrario} ἂν σοι ἐγίνετο τὸ ἀντιλέγειν [i1] {i2} ἡμῖν· ἐπεὶ δ' « ἀκριβοῦν » μὲν οὐθ' οἶός τ' εἶ οὐτ' ἴσως σοι πάνυ τι μέλει, ἀγαπᾷς δὲ καὶ τὰ ἐπιτυχόντα εἰκῇ³⁰ « ἐμῶν », τῶν γε τοιούτων οὐδεμία σοι ἀπορία {ii1 e contrario}. Καὶ μὲν δὴ καὶ διάβαλλε ὃ τι βούλει καὶ τῶν βλασφημιῶν {11} ἐμφοροῦ, ὥσπερ καὶ ἠπειλήσας οὐ φείσεσθαι τῶν τοιούτων, καίπερ οὐδὲ νῦν γε πεφεισμένος. Ὅ τι {11a} γὰρ ἂν βλασφημῆσιν {11b}, ἡμῶν μὲν [12] οὐχ ἄψῃ -οὐ γὰρ οὐδ' ἡμῖν προσόντα ἐρεῖς,³¹

²⁶ For the date, see WOODHOUSE, *George Gemistos Plethon*, p. 270.

²⁷ For the date (as established by M. Jugie), see FRANZ TINNEFELD, « Georgios Gennadios II. Scholarios », in CARMELLO G. CONTICELLO, VASSA CONTICELLO (eds.), *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, vol. II: XIII^e-XIX^e s., Brepols, Turnhout 2002, p. 477-549, at p. 515.

²⁸ The title is traditionally rendered in an awkward manner as « De differentiis Platonis et Aristotelis » or « On the Differences between Plato and Aristotle ». For a discussion of its proper translation, see DEMETRACOPOULOS, *Πλήθων καὶ Θωμᾶς Ἀκυνάτης*, p. 76, n. 177; TAMBRUN, *Pléthon*, p. 58.

²⁹ The phrase appears exclusively in PLATO's *Crito* 44C6-7: « ΣΩ. Ἀλλὰ τί ἡμῖν, ὦ μακάριε Κρίτων, οὕτω τῆς τῶν πολλῶν δόξης μέλει; ». Before Plethon, the passage is cited only once (JULIAN, *Εἰς τοὺς ἀπαιδεύτους κύνας* 9; GABRIEL ROCHEFORT (ed.), *L'empereur Julien. Œuvres complètes*, t. II, pt. I: *Discours de Julien Empereur*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1963, p. 155).

³⁰ Plethon, in his *Laws* I, 1 and 3, employs similar phrasing to chastise the uncritical endorsement of various opinions: « [...] πᾶσα ἀνάγκη [...] μὴ εἰκῇ ἂν τὰ προστυχόντα [cf. « τὰ ἐπιτυχόντα εἰκῇ »] αἰρεῖσθαι, ἀλλὰ προεξητακότας [cf. « ἡκρίβους » and « ἀκριβοῦν »] ἂν πρότερον ἰκανῶς [...], οὕτω τὴν αἵρεσιν ποιεῖσθαι »; « Καὶ μὴν [...] ἂν ἄτοπον εἶναι [...] τὰ προστυχόντα εἰκῇ ἂν [cf. « τὰ ἐπιτυχόντα εἰκῇ »] καὶ ἀβασανίστως παραδέχεσθαι » (CHARLES ALEXANDRE (ed.), *Πλήθωνος Νόμων συγγραφῆς τὰ σωζόμενα*. PLÉTHON, *Traité des Lois, ou recueil des fragments, en partie inédits, de cet ouvrage. Texte revu sur les manuscrits; précédé d'une notice historique et critique*, transl. AUGUSTIN PELLISSIER, Firmin Didot, Paris 1858, p. 20,23-22,4; 40,14-18). For the origins of Plethon's use of ἀκριβοῦν, see *infra*, p. 429-431.

³¹ The rare expression λέγειν προσεῖναι τί τινι, meaning 'to accuse somebody of something', appears in ORIGEN's *Contra Celsum* VII, 40, 20-22: « [...] οἰόμενος ἡμῖν προσεῖναι τὰ ἐκείνοις προσαγόμενα ἐγκλήματα ταῦτα λέγει πρὸς ἡμᾶς οὐ προσόντα ἡμῖν [...] » (ORIGÈNE, *Contre Celse*, t. IV: *Livres VII et VIII*, ed. MARCEL BORRET, Cerf, Paris 1969, p. 106; ORIGÈNE, *Contra Celsum libri VIII*, ed. MIROSLAV

φλυαρήσεις {13} δὲ τηνάλλως καὶ σαυτὸν μόνον αἰσχυνεῖς, τὴν σαυτοῦ σκαιότητα ἔτι καὶ μᾶλλον ἐπιδείξας-, ἡμῖν δέ [14] σου τὰ τοιαῦτα ἴσα {iv} {15} καὶ κυνιδίου [v1] [16a] Μελιταίου [v2] [16b] τινὸς ὑλακαῖς [vi] [17] λελόγισται τε ἤδη καὶ αὐθις λογισθήσεται [18].

If, however, pomp still [i.e. even after reading Plethon's refutation of his own *Κατὰ τῶν Πλήθωνος ἀποριῶν ἐπ' Ἀριστοτέλει*] occupies your soul and you, either out of a wish to protect Aristotle or out of envy for me, set out to write against this work of mine, too, no problem at all for my part! Go for writing against it quite with much self-confidence, because I shall not write a single word against whatever you would write. For, I know that, the longer the text you would write be, the more you will disgrace yourself. And if it turns out that some think that your writing is of some value, I very well know for sure that this will be the judgment of nobody else than those who are both ignorant and foolish, namely of persons whose opinion I, for myself, do not actually pay any attention to. Besides, you will show high facility in producing texts. In fact, if you put your claims under proper scrutiny in order to verify them, refuting me would become for you an extremely difficult task; since, though, you are not capable of scrutinizing and verifying them and perhaps you don't even care of doing so but you are content just with vomiting a flood of words in any manner whatsoever, you quite naturally have no problem at all with doing so. So, launch against me any slander you want and inflict on me whatever insult, just as you have already threatened me that you will not refrain from doing so – which, in fact, you have already let yourself do. Whatever insults you will launch, you will not affect me, because you will not be launching against me any charge that holds true, but simply prattling in a way irrelevant to the point and put shame only on yourself by exhibiting your uncouthness in a higher degree. For my part, I have so far considered, and will consider again, the base things written or to-be-written by you as if they were howls of a small Maltese dog.³²

MARCOVICH, Brill, Leiden – Boston – Köln 2001, p. 493,18–19). Plethon likely read Origen's *Contra Celsum* (see HLADKÝ, *The Philosophy of Gemistos Plethon*, p. 116).

³² PLETHON, *Πρὸς τὰς Σχολαρίων ὑπὲρ Ἀριστοτέλους ἀντιλήψεις* XXXI, 14 (*Georgii Gemisti Plethonis Contra Scholarii pro Aristotele obiectiones*, ed. ENRICO V. MALTESE, Teubner, Lipsiae 1988, p. 46,4–23 = XXXI, 10 in BERNADETTE LAGARDE (ed.), « Georges Gémiste Pléthon: *Contre les objections de Scholarios en faveur d'Aristote (Réplique)* », *Byzantion*, 59 (1989), p. 354–507, at p. 500,6–24). My translation is partially based on the close summary of a part of the passage by WOODHOUSE (*George Gemistos Plethon*, p. 307), which I have corrected and improved where necessary. The passage is a partly repetitive expansion of an earlier section of the same work: « Ἐπεὶ δὲ σὺ ἡξίωσας ἀντιλαβέσθαι, ἡμεῖς καὶ ἔτι ἀμυνοῦμεν Πλάτωνι τε καὶ ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς, οὐδὲν φροντίσαντες ὥν σὺ ἡμᾶς δεδίττη, οὐ φείσεσθαι τῶν ἐς ἡμᾶς λοιδοριῶν ἀπειλῶν, ὅς γε οὐδὲ νῦν πέφεισαι. [...] Ἐροῦμεν δ' ἃ ἐροῦμεν, οὐ πρὸς ἅπαν σου μῆκος τῶν λόγων – μωρία γὰρ ἂν ἦν πρὸς κενὸν μῆκος λόγων ἕτερον μῆκος καὶ αὐτοὺς ἀντιπαρτείνειν –, ἀλλ' ἡμῖν μὲν, ὅπου καίριον εἴη τι εἰπεῖν, εἰρήσεται, ἢ τοι ἐν οἷς δόξαις ἂν ἐνίοις οὐ πάντοι σοφοῖς λέγειν τι ἢ καὶ ἐν οἷς ἀμπολυ τοῦ ὑγιούς ἀποπεπλάνησαι, ἐάνπερ ἐλεγχόμενος ὑφῆς τι τοῦ τύφου. Τὰ δ' ἄλλα ἄλλοις παρήσομεν καταγελαῖν, οἱ ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ τῶν τε κενῶν ὑπὲρ σεαυτοῦ αὐχημάτων τῶν τε ἐς ἡμᾶς σου ἡμῶν οὐχ ἀπτομένων βλασφημιῶν καταγελάσσονται » (V, 6–7; ed. LAGARDE, p. 380,20–382,13; ed. MALTESE, p. 5,28–6,7). Latin numbers in parentheses and

The text is clear, except for the final sentence, whose bitter simile warrants further discussion. I will first examine its direct literary context and then revisit the entire passage to draw additional conclusions about Scholarios's relationship to Plethon.

II.2 Suggestions Hitherto Made

W. Blum³³ has drawn a parallel between Plethon's reference to the Maltese lapdogs and Aristotle's *Historia animalium*, where « Μελιταῖον κυνίδιον » is mentioned (IX, 6; 612b10–11). While it is not unlikely that Plethon may have read this Aristotelian text,³⁴ there is no reason to believe, as B. Lagarde, too, seems to suggest,³⁵ that this passing reference to the Maltese dogs served as a direct source for Plethon's use of the simile. In this passage, Aristotle does not discuss the Maltese dogs themselves but instead refers to the « ἰκτίς » (yellow-breasted marten), stating that this animal is as small as a Maltese lapdog.³⁶ Furthermore, Blum's reference to Theophrastus's *Characteres* XXI, 9 does not illuminate Plethon's use of the Maltese dog simile either;³⁷ Theophrastus notes that individuals who overly focus on trivial matters might, among other absurdities, erect a tomb for a deceased Maltese dog and even inscribe the breed of the dog on the tombstone.

B. Lagarde³⁸ has compared Plethon's simile to a passage from Plato's *Laws* (XII, 967C5–D1), which reads:

braces refer to verbal and content similarities between the texts and their sources (which are cited below in the same paragraph). Arabic numbers in parentheses and braces refer to verbal and content similarities between the text and the reception of it by Andronicus Callistus and Michael Apostolius in the passages quoted below in Appendix III (p. 440–442).

³³ BLUM, *Georgios Gemistos Plethon*, p. 27, n. 42.

³⁴ See one of the concluding remarks in PLETHON's *De Differentiis*: « Τί οὖν; – ἄν φαίη τις – ‘Οὐκ ἄξια τὰ Ἀριστοτέλους βιβλία μετιέναι;’. Καὶ πάννυ, τῶν γε ἐν αὐτοῖς χρησίμων ἔνεκα [...] » (BERNADETTE LAGARDE (ed.), « Georges Gémiste Pléthon: *Des différences entre Platon et Aristote* », *Byzantion*, 43 (1973), p. 312–343, at p. 343,9–12; « ‘What then? – someone might say – Are not Aristotle's books worth reading?’ Certainly, for the useful content contained within them »). Plethon repeats this in his reply to Scholarios (5,1 and 30,14; ed. LAGARDE, p. 376,16–20 and 488,29–31; ed. MALTESE, p. 4 and 42). Plethon is clear: Aristotle's writings are a must for *uti*, but not – at least non unconditionally – for *frui*.

³⁵ LAGARDE (ed.), « Georges Gémiste Pléthon: *Contre les objections* », p. 501, n. 311.

³⁶ See, e.g., ARISTOTELES, *Werke in deutscher Übersetzung*, Band 16: *Zoologische Schriften*, I: *Historia animalium*, Teil V: *Buch VIII und IX*, ed. STEFAN SCHNIEDERS, De Gruyter, Berlin – Boston 2019, p. 742 ad loc.

³⁷ « Καὶ κυναρίου δὲ Μελιταίου τελευτήσαντος αὐτῷ, μνήμα ποιῆσαι καὶ στηλίδιον, ποιήσας ἐπιγράψαι: ‘Κλάδος Μελιταῖος’ » (THEOPHRAST, *Charaktere. Herausgegeben und erklärt*, Band I: *Textgeschichte und Text*, ed. PETER STEINMETZ, Max Hueber, Munich 1960, p. 241).

³⁸ LAGARDE (ed.), « Georges Gémiste Pléthon: *Contre les objections* », p. 501, n. 311.

Ταῦτ' ἦν τὰ τότε ἐξεργασμένα πολλὰς ἀθεότητος καὶ δυσχερείας τῶν τοιούτων ἄπτεσθαι, καὶ δὴ καὶ λοιδορήσεις γε ἐπῆλθον ποιηταῖς, τοὺς φιλοσοφοῦντας κυσὶ ματαίαις ἀπεικάζοντας χρωμέναισιν ὕλακαῖς, ἄλλα τε αὖ ἀνόητ' εἶπεῖν.

These were the views which, at that time, caused these thinkers to incur many charges of atheism and much odium, and which also incited the poets to abuse them – by likening philosophers to ‘dogs howling at the moon’, with other such senseless slanders.³⁹

It was perhaps the words « ἀπεικάζοντας » and « ὕλακαῖς » that led her to believe this was Plethon's source. However, although Plethon had certainly read Plato's *Laws*,⁴⁰ the point in the quoted Platonic passage is irrelevant to Plethon's argument. The Platonic passage does not mention Maltese dogs but refers to dogs in general. Moreover, as is clear from the context of these lines, Plato is illustrating how certain unnamed poets mocked materialist philosophers who, in their overconfidence, mistakenly equated the nature of the heavenly bodies with that of the terrestrial ones, failing to recognize the divine souls that govern the former. This serves as a depiction of philosophers whose biases led them to fall short of the grandeur of their subject matter. Could it be that Plethon, in a similar manner, compared the writings and ideas of a bad philosopher, namely Scholarios, to those of his own? I believe this would involve stretching Plato's passage to fit Plethon's argument while overlooking the important differences between them.

B. Lagarde⁴¹ also directs readers of Plethon's passage to a humorous episode from Lucian's *Symposium seu Lapithae* 19, apparently considering it Plethon's actual source:

Ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ εἰς τὸν Ἀλκιδάμαντα ὁμοίον τι ἀπέρριψε Ἑλιταῖον κυνίδιον' προσειπὼν αὐτόν, ἀγανακτήσας ἐκείνος – καὶ πάλοι δὲ δῆλος ἦν φθονῶν αὐτῷ εὐδοκιμοῦντι καὶ κατέχοντι τὸ συμπόσιον – ἀπορρίψας τὸν τρίβωνα προὔκαλεῖτό οἱ

³⁹ PLATO, *Laws*, vol. II: *Books 7–12*, transl. ROBERT GREGG BURY, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA – London 1926, p. 563. Cf. PLATO, *Republic* X, 607B7–8: « [...] ἡ 'λακέρυζα πρὸς δεσπότην κύων ἐκείνη κραυγάζουσα [...] » / « [...] the 'yelping hound barking at her master [...] » (PLATO, *The Republic*, vol. II: *Books VI–X*, transl. PAUL SHOREY, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA – London 1937², p. 465).

⁴⁰ A strict demonstration of this can be found in Plethon's careful reproduction of certain specific phrases that appear only in Plato's *Laws* (see DEMETRACOPOULOS, « Christian Scepticism », p. 416–417; 420; 424. Cf. ID., « Τὰ προβλήματα τῆς μεθόδου (*modus sciendi*) καὶ τῆς γνωσιμότητος τῶν ὄντων στή *Νόμων συγγραφὴν* τοῦ Γεωργίου Γεμιστοῦ ἢ Πλήθωνος: ἱστορική καὶ κριτική προσέγγιση » (« The Problems of Method (*modus sciendi*) and Degree of Knowledge in Plethon's *Laws*: An Historical and Critical Approach »), *Νέα Κοινωνιολογία*, 15/3 (« Αφιέρωμα στον Γεώργιο Γεμιστό-Πλήθωνα ») (2001), p. 41–55, at p. 50, n. 4. See also RUTH WEBB, « The *Nomoi* of Gemistos Plethon in the Light of Plato's *Laws* », *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 52 (1989), p. 214–219, at p. 217–219.

⁴¹ LAGARDE (ed.), « Georges Gémiste Pléthon: *Contre les objections* », p. 501, n. 311.

παγκρατιάζειν, εἰ δὲ μή, κατοίσειν αὐτοῦ ἔφη τὴν βακτηρίαν. Οὕτω δὲ ὁ κακοδαίμων ὁ Σατυρίων – τοῦτο γὰρ ὁ γελωτοποιὸς ἐκαλεῖτο – συστάς ἐπαγκρατίαζε. Καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα ὑπερήδιστον ἦν, φιλόσοφος ἀνὴρ γελωτοποιῶ ἀνταιρόμενος καὶ παίων καὶ παιόμενος ἐν τῷ μέρει. Οἱ παρόντες δὲ οἱ μὲν ἠδούντο, οἱ δὲ ἐγέλων, ἄχρι ἀπηγόρευσε παιόμενος ὁ Ἀλκιδάμας ὑπὸ συγκεκροτημένου ἀνθρωπίσκου καταγωνισθεῖς. Γέλως οὖν πολὺς ἐξέχυθη ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς.

But when he [sc. Satyrion the joker] took a fling at Alcidamas in the same way, calling him a Maltese lapdog, Alcidamas got angry: indeed, for a long time it had been plain that he was jealous because the other fellow was making a hit and holding the attention of the room. So, throwing off his philosopher’s cloak, he challenged him to fight, or else, he said, he would lay his staff on him. Then the poor Satyrion, for that was the clown’s name, stood up to him and fought. It was delicious to see a philosopher squaring off at a clown, and giving and receiving blows in turn. Though some of onlookers were disgusted, others kept laughing, until finally Alcidamas had enough of his punishment, well beaten by a tough little dwarf. So they got roundly laughed at.⁴²

One may surmise that Satyrion’s description of the *persona* of the Cynic philosopher Alcidamas as « a Maltese lapdog » was related to a recurring critique of philosophers in Lucian’s works, specifically their tendency to speak profusely without adhering to their own teachings, or even act in direct contradiction to their precepts.⁴³ This flaw was presumably emphasized by the etymology of Alcidamas’s name and was evidently substantiated by the fact that Alcidamas was eventually defeated by the joker. The situation is further complicated by Alcidamas’s association with Cynicism, as Cynics were expected either to remain unaffected by insults⁴⁴ or to robustly defend themselves when necessary.⁴⁵

⁴² *Luciani opera*, t. I: *Libelli 10–25*, ed. MATTHEW DONALD MACLEOD, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1972, p. 151,23–152,4; transl. AUSTIN MORRIS HARMON (LUCIAN, *Phalaris. Hippias or The Bath. Dionysus. Heracles. Amber or The Swans. The Fly. Nigrinus. Demonax. The Hall. My Native Land. Octogenarians. A True Story. Slander. The Consonants at Law. The Carousal (Symposium) or The Lapiths*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA – London 1913, p. 431–433).

⁴³ See, e.g., LUCIAN, *Reviviscentes sive piscator* 44–45 (*Luciani opera*, t. II: *Libelli 26–43*, ed. MATTHEW DONALD MACLEOD, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1974, p. 78,10–79,5). For Lucian’s attitude to Cynics, see, *inter alia*, the critical *Forschungsbericht* by PHILIP R. BOSMAN, « Lucian among the Cynics: the Zeus Refuted and Cynic Tradition », *Classical Quarterly*, 62/2 (2012), p. 785–795.

⁴⁴ See, e.g., DIOGENES LAERTIUS, *Vitae philosophorum* VI, 54: « Πρὸς τὸν εἰπόντα, ‘πολλοὶ σου καταγελῶσιν,’ ‘ἀλλ’ ἐγὼ,’ ἔφη, ‘οὐ καταγελῶμαι’ » (« When he was told that many people laugh at him, he made answer, ‘But I am not laughed down’ »; ed. DORANDI, p. 439, ll. 400–402; ed. MARCOVICH, p. 409,10–11; transl. HICKS, p. 57).

⁴⁵ There is no evidence to suggest that the Alcidamas portrayed as a *dramatis persona* in LUCIAN’s *Symposium*, the Alcidamas mentioned in (Ps.-) LUCIAN’s *Demosthenis encomium* and Alcidamas of Elea are the same individual (see, e.g., RICHARD GOULET, « Alcidamas », in RICHARD GOULET (ed.), *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, vol. I, Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, Paris 1994,

However, except for the insult of calling someone ‘a small Maltese dog’, there is nothing in Lucian’s text that parallels Plethon’s use of this metaphor. In Lucian, both the joker and the philosopher are portrayed as light, somewhat comedic figures. The philosopher, by feeling offended and reacting awkwardly to the joke, becomes more ridiculous than the joker, who is absurd by nature. Clearly, neither of the figures in Lucian’s narrative corresponds to Scholarios or Plethon; in fact, Plethon does not make himself part of the simile he applies so bitterly to his adversary.

III. *The Actual Sources and Their Import*

III.1 First Source

So, what was the actual source of Plethon’s use of the Maltese dog simile, and what did it signify? From the occurrences of *Μελιταῖον κυνίδιον* in Greek literature prior to Plethon, two references – both from the *corpus Psellianum* – are particularly close to Plethon’s usage. The first is found in Ps.-Michael Psellos’s *Introductio in « Psalmos »*. The fact that this text is preserved in two 13th-century manuscripts and one from the 14th century⁴⁶ indicates that it predates Plethon and could have served as a source for him. The relevant passage, verses 122–137 of the poem, read:

Ἐγὼ δ’ ὁ ταῦτα γεγραφὼς ἔρῳ σοι καὶ τι πλέον.
Εἰδὼν ποτε κυνίδιον [v1] ἀπὸ τῶν Μελιταίων [v2],
παρῆν δὲ καὶ τις αὐλητῆς ἀπὸ τῶν ἀγοραίων,
καλάμῳ μέλος ἐνηχῶν μετὰ κιθαρωδίας.
Ὅταν δ’ αὐτὸς ἐνέπνευσε τὸ μέλος τῷ καλάμῳ,
ἐκεῖνο τὸ κυνίδιον [v1], ἃν ἔτυχεν ἐσθίον,
ἐνέκοπτε τὰ τῆς τροφῆς, ἀπέρριπτε τὸ βρώμα,

p. 101, n° 87; MICHEL NARCY, « Alcidas d’Élée », in GOULET (ed.), op. cit., p. 101–110, at p. 101–102). However, if one were to entertain the possibility of such a connection, another layer of irony emerges. Alcidas of Elea is reported to have said: « Ἐλευθέρους ἀφῆκε πάντας θεός οὐδένα δοῦλον ἢ φύσις πεποίηκεν » (fr. 3; ALCIDAMANTE, *Orazioni e frammenti*, ed. and transl. GUIDO AVEZZÙ, ‘L’Erma’ di Bretschneider, Rome 1982, p. 36). This egalitarian proclamation stands in stark contrast to Alcidas’s disparagement of the trickster Satyrion. Furthermore, the fact that Alcidas was eventually defeated by a dwarf served as a harsh lesson: such seemingly degenerate or defective individuals can, in fact, prove superior to so-called ‘normal’ humans, even those who are considered superior, such as philosophers.

⁴⁶ See *Michaelis Pselli poemata*, ed. LEENDERT G. WESTERINK, Teubner, Leipzig, 1992, p. X. Cf. ELPIDIO MIONI, *Bibliothecae divi Marci Venetiarum codices graeci manuscripti*, vol. II: *Thesaurus antiquus: codices 300–625*, Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Rome 1985, p. 490–491; PAUL MOORE, *Iter Psellianum. A Detailed List of Manuscript Sources for All Works Attributed to Michael Psellos, Including a Comprehensive Bibliography*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto 2005, p. 505 (N° 1105).

ἡρέμα τε προσέβαινε τοῦ μουσικοῦ πλησίον,
καὶ τοῦτον βλέπον ἀτενῶς ἅμα καὶ περισσῆνον
ἐκ λεπτοτάτης ὑλακῆς [vi] ὥσπερ {iv} ἀντεμελώδει [i1] {i2}.
Ἦνικά δὲ κατέπαυεν ὁ τραγωδὸς τὸ μέλος {vi},
ἐπὶ τὸ λείπον τῆς τροφῆς ὑπέστρεφεν ὁ κύων·
ὅταν δὲ πάλιν τὸν αὐλὸν ὑπέπνευσεν ἐκεῖνος,
καὶ πάλιν τὸ κυνίδιον [v1] τὴν βρῶσιν διωθεῖτο
καὶ γαληνῶς προσυλακτοῦν [vi] ἀντάδειν [i1] {i2} πῶς ἐφύκει {4}.
Ἀπλῶς δ', ὅσάκις ἦσθετο τὸν αὐλητὴν αὐλοῦντα,
τῶν ἄλλων πάντων ἀμελοῦν ἐξήρτητο τοῦ μέλους.⁴⁷

I, who wrote this poem, will tell you yet one thing more.
Once I saw a small dog, of the Maltese breed,
and there was an itinerant piper somewhere nearby,
who was playing a song with guitar accompaniment.
As soon as he began to play the flute,
that little dog, if it happened to eat,
stopped eating, gave up food,
walked slowly to the musician,
and, staring at him and wagging his tail,
it made a thin voice as if it was singing to him too.
When the musician stopped playing,
the dog returned to the food he had left.
But as soon as he began to play again,
the little dog gave up the food again
and uttering a calm voice it looked like singing to him too.
And generally, whenever it heard the piper play,
it would drop whatever he was doing and hang on to the music he was
listening to.

In Ps.-Psellos's text, the terms *ἐσθίειν*, *τροφή*, *βρῶμα* and *βρῶσις* coincide or are synonyms with [2] (*τρέφειν*) in the Plethonic passage from *De rebus Peloponnesiacis oratio I* quoted above (p. 400–401). However, these terms do not present – at least explicitly – the Maltese lapdogs as voracious but merely depict them as eating food, a simple activity that is interrupted whenever they listen to music. In such cases, Ps.-Psellos reports, eating is replaced by *ὑλακή* (howling) or *ἀντιμελωδεῖν* (counter-melody singing) or *ἀντάδειν* (responding with song), which he finds remarkable. Ps.-Psellos's aim in this section of his poem⁴⁸ is to emphasize the power of music, illustrating its effects even on beings that are not naturally inclined to or susceptible to it, such as non-human animals, including horses, other tame animals, and Maltese dogs. Aside from the very name of the dog in the simile, i.e.,

⁴⁷ PS.-MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Poema* 53, ll. 122–137 (ed. WESTERINK, p. 307). On the manuscript tradition of the writing, see *Ibid.*, p. VIII; x; xxvii.

⁴⁸ PS.-MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Poema* 53, ll. 113–137 (ed. WESTERINK, p. 306–307).

κύων Μελιταῖος or κυνίδιον Μελιταῖον, and the broadly shared reference to eating as an activity of these dogs, the sources of Plethon's simile in the *De rebus Peloponnesiacis oratio I* (see above, p. 401–405) do not explain either the phrasing or the content of the simile used by Plethon in his reply to Scholarios.

III.2 Second Source

Let us now consider the context of the couple of lines from Michael Psellos quoted above (p. 404–405). These lines come from a text addressed by Psellos (1018–1078) to his disciple, John Italos (c. 1025–?), during the latter's apprenticeship under him. In this text, the teacher reprimands the disciple for rashly urging him to deliver lessons more quickly. Psellos responds authoritatively, explaining that such promptness is not to be praised, as it stems from overconfidence and a failure to appreciate the complexity and depth of the scientific subjects the student is meant to master:

[...] Οὐπω ἔγνωκας ὅποιον τῶν μαθημάτων τὸ μέγεθος καὶ ἡλικὸν τὸ ὕψος καὶ ὅτι οὐ διὰ ῥαδίας ἢ πρὸς ἐκεῖνα ἄνοδος [...]. Σὺ δὲ ἄρα, ὥσπερ τὰς ἐπὶ τῶν αἰγιαλῶν ψηφίδας ἀναιρήσεσθαι μέλλων, οὕτως ἐπὶ τὴν γεωμετρίαν ἀπεριμερίμνως χωρεῖς, καὶ οὐδὲν πρᾶγμα εἰ καὶ ἄλλοθί ποί βαδίζεις· θελήσαι γάρ δεῖ μόνον πρὸς τὴν κατάληψιν, καὶ κατείληπται ἢ ἀπόδειξις!⁴⁹

You have not yet become aware of the grandeur and the height of the disciplines; you ignore that the way which leads to their height is not an easy one. [...] You, however, move to understand geometry carelessly, as if you were going to pick up pebbles from the beaches, and you do not care if it happens that you go the wrong way; you think that, to understand a proof, all you have to do is want it, and once you want it, bang! You get it!

In the opening paragraph of his letter to Italos, Psellos employs the Maltese dog metaphor:

Ἡ περὶ τὰς ἐπιστήμας προθυμία σου πολλοῦ ἂν ἀξία ἦν, εἰ, καθάπερ ἐπὶ ζυγοῦ σταθμωμένη, πραγμάτων ἐναντίων ὄλω βάρει καὶ ὄλαις ῥοπαῖς, πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον ἀπένευεν. Ἐπεὶ δὲ μεῖζον τῆς ἀληθείας τὸ ὑπονοούμενόν σοι πεφώραται, καὶ οὐχ, ὥσπερ αἱ Λάκαιναι κύνες, λαγῶ καὶ λοπάδος προτεθειμένων ἐπὶ τὸ ζῶον ὀρμαῖς, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ {iv} τὰ Μελιταῖα [v2] κυνίδια [v1] ὄλαις βάσεισι⁵⁰ καὶ ὄλαις ὀσφρήσεσι περὶ τὴν

⁴⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Oratoria minora* 18 (Εἰς τὸν Λογγίβαρδον Ἰωάννην καταναγκάζοντα αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ ἐρμηνεύσαι τάχιον τὰ μαθήματα) (To John the Lombard, Who Was Urging Him with Importunity to Faster Deliver the Lessons), ll. 37–44 (ed. LITTLEWOOD, p. 66–67).

⁵⁰ Cf. above, p. 404, n. 16.

λοπάδα λιχνεύη, οὐ πάνυ σου τὸ ἐν λόγοις « πρόθυμον »⁵¹ « ἄγαμαι ». Εὐκολος {ii1} γὰρ ἢ γλωττα {ii1} τὰ κρείττω εἰπεῖν [ii2] καὶ ῥάστη πρὸς ἄμφω τὰ μέρη τῶν λόγων μεταπεσεῖν, ἀλλ' οἱ καιροὶ ἐλέγχουσι τὰς ἀσυμβάτους φωνὰς πρὸς τὰ πράγματα.⁵² [...]

Your zeal for laying hold of the various disciplines would be quite praiseworthy, if, tested by means of a beam of balance against all the casting, counter-balancing weights, eventually bent towards the good and noble things. Since, however, the point of your words has been caught to exceed the truth, and, unlike what the female Laconian dogs do when standing between hare and a dish of food, you don't run after the animal, but, like the small Maltese dogs, you gormandize to the dish with all your steps and with all of your smelling power, I do not approve at all of your eagerness to study. Indeed, it is easy for one to speak in lofty terms and, at the same time, it is absolutely and equally easy for one's tongue to be eventually verified or falsified; it is the crucial, the test moment, so to speak, that disproves the statements that are not in conformity with things.

Psellos contrasts « female Laconian dogs » with « Maltese dogs » to illustrate his point. Elsewhere, he describes the former as exceptionally skilled in scouting, owing to both their superior sense of smell and their intelligence.⁵³ He portrays them similarly to the so-called Chrysippus-dog,⁵⁴ which, as if being rational, when chasing a quarry, reaches a point where three roads converge; after sniffing the air of two of the paths and finding no trace of the quarry, the dog skips smelling the air of the third path, intuitively choosing it as the correct one and immediately running down it. Furthermore, to carry out their task as scouts, these dogs set aside

⁵¹ The phrase ἐν λόγοις προθυμεῖσθαι is extremely rare; for an occurrence of it, see EUSTATHIUS OF THESSALONICA, *Epitaphius in imperatorem Manuelem I Comnenum* 3 (EMMANUEL BOURBOUHAKIS (ed.), *Not Composed in a Chance Manner: the Epitaphios for Manuel I Komnenos by Eustathios of Thessalonike*, Uppsala University Press, Uppsala 2017, p. 4). Psellos's προθυμία derives from the Proclean passage to be cited right away.

⁵² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Oratoria minora* 18, ll. 1–11 (ed. LITTLEWOOD, p. 65–66). For the identification of Ἰωάννης Λογγίβαρδος to John Italos, see Ibid. p. 65; cf. MOORE, *Iter Psellianum*, p. 347 (n° 912); 582 s.v.

⁵³ Cf. ARISTOTLE's mention that the females are by nature smarter than the males (*Historia animalium* IX, 1, 608a27–28: « [...] αἱ Λάκαιναι κύνες αἱ θήλειαι εὐφυέστεραι τῶν ἀρρένων εἰσὶν »).

⁵⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Epistle* 54, l. 11: « [...] τὰς Λακαίνας [...] κύνας ῥινηλατούσας τὸ ἐκπεφευγός »; *Epistle* 142, ll. 60–61: « Ἰχνηλατοῖη δέ σοι καλῶς καὶ ἡ Λάκαινα κύων »; *Epistle* 391, ll. 30–34: « Ἐμοὶ δὲ τεθαύμασται μᾶλλον ἢ ἰχνηλάτις Λάκαινα, ὅτι φιλοσοφεῖ πως καὶ συλλογίζεται ἐν ὁσφρήσειν ἀμέλει καὶ ἐν τρισὶν ἀπολειφθεῖσα ὁδοῖς, καὶ τὸν ἀέρα τῶν δυεῖν ἀναπνεύσασα, εἴτα διὰ τοῦ φυγάδος μὴ ὁσφρανθεῖσα θηρὸς τὸν τρίτον οὐδ' ἀξιοῖ ἀναπνεῖν » (MICHAEL PSELLUS, *Epistulae*, ed. STRATIS PAPAIOANNOU, De Gruyter, Berlin–Boston 2019, p. 120–121; 385–386; 812). On the so-called Chrysippus-dog, see the primary and secondary literature collected in JOHN A. DEMETRACOPOULOS, « Thomas Aquinas' Impact on Late Byzantine Philosophy: The Issues of Method or Modus Sciendi and Dignitas Hominis », in ANDREAS SPEER, PHILIPP STEINKRÜGER (eds.), *Knotenpunkt Byzanz. Wissensformen und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2012, p. 333–410, at p. 392, n. 324.

the food provided to them in a dish and pursue a hare instead. In contrast, Psellos presents the Maltese dogs as using their sense of smell not for a noble purpose but simply to satisfy their desire to consume the food that is readily available to them in a dish provided by others.

Thus, it seems that Psellos likens John Italos's studiousness to the behaviour of the Maltese dogs, suggesting that his approach to knowledge was more about consuming it quickly and superficially, rather than engaging with it actively and deeply. Psellos implies that Italos's desire for knowledge lacked the intellectual vigor and serious involvement necessary to truly grasp the subject matter and achieve a profound understanding.

The background to Psellos's text seems to be Proclus's *explanatio* of Zeno's reserved metaphorical praise of Socrates as a female Laconian dog in Plato's *Parmenides* 128B7–C2 (« Σὺ δ' οὖν τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ γράμματος οὐ πανταχοῦ ἤσθησαι. Καίτοι ὥσπερ γε αἱ Λάκαιναι σκύλακες εὖ μεταθεῖς τε καὶ ἰχνεύεις τὰ λεχθέντα· ἀλλὰ [...] »):

« Φιλόσοφον » τοῦτο τὸ θηρίον καὶ ἐν Πολιτείᾳ (II, 376A–C) Σωκράτης ὀνομάζειν ἤξιωσε, τὸν κύνα λέγω. Πρόσκειται δὲ ἐνταῦθα [sc. in *Parmenides*] καὶ τὸ « Λάκαιναι » τὸ θηρατικὸν αὐτῷ παρεχόμενον, ὃ δὴ σύμβολόν ἐστι « τῆς τοῦ ὄντος θήρας » (PLATO, *Phaedo* 66C2)· τοιοῦτον δὲ καὶ τὸ « ἰχνεύειν », τὸ ἀπὸ τῶν γραμμάτων, οἷον ἰχνῶν ὄντων τῆς τοῦ λέγοντος ἐννοίας, αὐτὴν μεταδιώκειν καὶ θηρᾶν τὴν τοῦ λέγοντος ἀληθεστάτην νόησιν· καὶ τὸ « μεταθεῖν » δὲ οἰκεῖόν ἐστι πρὸς τὴν ὀξύτητα τοῦ νοοῦντος καὶ τὴν προθυμίαν πρὸς τὴν μέθοδον τῆς εὐρέσεως. Ἐκ δὲ ἀπάντων τούτων εὐδηλὸς ἐστὶν ὁ Ζήνων ἀγάμενος μὲν τὴν ἀγχίνοιαν καὶ τὴν εὐφυΐαν τοῦ Σωκράτους καὶ κινῶν αὐτήν, ὅσον δὲ αὐτοῦ παρασφάλλεται τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἀπευθύνων.

In the *Republic*, too, Socrates, mentioning the dog, says this animal deserves to be called « philosophic ». Here Zeno adds « Laconian », which gives Socrates the character of a hunter, clearly a symbol of « the hunt for being ». Symbolical also is « following the track », i.e. following Zeno's writings. These writings being, so to speak, the traces of the writer's thought, Socrates pursues and hunts down the precise meaning of what the writer says. And « picking up the scent » appropriately expresses the acuteness of the thinker in discovering the path of the argument. From all this it is clear that Zeno admires Socrates's keenness and ability, is stirring it to activity, but correcting it as far as it misses the truth, which is what is all about.⁵⁵

Psellos, in subtly adapting this Plato-based Proclean passage and applying it to Italos, replaces the Laconic dogs with Maltese ones. In doing so, he criticizes Italos

⁵⁵ PROCLUS DIADOCHUS, *In Platonis « Parmenidem » I* (Procli in Platonis *Parmenidem* *Commentaria*. *Tomus I, libros I–III continens*, ed. CARLOS G. STEEL, CAROLINE MACÉ, PIERRE D'HOINE, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2007, p. 111, 10–21); *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, transl. GLENN R. MORROW, intr. and notes JOHN M. DILLON, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ 1992², p. 85–86), slightly adapted.

far more harshly than Zeno criticized Socrates. Psellos's point is that Italos is heading in the wrong direction (cf. his remark cited above, p. 416: « [...] you do not care if it happens that you go the wrong way »).

In light of the above, it should be added that Plethon's Psellian and Proclean-derived *προθυμία* partially overlaps with *ἐπιθυμία*, the term used by both Plethon in *De Rebus Peloponnesiacis Oratio I* and Psellos in his letter to Italos. Plethon uses *ἐπιθυμία* in reference to the irrational desire of the Maltese-dog-like courtiers to devour everything (p. 400–401), whereas Psellos refers to Italos's irrational, reckless desire to consume as much « knowledge » as possible, which is limited to « wanting » (*θελῆσαι* [...] *μόνον*), a mere desire devoid of any thoughtful approach or method for its realization.

This interpretation is supported by the fact that Psellos's phrase « ῥάστη πρὸς ἄμφω τὰ μέρη τῶν λόγων μεταπεσεῖν » closely mirrors the following moral maxim, which, as far as I can determine, is preserved only in Dionysius of Halicarnassus's *Antiquitates Romanae* XI, 61, 2: « [...] κοῦφόν τι πρᾶγμα ἐστὶν ἐπιθυμία δίχα λόγου γινομένη καὶ ταχὺ μεταπίπτον ἐπὶ θάτερα μέρη [...] » (« [...] such a fickle thing, it seems, is desire apart from reason and so quickly does it veer the other way [...] »).⁵⁶ This maxim highlights the instability of irrational desire: it is fleeting, dissipating as quickly as it arises. Strictly speaking, Psellos applies this to the « εὐκόλος γλῶττα » (easy tongue), not directly to « desire »; however, what « εὐκόλος γλῶττα » represents here is a particular *προθυμία*, i.e. Italos's excessive, superficial, and therefore irrational eagerness to absorb the various disciplines as rapidly as possible. If Psellos were to comply with his disciple's request, the educational process would bypass the necessary method of learning, which requires time and mental effort, proceeding through demonstration. In essence, Psellos refers to Italos's « εὐκόλος γλῶττα » as an expression of Italos's desire and his belief that he could manage faster, more intensive courses. Ultimately, the core issue remains the same.

IV. Plethon's Two Implicit Points

The striking and exclusive similarity of the diction of Plethon's depiction of Scholarios as a Maltese lapdog to the two passages from the *corpus Psellianum* quoted and discussed above (p. 414–419) shows that these passages were the actual sources Plethon had resort to. What are the intellectual and moral defects that Plethon intends to impute to Scholarios through this simile?

⁵⁶ DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS, *Antiquitates Romanae* XI, 61, 2 (*The Roman Antiquities of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. With an English Translation on the Basis of the Version of E. Spelman*, ed. EARNEST CARY, vol. VII, Harvard University Press, London – Cambridge, MA, 1950, p. 188–189).

IV.1 Scholarios as a Heteronomous Author

By applying the Ps.-Psellian Maltese dog simile to Scholarios, Plethon implies that his Christian adversary, despite his self-image, was incapable of initiating or completing any intellectual project of his own – particularly not something as ambitious as resolving the long-standing and complex Plato-Aristotle controversy, an issue of immense significance to both Plethon and Scholarios. Unlike Plethon, whose *De Differentiis* was not a response to another's work but stemmed from his own decision to reignite the Plato vs. Aristotle debate in Florence, where he sided with Plato against the centuries-long Aristotelian preference in the West, Scholarios only began addressing this issue in response to Plethon's work. Even worse, in his reply, Scholarios slavishly followed Plethon's lead: in order to argue for Aristotle's superiority to Plato, he simply addressed Plethon's points one by one,⁵⁷ crafting a text that mirrored the structure of Plethon's own. Scholarios, like the Maltese dog in Ps.-Psellos's metaphor, produced inferior 'music' (i.e., philosophical literature); subject to the limitations of his own nature, he could only generate a ridiculous 'accompaniment' to Plethon's true 'music', namely philosophy. Moreover, whenever Plethon remained silent, Scholarios produced nothing; only when Plethon wrote would Scholarios awkwardly react, transforming himself into an author by responding to Plethon's 'music'.

In addition, Scholarios, in his refutation of *De Differentiis*, had accused Plethon of a lack of originality and of recklessly stirring up anti-Aristotelian arguments from other sources.⁵⁸ Plethon's application of the (Ps.-Psellian in origins) Maltese dog simile was, in essence, a counter-accusation.

Further, one can reasonably apply Plethon's words to Scholarios's entire literary output on philosophical and theological issues up until 1448/49, when Plethon called him a « small Maltese dog ». Scholarios's works on Aristotle amounted to a series of derivative pieces – translations, adaptations, and excerpts from commentaries by some Latin and Greek authors.⁵⁹ Plethon's phrase

⁵⁷ See JOHN A. DEMETRACOPOULOS, « Philosophy and Christianity in George Scholarios - Gennadios II: an Overview of the Main Issues », *Philosophia*, 47 (2017), p. 243–268, at p. 246–258.

⁵⁸ SCHOLARIOS, *Κατὰ τῶν Πλήθωνος ἀποριῶν ἐπ' Ἀριστοτέλει* II: « [...] Πλήθων [...], τὰ πολλοῖς ἄλλοις ἐξευρημένα καὶ πρὸ αὐτοῦ καλῶς εἰς μέσον ἤνεγκε συναθροίσας τε καὶ ἐπιτεμὼν, τοῦτο καὶ νῦν δῆλόν ἐστιν »; « [...] πολλὰ τε κατ' Ἀριστοτέλους ἐν πολλῷ συνήθροισε χρόνῳ, καὶ ὅτε πρῶτον οἷός τε ἐγένετο ταῦτα ἐν ἐνὶ συμφορῇσαι βιβλίῳ, συνέθηκέ τε καὶ ἀπεριμερίμνως ἐκδέδωκεν » (*Œuvres complètes de Georges (Gennadios) Scholarios*, ed. MARTIN JUGIE et al., t. IV, p. 113,40–114,3; 116,22–25).

⁵⁹ A comprehensive list of Scholarios's Aristotle-based writings can be found in JOHN A. DEMETRACOPOULOS, « The Sources of George - Gennadios II Scholarios' *Paraphrasis* of the *Parva Naturalia* and its Place in his Thought », in BÖRJE BYDÉN, FILIP RADOVIC (eds.), *Supplementing the Science of Soul: The 'Parva Naturalia' in Greek, Arabic and Latin Aristotelianism. 2014 Conference, Gothenburg*, 6–8

« φλυαρήσεις τηνάλλως » likely incorporates Scholarios's uncritical admiration for Aquinas, from whom, as Plethon observes, Scholarios draws irrelevant and futile material in his refutation of *De Differentiis* (« τηνάλλως μακρολογῶν »).⁶⁰ Plethon's remark about this reinforces the idea that Scholarios, in defending Aristotle, would continue to rely on derivative (mainly Thomistic) material, demonstrating again his inability to produce truly original philosophical work.

Similarly, most of Scholarios's numerous theological writings concerned minor issues like the Filioque, focusing on ecclesiastical debates between the Church of Constantinople and the Church of Rome during the 1430s and 40s. Even the sermons Scholarios delivered in the churches of the palace⁶¹ were mainly adaptations of works by Aquinas and others.⁶²

Plethon's allusion to Scholarios's inability to establish his own intellectual agenda extends to Scholarios's reaction to Plethon's *Laws*. In 1450, Scholarios, in

June, Springer, Dordrecht – Heidelberg – London – New York 2018, p. 233–315, at p. 240–256. Scholarios's Aquinas-based writings are also discussed in JOHN A. DEMETRACOPOULOS, « Scholarios' *On Almsgiving*, or How to Convert a Scholastic *Quaestio* into a *Sermon* », in DENIS M. SEARBY (ed.), *'Never the Twain Shall Meet'? Latins and Greeks Learning from Each Other in Byzantium. A Conference at Stockholm, June 24–26, 2015*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2017, p. 131–178, at p. 163–167. Additional Scholastic-related findings are noted in IRINI BALCOYIANNPOULOU, « Ἡ μετάφραση (1433/35) τοῦ ἡμίτελου Ὑπομνήματος τοῦ Θωμᾶ Ἀκρινάτη στό ἀριστοτελικό *Περὶ ἐρμηνείας* (1271) καὶ μιᾶς ἀνέκδοτης Σχολαστικῆς *continuatio* τοῦ Ὑπομνήματος ἀπὸ τόν Γεώργιο Σχολάριο (ca. 1400 – paulo post 1472) » (with an English Summary: « George Scholarios' (ca. 1400–paulo post 1472) Translation (1433/35) of Thomas Aquinas' Unfinished *Commentary* on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* (1271) and of an Unedited *Continuatio* to the *Commentary* »), in JOHN A. DEMETRACOPOULOS, CHARALAMBOS DENDRINOS (eds.), *Thomas Latinus – Thomas Graecus: Thomas Aquinas and his Reception in Byzantium. Proceedings of an International Conference Held at the Stavros Niarchos Culture Centre, Athens, 15–16 December 2017*, Artos Zois Foundation, Athens 2022, p. 435–469, at p. 449–455.

⁶⁰ PLETHON, *Πρὸς τὰς Σχολαρίου ὑπὲρ Ἀριστοτέλους ἀντιλήψεις* XX, 2: « [...] ἔστι δ' ἃ καὶ τῶν Θωμᾶ ἐνείρων οὐκ ἐν καιρῷ, ἀλλὰ τηνάλλως μακρολογῶν [...] » (ed. LAGARDE, p. 418,9–10; ed. MALTESE, p. 17,21–22). Cf. DEMETRACOPOULOS, *Πλήθων καὶ Θωμᾶς Ἀκρινάτης*, p. 71–72.

⁶¹ *Œuvres complètes de Georges (Gennadios) Scholarios. Γενναδίου τοῦ Σχολαρίου ἅπαντα τὰ εὗρισκόμενα*, t. I: *Œuvres oratoires – Traités théologiques sur la Providence et sur l'âme*, ed. MARTIN JUGIE, LOUIS PETIT, XÉNOPHON A. SIDÉRIDÈS, Maison de la Bonne Presse, Paris 1928, p. 1–122; cf. TINNEFELD, « Georgios Gennadios II. Scholarios », 507–508.

⁶² See DEMETRACOPOULOS, « Scholarios' *On Almsgiving* », p. 129–162. Plethon was able to recognize Scholarios's profound dependence on Aquinas due to his careful examination of Demetrios Cydones's translation of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* (I^a, I^a II^{ae} and II^a II^{ae}). It was through this thorough engagement that he identified Scholarios's incorporation of certain material from the I^a into the *Κατὰ τῶν Πλήθωνος ἀποριῶν ἐπ' Ἀριστοτέλει*. For a detailed discussion of this (still not fully traced) material, see DEMETRACOPOULOS, « Philosophy and Christianity », p. 246; 247; 249; 251–253; 254; 257; ID., « Georgios Gennadios II. Scholarios », in ALEXANDER BRUNGS, GEORGI KAPRIEV, VILEM MUDROCH (eds.), *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Begründet von F. ÜBERWEG. Die Philosophie des Mittelalters*, Band I: *Jüdische und byzantinische Philosophie*, Bandteil: Byzanz, Schwabe, Basel 2019, p. 224–239, at p. 231–237. Regarding Plethon's (still not fully explored but undoubtedly extensive) familiarity with *Thomas Graecus*, see DEMETRACOPOULOS, *Ἀπὸ τὴν ἱστορία τοῦ βυζαντινοῦ θωμισμοῦ, in toto*; ID., « Georgios Gemistos-Plethon's Dependence », *in toto*.

his *Ἐπιστολὴ τῇ βασιλίσσει περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ* (*An Epistle to the Queen on the Book of Gemistos* [i.e. the Laws]), stated his intention to refute it,⁶³ though after Plethon's death, he ultimately chose to burn the work. Once again, Scholarios was poised to produce 'music' only in reaction to another's 'music'.

In light of all this, Plethon's use of « ὕλακαῖς » does not refer to barking, but to howling. Plethon's conclusion in *Πρὸς τὰς Σχολαρίου ὑπὲρ Ἀριστοτέλους ἀντιλήψεις* is not that Scholarios's writings are like the harmless barking of a small dog, ridiculing itself by attempting to threaten or harm others. Instead, Plethon is saying that Scholarios's contribution to the major philosophical debate – the Plato-Aristotle controversy – was heteronomous, lacking any true originality or independent intellectual spark. Plethon's writings, by contrast, are the true 'music'. In other words, Plethon's metaphor equates Scholarios's writings to human-like animal sounds, implying that Scholarios's approach to the Plato-Aristotle debate was as inferior to Plethon's as a dog's howling is to human singing.

Even more, Plethon implies that Scholarios's *Κατὰ τῶν Πλήθωνος ἀποριῶν ἐπ' Ἀριστοτέλει*, as it was produced only occasionally – that is, as a reaction to someone else's philosophical discourse – was doomed to become silent, meaning it would not be read in the future.⁶⁴ This sharply contrasts with how Plethon, adapting a celebrated passage from Thucydides, depicted his *magnum opus* – the fundamentally and expressly Plato-based *Laws*:

Ἄγετε δὴ, ὦ θεοὶ λόγιοι [...], [...] ὑμεῖς ἡμῖν τῶνδε τῶν λόγων ἡγήσασθέ τε καὶ δότε τήνδε τὴν συγγραφὴν ὡς ἐπιτυχεστάτην γενέσθαι, κτῆμα αἰὲ προκεισομένην τῶν ἀνθρώπων τοῖς ἐθέλουσιν ἄν [...] τὸν αὐτῶν βίον ὡς κάλλιστά τε καὶ ἄριστα καθισταμένοις ζῆν.

So, come on, o gods of literature [...]. [...] Do you be my leader in this work of mine, and grant that this book may have all success, to be set as a possession for ever for

⁶³ « [...] ἀντιγράφειν αὐτῷ [sc. against Plethon] παρεσκευαζόμεθα πρότερον [...] » (*Œuvres complètes de Georges (Gennadios) Scholarios*, ed. JUGIE et al., t. IV, p. 154,31–32). Regarding his preparation for this endeavour and the subsequent use of the material he produced in this context, see JOHN A. DEMETRACOPOULOS, « Georgios Gennadios II - Scholarios' *Florilegium Thomisticum*. His Early Abridgment of Various Chapters and *Quaestiones* of Thomas Aquinas' *Summae* and His anti-Plethonism », *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales*, 69/1 (2002), p. 117–171; Id., « Georgios Gennadios II - Scholarios' *Florilegium Thomisticum* II » in toto; IOANNIS KASSIDIS, « Γεωργίου Γενναδίου Β' τοῦ Σχολαρίου *Περὶ θείας προνοίας καὶ προορισμοῦ*: εἰσαγωγή καὶ κριτική ἐκδόση » (with an English Summary: « George Gennadios II - Scholarios' *On the Divine Providence and Predestination*: an Annotated Critical Edition »), Ph.D. Diss., Ionian University, Corfu 2023 (<<https://www.ekt.gr/el/library/didaktorika>>; accessed December 2024), p. 28*–29*, 40*–42*.

⁶⁴ Interestingly, Plethon's suggestion proved to be accurate: Scholarios's work survives in only a few manuscripts and was first published as late as 1858 (*Œuvres complètes de Georges (Gennadios) Scholarios*, ed. JUGIE et al., t. IV, p. 1–IV; 1).

those of mankind who wish to pass their lives [...] established in the best and noblest fashion.⁶⁵

Plethon, inspired by eternal truth, could hope for lasting influence through his writing; Scholarios, however, was rooted in the recent past – the Christian past of human history – which was destined to be eclipsed by that truth.⁶⁶

IV.2 Scholarios: « Voracious » but Failed and Ungrateful Disciple of Plethon?

The fact that Plethon criticised Scholarios by referencing a text addressed by a prominent Byzantine Platonist teacher⁶⁷ to a disciple of his may carry significant implications.

The elements [iia-b] and {iia-b} (Plethon: οὐκ ὀλίγη εὐπορία λόγων, τὰ λεγόμενα and οὐδεμία ἀπορία; Psellos: εὐκόλος [...] γλῶττα and εἰπεῖν) do not coincide in full; Psellos emphasizes his disciple's ease in articulating an ardent desire for accelerated learning, whereas Plethon critiques an author's rash and careless production of texts. However, this difference is not absolute. A competent disciple is expected to be trained in becoming an author, and the *conditio sine qua non* for a serious author is mastery of various disciplines, including the art of writing. Since Plethon was addressing an adult, he also drew inspiration from a letter by another

⁶⁵ PLETHON, *Laws* I, 4, ed. ALEXANDRE, p. 44,1–11; transl. WOODHOUSE, p. 328–329, slightly improved. This is a bold *imitatio* of THUCYDIDES's *History* I, 22, 4: « [...] ὅσοι δὲ βουλήσονται τῶν τε γενομένων τὸ σαφὲς σκοπεῖν καὶ τῶν μελλόντων ποτὲ αὐθις κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον τοιούτων καὶ παραπλησίων ἔσεσθαι, ὠφέλιμα κρίνειν αὐτὰ ἀρκούντως ἔξει. Κτῆμά τε ἐς αἰεὶ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρῆμα ἀκούειν ξύγκειται » (see DEMETRACOPOULOS, « Τὰ προβλήματα τῆς μεθόδου », p. 50, n. 11). Of course, Plethon's conception of history differs significantly from that of Thucydides, whose central idea is that history repeats itself, making knowledge of past major events valuable for shaping the present and future. In contrast, Plethon's work, written for the benefit of humanity, is not a historical account but a philosophical and political treatise, deeply influenced by Platonic and Pythagorean principles regarding the philosophy of history. Plethon's imitation of Thucydides can be viewed as one of many *paradiorthoseis* in Greek literature.

⁶⁶ Cf., *inter alia*, George of Trebizond's report that, while in Florence, Plethon predicted that a few years after his death, Christianity and Islam would fade away and be replaced by a form of 'gentilitas' (GEORGE OF TREBIZOND, *Comparatio philosophorum Platonis et Aristotelis et de Aristotelis prestantia* III, 20, 6 and 59; JOHN MONFASANI (ed.), *Vindicatio Aristotelis. Two Works of George of Trebizond in the Plato-Aristotle Controversy of the Fifteenth Century: Protectio Problematum Aristotelis – Comparatio philosophorum Platonis et Aristotelis et de Aristotelis prestantia*, Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Tempe, Arizona 2021, p. 958,21–25; 970,13–15).

⁶⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Opuscula theologica* 53, ll. 26–29: « Ὁ δαιμόνιος Ἀριστοτέλης, πρὸς τὴν πρεσβυτέραν Ἀκαδημίαν ἀντιταττόμενος καὶ αὐτῷ διαμαχόμενος Πλάτωνι [...]. Ὁ μὲν γὰρ Πλάτων, αὐτῆς τῆς ἀληθείας ἀψάμενος [...] » (ed. PAUL GAUTIER, *Michaelis Pselli theologica*, vol. I, Teubner, Leipzig 1989, p. 204); ID., *Opuscula logica, physica, allegorica, alia* 55, ll. 1279–1280: « [...] ὁ θεῖος Πλάτων [...] » (MICHAELIS PSELLI *philosophica minora*, vol. I: *Opuscula logica, physica, allegorica, alia*, ed. JOHN M. DUFFY, Teubner, Leipzig 1992, p. 278).

Byzantine Platonist, Nicephorus Gregoras (c. 1295–1361), who critiqued certain individuals who were once his « compatriots », « disciples », and « admirers », but later disparaged one of his major works, the *Commentary on Synesius's « De Insomniis »*.⁶⁸ Could Plethon have been suggesting that Scholarios was a failed disciple who later displayed ingratitude toward his former teacher? Let us examine Gregoras's text, emphasizing the wording which Plethon (Pl.) drew upon it:

[...] οὐ μόνον ἐχθρῶν προφανῶν ἐξ ἄλλοδαπῆς τε κατὰ πλῆθος ἰόντων καὶ ἀμαθίᾳ συντεθραμμένων ἄλλοδαπῇ κὰν τῷ λοιδορεῖν {Pl.: « τῶν βλασφημιῶν »; « βλασφημίας »; « διάβαλλε »} ἀνέδην οὐς οὐκ ἐχρῆν φιλοτιμουμένων μᾶλλον αὐτῶν ἢ κατὰ τὸν Ὀμηρικὸν ἐκείνον θεοσίτην ἐπὶ τῇ ἀκρασίᾳ τῆς γλώττης {Plethon: « οὐκ ὀλίγη εὐπορία λόγων »}, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἐκ πολλοῦ γειτόνων καὶ μαθητῶν καὶ φίλων πόρρω που διωσαμένων εὐγνωμον ἅπαν ἄρτι καὶ τὰς ἐμὰς ἡδομένων ἀκούειν τοιαύτας ἀδίκους ὕβρεις {Pl.: « τῶν βλασφημιῶν »; « βλασφημίας »; « διάβαλλε »} [...]. Οὐκ ἔστιν ἐντυχεῖν οὐδενὶ τῷ τῶν βίων μὴ πλείους τοὺς ἀμαθεῖς [Pl.: « ἀμαθεῖς »] καὶ βασκάνους [Pl.: « βασκανίας »] προφαίνοντί τε καὶ γλώτταν ὀπλίζοντας ἀκρατῇ {cf. Pl.'s « εὐπορία λόγων »; « τῶν τοιούτων οὐδεμία ἀπορία »} τε καὶ λοιδορον {Pl.: « τῶν βλασφημιῶν »; « βλασφημίας »; « διάβαλλε »}, οἷς εὐδοκιμεῖν ἐξεγένετο [...]. Μάρτυρες τῶν λεγομένων σαφεῖς οἷς τε ἐπὶ λόγοις περιβοήτους ἄνδρας πάσαι γενέσθαι τετύχηκε καὶ οὐς κατὰ τῶν βασκάνων [Pl.: « βασκανίας »] οὗτοι [...] ἐξήνεγκαν λόγους [...], τοὺς φθονουμένους {Pl.: « βασκανίας »} καρτερικωτέρους τε εἶναι διδάσκοντες [...]. Σωκράτεις καὶ Πλάτωνες οὗτοι, Δημοσθένεις θ' ἅμα καὶ Κικέρωνες, Ἀριστείδαι τε καὶ Συνέσιοι καὶ ὁ μυρίος τῶν ὁμοίων θιάσος [...], οἱ [...] βίβλους τοῖς ὀψιγόνους κατέλιπον, μάλα τοι ἐν καιρῷ τῆς τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἀγνωμοσύνης τὸ βάσκανον [Pl.: « βασκανίας »] στηλιτεύειν ἐχούσας. [...] Κριτὰς γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς οἱ μὴδὲν ὑγιὲς εἰδέναι δυνάμενοι χειροτονοῦντες, συκοφαντοῦσι {Pl.: « διάβαλλε »} μὲν πρὸς τὸν δῆμον τὰμά [Pl.: « τὰ ἡμέτερα »], τὰ δὲ τῶν φαύλων καὶ μηδαμῇ ποτ' εὐδοκιμεῖν εἰωθότων αὖξουσιν κακοήθως, ἵν' ἑαυτοῖς μὲν οὕτως πῶς ὅψε γοῦν περιποιήσωνται δόξαν, ἡμῖν δ' ἀδοξίαν, παραπλήσια δρῶντες τοῖς παρασίτοις, οἱ διαπαντὸς « ἄκαπνα θύοντες »⁶⁹ οἴκοι τοὺς ἐτέρων περισκοποῦντες ἔωθεν καπνοῦς, ἐκεῖθεν τὸν ἡμερήσιον τῇ γαστρὶ πορίζουσι δασμὸν ἀεὶ. Καὶ γὰρ καὶ αὐτοί, μὴδὲν εἰς ἐπίδειξιν « ἔχοντες οἴκοθεν » ἀγαθόν [Pl.: « τὴν σαυτοῦ σκαιότητα ἐπιδείξας »], τὰς τῶν εὐδοκίμων ἀτόπους ὕβρεις {Pl.: « τῶν βλασφημιῶν »; « βλασφημίας »} τῇ γαστρὶ τῆς ἑαυτῶν βασκανίας [Plethon: « βασκανίας »] ἡμερήσιον ἐκπορίζουσι τράπεζαν [...]. [...] Τῇ ἑαυτῶν αἰσχύνῃ [Pl.: « σαυτὸν ... αἰσχυνεῖς »] λανθάνουσιν ἀεὶ περιπετεῖς γιγνώμενοι καὶ περιφανῇ κακίας ἀνδράποδα σφᾶς ἀποδεικνύντες [Pl.: « ἐπιδείξας »] ὄντας αὐτοῦς, οὐχ ἅπαξ

⁶⁸ *Nicephori Gregorae Explicatio in librum Synesii « De insomniis »: scholia cum glossis*, ed. PAOLO PIETROSANTI, Levante, Bari 1999.

⁶⁹ A Callimachean verse quoted by ATHENAEUS (*Deipnosophistae* I, 14; *Athenaei Naucraticae Deipnosophistarum libri XV*, vol. I: *Libri I–V*, ed. GEORGIUS KAIBEL, Teubner, Leipzig 1887, p. 18,4) and certain Byzantine authors before Gregoras (Michael Psellos, Eustathius of Thessalonica, Constantine Manasses, Nicephorus Basilaces, and Nicetas Choniates).

οὐδ' ἐνίστε καὶ ὀλιγάκις, ἀλλὰ πολλάκις {Plethon: « ἔτι καὶ μᾶλλον »}, φάναι καὶ διηνεκῶς μηδὲ γὰρ δυνάμενα μηδ' ἐπὶ βραχὺ τὰ τῆς βασκανίου [Pl.: « ὑπὸ βασκανίας »] ψυχῆς ἔμβρυα πρὸς τὴν ἀφανῆ ταμιεύεσθαι χώραν, τῆς ἀτόπου γαστρὸς ἀμβλωθρίδιά τινα ῥήγνυνται [...]. Εἶναι δ' αὐτοὺς [...], οἱ διὰ τὴν πρὸς ἐμὲ βασκανίαν [Pl.: « ὑπὸ βασκανίας τῆς πρὸς ἡμᾶς »] [...] ὧν μέγα μὲν τὸ τυφωνικὸν {cf. perhaps Pl.'s « τῦφος »} ἄσθμα, μάλα δ' ἀδρανὲς τὸ τοῦ νοῦ καὶ τῆς γλώττης δυνάμενον, συμφορῶς πως οὔσης ἀεὶ τῆς οἰήσεως τῇ κουφότητι καὶ ῥᾶστα πειθούσης ἂ μὴ καθήκει. [...] Ὦν γὰρ ἡ διάνοια δι' ἀμβλύτητα βασκανίας [Pl.: « ὑπὸ βασκανίας »] ἅπαξ γένηται μήτηρ, οὐ μέγα ἔργον νῦν μὲν ῥημάτων χαλκεύειν ὄγκους {Pl.: « οὐκ ὀλίγη εὐπορία λόγων »} ὑπὲρ πάντας μὲν βορείους Καυκάσους, ὑπὲρ πάντας δὲ Θετταλικοὺς Παρνασσούς, νῦν δ' ἑτέρας ράπτειν ἐπιβουλὰς ἐφ' ἑτέροις {Pl.: « ἔτι [...] ἀντιγράφειν »} [...]. Τοιοῦτοί μοι Τελχῖνες {Pl.: « βασκανίας »} διηνεκῶς ἐπιφύονται [...], Ἄνυτοί τινες καὶ Μέλῃτοι καὶ Καλλικλεῖς καὶ Πῶλοι, γαῦροι νεανίσκοι, γηρῶντι φάναι Σωκράτει [...].⁷⁰

[...] Not only do we encounter open enemies from foreign lands, countless in number and reared in ignorance abroad, who seek to vaunt themselves in abusive speech – much like that Homeric Thersites, notorious for the intemperance of his tongue – rather than behave as they ought; but we also face those long since our neighbours, our pupils, and our friends, who have strayed far from sound judgment and now take delight in hearing such unjust insults against me. [...] For no human life is exempt from the emergence of a majority of such ignorant and spiteful individuals, who appear and arm their tongue with unbridled vilification, by which means they manage to thrive. Clear witnesses to these assertions are those men who, in times past, became famous on account of their words, as well as the speeches they delivered against malicious slanderers – thus proving that those who are envied show themselves to be more steadfast. [...] These include Socrates and Plato, together with Demosthenes and Cicero, Aristides and Synesius, and the innumerable company of their peers [...] men who [...] have left behind, for posterity, writings well fitted to denounce, at the opportune moment, the malice of the ingratitude of one's enemies. [...] For indeed, those who can perceive nothing sound appoint themselves as judges of my writings, slandering me before the public, while maliciously exalting the writings of the worthless men – people who have never once enjoyed good repute – in order that they themselves may, in this manner, belatedly secure a reputation of their own, and at the same time bring disrepute upon me. In so doing, they act much like parasites who, offering « smokeless sacrifice » in their own homes, watch from early morning for the smoke rising from others' houses, and from that obtain the daily tribute for their belly. Indeed, lacking anything good to show from their own store, they procure their daily meal for the belly of their spitefulness by spewing outlandish insults against reputable men. [...] And all the while, they remain unaware that they ever bring shame upon themselves, continually proving themselves – quite visibly – to be the enslaved

⁷⁰ NICEPHORUS GREGORAS, *Epistle 148*, ll. 95–202 (*Nicephori Gregorae epistulae. Accedunt epistulae ad Gregoram missae. Volumen II epistulas continens*, ed. PETRUS ALOISIUS M. LEONE, Tipografia di Matino, Matino 1982, p. 359–363).

instruments of vice, not just once, nor sometimes, nor seldom, but time and again, in an unbroken series of transgressions. For, as they are incapable even briefly of hiding away the malformed offspring of their malicious soul in some unseen place, some broodings, like monstrous abortions from an unnatural womb, burst forth. [...] They are the ones [...] who, on account of their envy of me [...]. Great indeed is their Typhonic roar, yet feeble is the potency of their mind and tongue, since conceit is somehow innately connected to frivolity and very easily persuades people to do what is unbecoming. [...] For, once the mind of those people – dulled by maliciousness – becomes pregnant, it is no great labour for them to forge bombastic utterances of a size surpassing every northern Caucasus or every Thessalian Parnassus, or else to stitch together fresh conspiracies upon fresh ones. [...] It is in this way that such Telchines perpetually afflict me – some Anytus or Meletus or Callicles or Polus, proud young men who once assaulted the elderly Socrates.

The frequent use of identical or closely similar words in Gregoras's and Plethon's condemnation of the same immoral attitude – namely, the unfair denigration of an author's literary works – strongly suggests that Gregoras's text likely served as a source for Plethon's.⁷¹ Let us examine Plethon's phrase, « ὑπὸ βασκανίας τῆς πρὸς ἡμᾶς », alongside Gregoras's « διὰ τὴν πρὸς ἐμὲ βασκανίαν ». The phrase *βασκανία πρὸς* + personal pronoun appears several dozen times in the *TLG*, but only three instances pertain to the denigration of literary works; in addition to Gregoras and Plethon, the phrase was used by Gregoras's teacher, Theodore Metochites (1270–1330), in reference to Nicephorus Choumnus's (c. 1250–1327) critique of Metochites's Platonism and Plato himself. Like Gregoras and Plethon, Metochites had already observed that such immoral behaviour ultimately tarnishes not the target of the attack, but the one who perpetrates it. Let us quote Metochites's text, highlighting the wording that Gregoras (Gr.) drew upon:

Καίτοι τί ταῦτα λέγεις, ὦ βέλτιστε σύ; Τί δὲ διὰ τὴν πρὸς ἡμᾶς σου βασκανίαν καὶ δύσνοιαν καὶ ἐπιβουλήν καὶ μάχην ἀγνοεῖς ἐπειγόμενος κατὰ σεαυτοῦ; [...] Σὺ [...] κατὰ σεαυτοῦ μᾶλλον τὴν γλώσσαν ὀπλίζεις [Gr.: « γλώτταν ὀπλίζοντας »] καὶ κινεῖς, ἐχθροὺς [Gr.: « ἐχθρῶν »; « τῶν ἐχθρῶν »] συκοφαντεῖν [Gr.: « συκοφαντοῦσι »] αἰρούμενος. Τί γὰρ [...] ἐπιλέλῃσαι τῶν σεαυτοῦ [Gr.: « λανθάνουσιν [...] σφᾶς »]; Ὅποτε γὰρ πᾶσα πρὸς τὸν θαυμαστὸν Πλάτωνα εὐλάβεια καὶ αἰδῶς ὀφείλεται, καὶ μαίνοιτ'

⁷¹ This is not the only instance of Plethon's borrowing from Gregoras; see, e.g., JOHN A. DEMETRACOPOULOS, « Ὁ ἀντιπληθωνισμός τοῦ Γεωργίου Γενναδίου-Σχολαρίου ὡς ρίζα τοῦ φιλοθωμισμοῦ του καὶ ὁ ἀντιχριστιανισμός τοῦ Γεωργίου Πλήθωνος-Γεμιστοῦ ὡς ρίζα τοῦ ἀντιαριστοτελισμοῦ του » (« George Scholarios' Aristotelianism as the Root of his Thomism and George Gemistos Plethon's anti-Christianism as the Root of his Anti-Aristotelianism »), in LINOS G. BENAKIS (ed.), *Διεθνὴς Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἑταιρεία Πληθωνικῶν καὶ Βυζαντινῶν Μελετῶν. Πρακτικὰ Ἀ' Ἐπιστημονικῆς Συνάντησης: « Βυζάντιο: ὁ κόσμος του καὶ ἡ Εὐρώπη » / International Society of Plethonic and Byzantine Studies. Proceedings of the 1st Conference: « Byzantium: Its World and Europe »* (Mistras, 26–28 May 2000), *Διεθνὴς Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἑταιρεία Πληθωνικῶν καὶ Βυζαντινῶν Μελετῶν*, Athens – Mistras 2002, p. 109–127, at p. 124–126.

ἂν ὅστις πρὸς τὴν ἐκείνου σοφίαν ἀντιβλέπειν ὅλως αἰροῖτ' ἂν καὶ ἀντιφιλοσοφεῖν καὶ ἀντιφθέγγεσθαι, τί κρίνεις [Gr.: « κριτὰς »] περὶ σεαυτοῦ; Τίνα τὴν δίκην ἐπάγεις; Ποῦ σοι τὰ θαυμαστὰ βιβλία χωρήσει, ἃ κατὰ Πλάτωνος [Gr.: « Πλάτωνες »] ἀντιφιλοσοφεῖς [...]; [...] Λέληθας [Gr.: « λανθάνουσιν [...] σφᾶς »] ἐπηρεάζων, ὦ γενναῖε, σαυτῷ καὶ τοῖς σοῖς κατὰ τοῦ Πλάτωνος [Gr.: « Πλάτωνες »] συντάγμασι [...].⁷²

Why do you say these things, my most excellent friend? Why, driven by your envy, ill will, scheming, and hostility toward me, do you fail to recognize that you are acting to your own detriment? [...] You [...] are arming and wielding your tongue against yourself, choosing to slander enemies. Have you [...] forgotten your own standing? For when every reverence and respect is due to the admirable Plato, and one would have to be utterly mad to oppose his wisdom, to engage in counter-philosophy, or to speak against him in any way, what do you think of yourself? What judgment do you render upon yourself? Where will your esteemed writings find their place, those through which you argue against Plato [...]? [...] You fail to see, noble friend, that in attacking Plato, you harm both yourself and your own writings.

While it is not impossible that Plethon had also read Metochites's text – which, after all, critiques a reckless adversary of Plato – there is no evidence to suggest that Plethon used it directly as a source for the conclusion of his *Πρὸς τὰς Σχολαρίους ὑπὲρ Ἀριστοτέλους ἀντιλήψεις*. Instead, his engagement with the text appears to have been indirect, mediated through Gregoras's incorporation of certain elements from Metochites's wording into his *Epistle 148*. In this epistle, Gregoras portrays some of his former disciples and current adversaries as pseudo-authors who produce writings « in their homes » by merely observing what true authors produce and disseminate beyond their own spaces. This critique aligns with Plethon's application of the Maltese dog simile to Scholarios, as previously discussed (p. 419–423). Additionally, Gregoras characterizes those who attack his writings as youthful, boastful, malign, and envious individuals (« γαῦροι νεανίσκοι »; « βᾶσκανοι »), who channel the erudition they gained from him into their own moral deficiencies, producing voluminous writings in an attempt to undermine their teacher's work. This characterization aptly describes the Scholarios vs. Plethon tension: Scholarios, around the age of forty, attacked Plethon's *De Differentiis*, while Plethon, approximately ninety years old, responded to Scholarios's refutation.

It is unnecessary to enumerate the remaining evident similarities. However, it is worth considering Plethon's contrast between *ἐμεῖν* and *ἀκριβοῦν*. As observed, Plethon was familiar with Gregoras's metaphorical parallelism – rooted in Plato's *Theaetetus* 149A–151D) – that compares inferior authors (such as former disciples

⁷² THEODORE METOCHITES, *Oratio XIV*, 18, 1–13 and 32–34 (THEODORUS METOCHITES, *Orationes*, ed. ELENI KALTSOGIANNI, JOHN POLEMIS, De Gruyter, Berlin – Boston 2019, p. 603–604).

who criticize their teacher's work) to wombs incapable of nurturing an embryo to life, resulting in abortion. Gregoras's source, overlooked until now, is Synesius of Cyrene's (c. 370–c. 413 AD) *Dio* XII, 9 – XIII, 2, wherein Synesius blesses himself for not being a mere teacher of grammar, which would involve memorizing handbooks and stifling critical thinking, but a true philosopher:

Ἡπιστάμην γὰρ πολὺ τῆς ἐλευθερίας ὑποτεμούμενος, εἰ πρῶτον μὲν ἀνάγκην ἔξω βιβλίον ἐξονυχίζειν, ὅφ' οὗ γίνεται τὸ κατὰ μνήμην ἐνεργεῖν, τὴν δὲ ἐπιβολὴν ἀγύμναστον εἶναι καὶ ἄγονον, ἣν δεῖ κριτὴν εἶναι βιβλίων· ἐπεὶ δὴ κατὰ τοῦτο ὁ φιλόσοφος μᾶλλον, ἐκεῖνο δὲ ἀποδεδόσθω γραμματικοῖς. Εἶεν δ' ἂν καὶ φιλοσόφων βιβλίων γραμματικοὶ τινες ἀποδεδειγμένοι, τὰς συλλαβὰς εὖ μάλα συγκρίνοντές τε καὶ διακρίνοντες, οἵκεῖον δὲ οὐδὲν οὐδέποτε μαιευσόμενοι· ὅ τι δὲ καὶ τέκοιεν, ὑπὸ θράσους τυφλὸν καὶ ἀνεμιαῖον· οὐ γὰρ ἐκθάλλει τὸν εἶσω λόγον, ὅτ' ἡμέραν ἐμὲν ἀνάγκη· τό τε σπουδῇ « σχεδιάζειν », ⁷³ ἐν μὴ δέοντι τῇ σπουδῇ χρώμενον, ἐξίτηλον αὐτὴν ἀποφαίνει. Φύονται μὲν γὰρ ἐπὶ « λόγοις » ὥδινες ψυχῶν ὥσπερ ἐπὶ τόκοις σωμάτων· ὅστις δὲ ἁώροις αὐταῖς συνεθίζεται, καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ πέπονθε παραπλήσια τοῖς ἐπὶ τῶν σωμάτων συμβαίνουσιν· ὀλισθοῦσα δὲ ἕξις εἰς τὸ ἀμβλίσκειν οὐδὲν ἂν ὠδινήσειεν ἀρτιμελὲς καὶ βιώσιμον.

I knew that I should cut off a great part of my freedom if I had to make a minute study of a book beforehand, a practice by which it comes to pass that the faculty of memory is energetic, but the critical faculty untrained and sterile, that faculty which must needs be the judge of books. It is through this above all that the philosopher exists; let the other be considered as the grammarians' task. And indeed some authors of philosophical books might be presented as grammarians who combine and separate syllables very well, but never succeed in bringing to birth anything of their own. Whatsoever they have actually brought forth is blinded by rashness and is empty; for a man cannot cherish the word that is within him [i.e., thought], who must perforce vomit words out [i.e. produce written or oral texts] every day; and writing intensely on the spur of the moment where intense is uncalled for, eventually proves the latter futile. In producing texts, birth pangs of the souls take place just as birth pangs take place in births of bodies; and to whomsoever accustoms himself to the untimely pangs for begetting texts the same things happen as those happening to whom suffers in the body: he who has been accustomed to a premature delivery can bring to birth nothing sound of limb or likely to live.⁷⁴

⁷³ (Ps.-) PLATO, *Sisyphus* 387E3: « [...] σχεδιάζοντα λέγειν ὅ τι ἂν τύχη [...] »; 390B2–4: « [...] αὐτοσχεδιάζοντες καὶ διαμαντευόμενοι [...], περὶ ὧν οὐκ ἠπίστασθε [...] ».

⁷⁴ *Synésios de Cyrène*, t. IV: *Opuscles. I*, ed. JACQUES LAMOUREUX, transl. and comm. NOËL AUJOULAT, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 2004, p. 174–175 (I correct « ἐπειδὴ » to « ἐπεὶ δὴ »); *The Essays and Hymns of Synesius of Cyrene: Including the Address to the Emperor Arcadius and the Political Speeches*, transl. AUGUSTINE FITZGERALD, vol. I, Oxford University Press, London 1930, p. 174, substantially revised; DIONYSIUS PETAVIUS's Latin translation (PG 66, col. 1151B) and AUJOULAT's French translation (*ibid.*) are much more accurate. Synesius's *Dio* begins with an explicit mention of Philostratus's *Vitae Sophistarum*.

As is well known, Synesius's critique of « vomiting speeches » (or « writings ») – an activity pertaining not to « philosophers » but to « philologists » – can be traced to a maxim attributed to the (anti-Christian)⁷⁵ Aelius Aristides, as preserved in Philostratus's (c. 170–c. 240 AD) *Vitae Sophistarum* 2 as well as in Eunapius of Sardis's (c. 349–c. 420 AD) *Vitae Philosophorum et Sophistarum* X, 41: « Οὐ γάρ ἐσμεν τῶν ἐμούντων, ἀλλὰ τῶν ἀκριβούντων » (« For I am one of those who do not vomit speeches but try to carefully investigate in their speeches the issue at stake »); « [...] προενεγκόντων [...] ὡς 'οὐκ εἰσὶ τῶν ἐμούντων ἀλλὰ τῶν ἀκριβούντων' [...] » (« [...] saying that their custom was 'not to vomit speeches but to carefully investigate in their speeches the issue at stake' [...] »).⁷⁶ Plethon appears to have been aware of both Gregoras's appropriation of Synesius's passage and Synesius's use of Aristides's dictum as reported by Philostratus and/or Eunapius. Plethon substituted Synesius's and Gregoras's metaphor with that found in Aristides's statement, contrasting ἐμεῖν (« throwing up a flood of words ») – a characteristic he attributed to Scholarios – with ἀκριβοῦν (« carefully investigating an issue »), which is the mark of serious thinkers and authors. Viewed through Aristides's dictum, Plethon's application of this metaphor implied that Scholarios tended to hastily produce voluminous texts whose content was necessarily shallow. From the perspective of Synesius's reception of Aristides's saying, this critique suggests that Scholarios's facility in producing writings (such as those attacking Plethon) stemmed from his reliance on philosophical handbooks, which he reproduced uncritically, forfeiting the opportunity for independent philosophical inquiry.

In Plethon's texts the phrase « [...] τὰ ἐπιτυχόντα εἰκῇ [...] » stands in contrast to ἀκριβοῦν. It is highly probable that « τὰ ἐπιτυχόντα » is Plethon's adaptation of « ὅ τι ἂν τύχη » from (Ps.-) Plato's *Sisyphus* 387E3: « [...] σχεδιάζοντα λέγειν ὅ τι ἂν τύχη [...] » (cf. above, p. 428, n. 73). The use of « σχεδιάζοντα » indicates that both the diction and content of this (Ps.-) Platonic passage influenced Synesius's term *σχεδιάζειν*. Furthermore, (Ps.-) Plato's « λέγειν » was adapted by Synesius as « λόγον » and « λόγοις » and by Plethon as « λέγειν », « λόγων », and « τὰ λεγόμενα » (see above, p. 409; 429). This intertextuality suggests Plethon was keenly aware of Synesius's dependence on (Ps.-) Plato and crafted his critique of Scholarios as a summation of the reception history of (Ps.-) Plato, Philostratus/Eunapius, Synesius, and Nicephorus Gregoras.

⁷⁵ See, e.g., F. GERALD DOWNING, *Cynics and Christian Origins*, T & T. Clark, Edinburgh 1993, p. 19–20.

⁷⁶ EUNAPIUS DE SARDES, *Vies de philosophes et de sophistes*, ed. RICHARD GOULET, t. II, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 2014, p. 73,20–21 (see also op. cit., p. 253, n. 7); PHILOSTRATUS AND EUNAPIUS, *The Lives of the Sophists*, transl. WILMER C. F. WRIGHT, William Heinemann – G. P. Putnam's Sons, London – New York 1921, p. 217; 493 (adapted). For the relation of the Synesian to the Philostratean passage, see transl. WRIGHT, p. 216, n. 5. For ἀκριβοῦν, see also AELIUS ARISTIDES's *Περὶ ὁμοιοῦς ταῖς πόλεσιν*: « [...] ἴσως ἂν ὥσπερ ἄλλο τι πρᾶγμα τῆς προσηκούσης μελέτης τυγχάνον καὶ τοῦθ' ὑμῖν ἀκριβοῦσθαι [...] » (JEBB 536; *Aristides*, ed. WILHELM DINDORF, vol. I, Reimer, Leipzig 1829, p. 793).

What was the intended outcome of this layered engagement with the reception history of these texts? The key lies in Synesius's phrase « κριτὴν εἶναι βιβλίων » and Gregoras's adaptation, « κριτὰς [...] ἐαυτοὺς [...] χειροτονοῦντες ». For Synesius, only philosophers – not philologists or philosophy teachers bound by handbooks – are capable of assessing the value of books. To Plethon, Scholarios did not belong to the former category.

Was Scholarios's profession as a teacher of philosophy necessarily an impediment to his philosophical aptitude? Not inherently; it depended on his disposition as a disciple. Drawing directly on Gregoras's rebuke of certain former disciples who had erroneously – and immorally – judged his writings (see above, p. 424–426), Plethon hints that Scholarios had been a deficient disciple. This is further evidenced in Plethon's phrase « τὴν σαυτοῦ σκαιότητα [...] ἐπιδείξας », which seems to echo Gregoras's « μηδὲν εἰς ἐπίδειξιν ἔχοντες οἴκοθεν ἀγαθόν ». However, Plethon replaces « μηδὲν ἀγαθόν » with « τὴν σκαιότητα ». Why this substitution? One common meaning of σκαῖος, as documented in Byzantine lexicons, is « stupid » or « unable to learn ». For example: « 'Σκαῖός': [...] Οὕτως ἐκάλουν τοὺς ἀμαθεῖς καὶ δυσπαρακολουθήτους καὶ τοὺς μωροὺς »;⁷⁷ « 'Σκαῖός': [...] Μωρός, ἀπαίδευτος, ἀμαθής »;⁷⁸ « 'Σκαῖοί': [...] ἀμαθεῖς καὶ ἀπαίδευτοι. 'Σκαῖός': ὁ ἀμαθής, παρὰ τὸ 'σκάζειν' τῇ μαθήσει πρὸς τὸν διδάσκαλον ».⁷⁹ Thus, Plethon's charge of σκαιότης may suggest that Scholarios had been his disciple – perhaps decades earlier – but failed to grasp essential lessons or even abandoned them prematurely.⁸⁰ This failure could explain why Scholarios, in his later years,

⁷⁷ SUDA, *Lexicon* Σ 548, in ADA ADLER (ed.), *Suidae Lexicon*, pt. IV: Π–Ψ, *Lexicographi Graeci*, I.4, Teubner, Leipzig 1935, p. 373,3–4.

⁷⁸ HESYCHIUS, *Lexicon* Σ 800 (ἩΕΥΧΙΟΣ. HESYCHII ALEXANDRINI *Lexicon*, vol. IV: Σ–Ω. *Editio altera*, ed. MAURICIUS SCHMIDT, sumptibus Hermannii Dufftii (Libraria Maukiana), Jena 1867, p. 1358,10–13).

⁷⁹ *Etymologicum Graecae linguae Gudianum et alia grammaticorum scripta e codicibus manuscriptis nunc primum edita*, ed. FRIEDRICH WILHELM STURZ, apud I. A. G. Weigel, Leipzig 1818 (repr. Hildesheim 1973), p. 502,27. Cf. PLATO's *Republic* 411E1–2: « [...] ἐν ἀμαθίᾳ καὶ σκαιότητι [...] »; ARISTOPHANES, *Vespa* 1183: « ὦ σκαῖε καὶ ἀπαίδευτε [...] »; LYSIAS, *In Theomnestum* 15: « [...] τοῦτον δὲ οὕτω σκαῖον εἶναι, ὥστε οὐ δύνασθαι μαθεῖν τὰ λεγόμενα » (*Lysiae orationes cum fragmentis*, ed. CHRISTOPHER CAREY, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007, p. 92,24–25).

⁸⁰ The following passage from Scholarios's *Περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ, καὶ κατὰ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς πολυθεΐας* reveals that, prior to his journey to Ferrara, Scholarios had spent some undetermined time in the Peloponnese and had some level of contact with Plethon: « Ἐκεῖνος [sc. Plethon] τοίνυν, ὁποῖος ἦν, ἐκ πολλοῦ δῆλος ἡμῖν ἐγεγόνει, καὶ ὅτι τοιοῦτο βιβλίον ἐν πλείοσι χρόνοις εἶχε συγγεγραφώς, πολλῶν τε ἐξηγουμένων ἀξίων πιστεῦσθαι καὶ ἡμῶν πολλαῖς καὶ φανεραῖς ἀποδείξεσιν ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ μὲν πρῶτον, εἴτ' ἐν Ἰταλίᾳ κατειληφότων » (*Œuvres complètes de Georges (Gennadios) Scholarios*, ed. JUIE et al., t. IV, p. 155,29–156,1; « His [i.e., Plethon's] intellectual identity had long been evident to me, and I knew that he had written such a book [i.e., the sacrilegious *Laws*] over the course of several years; many trustworthy individuals reported these matters to me [while I was still in Constantinople], and I myself became aware of these things

was unable to adequately assess Plethon's *De Differentiis*, a concise 8,609-word text, and responded with an unwieldy 48,428-word refutation. His failure, both as a disciple and later as an author, was not due to inherent dullness but, as Michael Psellos had noted about his disciple John Italos, due to an immature eagerness to accumulate information without grasping its essence (see above, p. 416–419). Scholarios's moral failure as an author lay in the ignominy he brought upon his mentor, paralleling Gregoras's criticism of certain disciples who turned against their teacher.⁸¹

through numerous clear and irrefutable pieces of evidence, first in the Peloponnese and later in Italy »). Scholarios's reference to Plethon's pagan teaching in Florence not only aligns with his interpretation of the anti-Aristotelianism of Plethon's *De Differentiis* as having a distinctly anti-Christian intent (SCHOLARIOS, *Περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ, καὶ κατὰ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς πολυθείας*, ed. JUGIE et al., t. IV, p. 156,1–7; cf. ID., *Κατὰ τῶν Πλήθωνος ἀποριῶν ἐπ' Ἀριστοτέλει II*; ed. JUGIE et al., t. IV, p. 114,12–115,30), but also intersects with George of Trebizond's account of Plethon's views in Italy regarding the fate of Christianity (p. 423, n. 66). CHRISTOPHER J. G. TURNER (« The Career of George-Gennadius Scholarios », *Byzantion*, 39 (1969), p. 420–455, at p. 428) suggests that Scholarios's stay in the Peloponnese was « a brief visit ». This interpretation is plausible, especially since later, in a letter to Bessarion, Scholarios refers to Plethon as « your teacher » (« [...] τὸν σὸν [sc. Bessarion's] διδάσκαλον [...] »; SCHOLARIOS, *Epistle* 18; ed. JUGIE et al., t. IV, p. 437,34). The dating of the epistle is provided in MARIE-HÉLÈNE BLANCHET's *Georges-Gennadius Scholarios (vers 1400 – vers 1472): un intellectuel orthodoxe face à la disparition de l'Empire byzantine*, Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, Paris 2008, p. 293–294 and 482. However, it is not implausible to assume that Scholarios might have been reluctant to publicly associate himself with a thinker whose pagan intellectual identity was well known to him and others. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that Scholarios's brief engagement with Plethon, if it occurred, was short-lived. Plethon may have excluded him from his inner circle, as he did with many of his disciples (e.g., Hermonymos Christonymos Charitonymos), or Scholarios himself may have distanced himself. From that point on, Scholarios would likely have avoided being regarded as a disciple of Plethon, just as Plethon would have refrained from acknowledging Scholarios as one of his disciples, due to the latter's perceived « bluntness » as a follower. Therefore, Scholarios's awareness of Plethon's paganism likely stemmed from this initial, brief encounter, and this awareness may have influenced his decision to refrain from insisting on further involvement in Plethon's inner circle. Unlike Charitonymos, Scholarios never needed to clear his reputation as a Christian, despite any potential admiration for Plethon. Charitonymos, on the other hand, faced such a need after Plethon's death and Scholarios's official condemnation of Plethon's paganism (see JOHN A. DEMETRACOPOULOS, « Hermonymos Christonymos Charitonymos' *Capita decem pro divinitate Christi*: a Posthumous Reaction to Plethon's Anti-Christianism », in PAUL R. BLUM, JOSEF MATULA (eds.), *Georgios Gemistos Plethon: The Byzantine and the Latin Renaissance*, Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, Olomouc 2014, p. 143–259, at p. 224–233). Scholarios was born c. 1400, and Plethon had settled in Mistras by the end of the first decade of the 15th century (see, e.g., TAMBRUN, *Pléthon*, p. 39). Therefore, their brief association would have likely occurred sometime in the early 1420s.

⁸¹ Cf. THEODORE GAZA, *Epistle* 3 (written in March 1450), ll. 131–135: « [...] ὅρα, ἄνθρωπε, εἰ, τούτων οὕτως ἐχόντων, οὐ τὰ τῶν μοχθηρῶν καὶ σκαιῶν καὶ ἀχαρίστων σὺ ὁ πρότερόν μοι οἰκείως ἔχων ἐποίεις, μαινόμενος ἐπ' ἐμὲ καὶ κατορχούμενος τοῦ σέ καὶ φιλήσαντος καὶ διδάξαντος καὶ τὰ δυνατὰ πάντα εὐεργετήσαντος » (*Theodori Gazae epistolae*, ed. PETRUS ALOISIUS M. LEONE, M. D'Auria, Napoli 1990, p. 44).

Psellos, in a letter addressed to John Italos, praised his disciple for producing literary works that, although imperfect, were not devoid of qualities and demonstrated that Italos was finally on the correct path.⁸² Italos's eventual success might have been due to the fact that, after initially appearing to share in the Maltese dogs' insatiable appetite for indiscriminately absorbing various disciplines, he ultimately adopted the proper *modus discendi* as prescribed by his teacher. Scholarios, however, in stark contrast to Italos, never received such commendation from Plethon, assuming he was indeed taught, either directly or indirectly, by him. To Plethon, Scholarios remained forever a « Maltese dog », a characterization that aligned with Gregoras's description of certain former disciples who severely criticized his literary work. These individuals, as Gregoras remarked in his epistle exploited by Plethon, were merely 'parasites', analogous to the courtiers at Mistras whom Plethon had earlier denounced using the same Maltese dog simile (see above, Section I). Scholarios's status as such a parasite encapsulated not only his relationship with his teacher but also the character of his philosophical and literary endeavours.

V. *The Maltese Dog's Reply: Purus grammaticus purus asinus!*

Scholarios did not produce a counter-reply to Plethon's rebuttal of his refutation of Plethon's *De Differentiis*. Some members of the intellectual circle surrounding Plethon and Bessarion, far less skilled in philosophy than Plethon, Scholarios, or Bessarion, were to take up the thread of the Plato-Aristotle controversy, thereby contributing to this body of literature. Nevertheless, Scholarios presumably recognized, at least in part, the literary context underlying the concluding paragraph of Plethon's counter-reply. Around 1456, or shortly thereafter, he authored the overtly anti-pagan and vehemently anti-Plethonic treatise *Περὶ τοῦ ἑνὸς ἐν Τριάδι Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ πάντων τῶν ὄντων δημιουργοῦ, καὶ κατὰ ἀθέων ἥτοι αὐτοματιστῶν καὶ κατὰ πολυθέων* (*On the One in the Trinity of Our God and Creator of All Beings, Against Atheists or Automatists, and Against Polytheists*). Reflecting on Plethon's regrettable relapse into paganism, he remarks:

Μαθημάτων [1] μὲν γὰρ τῆς ὑπτιότητος μόνης μετέσχεν, ἄλλο δ' οὐδὲν ἄξιον αὐτῶν τε ἀπώνατο καὶ τῆς ἐπικοσμούσης {2a} ταῦτα σοφίας [2b]. Εὐφραδείας {3a} δὲ ἐπεμελήθη {4} μὲν καλῶς τῆς ἀρχαίας {3b}, ἀλλ' ἐν ἀσεβεστάτῳ καὶ ἀφρονεστάτῳ συγγράμματι [4] [sc. the Νόμων συγγραφή], ἣν ἡ Λατίνων παροιμία διὰ τοῦτο προσηκόντως τιμᾷ ἐν τοῖς « εἰλικρινῶς » καὶ μόνης αὐτῆς ἐπιμεληθεῖσιν {5}. Ἐν τούτοις μὲν οὖν, κἂν εἶχέ τις αὐτὸν ἐπαινεῖν, οὕτω δ' ἀπλοῦς πάνυ καὶ τῶν χυδαίων οὐδὲν σχεδὸν διαφέρων ἦν περὶ τὸ δύνασθαι κρίνειν ἀληθείας [6a] πέρυ καὶ ψεύδους

⁸² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Oratoria minora* 19 (Ἐπαινος τοῦ Ἰταλοῦ) (ed. LITTLEWOOD, p. 69–72).

[6b], ὥστε καὶ παῖς [7] αὐτὸν ἐξήλεγχεν {7} ἄν, καὶ παιδί [7] ἀντιλέγειν οὐκ ἂν οἶός τ' ἦν πειραστικῶς ψευδομένῳ [6b] διὸ καὶ τὴν πλάνην ὑπέστη ταύτην [...].⁸³

He studied the various subjects in education only superficially, and so from these disciplines he gained nothing further, nor, of course, the wisdom that comes at the end and adorns them. He successfully cultivated the ability to write very fine

⁸³ SCHOLARIOS, *Περὶ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἐν Τριάδι Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ πάντων τῶν ὄντων δημιουργοῦ, καὶ κατὰ ἀθέων ἤτοι αὐτοματιστῶν καὶ κατὰ πολυθέων* (ed. JUGIE et al., t. IV, p. 180,21–30). Cf. two similar Scholarian passages: « [...] ἐνὶ τὰ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς παιδείας ὑπελείφθη καλὰ πρεσβύτη, καὶ οὗτος ἀπώνατο τῆς περὶ ταῦτα σπουδῆς φρενῶν αἰσχροῦν ἐκστασιν [...]». Ἠλγούμεν ἐπὶ τοῖς πόνοις τοῦ γέροντος, οὐδ' ἀπώλεσε, τὴν περὶ τὴν λέξιν τε καὶ συνθήκην φιλοτιμίαν ὑποθέσει φαυλοτάταις συναναλώσας [...]. [...] Μέχρι τοσοῦτου τὴν περὶ τὸν Ἑλληνισμόν ἐκτεῖνας σπουδὴν [...], ὅτι μὴ μόνον τὴν λέξιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ψυχὴν τὴν οἰκείαν οὕτω διανοήθη κοσμεῖν » (SCHOLARIOS, *Περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ, καὶ κατὰ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς πολυθείας*; ed. JUGIE et al., t. IV, p. 160,17–30); « Πάντων οὖν ἐκείνων ἀφρονέστερος οὗτος γέγονε σοφιστής, ὥσπερ οὐ πρεσβυτικοῦ φρονήματος ὢν ἢ συνεστῶτος ὅλως, ἀλλὰ παιδαριώδους ἢ παρατετραμμένου· καὶ τὸ ἀδόκμενον περὶ 'τῆς ἐν λόγοις δυνάμεως', ὡς ἄρα 'ἐν ψυχῇ ἀνοήτου αὕτη ὡς μάχαιρά ἐστιν ἐν χειρὶ μαινομένου', τοῦτο καὶ τούτῳ συνέβη. Δύναμιν γάρ λαβὼν τοῦ συντιθέναι λόγους, καὶ ἴσως οὐ[κ] φαυλοτέρᾳ συνθήκῃ, κατεχρήσατο τῇ δυνάμει πρὸς καταστροφὴν ἑαυτοῦ [...], δι' ἑλλειψιν [...] λογισμοῦ ἔμφρονος καὶ σοφίας ἀληθινῆς καὶ διαλεκτικῆς ἐπιστήμης τὴν πλάνην παθὼν, κουφότῃ δὲ καὶ τῇ εἰρημένῃ δυνάμει καὶ φανερώσαι οὕτως αὐτὴν προαχθεῖς. Τοιοῦτος γάρ ἦν καὶ τοιοῦτος ἐγνωρίζετο τοῖς δυναμένοις κρίνειν. Εἰ γάρ τι καὶ τῆς περὶ σοφίας δεινότητος προσεγένετο αὐτῷ [...], ἄχρηστον αὐτῷ πρὸς τὴν τῆς ἀληθείας εὔρεσιν γέγονεν [...] » (SCHOLARIOS, *Ἐπιστολὴ τῇ βασιλείᾳ περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ*; ed. JUGIE et al., t. IV, p. 152,11–23). Regarding Cicero's dictum referenced by Scholarios, which supports his characterization of Plethon as a gifted yet deranged author, see the following note in Scholarios's *Προλεγόμενα εἰς τὴν Λογικὴν καὶ εἰς τὴν Πορφυρίου « Εἰσαγωγὴν », ἐκ διαφόρων συλλεγέμενα βιβλίων, μετὰ ἰδίων ἐπιστασιῶν IV*: « [...] ὡς γάρ φησιν ὁ Τούλλιος ἐν τῇ *Δευτέρᾳ ῥητορικῇ*, ὅτι 'ἡ σοφία χωρὶς τῆς λεκτικῆς ἐστὶ μάχαιρα ἐν χειρὶ παραλυτικοῦ, καὶ ἡ εὐγλωττία χωρὶς σοφίας ἐστὶ μάχαιρα ἐν χειρὶ μαινομένου' (cf. CICERO, *De oratore* III, 14, 55: « Est enim eloquentia una quaedam de summis virtutibus; [...] quarum virtutum expertibus si dicendi copiam tradiderimus, non eos quidem oratores effecerimus, sed furentibus quaedam arma dederimus »; cf., *inter perplura alia*, GIOVANNI DI BONANDREA, *Commentary on Brevis introductio ad dictamen* 313–315: « Sapientia est talis sine eloquentia qualis est paraliticus cum ense in manu, et talis eloquentia sine sapientia qualis est furiosus cum gladio acuto. Et ratio est quia sicut paraliticus non potest operari ense, ita sapiens non potest sapientiam sine eloquentia et sicut furiosus huius gladium acutum percutit omnes abstantes, ita eloquentia percutit omnes suis viribus dicendo malum vel bonum de quo licet ut sibi accidit », in CHIARA ZENNARO, « Il Commento alla *Brevis introductio ad dictamen* di Giovanni di Bonandrea del ms. Perugia, Biblioteca Augusta, lat. B 56: Edizione critica », Tesi di laurea, Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia 2019, p. 59), καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐ δεῖ μόνον ἐπιστήμης ἔχειν πραγματικὰς πρὸς τὴν σοφίαν τεταγμένας, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπιστήμης λογικὰς, εἴτουν λεκτικὰς πρὸς τὴν εὐτακτον ὁμιλίαν. Ἄς δὲ λογικὰς ἐπιστήμης καὶ διακρίνουσι κατὰ τὴν διάκρισιν τοῦ λόγου, διαφόρως λαμβάνεσθαι δυναμένου. Ἐν γὰρ τῷ λόγῳ τρία εἰσίν, ἡ οὐσία τοῦ λόγου, ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ἀγαθότης εἴτουν ἡ εὐπρέπεια. Τῷ μὲν οὖν πρώτῳ τρόπῳ περὶ τοῦ λόγου ἔστιν ἡ γραμματικὴ, τῷ δευτέρῳ ἡ λογικὴ, τῷ δὲ τρίτῳ ἡ ῥητορικὴ » (ed. JUGIE et al., t. VII: *Commentaires et résumés des ouvrages d'Aristote*, Maison de la Bonne Presse, Paris, 1936, p. 29,16–25). The note is clearly a translation of some Scholastic text; for Scholarios's direct Latin source, see IRINI BALCOYIANNPOULOU, « George Scholarios' *Praenotationes Philosophicae* (cum Axiomatibus Aristotelicis): an Annotated Editio Princeps », forthcoming.

ancient Greek, but he did this by writing a text that was sacrilegious and insane; for this reason, this skill of his is finely described by the relevant Latin proverb, that is, the proverb that refers to people who are « exclusively » occupied with writing in a fine style. In this work, then, even if one accepts that he may be justifiably praised, nevertheless, as to the question of the distinction between truth and error he was so naive, and not superior at all in this respect even to the illiterate men, that even a teenager could refute him, and he would be unable to contradict him, should the teenager assert something false just to test him. That was the reason why he fell into this error.

As will be demonstrated, Scholarios drew extensively on Themistius's *Βασανιστής ἢ φιλόσοφος* (*The Examiner or the Philosopher*), employing Themistius's criteria for distinguishing between a genuine philosopher and a pseudo-philosopher to argue that Plethon falls into the latter category. As previously noted (p. 404, n. 16), in this work, Themistius contrasts the *Λάκαινα κύων* (Spartan dog) with a *πονηρόν κυνίδιον* (malicious little dog) such as the *Μελιταία κύων* (Maltese dog). However, this is not the aspect on which Scholarios focuses. In this speech, Themistius aims to delineate the distinctive traits of a genuine philosopher, as identified by Plato; the fourth of these traits is particularly relevant:

Τέταρτον δὲ τύπον εἶναί φησι « τὴν ἀψευδίαν {6a} [6b *e contrario*] καὶ τὸ ἐκόντας εἶναι μηδὲν μηδαμῇ προσδέχεσθαι τὸ ψεῦδος [6b], ἀλλὰ μισεῖν, τὴν δὲ ἀλήθειαν [6a] στέργειν » [PLATO, *Republic* VI, 485C3–4]. Ἄγαμαι οὖν ἐγὼ καὶ ταύτη τὸν « νομοθέτην » [sc. Plato] οἶω « θριγκῶ » [PLATO, *Republic* VII, 534E1–4] περιβάλλει {2a} τὴν σοφίαν [2b] εἰς πάντα ἀληθῆ [6a]. [...] Ἔστι που τάληθές [6a] καὶ τὸ ψεῦδος [6b] πολὺ μὲν ἐν τοῖς μαθήμασι [1], πολὺ δὲ ἐν συμβολαίοις καὶ συναλλαγμασιν. Ὁ οὖν μηδενὶ μηδαμῇ τῷ ψεύδει [6b] πάροδον ἀφιεῖς [...].

Plato says that the fourth mark of the true philosopher is « the absence of falsehood, the determination to hate what is false and never under any circumstances to embrace it, and love of the truth ». Here too, then, I marvel at the wall our legislator builds around a wisdom that is faithful to the truth in every respect. [...] One finds, no doubt, much truth and also much falsity in the various fields of learning, just as one does in business dealings and transactions. Now surely [...] a person who does not let falsehood in under any circumstances [...].⁸⁴

Scholarios appears to have been aware that Themistius relied heavily on Plato's *Republic*, Books VI and VII. Like Plato, Scholarios emphasizes that what safeguards philosophy and must continually oversee its practices, as though from above, is

⁸⁴ Themistii orationes. II, ed. DOWNEY et al., p. 39,13–20; transl. ROBERT J. PENELLA, *The Private Orations of Themistius*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 2000, p. 78–79.

logic – particularly the method of distinction. To Scholarios, this was Plethon's greatest weakness and one of the primary sources of his philosophical errors.⁸⁵

The Latin proverb to which Scholarios alludes is « *purus grammaticus purus asinus* » (« Pure philologist, absolute ass »). Indeed, this saying appears in the margins of three out of the four autographed copies of the relevant text, seemingly written in Scholarios's own hand: « Παροιμία Λατίνων: Πώρους γραμματικούς, πώρους ἄσινους. Εἰλικρινῆς γραμματικὸς εἰλικρινῆς ὄνος [9] »;⁸⁶ « Παροιμία Λατίνων: Πούρους γραμματικούς, πούρους ἄσινους. Εἰλικρινῆς γραμματικὸς εἰλικρινῆς ὄνος [9]. *Purus grammaticus purus asinus* ».⁸⁷ His insult functions as an implicit response to Plethon's claim that Scholarios could only « vomit » texts, rather than genuinely « beget » them – essentially accusing him of being incapable of truly grasping the essence of philosophical issues or articulating serious thoughts about them. Scholarios uses the above insult as part of his characterization of Plethon as a learned man who, captivated by the elevated style of Greek literature, embraced its content uncritically. In light of Synesius's depiction of the *γραμματικός* (see above, p. 428–429) – a term also employed by Scholarios – this stance resembles that of a teacher so fixated on the texts he reads and teaches that he becomes incapable of distancing himself from them to form independent judgments. Furthermore, Scholarios accuses Plethon of being incapable of discerning (« κρίνειν ») the truth, including the truth contained in the books he studied, attributing Plethon's fundamental error of abandoning Christianity to this inability. In so doing, Scholarios simply reverses the accusation which Plethon had launched against him by implicitly referring to Synesius's « κριτὴν [...] βιβλίων » a quality explicitly attributed to the *φιλόσοφος* rather than to the *γραμματικοί*. Synesius cautions against mistaking individuals who are, in reality, « philologists » for genuine philosophers, even if such individuals produce « philosophical books » that engage with philosophical themes but lack substantive philosophical content.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ SCHOLARIOS, *Κατὰ τῶν Πλήθωνος ἀποριῶν ἐπ' Ἀριστοτέλει* II: « Ἀλλὰ Πλήθων, διὰ τὸ λογικῆς μεθόδου παντάπασιν ἐστερηθῆσαι (δῆλος γάρ ἐστιν οὐ τὴν ἐντεριώνην τῶν Ἀριστοτέλους λόγων – καὶ παντὸς δὲ οἶμαι λόγου –, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἔξω μόνον ὁρῶν) [...] »; « [...] ὡς μὴ ἂν ποτε πλάνης αἴτιον γενέσθαι τινί, εἰ μὴ νοῦ τε ὁμοίως καὶ λογικῶν μεθόδων ἄμοιρος εἴη » (ed. JUGIE et al., t. IV, p. 74,30–32; 108,36–37). He presumably combines this with Plethon's denigration of Aristotle, the champion of logic.

⁸⁶ MS. *Par. gr.* 1292 (Diktyon 50901), fol. 136^v.

⁸⁷ MS. *Par. gr.* 1289 (Diktyon 50898), fol. 254^v; MS. *Pantocr.* 127 (= *Hagiou Orous* 1161) (Diktyon 29146), fol. 15^r. Cf. the app. crit. in M. JUGIE's edition of the writing.

⁸⁸ To the best of my knowledge, there is no other evidence that Scholarios had read Synesius's *Dio*. However, this is not improbable, given the points mentioned above, as well as the fact that he was drawn to the *Hymns* of Synesius, the « blessed and wise » convert to Christianity, one of which he took care to rephrase in more accessible language (SCHOLARIOS, *Τοῦ μακαρίου καὶ σοφοῦ Συνεσίου Εὐχὴ δι' ἐπῶν μὲν ἐμμέτρων ὑπ' αὐτοῦ συντεθείσα, μεταφρασθεῖσα δὲ ὑφ' ἡμῶν εἰς τὸ σαφέστερον τοῖς πολλοῖς*; ed. JUGIE et al., t. IV, p. 369–371).

A brief remark on Scholarios's use of the Latin proverb as an insult toward Plethon is warranted. Scholarios was likely inspired in this regard by Themistius's reference to an Aesopian fable:

Νεμεσῶ γὰρ καὶ τῷ ὄνῳ [9] Αἰσώπου ἀκούων ὅτι ὄνος [9] ὢν ὅμως ἡμπίσχετο
λεοντῆν. Ταύτη τοι καὶ ξυνελθόντα παιδάρια [7] ξαίνει {8} τε αὐτὸν τοῖς ῥοπάλοις
καὶ ἀφαιρεῖται τῆς δοῖας τε καὶ τοῦ φρονήματος.

I am also indignant at Aesop's ass when I hear that, although an ass, the animal dressed up in a lion's skin. So a group of children beat the ass with clubs and deprive him both of his lion's skin and his presumption.⁸⁹

In addition to referencing the « ass » (i.e., the philologist) who pretends to be a lion (i.e., the philosopher), Themistius's passage can also shed light on Scholarios's somewhat peculiar assertion that even the average brat could refute the arguments presented by Plethon in his *Laws*.

Furthermore, it appears that Scholarios, in his effort to dismantle Plethon's claims in the passage cited above (p. 433–434), drew upon yet another work by Themistius. In the preface to his *Ἐπιτάφιος ἐπὶ τῷ πατρὶ* (*Funeral Oration for His Father*), Themistius contrasts the philosopher's endeavors with the purely literary activity of crafting meticulously polished texts in an Atticizing style and delighting in their aesthetic refinement:

Ὁ λόγος ἡμῖν οὐ φιλοτιμίας καὶ ἐπιδείξεως [...] στοχάζεται [...]. Τῇ λέξει {3a} δὲ εἴ τι
ἐλλείπειν εἰς παλαιότητα {3b} εὐρίσκοιτε, οὐ θαυμαστόν. Χαλεπὸν γὰρ
ἐφικέσθαι τῆς ἐν συγγραφῇ [4] ἀκριβείας μὴ τοῦτο συνεχῶς ἐκμελετῶντας {5} [...], καὶ
ἅμα οὐχ οὕτω φροντιστέον {5} τῷ φιλοσόφῳ καλλιπειίας {3a–b}, ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνο μάλιστα
φυλακτέον ὑμῖν, εἰ τὸ πρέπον ἀπανταχῇ διεσώσατο καὶ [...] φιλοσοφεῖν ἐπιχειροῦντι
[...].

This oration of mine does not have as its goal the winning of honour or the display of oratorical talent [...]. If you should find that, in its style, this oration does not fully measure up to the ancient models, there would be nothing astonishing about that. It is difficult to achieve this level of precision in one's writing if one does not work at it constantly [...]. Also, a philosopher should not be that concerned with beauty of language; you should mainly pay heed to whether or not he has, on all occasions, be true to his sense of what befits [...] one who is himself trying to be a philosopher.⁹⁰

To summarize, Scholarios relied on a Plato-inspired discourse by Themistius to refute Plethon's assertion that he was a genuine philosopher while casting Scholarios as someone who merely produced ineffectual writings on philosophical

⁸⁹ *Themistii orationes. II*, ed. DOWNEY et al., p. 20,14–19; transl. PENELLA, p. 63.

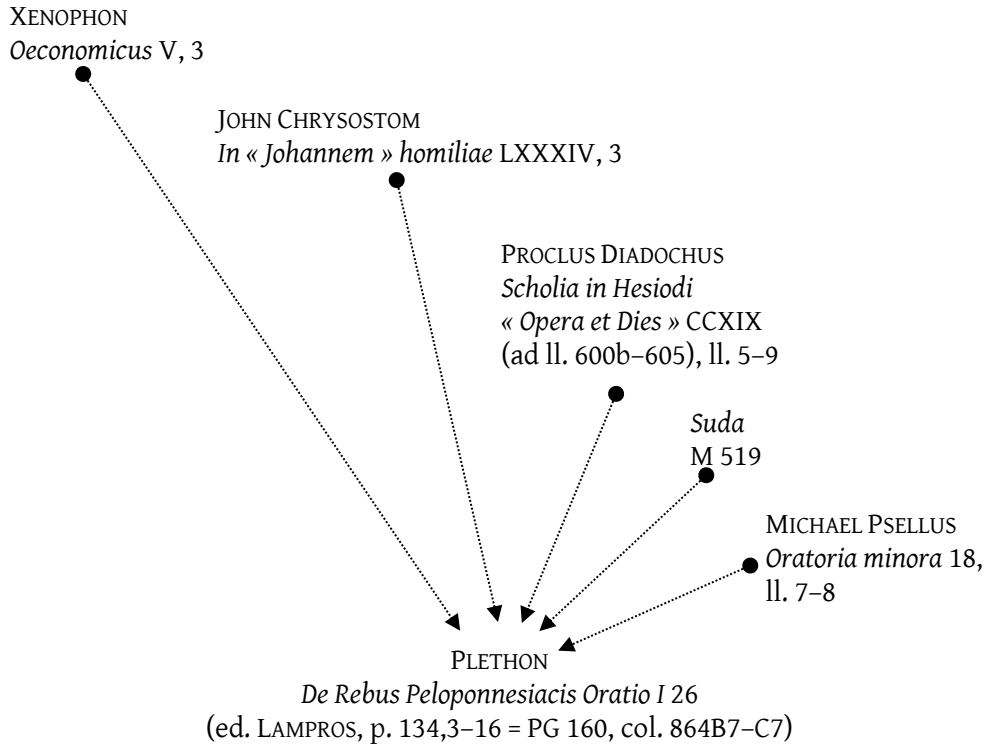
⁹⁰ *Themistii orationes. II*, ed. DOWNEY et al., p. 2,2–19; transl. PENELLA, p. 51–52.

subjects. In Scholarios's view, it was he who embodied the true philosophical author, not Plethon. This distinction, in turn, mirrors the philosophical allegiances of the two Georges: Scholarios championed Aristotle, whom he regarded as a philosopher *stricto sensu*, in contrast to Plato, whom he dismissed as a lover of myths more concerned with stylistic elegance in his writings than with the pursuit of truth.⁹¹

⁹¹ « [...] τὸ δὲ Πλάτωνος ἐπικεχρωσμένον ποιητῇ μάλιστα, ὡς ἂν μὴ λέγω χεῖροσι ἐπιτηδεύματι, πρέπον ἔστιν εἰπεῖν » (SCHOLARIOS, *Κατὰ τῶν Πλήθωνος ἀποριῶν ἐπ' Ἀριστοτέλει* I; ed. JUGIE et al., t. IV, p. 8,27–29; cf. op. cit., p. 4,8: « [...] τῆς Πλάτωνος ἐαλωκότες Μούσης [...] »; p. 14,5–7: « Χάριν οὖν Πλάτωνι δικαίαν ὁμολογῶν (sc. Aristotle) τῆς πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν ὁδηγίας, ὅμως τὰ αὐτοῦ τε Πλάτωνος καὶ τῶν ἄλλων οὐκ ἄνευ τῆς προσηκούσης ἐπιστάσιος ἐδέξατο, ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ κρίσει τῶν τοιούτων τὴν ἀλήθειαν προεστήσατο [...] »; p. 108,21–26: « [...] Πλάτωνα μὲν εὐρίσκω καθόλου τε καὶ συγκεκριμένως μετιόντα τοὺς λόγους, εἴτε διὰ τὸ ρητορικὴ φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιχρωννύνει οὕτω δοκοῦντα, εἴτε καὶ δόξαν αὐτῷ βέλτιον εἶναι τῇδε φιλοσοφεῖν· Ἀριστοτέλη δὲ διωρισμένως τε καὶ σαφῶς καὶ οἰκείως πάνυ τοῖς λόγοις χρησάμενον, πρᾶγμα φιλοσόφῳ τε καὶ φιλοσοφίας ἐσομένῳ καθηγεμόνι πρέπον πεποιηκότα »). For Scholarios's view of Plato, cf. DEMETRACOPOULOS, « The Sources of George - Gennadios II Scholarios' *Paraphrasis* of the *Parva Naturalia* », p. 234–236.

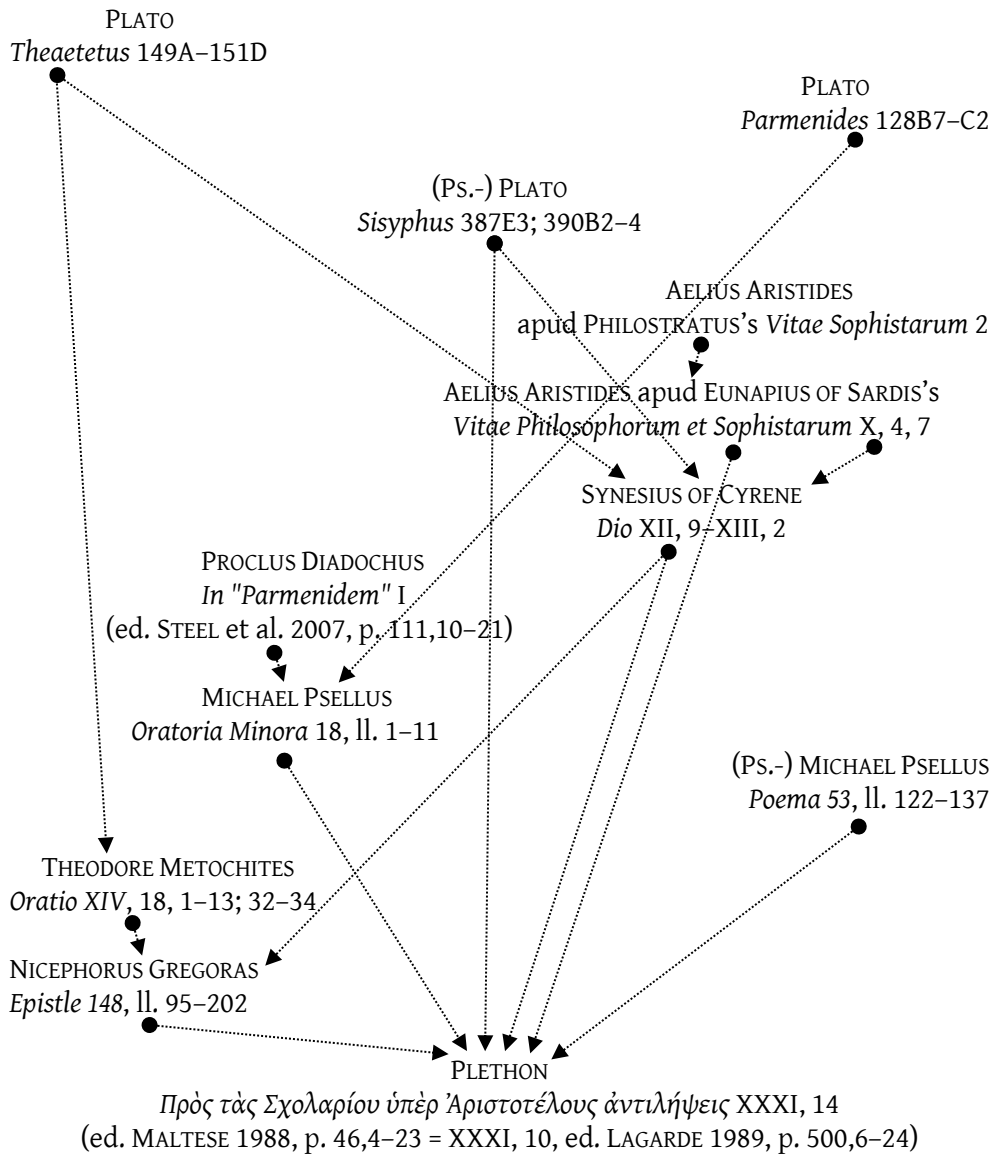
Appendix I

This is a schematic representation of the textual dependences established in Section I concerning Plethon's *De Rebus Peloponnesiacis Oratio I* 26.



Appendix II

This is a stemmatic representation of the cases of dependency established in Section II regarding Plethon's *Πρὸς τὰς Σχολαρίου ὑπὲρ Ἀριστοτέλους ἀντιλήψεις* XXXI, 14, including the interconnections between the ancient Greek and Byzantine texts utilized by Plethon in the composition of his own text.



Appendix III
The short Byzantine aftermath of the Maltese dog simile

Plethon's second use of the Maltese dog simile had a brief afterlife in 15th-century Greek literature on the Plato-Aristotle controversy. This is evident in Andronicus Callistus's (c. 1400–1478) oblique reproduction of the simile in his *Defensio Theodori Gazae adversus Michaellem Apostolium* (Πρὸς τὰς Μιχαήλου Ἀποστόλου κατὰ Θεοδώρου ἀντιλήψεις), written in 1462 (before May 19):

Οὕτω δ' ἦττων ὁ βδελυρὸς [sc. Michael Apostolius] τῆς πρὸς [6] Ἀριστοτέλη [4] τε καὶ Θεόδωρον βασκανίας {5} ἐστίν, ὥστ' ἀπόδειξιν [19] μὲν τοῦ ζητουμένου χάριν [...] οὐδ' ἠγντναοῦν λέγει, καθάπερ {15} δὲ Μελιταῖον [16b] κυνίδιον [16a] ὑλακτῶν [17] οὐ παύεται {2a-c}, δῆξαι μὲν καὶ διασπαράξαι βουλόμενος, οὐ δυνάμενος δὲ «δοξομανεῖς» καὶ «ἀνοήτους» {11} καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα αὐτοὺς ὀνομάζων, αὐτὸς ὦν ὁ τφόντι δοξομανῆς καὶ ἀναίσθητος {10} [...].⁹²

This abominable man is so much subjected to the passion of malignity against Aristotle and Theodore that he does not construct any demonstration that could contribute to resolving the issue at stake at all, but instead ceaselessly barks like a small Maltese lapdog, wishing to beat them and tear them into pieces, and, because he is unable to do so, calls them «avid for glory», «fools» etc., whereas it is in fact he who is avid for glory and dummy [...].

It is not unreasonable at all to interpret some of the Maltese dogs' barking as a threat. Still, as the detailed diction comparison above – using numbers in brackets and braces (see above, p. 402, n. 11) – demonstrates, Callistus's Maltese dogs simile is derived from Plethon's. This implies that Callistus's application of Plethon's depiction of Scholarios as a Maltese dog to Michael Apostolius represents a misinterpretation of what Plethon had actually meant regarding Scholarios (see above, Section II, § 4).

In fact, this error was derivative. Callistus's opponent, Michael Apostolius, had already appropriated the Plethonic simile. This is evident in the conclusion of his refutation (Πρὸς τὰς ὑπὲρ Ἀριστοτέλους περὶ οὐσίας κατὰ Πλήθωνος Θεοδώρου τοῦ Γαζῆ ἀντιλήψεις) of Theodore Gaza's *Adversus Plethonem de substantia* (Πρὸς Πλήθωνα ὑπὲρ Ἀριστοτέλους), which dates from 1461:

⁹² ANDRONICUS CALLISTUS, *Defensio Theodori Gazae adversus Michaellem Apostolium* XXVII, 2, in LUIGI ORLANDI, *Andronikos Kallistos: a Byzantine Scholar and His Manuscripts in Italian Humanism*, De Gruyter, Berlin – Boston 2023, p. 452,13–19 (previous edition: LUDWIG MOHLER, *Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist und Staatsman. Funde und Forschungen*, Band III: *Aus Bessarions Gelehrtenkreis. Abhandlungen, Reden, Briefe von Bessarion, Theodoros Gazes, Michael Apostolios, Andronikos Kallistos, Georgios Trapezuntios, Niccolò Perotti, Niccolò Capranica*, F. Schöningh, Paderborn 1941 [reprint: Scientia, Aalen 1967], p. 202,10–16). The translation is mine. For the date of the writing, see ORLANDI, *Andronikos Kallistos*, p. 32–33; 365.

Ἡμῖν μὲν [12] δὴ ὅσα δυνατὰ ἦν περὶ οὐσίας εἰπεῖν ὑπεραπολογουμένοις τοῦ Πλήθωνος {7} εἴρηται ἱκανὰ καὶ διὰ βραχέων {13 *e contrario*} [...] Ὅσα δέ σοι [1; 2a] ἀπεραντολογοῦντι {13} εἴρηται ἐφεξῆς, οὐδέν τι ἀναγκαῖον οὐδ' ἄξιον λόγου ἀποδεικνύοντι [19], [...] ταῦτα οὐδὲ λόγου τυχεῖν ἠξιώσαμεν, Μελιταίου [16b] κυνιδίου [16a] ὥς {15} ὑλακὴν [17] λογισάμενοι [18], ἵνα μὴ καὶ αὐτοὶ τὰ αὐτὰ περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ἀεὶ λέγοντες ἀνόητοι {10} φανῶμεν {9}, ὥς σύ, καὶ ἀπεραντολόγοι {13} τοῖς σώφροσιν {10 *e contrario*}. Ἰκανὰ μέντοι σου καὶ ταῦτα περιτρέψαι τὸ φρόνημα {3}. [...] Εἰ δὲ [1] καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἔτι [2b] μενεῖς {3a/c} τῇ ἰδίᾳ συνηγορῶν ἀφροσύνη {10}, ἡμεῖς [8a; 14] [...] δικαίως ἂν σιωπήσομεν {8b/c} [...].⁹³

This is what I was able to say about the 'substance' issue as a defence of Plethon, in a way both sufficient and succinct [...]. As for the remaining things you have said without any measure and without showing anything in a logically cogent way and without saying anything of some import at all [...]. I did not pay any attention to them whatsoever, considering them as barking by some Maltese lapdog, as I wanted to abstain from saying the same things about the same issues and thereby giving the wise men the impression that I am, just like you, foolish and a never-ending babblers. Besides, what I have said suffices to overturn your confidence. [...] However, if it happens that you, even after reading what I have written, keep defending your senselessness, I, for my part, shall quite reasonably remain silent [...].

As is evident, what Apostolius imputes to Gaza by depicting him as a « Maltese dog » is not that he did nothing more than join a discussion on an intellectual agenda set by somebody else (which, of course, is quite true, and even truer than Plethon's depreciation of Scholarios on the same account), but that, unaware of his own intellectual limitations, he dared to attack a giant such as Plethon and, of course, the only thing he managed was to ridicule himself.

That Apostolius's reproduction of Plethon's application of the Maltese dog simile should be seen as an interpretation of the relevant passage from Plethon's writing is corroborated by the fact that, in both Apostolius's and Plethon's writings, the simile occurs in the epilogue. Furthermore, Apostolius's epilogue is, in its entirety and down to certain fine details in diction, an imitation of Plethon's epilogue. Additionally, [5] is common only between Plethon and Callistus, which suggests that the latter had definitely read and adapted the former.

⁹³ MICHAEL APOSTOLIUS, *Ad Theodori Gazae pro Aristotele de substantia adversus Plethonem obiectiones 7* (ed. MOHLER, Bd. III, p. 169,25–36). That all the items of the set of writings produced by BESSARION (*Πρὸς τὰ Πλήθωνος πρὸς Ἀριστοτέλη περὶ οὐσίας*; ed. MOHLER, Bd. III, p. 149–150), Theodore Gaza, Michael Apostolius, and Andronicus Callistus as a continuation of the Scholarios vs. Plethon quarrel are directly based on the writings of Plethon and Scholarios is evidenced by the fact that the very titles of these polemical works are strikingly close adaptations of the titles of the relevant writings by Plethon and Scholarios.

From the above, the conclusion is clear: neither Apostolius nor Callistus were aware of the sources of Plethon's use of the Maltese lapdog simile, and this is why, in reproducing it, they missed its point. Therefore, knowing that Plethon's « ὕλακαῖς » does not mean barking but howling (see above, p. 422) is important for the additional reason that the earliest interpretations of Plethon's passage misconstrued « ὕλακαῖς » as barking, thereby obscuring its intended moral significance.