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NIKETAS SINIOSSOGLOU, *PLATO AND THEODORET: THE CHRISTIAN APPROPRIATION OF PLATONIC PHILOSOPHY AND THE HELLENIC INTELLECTUAL RESISTANCE* (CAMBRIDGE: CAMBRIDGE UP, 2008).

In *Plato and Theodoret: The Christian Appropriation of Platonic Philosophy and the Hellenic Intellectual Resistance*, Niketas Siniossoglou sets out to establish the contours of the late-antique conflict between Christians and Hellenes over the proper interpretation of Plato's philosophy. In particular, Siniossoglou seeks to define the distinction between what he calls the "philosophical mode of interpretation," characteristic of the Neoplatonic schools, and the "rhetorical mode" of the Christian apologists who sought to appropriate Plato in support of Christian doctrine over-against pagan religion and philosophy. He focuses specifically on the *Graecarum Affectionem Curatio* of Theodoret of Cyrillus, a work of Christian apologetic that has been positively evaluated by modern scholarship as an articulate response to pagan philosophy. In his reading of Theodoret, Siniossoglou seeks to uncover the dynamics of his appropriation and transformation of Platonic terminology and concepts to get at just how he, and by extension, other Christian apologists, went about rewriting Plato as a supporter of the Judaeo-Christian worldview. To do this, the author attempts to hear Theodoret from the perspective of the intended audience of the *Curatio*, the Hellenic intellectual elite, so as to be attentive to the philosophical and cultural significance of the moves Theodoret makes with respect to the texts of Plato. In brief, Theodoret, from this point of view, seeks to fragment the Platonic philosophical corpus so as to render it incoherent as a whole and open it to his own selective retrieval of elements that accord with established Christian dogma. It is these retrieved and appropriated elements that Theodoret (echoing earlier Christian apologists) claims to be the authentic Platonic tradition, which derive from the Hebraic tradition, whereas the Neoplatonic interpretation of Plato, Theodoret claims, is a corruption of this original intention of Plato.

The author uses the introduction to establish a hermeneutical framework for his project. First, he lays out a typical distinction between "philosophical" and "rhetorical" modes of interpretation. Philosophical interpretation is "exegetical" in that it seeks to clarify, without interpolations, the meaning (*nous*) of the text by

dividing the text into parts and assigning meaning to each part. The rhetorical mode, on the other hand, does not bind itself to the received text but admits of de- and recontextualizations, interpolations, rearrangings, alterations of syntax, and even outright forgeries to bring the text in line with the position of the rhetorical interpreter. This is all done to undermine an opponent's position by way of "appropriating his texts" (13) and is what Theodoret, and the apologists more generally, did with Plato against Hellenic philosophers.

Next, the author notes the positions defined by modern hermeneutical theory, particularly as articulated by Gadamer and Ricoeur, which acknowledge the inevitable situation of any interpreter within a community bound by conventions and particular reading strategies (Gadamer), on the one hand, and the necessary encounter between text and life in the experience of the interpreter (Ricoeur), on the other. As such, according to modern hermeneutics, philosophical appropriation may be seen as the process not of distortion but of development. As applied to Theodoret, this approach would affirm his work in *Curatio* as a creative development of Platonic thought born of a particularly Christian mode of reading the Platonic texts.

The author expresses doubts, however, with respect to the utility of both of these modes of evaluation for the fulfillment of his goals of contributing to the delineation of a "conceptual history of Platonic philosophical vocabulary" (17), and of uncovering the dynamics of the late-antique polemics within that history. They would seem, to the author, to hinder a real "ideological and philosophical" engagement with the controversy. By contrast, the author seeks to evaluate Theodoret's work in the light of "the subjectivity of the age"—in this case, the range of interpretive strategies in late-antique intellectual culture—and in particular, the subjectivity of those for whom he was writing: the Hellenic elite. This, according to the author, will allow for more critical traction with respect to Theodoret's appropriation of Plato and for a sharper presentation of how Plato's texts came to be used against Hellenic philosophy and religion. The author is not satisfied with the reversion to "perspectivism," in which Christian and Neoplatonic readings are granted equal legitimacy within their respective contexts. Theodoret himself would not admit of such a hermeneutical orientation, since he had definite views on Plato's intentions as an author and on the origin of his ideas (Hebrew Scripture). Thus, the author seeks to ground a philosophically

critical reading of Theodoret's appropriation of Plato in terms of "intentionality"—both Plato's and Theodoret's. Without taking this seriously, though not excluding all the caveats concerning the impossibility of achieving a perfect view of the author's intention, we have no way of distinguishing an ideological manipulation of Plato from any other reading.

From this, the author makes a foundational distinction between Neoplatonic "doctrinal" modes of interpretation and Christian "rhetorical" modes, a modification of the initial distinction between "philosophical" and "rhetorical" modes noted above. What, after all, is the difference between Neoplatonic and Christian appropriations of Plato given that both are subject to their own respective intellectual concerns? First, the author notes that, unlike for the Neoplatonists, the overall coherence of Plato's thought is not important for Theodoret. Plato is useful for Theodoret in his attempt to redefine Hellenic identity and convert the Hellenes to Christianity. Second, Theodoret's aim to harmonize Plato with Christian doctrine, or, to put it as Theodoret would, to show *that* Plato is in harmony with Christian doctrine, leads him to excise from his notion of "Plato" anything that fails to conform. Theodoret's is a task of wisely reconfiguring the received text of Plato so as to replace "the Hellenic intellectual paradigm with the Judaeo-Christian one" (23). This is done by means of the clever manipulation of Plato's words, not by the exposition of his meaning (*nous*). The Neoplatonists, by contrast, have the exposition of Plato's meaning as the goal of their interpretation, not as a tool for the appropriation of Plato to a foreign system.

A consequence of this is the observation that the "philosophical" reading of Plato, which ostensibly submits all reading strategies to the elucidation of Plato's texts as a coherent whole, entails the constant revision of the interpreter's horizon, whereas the rhetorical/apologetical reading, characterized by the author as "ideological manipulation," submits Plato's texts to a fixed possibility of meaning and omits whatever does not fit. Theodoret's goal, according to the author, is to "use philosophical texts for the sake of control," to "creat[e]...a Christian hegemony of discourse" (24), whereas the Neoplatonists allowed for a plurality of interpretations and sought to expose the "universal" in Plato's philosophy. Theodoret is triumphalistic as he offers a cure (*therapeia*) to the Hellenes, a cure that is intended to fold them into the burgeoning Christian culture.

In chapter 1, "The Conflict between Hellenism and Christianity in Late Antiquity," the author presents the characteristics of the intended audience of Theodoret's *Curatio*. He demonstrates the continuing prevalence of non-Christian Hellenic culture in certain parts of Asia Minor well into the fifth century and notes that the monastery where Theodoret compiled *Curatio* was very close to Apamea, which was "geographically at the very heart of Platonism and paganism in Syria" (39). From the evidence of Theodoret's epistles to the few remaining pagans in high governmental positions, the author concludes that his audience was composed of men who represented the ideals of Greek *paideia* and philosophy, rather than the rituals of Greek religion, hence the exclusively philosophical and literary nature of the *Curatio's* engagement with Hellenic culture.

This is not to say, however, that Theodoret's audience was restricted to members of the Platonic schools. While the discourse of philosophical critique of Christianity changed to a more clandestine form wherein the Neoplatonic sage became a commentator on the dialogues of Plato and served as a protector of the tradition and hierophant of salvation—the decimation of Hellenic religious institutions having forced philosophy into a more religious and sacramental mode—there were philosophers and well educated statesmen who hoped that this preservation of Hellenic culture would extend to the polity at large and regain sway over "depraved (i.e. Christian) polities" of the empire. The exegesis of Plato's works became the primary mode of this counter-cultural discourse, a resistance made necessary by the Christian attempt to wrest Plato (and other elements of Greek philosophical culture) away from the Hellenes through the reformatting and application of his language in a way conducive to Christian doctrine. Theodoret, unlike some of his predecessors in the Greek-speaking Christian tradition, was not content merely to take what was useful from pagan learning and leave the rest. Rather, he sought to transform Hellenic concepts and assimilate them into Christian thought and in so doing, achieve the conversion of the Hellenic intellectual elite.

A paradigmatic response to this intention (though not to Theodoret directly) is provided by the Emperor Julian. The author applies the notion of "historical pseudomorphosis," whereby a new community appropriates the external qualities

and culture of the elite elements of the preceding culture, to the Christian attempt to adopt Hellenic philosophy to Christian life. Julian sought to safe-guard the Platonic text both in its textual integrity and (along with the other classic Greek texts) in its teaching. Thus, Christians were barred from teaching texts they regarded as impious. According to the author, Julian was most concerned that Hellenes preserve their cultural identity against a group that would attempt to undermine that identity by infiltrating its literary culture and pillaging what it found useful, though this turned out to be, for Julian, not the best of Hellenic (of Jewish) culture, but the worst. In Theodoret's *Curatio*, Julian's worst fears are essentially realized in that, rather than setting up a direct philosophical attack against Hellenism, Theodoret seeks to revise the very culture of Hellenic philosophy to make it Christian.

Chapter 2, "*Peri Arches: The Question of Philosophical Monotheism*," the author considers the charge of polytheism that was leveled at the Greeks. He addresses two fundamental questions. First, he considers the validity of Theodoret's claim that the authentically Platonic monotheism is incompatible with late-antique Neoplatonic religiosity, which, Theodoret claims is polytheistic. Second, he interrogates Theodoret's intention in attacking pagan religious practices, concluding that Theodoret is not simply seeking to assimilate Plato to Christianity, but is after a wholesale replacement of pagan piety with corresponding Christian forms of religious life. The author goes on to argue that the sharp dichotomy between the respective philosophical theologies of Theodoret and the Neoplatonists he criticizes is the misleading result of Theodoret's projection of the categories of polytheism and monotheism onto the discussion. Rather than a sharp dichotomy, the author sees a difference of terminology only when it comes to the question of the divine hierarchy for Theodoret and the Neoplatonists.

To address the first question of pagan polytheism, the author observes that Neoplatonic philosophical theology, following Plato himself, was an "esoteric monotheism" (73), in which no strict distinction between the terms *god*, *gods*, and *the divine* was felt to be necessary. It is not an issue here of a multitude of gods as competing first principles, but of the lack of a notion of a personal divine agent as the supreme being in the Hellenic philosophical mind. As such, the Hellenes could follow Plato's usage of both *god* and *gods* without the perception of

contradiction, as the apologists charged (though the apologists attributed the contradiction not to any actual polytheism on the part of Plato, but to his fear of the masses). Rather, the Neoplatonists held that there is a common "father" and "king" of all, but that different qualities of the divine are manifest as the different gods. This, then, is the foundation of Hellenic "henotheism," the belief in one supreme god that does not preclude belief in other gods who act as local officials of what is essentially a unified divine reality. Theodoret's alternative to this system, the cult of the saints and martyrs, is, for the author, simply a matter of alternative terminology since, on Theodoret's own account, God has replaced the gods of Hellenism with the saints of Christianity and they fulfill the same ambassadorial and intercessory functions.

With respect to oracles, Neoplatonic theurgy, and ritual sacrifice, the author demonstrates Theodoret's basic strategy of lifting positions out of the internal dialectic of Neoplatonic debates on the issue (particularly between Porphyry and Iamblichus) in support of his own interpretation of pagan ritual—that it seeks to manipulate daemonic powers for human benefit—in order, 1.) to supplant pagan oracles with Judaeo-Christian prophecy, and 2.) to separate Plato from the later tradition which, he argues, has departed from him. However, the author shows that Theodoret, either deliberately, or as a result of his sources, does not acknowledge the subtleties of Plato's and Porphyry's actual position on sacrifices (that they have their place in the state); neither does he acknowledge the thrust of Iamblichus' teaching about theurgy in that he gives a superstitious view of theurgy that Iamblichus himself was at pains to criticize.

The author notes a similar tendentiousness with respect to Theodoret's criticism of pagan myths and "idolatry," arguing that Theodoret "overgeneralize[s]" the notion of idolatry with respect to paganism and then bluntly applies it to all pagan religion, ignoring the philosophical and theological accounts by the best pagan philosophers of the time. The intention here was to reduce Neoplatonism to a vulgar polytheism, which, the author argues, the Neoplatonist philosophers themselves rejected with a sophisticated notion of the place and interpretation of myth and image in the philosophic life. In fact, all of the noted criticisms of pagan cultic practice and polytheism could be applied just as readily to Christian practice.

Why, then, could Theodoret not accept pagan religion as monotheistic? The author argues that for Theodoret, it is not enough to be monotheistic; one must be a Christian monotheist. Any other monotheism is an alternative, not a complement, to Christianity. From the pagan side, the exclusivity of Christian monotheism appeared arrogant and limited and ultimately as slanderous against God since it attributes envy to him, according to Julian. Theodoret opposed the Neoplatonic inclusivist reading of Platonic monotheism as threatening the Christian "monopoly" on God by seeking to separate Plato's philosophy from the Neoplatonists in his refusal to consider pagan philosophy (Plato) and practice (theurgy, ritual, iconography, etc.) as a single reality to be addressed.

In Chapter 3, "*Askesis: From Platonic to Christian Asceticism*," the author discusses Theodoret's description of Christian asceticism as the true realization of Plato's notion of philosophy. The author strongly challenges the notion in modern scholarship that Christian asceticism represents a continuation of Hellenic *paideia* and philosophic culture. Rather, as he starkly states, "The word *philosophia* in Theodoret means the opposite of what it meant in classical times" (121). By this he means that the ideal of the unlettered anchorite who possesses wisdom by personal experience as opposed to study has practically nothing in common with what Hellenes would have understood by the term, even in its application to a "holy man." A holy philosopher for the Hellenes is one who, precisely by having engaged in philosophical enquiry (mathematics, astronomy, etc.) has come to knowledge of the divine and assumed a role as teacher in an urban environment, not the desert. Again, Theodoret's method is to stitch together passages from Plato to create the illusion of Platonic support for what the author takes to be an essentially anti-intellectualist notion of holiness amongst Christian ascetics and spokesmen.

The author adduces the particular notion of the preparation, or "study" of death (*melete thanatou*), by which Plato defined philosophy in the *Phaedo* as an exemplary misappropriation. According to the author, most Christians took this quite literally and applied it to the martyrs as the most typical fulfillment of Plato's injunction. Neoplatonists, however, took it as referring to the intellectual exercise of abstracting the mind from sensible realities for the acquisition of "a purely mystical transcendence of individuality" (125).

From here the author goes on to argue for a general and fundamental incompatibility of Platonic and Christian *askesis* based upon opposed views of man and society. He argues that Platonic praxis is not aimed at the body but at the intellect and does not imply bodily mortification or flight from the polis. On the contrary, Hellenic *paideia* is civic in its essence as it seeks to cultivate virtues of moderation, courage and justice for the preservation and enhancement of society. Theodoret's description of asceticism, on the other hand, is of "an austere form of *physical* asceticism" which was quite foreign to the Platonic tradition, both in its actual techniques, and in its relation to society. Its goal was to transcend human nature and society by the elimination of bodily pleasure and the infliction of bodily hardships. From the Hellenic point of view, this presumed hostility towards procreation and the norms of society more generally seemed misanthropic and threatening to the maintenance of the empire. What is more, the author echoes the criticisms of Basil of Caesarea by implying that the motives of these extreme ascetics were essentially "egotistical and selfish" (143). He concludes that Theodoret employs the traditional vocabulary of Greek *paideia*—*ascesis*, *sophrosune*, *arête*, *politeia*, etc.—but applies foreign meanings to them as a part of his overall rhetorical strategy in *Curatio* to attract and win over the educated Hellenes to a form of life essentially foreign to their own.

In Chapter 4, "*Mythos* and *Kosmos*: Judaeo-Christian Creationism and Plato's Cosmology," the author discusses Theodoret's attempts to co-opt Platonic cosmology in support of the Judaeo-Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. He focuses his attention on the question of the divergent modes of interpreting Plato's myths amongst the Christian apologist and the Neoplatonists. By reading certain sections of Plato's myths in the *Timaeus* and the *Statesman* in a literal fashion, Theodoret seeks to demonstrate, against the prevalent Hellenic view, that Plato lends support to the belief that the world had a beginning. The author shows how this reading runs contrary to the Neoplatonic reading, not only in particulars but in overall reading strategy. This literal reading introduces contradictions into the large-scale system of Plato, a fact that led Platonists to look under the surface of the text for a more hidden and integrated meaning, whereas Theodoret, because the literal reading of the generation of the cosmos by the demiurge accorded with a creationist view of the world, and because he was not concerned for the unity of a body of texts he did not consider sacred, was perfectly willing to let the contradictions stand and appropriate what was useful

to him. The author points out the fact that Theodoret applies the opposite approach to the Bible, his reading of which was much more like the Neoplatonic reading of Plato, i.e. a reading that seeks to preserve the *symphonia* of the text and takes difficulties and contradictions as signs of the need to move beyond the letter.

The author also points to Theodoret's use of Plato in support of Christian notions of afterlife and judgment as examples of Theodoret's unwillingness to extend the possibility of polyvalence in texts to the Platonic myths. Rather, Theodoret imposes Christian doctrine as a canon by which to evaluate and appropriate conformable aspects of the various myths, and so subjects Plato's texts to concepts that are foreign to them. Again, the author observes that Theodoret is interested in making use of the language that can be acquired from Plato's myths and applying it to Christian dogma rather than in discerning Plato's own intention in constructing the myths as he did.

In Chapter 5, "*Nomos: The Political Implications of Judaeo-Christian Monotheism*," the author addresses himself to the question of Theodoret's political theology. He seeks to answer the question of why the Hellenes would have resisted the increasingly centralized form of monarchy that attended the exclusive monotheism of the apologists—where one God implied one emperor of one empire— at the expense of the classical notion of the polis. Focusing on the policies and world-view of the emperor Julian, the author argues that, while there never was a fully tolerant "plurinationalist" and polytheist Roman empire, the henotheism of the Hellenic vision did allow for the perdurability of diverse ethnic and religious identities. In polemical opposition to this, the apologetic tradition equated polytheism with political and metaphysical anarchy, but in so doing, the author argues, they failed to understand that Hellenic henotheism with its allowance of a number of lesser deities does not militate against a robust notion of divine monarchy. It is simply that, for the Hellenes, the supreme celestial monarch has many venerable servants over whom he rules who are at work for him in the cosmos.

For his own part, Theodoret saw in the Christianization of the empire the beginnings of the fulfillment of Jewish prophecy, in which ethnic divisions are abolished and war between the nations is put aside. The empire after Constantine is now the foretaste of the kingdom of God on earth. The author attributes the contours of Theodoret's thought concerning the empire to an underlying set of

dichotomies—that between natural law (represented by the Gospel) and ancestral law (Hellenic legal traditions), on the one hand, and that between the Judaeo-Christian notion of the *oikoumene* (unified world order) and the Greek ideal of the *polis*, on the other. In this frame, natural law as divine law becomes the justification for “caesaropapism,” where the state is submitted to the strictures of “religious orthodoxy” (198). As such, Theodoret’s (and other apologists’) vision posed a challenge to the traditional Roman social hierarchy in a way that Greek philosophy did not. Given the often tumultuous times of the late-antique Roman empire, it is no wonder, notes the author, that those intent upon preserving the empire would question the loyalty of those who would offer such fundamental critique of Roman institutions.

From these general observations, the author turns again to the central locus of his book: Theodoret’s rewriting of Plato, here with respect to political theory. To make his case, Theodoret focuses on a familiar Hellenic concept of the *nomos* (law) as divine principle. This notion, in which law becomes universalized, moves political thought away from the localized notions of law in the *polis* and toward a universal notion open to imperial appropriation. Stoic notions of *logos* proved most helpful for Theodoret’s apologetic predecessors (like Philo) in the identification of Greek notions of universal/divine principle with the law of Moses. With respect to Plato, we also find the notions of *nomos* as divine and of the assimilation to the divine by means of the fulfillment of this divine law. Here Theodoret draws Plato into conjunction with Moses, and interprets Platonic notions of justice, piety and wisdom as representing the Judaeo-Christian ideal of submission to the divine law. To move the discourse from the Platonic to the Christian, however, Theodoret must make the Judaeo-Christian God take the place of Plato’s notion of the divine measure of all things, and must also direct religious piety toward the single God of the Bible rather than towards the many gods of the Hellenes. In addition, Theodoret argues that it is in the Christian-Roman empire that Plato’s ideals have begun to come to fruition, whereas in the proposed legal systems of Plato himself (in *Laws* and in *Republic*), Theodoret sees only the failure to achieve the desired assimilation to the divine, since the laws proposed (for example, with respect to sexual ethics) are contrary to nature. The author demonstrates in this context yet another example of Theodoret’s rewriting of Plato, in which discontinuous texts are juxtaposed to give a skewed impression of Plato’s thought. It is precisely here in Theodoret’s political appropriation of

Plato that the author sees the "culmination" of "Theodoret's eclectic approach to Plato" (209).

When he turns to evaluate Theodoret on this point from the Hellenic perspective, the author notes two fundamental flaws. First, Theodoret's attempt to link Judaeo-Christian notions of divine law to Hellenic notions of *nomos* and *logos* fails to acknowledge the fundamental difference between the exclusivity of Judaeo-Christian law, on the one hand, and the universality of Hellenic notions of *logos* and *nomos* on the other. The notion that a particularly located expression of law could exhaust the universal law was incoherent for the Hellenes. Rather, individual expressions of law are manifestations of the one transcendent law that are appropriate to a particular time and place, and are based on reason and custom, not revelation. Likewise, the notion of an incarnation of the *logos* once and for all is foreign to the Hellenic worldview, for similar reasons. The second problem with Theodoret's appropriation of Platonic political thought has to do with the notion of the assimilation to the divine. Here, because Theodoret had effectively eliminated the political element of asceticism earlier in *Curatio*, he has placed himself outside of the Platonic vision of practical philosophical life. Hence, his use of Platonic terminology is placed at the service of a fundamentally un-Platonic vision of man and philosophy when it comes to political thought and the assimilation to the divine.

From here the author moves to an evaluation of some specific instances of Theodoret's political views, namely political authority, property, slavery, and tyranny. He argues that while Theodoret espoused the more radical elements of Christian universalism against both traditional Roman and Hellenic categories, in practice he was often led to "a compromise with the concepts of slavery, tyranny, and social injustice that extends to the point of their theological justification" (217). This paradoxical position is based, argues the author, upon Theodoret's insistence on an individual notion of salvation in which, on the political level, coping with social injustice (or inequality)—be it slavery, tyranny, or an inequitable distribution of resources—is a matter for personal asceticism, not social change. The individual is charged with reconciling oneself to one's divinely-appointed place in the world. Theodoret marshals texts from the Platonic tradition in support of this notion, and he is, according to the author, partly justified, in particular with respect to his diagnosis of the causes of social injustice,

i.e. injustice in individuals. In fact, Theodoret proves himself to be more a pragmatist and less open to the charge of hypocrisy than other Church Fathers in that he does not roundly criticize the privileged classes upon whose patronage he was in part dependent. However, the author argues that Theodoret's appropriation of Plotinus in favor of a quietist approach to social issues is less justified and ultimately misleading. Theodoret uses to good effect the Plotinian notions that evil is nothing but the privation of good and that cosmic reason employs it for good ends in support of his own views of divine economy, where incidental injustices serve a transcendent justice. Though Plotinus gives no extended treatise on political theory, the author uses the very Plotinian texts quoted by Theodoret to argue against Theodoret's position that injustice is sent as a punishment by God. Rather, on the Plotinian account, evil and injustice are the result of individual failures. Therefore, as though against Theodoret, Plotinus, following Plato, would argue that tyranny or any other form of injustice are not at all necessary to a divine economy, but are the result of ignorance and weakness.

In his conclusion, the author argues that the Christian apologetical (in truth, polemical) appropriation of Platonic philosophy should not be taken as evidence of the continuation of Hellenic intellectual culture and identity, since the appropriation turned Platonic vocabulary to fundamentally un-Platonic ends, and since the apologists—Theodoret in this case—were really asking the Hellenes to renounce their Hellenic identity and take on a distinctly un-Hellenic Judaeo-Christian worldview as their conceptual universe. In the judgment of the author, the Platonic philosophers, who were intent to preserve both the vital coherence of Plato's philosophy and the more general notion of Hellenic intellectual identity and *paideia*, were justified in their resistance to Christian-Platonism, a term whose hyphen, we might say, obscures the incommensurability of the concepts it appears to hold together.

Because the question of the relationship between Hellenism and Christianity has been vexed throughout the history of its asking by generalizations and clever one-liners— "What hath Athens to do with Jerusalem?," "Plato is Moses in Attic Greek," etc.—it is often difficult to find one's way into a clear and fruitful engagement with it. Nikitas Siniossoglou provides just such a fruitful engagement in *Plato and Theodoret*. The author's project of giving a reading of Theodoret's *Curatio* from the perspective of its intended audience, the Hellenic intellectual

elite, is, in the opinion of this reviewer, a success and a very helpful contribution to our understanding of the specifics of the engagement between Christian apologists and Platonism. It is itself a work of resistance against what the author takes to be a modern scholarly reiteration of the ancient attempt to appropriate Hellenic culture and philosophy to Christianity.¹ The author shows a firm grasp of the late-Antique Platonic tradition and is able to demonstrate convincingly the ways in which this tradition responds to Christian attempts to appropriate its master. His hermeneutical orientation in the introduction to the book is not overbearing (as such chapters often are), and provides a precise statement as to the nature of the author's own interpretive strategy.

It would be most interesting to apply this standpoint from the perspective of Hellenic philosophy to evaluate Christian works by authors who were not at all estranged from the traditions of Hellenic *paideia* (Theodoret himself was not, but much of his Syrian ascetical constituency was), and whose works are more positively philosophical in what the author has defined as its Hellenic sense. One thinks, for example, of the Theological Orations of Gregory Nazienzen, in which he describes theological discourse as "philosophizing about God" (*to peri theou philosophhein*), or later, of Maximus the Confessor, whom Michael Psellos referred to as "a philosopher." Indeed, given the commonly noted blurring of boundaries between philosophy and rhetoric in late-antiquity (not to mention in Plato himself, e.g. *Phaedrus*), the author's distinction between philosophical/doctrinal and rhetorical modes of reading and his demonstration of how it played out in Theodoret and the Neoplatonists is an important statement as to the difference between the *philologos* and the *philosophos* (Porphyry, *Vita Plotinii* 14). One wonders if different patristic texts—especially non-apologetical treatises— would manifest a truer continuation of Platonic conceptual language.

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1 or vice-versa; cf. Pierre Hadot, who calls Christian spirituality "the heir of ancient philosophy and its spiritual practices;" *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Blackwell, 1995), 127.