

Bessarion's Treasure

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Bessarion's Treasure

Editing, Translating and Interpreting Bessarion's
Literary Heritage

Edited by
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Foreword

The title of this volume originated as the conference “Bessarion’s Treasure: Editing, Translating and Interpreting Bessarion’s Literary Heritage”, which was organized by Sergei Mariev, Monica Marchetto and Katharina Luchner in Venice on 4–5 April 2014.

The main aim of the conference was to present a critical edition, with German translation and extensive philosophical commentary, of the *De natura et arte*, the sixth and last book of Bessarion’s main philosophical treatise “In calumniatorem Platonis” (*ICP*). In 2014, on the very eve of publishing the results of this research project, it seemed important to the members of our research group to discuss in greater depth our findings with other scholars working on closely related subjects. Thanks to generous support from the German Research Foundation (DFG), the Centro Tedesco di Studi Veneziani in Venice and the Venice International University, it was possible to welcome participants from all over the world to this conference.

The word “treasure” in the title of the conference and of the present volume echoes the word *thesaurus* that Bessarion frequently used to refer to his own collection of books, for example in his *Letter to the Doge and the Senate of Venice* that accompanied the act of donation of his library to Venice. Bessarion, as this choice of word makes clear, viewed his book collection as the greatest treasure he had ever possessed in his life. The subtitle “editing, translating and interpreting” refers to the three main phases of our research project on *De natura et arte* and the three components of our edition, which we wished to present and discuss during the conference. At the same time, these three categories have broader significance. At the present state of research into Byzantine philosophy in general, and not only into Bessarion’s philosophical texts, these words call attention to the three fundamental aspects that can ensure substantial advances in this field. “Editing” was one thematic strand during the conference. It is important to stress that it is impossible to make any progress without the publication of modern, “state of the art” critical editions of Byzantine philosophical texts. Accordingly, one of the aims of the conference was to discuss modern editorial practices that should be applied to Byzantine texts and, in particular, philosophical texts. During the early 20th century, Byzantine texts in general, and the few philosophical texts that appeared in print, were edited by adhering to the same rules, procedures and assumptions that had been developed by Classical philologists for “their” texts. These conventions were formulated for texts with significantly different textual histories and manuscript transmissions. When preparing a critical edition of a 15th-century treatise, it is frequently not the quest for the archetype that occupies an editor’s attention, simply because sometimes we are fortunate enough to have one or even several autographa. Depending on the transmission of a particular text, it becomes necessary instead to offer a comprehensive overview of the entire textual evidence avail-

able to us, namely the evidence that would normally have been discarded or reduced at the stage of *eliminatio codicum descriptorum*. In other cases, we might even have in our possession versions that reflect the state of the text prior to the final circulation of copies of the work. “Translating” was another thematic area that was explored during the conference. Over recent years, the simplistic or even condescending view that translations are merely a stopgap for those who do not read the original Greek or Latin has been yielding ground to a growing understanding that translation may become a medium in which the intrinsic ambiguities of the original(s) can and should be subjected to critical evaluation. The heuristic potential of the translational process is enormous and the translated text, that is the result or last stage of such a process, should ideally elucidate and not obscure the ambiguities and difficulties of the original. Finally, “interpreting” was included in the title of the conference, on the one hand, as a reference to the philosophical commentary on the *De natura et arte*, and, on the other hand, as an implicit invitation to all to share relevant topics and scholarly results of particular importance to our understanding of Bessarion’s literary, and not only philosophical, output or “heritage”.

The call for papers was met with great enthusiasm by the scholarly community. Looking back at the two days in Venice, I would like to reiterate, also on behalf of my co-organizers of the conference, our enormous gratitude to all those who attended. In particular, gratitude is due to Professor John Monfasani, who graciously agreed to be the key-note speaker, and whose scholarly work, as is widely known, is in large part dedicated to the main antagonist of Bessarion, George of Trebizond. I am grateful to John Demetracopoulos and Panagiotis Athanasopoulos, whose scholarly work embraces the reception of Thomas Aquinas, a source of primary importance for Bessarion in his philosophical arguments. I am also very much obliged, for both his attendance and invaluable insights, to Fabio Pagani, who has completed a critical edition of George of Trebizond’s translation of the Platonic *Laws* into Latin; to Eva Del Soldato, whose research explores the large network of Bessarion’s scholarly contacts for a glimpse into a nearly complete “atlas” of Bessarion’s *Nachleben*; to Annick Peters-Custot, an expert in Bessarion’s monasticism, to Georgios Steiris, whose research focuses on Michael Apostoles, and to Frederick Lauritzen, whose research sheds light on Bessarion’s early years. I am also very grateful for the insights that Christian Brockmann, Antonio Rigo, Vito Lorusso, Delphine Lauritzen and Aslihan Akisik Karakullukcu shared during the conference.

In 2014, there were as yet no definite plans to publish all the papers presented in Venice, as the two-day meeting was structured as a workshop and its main aim was the exchange of ideas along the thematic lines outlined above. However, after some time had elapsed, it became increasingly obvious that the research that many of the participants carried out in the aftermath of the gathering in Venice has many points of contact, and so the idea of publishing a volume of collected papers that would bring together several insights from philosophical, philological and historical perspectives on Bessarion’s texts has gradually become a reality. The present volume assembles

papers that, in one way or another, go back to presentations and discussions, or even reproduce in part the actual papers that were read at the conference. However, the majority of the papers published here contain new or significantly updated research results and an updated bibliography of the five years that have elapsed since the date of the conference.

It is to be expected that a number of major publications in the field of Bessarion Studies will appear in the near or nearest future. To name only a few, the critical edition and English translation of George of Trebizond's *Comparatio Platonis et Aristotelis* that is being prepared by John Monfasani, several new volumes from the *Thomas Byzantinus* Project of John Demetracopoulos, Panagiotis Athanasopoulos and other colleagues, Fabio Pagani's critical edition of George of Trebizond's translation of the Platonic *Laws*, and my own critical edition of books 1–5 of the *ICP*. While all these longer-term projects approach completion, the present volume seeks to offer some new and important “midterm” results from research into Bessarion's “literary heritage”.

Sergei Mariev

Munich, 31 October 2020

John Monfasani

Cardinal Bessarion and the Latins

Cardinal Bessarion spent more than half his life in the Latin West. If we combine his year and half at the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1438 and 1439 and the thirty-two years between his return to Italy from Constantinople in late 1440 and his death in November 1472, he had lived amongst Latins for more than thirty-three of his nearly sixty-five years.¹ At least mathematically, Bessarion's life between the Greek East and Latin West corresponds almost perfectly to the symmetry of Lorenzo Valla's famous characterization of him as *inter Graecos Latinissimus, inter Latinos Graecissimus*.² The first Latin we can document as being in contact with Bessarion is Francesco Filelfo. As Filelfo reminded Bessarion many years later, they first came to know each other at the school of Manuel Chrysococces in Constantinople, which would mean sometime between later 1422 and mid-1427,³ when Bessarion was still a teenager under the tutelage of Dositheos, the exiled metropolitan of Trebizond. Bessarion surely encountered many Latins besides Filelfo after he arrived in Constantinople at about age eight in 1416/17.⁴ We just cannot document who they were until he embarked in November 1437 for the Council in Italy with the rest of the Greek delegation and a papal party that included another future cardinal, Nicholas of Cusa.⁵ What we can say for sure is that Bessarion's Latin contacts before he arrived in Venice on 4 February 1438 did not lead to a knowledge of Latin. Unlike his slightly older friend, the layman George Scholarius, who took advantage of the Dominican monastery in Pera opposite Constantinople to learn Latin,⁶ there is nothing in Bessarion's biography pointing to any significant interchange with Dominicans in Constantinople. Indeed there is some evidence, as we shall see shortly, suggesting the opposite. As is well known, long before the Council, in 1431 he left Constantinople for Mistra in the Peloponnesus, where he studied with the celebrated Platonist teacher George Gemistus Pletho.⁷ So when he claimed in a

¹ This calculation assumes that Bessarion was born 2 January 1408, as I argued in Monfasani 1992 (reprinted as Essay VI in Monfasani 1995). This thesis has received independent confirmation from other evidence; see Braccini 2006, 86–88 and Ganchou 2005, 256, n. 204. Cf. also Tambrun-Krasker 2013, 9.

² On this compliment, see Monfasani 1988. It should be pointed out that Orthodox Greeks would take such praise as an expression of Bessarion's treachery; e. g., see Saladin 2009.

³ Ganchou 2005, 253–257.

⁴ Mioni 1991, 23; Coluccia 2009, 5.

⁵ Gill 1961, 83, 88–90.

⁶ See Blanchet and Ganchou 2005, 100, who suggest that it might have been Lodisius of Tabriz, OP, who taught Scholarius' Latin.

⁷ See Mohler 1923–1942, vol. 1, 45–50; Mioni 1991, 34–56; Coluccia 2009, 15–25. Spending time in Mistra with Pletho was almost an ordinary part of the educational *cursus honoris*; for instance, both

well known letter to the Dominican Andrew Chrysoberges to have read all of the arguments or writings (*logoi*) of Thomas Aquinas on the procession of the Holy Spirit, he must have read Thomas in the Demetrius Cydones' Greek translation of the *Summa Theologiae* without any knowledge of Thomas' other relevant writings.⁸

Once in Italy, Bessarion certainly learned Latin and Italian, and even some German. Indeed, in the next 34 years by virtually every plausible index Bessarion became a fully assimilated member of the Latin West, even if he kept the beard and habit of a Basilian monk.⁹ Starting gradually in the 1440s, by the 1450s he had become very active in the politics of the Roman Curia and remained so to his death in 1472, by which time he had also become the doyen of the college of cardinals.¹⁰ At least three times, in 1455, 1458, and 1464, he was a candidate in papal conclaves. Three times he served as a papal legate, in Bologna, Germany, and Venice, and twice papal ambassador first to the court of King Alfonso of Aragon and then at the end of his life, in France.¹¹ In 1458, he became the Cardinal Protector of the Franciscans, the largest of the mendicant orders. He was, of course, a celebrated patron of humanists and scholastics, with his household being viewed by panegyrists as a sort of "academy" of Latin and Greek intellectuals.¹² The manuscripts and printed books he collected constituted one of the great libraries of the age, and by bequeathing it to the Republic of Venice he benefacted not only Venice, but Western culture for the last five hundred years.¹³ As an author, he himself produced a small library of Latin writings consisting of letters, orations, treatises, and translations.¹⁴ With exception of Nicholas of Cusa and Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, who became Pope Pius II, no cardinal of the Quattrocento left a literary legacy that as endured as long and as well as has Bessarion's.¹⁵

Bessarion's anti-unionist opponent, Mark Eugenikos, and his pro-unionist ally, Isidore of Kiev, had also studied with Pletho (see Costas 2007, 413; Mercati 1926, 27), in Eugenikos' case without any apparent philosophical effect, but, as Mercati points out, Isidore seems to have been favorably inclined to Plato and hostile to Aristotle.

8 Candal 1938, 346.8; but see also de Halleux 1989, who corrects Candal's mistaken understanding where the quotation of Bessarion begins. Cf. Fyrigos 2012, 111: "nulla prova che, prima del concilio di Firenze, egli si fosse interessato più di tanto della teologia latina e di Tommaso."

9 On his beard, see Labowsky 1994, 285–286 ("I. La barba del Cardinale"); on his iconografia see now Lollini 2014, who captures the extensive earlier literature.

10 On Bessarion's Curial career, now see Henderson 2013.

11 The most recent study of Bessarion as a papal legate is Märkl 2013.

12 On Bessarion's "Academy" see Bianca 1999; Bianca 2013 and Monfasani 2011e. For a comparative study, see Schwarz 2005.

13 See Labowsky 1979 and Zorzi 1987, 13–85.

14 See Monfasani 2015.

15 One may also compare Bessarion to his Greek colleague, Isidore of Kiev, who was made a cardinal the same time as Bessarion. Unlike Bessarion, Isidore had little interest in studying or collecting Latin texts; see the list of 52 manuscripts he borrowed from the Vatican in Mercati 1926, 78–82 (even the Thomas Aquinas he borrowed was a Greek translation); see also Schreiner 2006.

Yet, despite his highly visible and influential engagement with Latin culture, Bessarion never really was the most Latin of the Greeks nor the most Greek of the Latins. Among the Greeks émigrés, George of Trebizond, John Argyropoulos, and Theodore Gaza unquestionably wrote a superior Latin; we have more Greek poetry from Francesco Filelfo than we do from Bessarion, and though it would be foolish to contend that Filelfo's Greek prose was superior to Bessarion's, it was at least as competent as Bessarion's Latin;¹⁶ and this is not to bring into the conversation Angelo Poliziano, whose *floruit* (1454–1494) postdated Valla's praise of Bessarion in his preface to Pope Nicholas V in 1452 for his translation of Thucydides.¹⁷ But Bessarion's relationship with Latin culture was far more problematic than just the issue of comparative skill in Latin and Greek.

We can start with the Franciscans. Bessarion became their Cardinal Protector in 1458, but his relationship with them had probably started before he settled into the papal Curia. As Remo Guidi has pointed out,¹⁸ in 1443 it was Bessarion who consecrated the Franciscan church of S. Croce in Florence and in the next year in his capacity as commendatory abbot assigned to the Franciscans the monastery of S. Mamante in Ravenna. As is well known, in 1463 he assigned his titular church of Ss. Apostoli to the Franciscans. All of this suggests that Bessarion had developed a connection with the Franciscans even before his arrival in Italy. Supporting this supposition is the fact that in the early 1450s, a decade after his arrival at the Curia, he had famously commissioned a sumptuous set of choral books for the Franciscan monastery of St. Anthony of Padua in Pera that ended up in the Franciscan monastery in Cesena because Constantinople fell before the manuscripts could be completed and shipped to Constantinople.¹⁹ One can multiply such contacts many times over from the 1440s to 1472. But as Guidi also remarks, “nel complesso la figura del Niceno non entrò mai da protagonista nelle pagine della storiografia francescana.”²⁰ He simply did not play a significantly active or influential role in the history of the Franciscans during the fourteen years of his Protectorate. If one approaches the question from the other direction, i. e., from that of Franciscan influences on Bessarion, the result is similar. Yes, he did possess a large library of Franciscan texts,²¹ but if one discounts the Scotist references in the *In Calumniatorem Platonis* supplied by Giovanni Gatti, Franciscan philosophy and theology are noticeably absent from Bessarion's largest philosophical work.²² Nor can one find Scotist influences in Bessarion's other writings, from his early unionist theological works to his various other writings as papal legate and Renaissance intellec-

16 E. g., see Filelfo, *De psychagogia* and Filelfo, *Odes*.

17 See Pade 2003, 121–122 for the preface.

18 Guidi 2013, 235.

19 See Weiss 1987; Mariani Canova 1977; Lollini 1989.

20 Guidi 2013, 235.

21 See Monfasani 2011a, 49–54.

22 See Monfasani 2012, 470–475.

tual.²³ Nor, significantly, did he ever seem to contemplate leaving his library to a Franciscan foundation. His only choice for the library was Venice, which, very poignantly, he viewed as “another Byzantium” (*alterum Bizantium*). A humorous aspect of this engagement with the Franciscans is the dialogue *De Arcanis Dei* that a young Franciscan member of his household, Georgius Benignus Salviati, wrote in 1471.²⁴ It is a dialogue on future contingents, an issue being hotly debated in Rome at the time.²⁵ The interlocutors in the dialogue are scholastic scholars associated with Bessarion, namely, the former General of the Franciscans and then cardinal Francesco della Rovere, the Franciscan theologian John Foxal, the Dominican theologian Giovanni Gatti, the secular theologian Fernando of Cordova, and Bessarion himself as the leader of the discussion and the determinator of each discussed issue. But right after the dedication copy (MS Vat. Lat. 9402 of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana), which is also the *codex unicus*, of the *De Arcanis Dei* had been prepared, Francesco della Rovere was elected pope. Not wanting to lose an opportunity to ingratiate himself with the new pontiff, Benignus clumsily reversed the names of Bessarion and Della Rovere everywhere in the dedication copy. In other words, Bessarion’s intellectual leadership in the discussion was a fiction. He had no defined theological position within this very scholastic debate. He had only a position of honor as patron until he was pushed aside by an even greater patron.

Benignus’ dialogue was imaginary, but we know that Bessarion did oversee scholastic debates in Rome. The Dominican theologian Bartolomeo Lapacci de’ Rimbertini tells us of a disputation in the early 1460s on the procession of the Holy Spirit overseen by Bessarion in which he, Lapacci, debated a Franciscan theologian who was a *domesticus* of the Cardinal.²⁶ According to Lapacci, Bessarion wanted to see Thomist trinitarian theology defended against Scotist views. We should recall that Bessarion had once compiled a list for himself of the differences between the Thomists and the Scotists on a wide range of theological and philosophical issues.²⁷ But the Roman *disputatio* Lapacci described was no mere scholastic exercise for Bessarion, but rather something that cut to the heart of his interests as a Byzantine theologian and Greek controversialist. Similarly, the Augustinian theologian Niccolò Palmieri tells that he was victorious in a disputation held in S. Maria Rotonda in Rome on the conception of Jesus Christ in which he rebutted the position of John of Damascus and John Chrysostomus and in which, according to the rubric in one manuscript Palmieri obtained “maximum honorem et victoriam contra Nicenum cardinalem in sua opin-

²³ See Monfasani 2011d, 165–166.

²⁴ See Etzkorn 1997, who unaccountably treated Bessarion as the author.

²⁵ See Baudry 1950 and Schabel 2000, 315–336.

²⁶ See Monfasani 2011a, 37–39. Bessarion seems to have attended disputations on this subject on multiple occasions; e. g., in Piacenza in 1472 while on his way to France; see Labowsky 1994, 286.

²⁷ See Monfasani 2011a, 187–196.

ione.”²⁸ It is highly improbable that Bessarion himself debated Palmieri, but what matters for our purposes is that Palmieri thought himself as defeating in the presence of Bessarion a Greek theological position upheld by Bessarion.

What we have to realize is that Bessarion never ceased to be a Byzantine theologian and that even after three decades in the Latin West was only fully comfortable thinking in Greek. He had written no theological work of any significance before the Council of Florence. It was only at the Council that he first emerged as a theological star. Apart from his interventions at the Council, the most famous of which was his *Oratio Dogmatica*,²⁹ Bessarion produced four theological works in the years immediately following the Council, all addressed to Greeks dealing with issues discussed at the Council: the treatise on the procession of the Holy Spirit to Alexius Lascaris Philanthropenus,³⁰ a *Refutatio* of Maximus Planudes,³¹ a *Refutatio* of Mark Eugenikos,³² and a *Defense* of John Beccus against Gregory Palamas.³³ He subsequently wrote three others works, all in Greek, though he later translated them into Latin, a task that was utterly necessary since from their conception they were aimed at a Latin audience.³⁴ The first was a treatise on John 21:22, where he defended the reading of the Greek Septuagint, *ean* in Greek or *si* in Latin, against the reading *sic* of the Latin Vulgate.³⁵ Interestingly enough, he explicitly based himself on principles enuntiated by the twelfth-century Latin Hebraist Nicolaus Maniacutia in order to contend, quite mistakenly, that the *sic* of the Latin Vulgate was a scribal error. In fact, *sic* is the correct reading for the Latin Vulgate.³⁶ The second work is a treatise interpreting and defending the epiclesis of the Greek eucharist, a practice that Latin theologians had challenged at the Council and that Bessarion justified in a memorandum in closing phase of the Council.³⁷ The third work was his *Encyclical* to the Greeks upon his becoming Patriarch of Constantinople in 1463, where Bessarion focused on history rather than theological argument.³⁸ In short, Bessarion never really engaged with Latin theology beyond what interested him as a Greek theologian.

Even a seemingly quite neutral text such as his 1470 letter to Pope Paul II on the correct date of Easter and reforming the calendar only makes sense in terms of

²⁸ See Monfasani 2011a, 39; and Monfasani 1991–1992, vol. 54, 343; vol. 55, 25.

²⁹ See Bessarion, *Oratio Dogmatica* and Bessarion, *Oratio Dogmatica* (Lusini).

³⁰ See Bessarion, *De Spiritus Sancti Processione*. See Rigo 2001, for this and the other theological writings of Bessarion; cf. also Monfasani 2011d, 170–174.

³¹ PG 161, 309–318. See Rigo 2001, 34–36, for the date and circumstances of the treatise.

³² PG 161, 137–241.

³³ PG 161, 240–288. See also Rigo 2000.

³⁴ See Monfasani 1981 and Monfasani 1983.

³⁵ The original Greek was first published by Mohler 1923–1942, vol. 3, 70–87.

³⁶ See Monfasani 1976, 95–96.

³⁷ Again, the original Greek text was first published by Mohler 1923–1942, vol. 3, 1–69; see also van Dieten 1984 and Boularand 1959.

³⁸ PG 161, 457–460; cf. Monfasani 2011d, 173–174.

Bessarion's focus on the Greek Church.³⁹ Most of the letter deals with the growing divergence between the solar year and the date of Easter in the Julian calendar; but in its last section, Bessarion essentially tells the pope to ignore everything he has just said because to change the calendar would cause division among Christians since backward areas would not have the astronomical knowledge to follow the new calendar. Not only is this letter absurdly contradictory, but the justification Bessarion gives for not instituting a reform of the calendar is also nothing short of silly, as if acceptance of a reformed calendar depended upon the learning of rural bishops. We do not know the context that provoked Bessarion's letter, but clearly in the first part of the letter he wanted to establish his credentials as an expert in astronomy and the calendar before advising that nothing should be changed. He wanted to forestall any change in the date of Easter, I would argue, not because some distant part of the Latin Church would end up being out of harmony with Rome, but because the Greek Church, now under Ottoman control, would have one more fundamental difference with Rome. To argue for the sake of the schismatic Greeks against a reform of the Roman calendar that was commonly recognized as needed would not have been a winning strategy. Hence, having established his credentials in the matter, he made his bizarre appeal to reject any reform for the sake of the more ignorant districts of Christendom.

Bessarion's relationship with the Dominican Order confirms his restrictive Greek perspective. As we have seen, Bessarion knew Thomas Aquinas in the Greek translation of Demetrius Cydones before the Council, and he certainly studied Thomas' treatment of the procession of the Holy Spirit. By the time he died, Bessarion owed almost all of Thomas' writings in the original Latin as well as the writings of many other Dominicans, especially of Albert the Great;⁴⁰ but significantly, he not only collected Thomas in Greek translation, but also demonstrably continued to read him in Greek.⁴¹ At the Council, his Latin counterparts in the public sessions were all Dominicans apart from Giuliano Cesarini. Indeed, the best of the Dominican theologians at the Council, Juan Torquemada, became a cardinal in the same consistory as Bessarion in December 1439 and remained Bessarion's colleague for the next 28 years without any noticeable intellectual interchange between the two.⁴² Bessarion did have significant interaction with two Dominican theologians: Bartolomeo Lapacci and Giovanni Gatti. But both Lapacci and Gatti knew Greek – unlike Torquemada and the Franciscan theologians in Bessarion's household.⁴³ This linguistic advantage helps to explain, I believe, why we have so much more evidence of the intellectual interaction of these two Domini-

³⁹ On the letter see Rigo 1994, 107. Kaltenbrunner 1876, 82–83 cites Ioannes Regiomontanus's mention of Bessarion's interest in calendar reform while legate in Venice in the 1460s, but seems not to know Bessarion's letter to Paul II; the same is true of Zinner 1968, 200.

⁴⁰ Monfasani 2011a, 46–47, 61–70.

⁴¹ See Fyrigos 2012, 112–118 and Fyrigos 2011.

⁴² Izbicki, 1981.

⁴³ For literature on Lapacci and Gatti, see Monfasani 2011a, 37 and 39.

cans with Bessarion, especially Gatti. I note that Bessarion repeated this pattern with humanists, with his secretaries from Lilio Tifernate to Niccolò Perotti and Domizio Calderini, as well as with humanist members of his household, such as young Lauro Quirini, Pietro Balbi, and Ioannes Regiomontanus. As I showed elsewhere, Bessarion actually had little interest in the work of the Italian humanists beyond the promotion of Greek studies, not even including in his library their translations from the Greek since they had little practical value to him beyond helping him early on improve his command of Latin.⁴⁴ In this regard, it is also worth noting that at his death he owned no writings of Nicholas of Cusa, though the two cardinals were kindred spirits in their interest in the Platonic tradition. Cusanus even knew some Greek, and in the case of George of Trebizond's translation of Plato's *Parmenides*,⁴⁵ he even consulted with Bessarion concerning the translation. Cusanus' peculiar brand of Latin Platonism simply did not appeal to Bessarion.

Bessarion's signature work as a Latin intellectual has always been the 1469 *In Calumniatorem Platonis*, which was, in fact, originally written in Greek. Ludwig Mohler published the original Greek text of this work 77 years ago.⁴⁶ We need to remember that the Plato-Aristotle controversy was a Byzantine quarrel triggered by George Gemistus Pletho's comparison of Plato and Aristotle at the Council of Florence in 1439. The controversy was conducted exclusively in Greek until George of Trebizond published in Latin at Rome first his *Protectio Problematum Aristotelis* in 1457 and then his *Comparatio Philosophorum Platonis et Aristotelis* in 1458.⁴⁷ Bessarion always intended to publish his response in Latin since his purpose was to defend Plato to the Latins. Yet he could not but compose in Greek, and most strangely of all, he wrote in Greek his critique of George of Trebizond's Latin translation of Plato's *Laws* that only had meaning in Latin.⁴⁸ Bessarion did make his own Latin translation of the *In Calumniatorem Platonis* in the 1460s and then had members of his household, especially Niccolò Perotti, produce a more refined Latin text.⁴⁹ But Bessarion's underlying Greek approach was much more than linguistic. As is well known because of Mohler's edition, Bessarion revised the original Greek text of the *In Calumniatorem Platonis* several times after its original composition in 1459. What is most striking about the original draft is that it was totally devoid of citations of Latin texts save for a minuscule number of citations of Cicero and Augustine and single citations of Macrobius and St. Jerome.⁵⁰ There was

44 Monfasani 2011a, 12–17.

45 See Monfasani 2002a.

46 In Mohler 1923–1942, vol. 2. An Italian translation is now available: Del Soldato 2014.

47 See Monfasani 1976, 162–170.

48 Pagani 2011 analyzes Bessarion's criticisms of Bks. 1–4. V. Tiftixoglou and S. Mariev are preparing a critical edition of the original Greek text. Until its publication we are dependent on the Latin text of the 1469 *princeps* and the Aldine editions of 1503 and 1513.

49 See Monfasani 1981; Monfasani 1983 and Monfasani 2011c.

50 See Monfasani 2012, 471–473.

no quotation of any medieval author, not even of Thomas Aquinas. Bessarion wrote the *In Calumniatorem Platonis* exclusively as a Greek intellectual, whose familiarity with Latin literature, even of classical texts, was very limited. Yes, in later redactions citations of Boethius, Quintilian, Pliny, Apuleius, Aulus Gellius, Suetonius, Macrobius, and Vergil can be found. But some of these Latin quotations, namely Aulus Gellius, Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and Macrobius' *Saturnalia* in Bk. IV (i. e., the original Bk. III), are not to be found in the Greek text at all and only appear for the first time in the 1469 Latin version,⁵¹ the product not of Bessarion's Latin scholarship, but that of his *familiares*, as can be demonstrated by Niccolò Perotti's marginal addition of Macrobius in Bessarion's own copy of the *In Calumniatorem Platonis*, MS Marc. Lat. 229 (= 1695) of the Biblioteca Marciana, Venice.⁵² I think it prudent to suppose that some, if not most, of the other Latin quotations found in the later redactions of the Greek text also originated with Bessarion's clients rather than with Bessarion himself.

The most startling instance of Bessarion's reliance on his *familiares* for his Latin erudition is the massive Bk. III that appeared for the first time in the 1469 Latin edition. The source for its Latin citations was a treatise by the Dominican theologian Giovanni Gatti that survives in a fragment containing between two thirds and three quarters of the original. In the corresponding chapters of Bk. III of the *In Calumniatorem Platonis*, every single Latin reference or citation, including medieval authorities such as Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great, Averroes, Avicenna, John Duns Scotus, Henry of Ghent, Thomas Wylton, Peter Lombard, and Hilary of Poitiers, in addition to patristic sources such as Augustine and Ambrose, came from Gatti's treatise.⁵³ Even the single apparent exception really is not such. At a certain point Bessarion had added in the margin in his own hand a long quotation of Thomas Aquinas' commentary on Bk. IV of the *Sentences*.⁵⁴ But this particular passage is the most important and largest one in Thomas for the issue at hand, the distance between the finite and the infinite, a passage that Gatti would not have omitted, and since all the other references to Thomas' *Sentences* commentary are directly from Gatti, it is hard not to conclude that Bessarion learned of this particular passage also from Gatti, perhaps *viva voce*. Consequently, we can reasonably presume that the Latin references in the part of the Bk. III not covered in the extant fragment of Gatti's treatise all derive from Gatti.

The most quoted author in Bk. III is Aristotle, whom Bessarion knew well. Also, many Greek authors are cited for whom Gatti could not have been responsible. Furthermore, Bk. III is a continuous tissue of argumentation, not quotations. Only Bessarion

⁵¹ The classical Latin quotations missing from the Greek text are to be found in Mohler 1923–1942, vol. 2, 511.27–34 (Caesar), 577.15–30 (Aulus Gellius and Macrobius), 582.37–38 (Virgil).

⁵² See Monfasani 1983, 219–220.

⁵³ I have prepared an edition of Gatti's treatise, found in MS Lat. VI, 61 (= 2592) of the Biblioteca Marciana, Venice.

⁵⁴ MS Lat. VI, 61 (= 2592), f. 102v, corresponding to Mohler 1923–1942, vol. 2, 240/241.

himself could have conceived and organized the main lines of this argumentation. Bessarion, not Gatti, was the author of Bk. III. Nonetheless, it can be shown that large sections of Bk. III depend directly on the arguments Gatti developed in his treatise, through not *verbatim* since the Latin text we have is a translation of Bessarion's Greek adaptation of Gatti. Furthermore, in the final 60 or 70 pages of Bk. III not covered by the fragment of Gatti's treatise, we cannot have any doubt that Bessarion continued to copy directly from Gatti since his arguments are cast in a distinctly scholastic manner of arguments *ad primum*, *ad secundum*, *ad tertium*, and so on, so different from Bessarion's style everywhere else in the *In Calumniatorem Platonis*. In short, Gatti supplied the intellectual and documentary material on the basis of which Bessarion wrote the new Bk. III.

But the *In Calumniatorem Platonis* tells us about Bessarion almost as much by what it omits as what it includes. Bessarion included multiple references to contemporary personages in the *In Calumniatorem Platonis*. Leonardo Bruni, John Argyropoulos, Pope Nicholas V, Nicholas of Cusa, Theodore Gaza; and, once, even Giovanni Gatti make an appearance.⁵⁵ Yet, he kept completely silent about the one contemporary whom George of Trebizond most talked about and attacked in the *Comparatio*, namely, Bessarion's teacher George Gemistus Pletho.

Why would Bessarion not defend the revered teacher, whom he called the wisest of all men,⁵⁶ when silence would suggest betrayal? There could be only one reason. Bessarion could defend Plato. He could not defend Pletho. Pletho was the neopagan George of Trebizond said he was. Pletho died four years before Bessarion wrote the *In Calumniatorem Platonis*.⁵⁷ On that occasion, Bessarion wrote an extraordinary letter to Pletho's sons in which he asserted that if one believed in the transmigration of souls, one would think that Plato's soul descended into Pletho's body.⁵⁸ Giovanni Mercati, the discoverer of an autograph draft of the letter, found it difficult to comprehend how Bessarion could have admired so greatly a man with such lamentable views.⁵⁹ But what I would like to call attention to is another aspect of the letter, namely, Bessarion's coupling of metempsychosis with deterministic necessity. As he put it in a clear reminiscence of a famous passage of Plato's *Phaedrus*:⁶⁰ "Plato's soul had to serve the unbreakable chains of fate and discharge its necessary period of time here below by en-

⁵⁵ Actually, Bessarion referred to Gatti twice: once quite clearly at Mohler 1923–1942, vol. 2, 305.11–12 ("Ioannes Gattus, theologiae professor, familiaris noster") and again in very confused fashion, as I explain in my forthcoming edition of Gatti's treatise, at 261.41 ("Simplicius familiaris noster").

⁵⁶ Mohler 1923–1942, vol. 3, 456.34.

⁵⁷ On Pletho's date of death, see Monfasani 1976, 163 and Monfasani 2006.

⁵⁸ Mohler 1923–1942, vol. 3, 468–469.

⁵⁹ Mercati 1917, 185: "il Bessarione sentiva per lui un'ammirazione sconfinata, quale, se ne rammentiamo le dottrine filosofico-religiose, stentiamo a comprendere."

⁶⁰ *Phaedrus* 248c2–4: "θεσμός τε Ἀδραστείας ὅδε· ἥ τις ἂν ψυχὴ θεῷ συνοπαδὸς γενομένη κατὶδὲ τῶν ἀληθῶν, μέχρι τε τῆς ἑτέρας περιόδου εἶναι ἀπήμονα." Cf. Ps.-Plutarch, *De Fato*, 568 c 6–7, who quotes precisely this passage; Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii*, c. 8.7, 203–4: "ὥς καὶ Ὅμηρῳ παρασχέιν

tering into Gemistus' body."⁶¹ Bessarion was fully aware not only of Pletho's belief in metempsychosis, but also of his rigid determinism. Almost a decade earlier, in 1446–1447, Bessarion addressed a series of questions to Pletho, one of which concerned determinism.⁶² Bessarion did pose his question innocently. He was consciously refuting Pletho's fatalism. He noted that many Platonists (Simplicius in his commentary on Epictetus, Olympiodorus in his commentaries on Plato's *Gorgias* and *First Alcibiades*, Ammonius, Damascius, and even Proclus in his *Elements of Theology*)⁶³ seems to allow for chance and contingency.⁶⁴ Bessarion was clearly challenging Pletho's deterministic views as unfaithful to Platonic orthodoxy. Bessarion began his series of questions with a reference to *koinai ennoiai*, common conceptions, which was a mainstay of Pletho's epistemological system.⁶⁵ He was knowingly engaging Pletho in terms which Pletho's would have approved, i. e., from Platonic authorities and Pletho's own epistemological presuppositions. Pletho's response is interesting. He completely ignored Bessarion's string of Platonic citations and instead attacked what he viewed as Aristotle's illogical treatment in the *Metaphysics* of contingency and necessity.⁶⁶ In contrast, Pletho explicitly endorsed the Stoic teaching on universal determinism.⁶⁷ Pletho made Bessarion to understand that he would suffer no trifling with the ancient truth of determinism and that he considered the careless words of some Platonists not worthy

θρήνον, παρελθὼν δ' ἐς πλείω σώματα κατὰ τὸν Ἀδραστείας θεσμόν." Synesius, *De Insomniis*, 8.25–26: "θεσμῶν Ἀδραστείας ἐπιταττόντων." Hippolytus, *Refutatio Omnium Haeresium* (= *Philosophumena*), I, c. 19.19, 3, cites this very same line of Plato's *Phaedrus*. The online *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* reports eight attestations of Proclus using the phrase *thesmos/oi Adrasteias*, and various Byzantine citations proving that the phrase was a commonplace.

⁶¹ Mohler 1923–1942, vol. 3, 469.6–7.

⁶² Mohler 1923–1942, vol. 3, 457–458.

⁶³ Mohler failed to annotate any of these references in his edition of the letter. They are as follows. For Simplicius see *Commentarius in Epictitum*, I.175–492, ed. I. Hadot (*Commentaire sur le Manuel d'Épictète*), Leiden 1996, 205–492 and Paris 2001 (vol. 1), 16–31 (cf. also CXXIX–CLXII: "La destinée des âmes: Fatalité [εἰμαρμένη], Providence [πρόνοια], pouvoir de détermination ou libre arbitre [τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, τὸ αὐτεξούσιον]"). For Olympiodorus, whom Bessarion quotes, see *In Platonis Gorgiam*, 39.1 and 48.5, ed. W. Norvin, Leipzig 1936, 182.9–11, 15–17, 232.2–5; ed. L. G. Westerink, 1973–198.3, 198.7–9, 253.31–254.4; *In Platonis I Alcibiadem*, ed. L. G. Westerink, Amsterdam 1956, 43.22, 45.1–6. For Ammonius see Olympiodorus, *In Platonis Gorgiam*, who quotes him at 48.5 cited above. Bessarion does not cite any specific text of Damascius, but see his *In Platonis Phaedonem*, 23–25 and 500, ed. L. G. Westerink, Amsterdam 1977 (*The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo*, vol. 2), 39 (23.1)–41.5, 255.6–7. Bessarion does not cite a specific text of Plutarch either, but cf. Ps.-Plutarch, *De Fato*, ed. E. Valgiglio, Rome 1964 and ed. J. Hani, in *Plutarque, Œuvres morales*, vol. 8, Paris 1980, 1–35. Finally, Bessarion cites almost *verbatim* Proclus, *Institutio Theologica*, ed. A. R. Dodds (*The Elements of Theology*), 2nd ed., Oxford 1963, p. 110.19–21.

⁶⁴ On the Neoplatonists and determinism, see Amand 1945, 156–176, who only discusses Proclus from among the authors named by Bessarion; see also Wallis 1972, 63–64, 78, 84, 150.

⁶⁵ See Masai 1956, 115–130; Hladký 2014, 59–60, 141–142.

⁶⁶ *Metaphysics*, 5.1025a14–30, 11.1064b32–1065a21.

⁶⁷ Mohler 1923–1942, vol. 3, 461–463.

of rebuttal or reinterpretation. So the allusion to the “unbreakable chain of fate” in Bessarion’s letter of consolation to Pletho’s sons was a homage to the strongly held beliefs of their father, just as was the allusion to the transmigration of souls, views incompatible with Bessarion’s equally strongly held Christianity.⁶⁸ But whereas Bessarion gently proposed to Pletho an alternative Platonic understanding of contingency, other Greek contemporaries, namely, Theodore Gaza and Matthew Camariotes did not view Pletho’s fatalism so gently and launched vigorous attacks upon it.⁶⁹

Bessarion’s library is suggestive concerning his relationship with Pletho. Though he excluded from it the writings of religious foes such as Mark Eugenicius and George Scholarius in what Brigitte Tambrun-Krasker has termed a sort of *damnatio memoriae*,⁷⁰ he owned almost all the major works of Pletho, some of them autographs, that he acquired after the death of Pletho. Yet, Bessarion never collected any of the fragments of Pletho’s overtly pagan *Laws*, even though the *Laws* were in effect Pletho’s intellectual testament and even though the main disseminator of these fragments, Demetrius Raoul Kavakis,⁷¹ took up residence in Rome about 1465 and was demonstrably a visitor in Bessarion’s home. Kavakis even tells us, that talked to Bessarion about Pletho.⁷² Just as Bessarion would not defend Pletho against George’s charges of paganism, so too he refused to acquire the fragments of the *Laws* that had survived Scholarius’ *auto-da-fe* because their presence in his library would have compromised him.⁷³

Bessarion’s attitude towards Pletho was complex and went to the core of his Greek identity. Bessarion explicitly disagreed with Pletho over a range of issues. As we have just seen, he sought to rescue Platonism from Pletho’s fatalism. He had no

⁶⁸ I note that Bessarion seem not to have understood another anti-Christian position of Pletho’s. In the *Laws*, Pletho placed Zoroaster 5,000 years before the return of the Heraclides (ed. C. Alexandre, Paris, 1858, p. 252). But in his chronological tables, which Bessarion knew by 1446/47, Pletho placed the return of the Heraclides 2528 years before the reign of the Byzantine Emperor John VIII, which meant Zoroaster lived long before the creation of the world 5508 years before Christ according to the standard Byzantine calculation; see Tambrun-Krasker 2006, 82–84 and Tambrun-Krasker 2013, 16–18. In a letter to Pletho in 1446/47, Bessarion enquired about the exact end of the year according to Pletho’s tables, citing the present year as 6955 from creation “according to the Greeks” (κατὰ Γραικούς); see Pletho, *Manuel d’astronomie*, 118–127 (which is an improvement on the text found in Mohler 1923–1942, vol. 3, 464) and Rigo 1994, 106.

⁶⁹ For Gaza’s *On the Voluntary and Involuntary* as part his campaign against Pletho, see Monfasani 2002b; for Camariotes’s rebuttal of Pletho’s *De Fato*, see Camariotes, *Orationes II* and Astruc 1955.

⁷⁰ Tambrun-Krasker 2013, 14. Bessarion’s library did contain Scholarius’ response to Pletho’s *De Differentiis*, MS Marc. Gr. IV, 31 (= 1316) (see Labowsky 1979, 219 and 444 for B 538), but this was most probably because it was the mate to Pletho’s response to Scholarius in MS Marc. Gr. 517 (= 886) (see Labowsky 1979, 219 and 444 for B 539).

⁷¹ See Bachelli 2007, 112–113.

⁷² Bachelli 2007, 36.

⁷³ For the date and circumstances of Scholarius’ deed, see Monfasani 2006.

sympathy for Pletho's vision of a *prisca theologia* beginning with Zoroaster.⁷⁴ He criticized Pletho's anti-unionist treatise.⁷⁵ He refuted Pletho's attack on Aristotle concerning purpose in nature.⁷⁶ Likewise, he contradicted Pletho on Aristotle by trying to reconcile Plato with Aristotle on first substance.⁷⁷ Furthermore, he patronized and deeply respected Theodore Gaza, who in virtually all his writings apart from his *Greek Grammar* explicitly criticized Pletho.⁷⁸ In a long letter to Bessarion discovered by Lotte Labowsky, Gaza respected Bessarion's sensibilities by speaking of Celsus and Julian the Apostate instead of Pletho when attacking Pletho's paganism, a courtesy that Bessarion could not but have recognized for what it was.⁷⁹ Finally, as is well known, Bessarion sternly chided an enthusiastic supporter of Pletho, Michael Apostolis, for abusing Gaza in defense of Pletho.⁸⁰

Yet, Bessarion described Pletho to Apostolis as "the wisest of men with Plato";⁸¹ and to Kavakis as the wisest man produced by Greece since Plotinus;⁸² and finally, he told Pletho's sons that their father was more similar to Plato in wisdom and virtue than anyone produced by Greece since the ancients.⁸³ But what of the Greek Church Fathers? What of Athanasius? Basil the Great? Gregory the Theologian? John Chrysostom? The answer, I believe, is that Bessarion put Pletho into a special category of pagan sages not to be compared with the inspired Christian Church Fathers. But if this is so, then Bessarion must have viewed Pletho as a pagan. Many contemporaries did not share Bessarion's awe and reverence for his teacher. Rather they felt fear and loathing, not only George of Trebizond and George Scholarius, but also members of Bessarion's circle, especially Theodore Gaza and his cousin Andronicus Callistus, who also wrote against Pletho and referred to his peculiar devotion to Zoroaster.⁸⁴ All these critics were Aristotelians. Silvester Syropoulos reports that George Amiroutzes, a lay scholar in the Greek delegation to the Council, scandalously mocked Pletho at a certain moment during the Council.⁸⁵ Amiroutzes was a distinguished Aristotelian.⁸⁶ A primary allegiance to Aristotle was apparently enough to break the spell that Pletho cast over his admirers. True, Bessarion admired Aristotle, but that was because he believed that Aristotle fundamentally agreed with the supreme philosopher, Plato.

⁷⁴ See Monfasani 2013, 50, 53, 55.

⁷⁵ See Monfasani 1994.

⁷⁶ See Bessarion, *De Natura et Arte* and Mariev 2013; Accendere and Privitera 2014.

⁷⁷ Mohler 1923–1942, 148–150.

⁷⁸ See note 69 above.

⁷⁹ See Labowsky 1968.

⁸⁰ Mohler 1923–1942, vol. 3, 511–513.

⁸¹ Mohler 1923–1942, vol. 3, 511.13

⁸² Bachelli 2007, 36.

⁸³ Mohler 1923–1942, vol. 3, 469.2–3.

⁸⁴ Mohler 1923–1942, vol. 3, 178.23.

⁸⁵ See Syropoulos, *Mémoires*, 446.19–22.

⁸⁶ See Monfasani 2011b.

How Bessarion reconciled the irreconcilable I do not know. I very much doubt that he knew the details of Pletho's *Laws*. Since he could not believe in metempsychosis or pagan fate and remain a Christian, let alone a Greek bishop and Roman cardinal, his acknowledgment of Pletho's belief in these doctrines was purely a homage to his teacher. He had carved out in his mind a special place for Pletho that exempted him from the strictures that should have applied to a non-believer.

Bessarion's devotion to Pletho demonstrates how faithful he remained to his Greek roots when we take into account the reaction of Latin Platonists to Pletho. Marsilio Ficino recoiled in disgust when he read Pletho's *De Fato*, as his autograph marginal comments prove.⁸⁷ Similarly, Nicholas of Cusa, the other great Latin Platonist of the day, seems to have ignored, if not rejected the Latin translation of Pletho's *De Fato* offered to him by the Greek émigré Ioannes Sophianos,⁸⁸ despite the fact that Cusanus famously craved new translations of Platonic texts and had been in Pletho's company for the trip of the Greek delegation to the Council in 1437.⁸⁹

Bessarion adapted brilliantly to Latin culture, but he did not internalize it.⁹⁰ His intellectual reactions, instincts, and erudition always remained profoundly Greek. Bessarion was neither the most Latin among the Greeks nor the most Greek among the Latins. Rather he was the most influential of the Greeks in the Latin West, the *potentissimus Graecorum inter Latinos*. He wished to use that position politically to rescue Greece, religiously to unite Greek Orthodoxy with Latin Catholicism, and culturally to salvage Greek culture from the rubble of the Byzantine Empire. He failed in the first two goals, but succeeded in the third. By his patronage, writings, and library he did more than any individual in the fifteenth century to advance the Hellenization of the Latin West.

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⁸⁷ See Monfasani 2002a.

⁸⁸ See Kristeller 1970.

⁸⁹ See Monfasani 2012, 478.

⁹⁰ See Bianca 2013, for a good study of the tensions between Bessarion as a Greek and the Latin cultural environment into which he threw himself.

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John A. Demetracopoulos

Cydones Redivivus: Bessarion Self-placed between Greeks and Latins, the Scholastic *Quaestio*, and the Hard Quest for Truth

1 An Alternative to the Byzantine Way of Polemics: Resolving Disagreement by Means of Peaceful Discussion

The Wrong Way: Arguing *ad libitum*

The opening words of Bessarion's (1403 or 1408¹ – 1472) *Refutatio Marci Ephesini*, most probably written after 1439/40 (or after May 1442) and before 1445,² read:

Ὁ [3a] Λατίνων τε καὶ [1] Γραικῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλους [2] περὶ τῶν μεγίστων [a] τε καὶ θειοτάτων [b] ἀκήρυκτος πόλεμος [3b] [...], ὅσα περὶ μειζόνων [a] ἐστί, τοσοῦτω καὶ χαλεπώτερος {4} γέγονε [5] τε καὶ ἐστίν. Ἦ τε γὰρ περὶ τὸ θεῖον [b] ἀλήθεια {c} μεῖζόν [a] τε καὶ τιμιώτερον {b} οὗ τις ἂν εἴποι, ὃ τε πόλεμος οὗτος [3a-c] καὶ χαλεπώτατος ἅμα καὶ μακρότατος {4} γέγονε [5] πάντων {6}, οὐδ' ἔστιν εὐρεῖν οὐθ' ὅστις ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον διήρκεσεν, οὐθ' ὅστις οὕτω τὰ μέρη κατ' ἀλλήλων [2] ἐξέμνηεν.³

The implacable war between Latin and Greeks on the most important and most divine matters not only regards lofty things but also has become, and still is, hard. Indeed, the truth on divine matters is the highest and most valuable thing one can think of, and this war is the hardest and

1 On the former date, along with a critical *Forschungsbericht* of the various datings of Bessarion's birth, see Kennedy 2018b. On the latter date, including a critique of the traditional 1403 date argued for by Kennedy, see Monfasani 2020, 81–89.

2 See, e.g., Labowsky 1967, 695; cf. the brief critical *Forschungsbericht* by Martin 2000, 167. The *terminus ante quem* is the death (June 23, 1445) of Mark Eugenikos, on which see mainly Gill 1959b, who argues for 1445, followed by practically all scholars. On the historical issues involved in dating this writing, see the critical *Forschungsbericht* and assessment by Blanchet 2008, 384–390. For the *terminus post quem*, traditionally placed at c. 1440, i.e. shortly after the Council of Florence, see *infra*, p. 42.

3 Bessarion, Ἀπόκρισις πρὸς τὰ τοῦ Ἐφέσου κεφάλαια 1 (PG 161: 137C2–140A3). Cf. Bessarion, *Sermo in prima universali sessione concilii Ferrariae*: “Τὸ γὰρ τοσοῦτον ἤδη χρόνον τὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας μέλη ἀπ' ἀλλήλων διεργωγὰ μὴδ' ἀνέχεσθαι συνελθεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς μόνην ἴσως τὴν ἀκοὴν δυσχεραίνειν, καὶ μένειν τὸ οἰκεῖον ἀγαπῶντα κακόν [...]” (“The fact that, for such long a time, the two separated parts of the Church do not stand meeting with each other, but react peevishly even at the suggestion that this could happen and stand each on its own place, having reconciled itself with its own calamity [...]”; ed. Gill 1953, 37, 24–29 = Mansi 31A: 498A). Throughout this study, I use numbers (or letters) in brackets for verbal similarities, and braces for similarities *quoad sensum*.

longest of all ever existed; indeed, one cannot find any war that lasted so long or that so harshly stirred up the passions of the parts engaged.

This passage is a combined adaptation of two well-known classical passages: one from Thucydides and one from Plato. In the Introduction to the former's *History*, one reads:

Θουκυδίδης Ἀθηναῖος ξυνέγραψε τὸν πόλεμον [3] τῶν Πελοποννησίων καὶ [1] Ἀθηναίων, ὡς ἐπολέμησαν πρὸς ἀλλήλους [2] [...], ἐλπίσας μέγαν τε ἔσεσθαι καὶ ἀξιολογώτατον {4} τῶν προγεγενημένων {6} [...]. [...] Καὶ ὁ πόλεμος οὗτος [3] [...] ἀπ' αὐτῶν τῶν ἔργων σκοποῦσι δηλώσει [...] μείζων {4} γεγενημένος [5] αὐτῶν.

Thucydides the Athenian wrote the history of the war waged by the Peloponnesians and the Athenians against one another [...], in the belief that it would be great and noteworthy above the wars that had gone before [...]. This war will prove for men who judge from the actual facts to have been more important than any that went before.⁴

Bessarion's stress of the gravity of the Christian East and West conflict on account of its unusual perseverance in the Preface to his main writing on the *Filioque* was probably derived from the opening period of the Preface from Demetrios Kydones' main writing on the same issue, i.e. his (unedited) *De processione Spiritus sancti ad amicum quendam*:

[...] ἡμᾶς ἡξίους γράφειν σοι τὰ δοκοῦντα περὶ ὧν Ἴταλοι καὶ [1] Ἕλληνες τοσούτου χρόνου {4} [cf. Bessarion's "ἐπὶ τοσούτον διήρκεσεν"] πρὸς ἀλλήλους [2] ἀμφισβητοῦσι {3} [...]. [...] Ἐφ' ἡμῶν καὶ τοῦ παρόντος πολέμου [3] [...].⁵

[...] You urged me to write down my opinion on the issues debated by Latins and Greeks for such a long time [cf. Bessarion's "that lasted so long"] [...]. [...] In our times, during the current phase of this war [...].

Evidently, Kydones' wording reflects Thucydides', though to a lesser degree than Bessarion's.⁶ This suggests that Kydones' usage of Thucydides did not escape Bessarion's attention and that the latter set out to do the same in more discernible terms,

⁴ Thucydides, *Historiae* I, 1; 21, 2 (eds. Jones and Powell 1942; tr. Forster Smith 1930, 3; 39). By the same time, Bessarion wrote his consolatory oration *Πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα τὴν σύζυγον ἀποβαλόμενον παραμυθητικὸς πρῶτος*. In the apparatus fontium of the edition, one can see some references to Thucydides (ed. Gentilini 1975, 162; 163).

⁵ Demetrios Kydones, *Περὶ τῆς ἐκπορεύσεως τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος, πρὸς τινα τῶν φίλων ἐρόμενον περὶ τούτου* 1 (cod. Marc. gr. 156, fol. 1r 5–6; 33–34; on the manuscript tradition of this writing, see Tinnefeld 1981, 63, N° 1.1.2); P.C. Athanasopoulos is preparing a critical edition of it.

⁶ Karavida 2017 is the inevitably imperfect outcome of the objectively impossible project to detect, in a single study, all the sources of the entire literary production of Kydones. Among the certain, probable, possible and fictitious sources *tumultuario studio* accumulated therein, which cover just a small percentage of Kydones' (true) sources, certain passages from Thucydides' *Historiae* do shed light on the literary background to Kydones' *Epistles* 190 and 372 (Karavida 2017, 186–187; 189; 199), where