contrary to widely held opinion, *CE* should be seen as an innovative solution to the challenge of restructuring former historical writings in an accessible framework, in order to satisfy the limited elite of Constantine VII's close circle. This new, rapid method of reshaping an enormous corpus of previous historiography required huge imperial investment and the cooperation of multiple assistants, similar to a modern encyclopaedia where a large number of authors have to follow strict editorial rules and submit their contributions to a superior authority. The cooperation of anonymous writers rendered the emperor the author of the whole historical encyclopaedia, a work that symbolised his power to shape comprehensive knowledge in line with his own taste. In addition, the similarity of the fifty-three subjects to the other Constantine compilations produced in the same period – especially *De cerimoniis*, *De administrando imperio* and *De thematibus* – not only suggests close connections among them, but also implies that similar cooperative methods might have been applied in compiling these works under the supervision of the emperor. It is also striking that the compilers tried hard to maintain the literary quality of the passages they excerpted. These textual 'jewels' were then available to be recycled in order to make other works more elegant, as was shown in the case of *Vita Basilii*. As far as content was concerned, collecting a rich corpus of instructive examples from the past seems to have been more important for the excerptors than the historical reality of the events, as the surprising inclusion of a fictitious narration, Iamblichus' *Babylonian History*, seems to imply. *CE* thus provide a unique illustration of the close relationship between empire and knowledge in Byzantium.

12 | *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam*

Joseph Rhakendytès' synopsis of Byzantine learning

ERIKA GIELEN

Introduction

During the last decades of the thirteenth and the early fourteenth century, the reign of the Byzantine emperor Andronicus II (1282–1328) was marked by serious social, political and economic upheavals. The Byzantine empire, once the proud and powerful heir of the great eastern Roman empire, was gradually losing most of its territories. Yet, the very same period was also an age of imperial patronage, characterised by a revival of ancient Greek culture.¹ One of its representatives was the Greek monk and scholar, Joseph Rhakendytès, also known as the Philosopher, and author of a monumental work entitled *Synopsis variarum disciplinarum*.² Modern scholars³ mostly refer to this work as Joseph's 'encyclopaedia', placing it within the tradition of 'Byzantine encyclopaedism', which is usually judged negatively.

This concept was introduced in 1971 by the French scholar Paul Lemerle,⁴ to characterise the Byzantine culture of the ninth and tenth centuries AD.

My thanks go to Professor Peter Van Deun, Professor Caroline Macé and Dr Ilse De Vos for reading earlier versions of this article.

¹ For good overviews, see Runciman (1970); Ševčenko (1971); Ševčenko (1984); Nicol (1993); Fryde (2000).

² This is the title used by modern scholars since Vitelli (1894) 490. In various manuscripts (both complete and incomplete), Joseph's work is preceded by two dodecasyllables (in Byzantine times a popular verse with twelve syllables): Μέλημα καὶ φρόντισμα καὶ γλυκὺς πόνος | οἰκτροῦ πινυροῦ Ἰωσήφ Ῥακενδύτου (*Florentinus Riccardianus Gr. 31 (K.II.4), folium 7^r*). At present, we have knowledge of twenty-three manuscripts, dated to the fourteenth, fifteenth or sixteenth century, which contain (parts of) Joseph's *Synopsis*, i.e. *Florentinus Med.-Laurentianus plut. LVIII.20*; *Florentinus Riccardianus Gr. 31*; *Mutinensis Gr. 101*; *Parisinus Gr. 3031*; *Vaticanus Barberinus Gr. 213*; *Vaticanus Gr. 111*; *Vaticanus Gr. 224*; *Vaticanus Gr. 267*; *Vaticanus Gr. 899*; *Venetus Marcianus IV. 24*; *Ven. Marcianus Gr. 529* (fourteenth century); *Florentinus Med.-Laurentianus plut. LVIII, 2*; *Florentinus Med.-Laurentianus plut. LVIII, 21*; *Venetus Marcianus VIII, 18*; *Vindobonensis Gr. 70* (fifteenth century); *Berolinensis Phil. Gr. 1573* (169) (fifteenth-sixteenth century); *Athos, Iviron 388* (4508); *Augustanus, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek 2^o Cod. 240*; *Berolinensis Phil. Gr. 1617* (214); *Bononiensis, Bibliotheca Universitaria 3526*; *Monacensis Gr. 78*; *Scorialensis Gr. 426* (ψ.1.6); and *Vaticanus Gr. 1361* (sixteenth century).

³ The standard works on Joseph the Philosopher are – chronologically arranged – the following: Treu (1899); Dräseke (1899); Terzaghi (1902); Criscuolo (1974); Stiernon (1974); Conticello (1995).

⁴ Lemerle (1971).

His starting point was an intriguing analysis of the reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (945–959) and its vast literary production.⁵ Yet, without giving any detailed definition of the Byzantine ‘encyclopaedia’ or describing its specific characteristics, Lemerle classified a wide range of very diverse texts as part of this one vague genre. Since then, many scholars,⁶ using Lemerle’s book as an authoritative reference work, have copied the term to refer to divergent examples of Byzantine literature, without much further investigation. It follows that, in most cases, their final conclusion has been, in line with Lemerle, rather negative. Lemerle, for example, ends his chapter on tenth-century encyclopaedism as follows: ‘Many features of this tenth-century Byzantine encyclopaedism surprise us. It ignores and thrusts aside the spirit of criticism. If it has recourse to original works, it is only to dismember them and deprive them of their soul. It is insensitive to antique beauty, or at least it leaves us with that impression. It lacks the idea that there can be progress, or simply adaptation . . . We have the impression of a closed world, where living reality does not penetrate.’⁷

Focusing on the *Synopsis* of Joseph the Philosopher, this article aims to refine this concept of Byzantine encyclopaedism. Joseph’s work is a good example of the way in which many of the so-called encyclopaedias from the Byzantine period, far from being brainless examples of ‘copying and pasting’, are in fact carefully thought-out and reflective of their social and cultural contexts.

Joseph Rhakendytès

Based on contemporary sources, it is commonly believed that Joseph Rhakendytès was born some time between 1260 and 1280 AD into a noble family on the Greek island of Ithaca.⁸ In this period, Ithaca was no longer part of the great Byzantine empire, but was under western rule, controlled by

⁵ For an analysis of the ‘encyclopaedic’ *Constantinian Excerpts* that were commissioned by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, see chapter 11 by András Németh.

⁶ For a brief overview, see, e.g., Odorico (1990); also Paul Magdalino in chapter 10.

⁷ Lemerle (1986) 346. For the original French text, see Lemerle (1971) 300: ‘Bien des caractères de cet encyclopédisme byzantin du X^e siècle sont, pour nous, surprenants. Il ignore, il repousse l’esprit critique. S’il recourt aux œuvres originales, c’est pour les dépecer et les vider de leur âme. Il est insensible à la beauté antique, ou du moins le laisse croire. Il n’a pas l’idée qu’on puisse progresser, ou simplement s’adapter . . . On a l’impression d’un monde fermé, où la réalité vivante ne pénètre pas.’

⁸ See references in n. 3. One of our most important sources on Joseph’s life is a letter (*terminus ante quem*: 1332) of Theodorus Metochites (1270–1332) entitled *To a friend, on the death of the most wise and pious Joseph the younger* (edited by Treu (1899) 2–31).

the Orsini family of Rome.⁹ Although these Italian rulers predicted a splendid and successful career in public life for him, offering him the post of ‘administrator of their whole household’,¹⁰ Joseph left for Thessaloniki to enter a monastery, where he devoted himself to *ascesis* and to the cultivation of virtue, as well as to the study of ancient philosophy, such as the works of Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus and Proclus. However, the pure, monastic life, always behind the very same walls, did not please him. After a few stopovers ‘in some mountainous refuges in Thessaly, on solitary islets around’ and on Mount Athos,¹¹ Joseph turned his steps towards Constantinople, or, to use Joseph’s own words, the ἑδραφός τῶν λόγων, ‘the foundation of all knowledge’.¹²

There, Andronicus II had surrounded himself with distinguished literati, like Nicephorus Choumnus, Theodorus Metochites and Nicephorus Gregoras. The latter calls this ‘circle’ around the emperor ‘a school of rhetoricians and philosophers that excels every Academy [of Plato], Lyceum [of Aristotle] and Attic Stoa’.¹³ Joseph seems to have been one of these philosophers. The evidence is the lively correspondence between Joseph and scholars like Choumnus, Gregoras and Michael Gabras.¹⁴ Besides, Joseph enjoyed imperial favour, since both Andronicus II and his grandson, the later Andronicus III, seem to have greatly appreciated Joseph’s presence and advice.¹⁵ Because of his great erudition, virtuous character and piety, he was generally praised, so that, as Gregoras says in one of his letters to Joseph, ‘if you deliberately closed your eyes and threw a stone into the crowd, you would surely hit one of your admirers’.¹⁶ At the end of his life, however, Joseph left the lively capital, thinking it ‘necessary to flee the mob, the great city [i.e. Constantinople], the emperors, the palaces, the titles of father, high offices

⁹ Approx. 1204–1357 AD. See Nicol (1984) 1–2, 36 and 82; Fryde (2000) 208.

¹⁰ Theodorus Metochites, *To a friend*, ed. Treu (1899) 7, line 9: τῶν οἰκῶν πάντων ἐπίτροπος.

¹¹ Theodorus Metochites, *To a friend*, ed. Treu (1899) 12, lines 6–10: ἐν . . . καὶ τισὶ κατὰ τὴν Θεσσαλίαν ὀρειναῖς ἀναχωρήσεσι καὶ νησιδίοις περὶ αὐτὴν ἐρημικοῖς.

¹² *Brief epitome of the most wise and erudite master Joseph Rhakendytès*, edited by Treu (1899) 34–38 (this phrase from 36, line 16). In what follows I will refer to this text as Joseph Rhak., *Epitome*.

¹³ Nicephorus Gregoras, *Historia Romana* 1, 471, 11–12: τὸ τῶν ῥητόρων καὶ φιλοσόφων γυμνάσιον τὸ πᾶσαν ὑπερβαῖνον Ἀκαδημίαν καὶ Λύκειον καὶ Στοᾶν Ἀττικὴν.

¹⁴ Some of these letters have been collected, edited and commented upon by Treu (1899) 47–63. Unfortunately none of the answers Joseph presumably wrote has survived, as far as we know.

¹⁵ In 1319/1320, for example, Joseph was asked by the young Andronicus to mediate in his dispute with the emperor (cf. Cantacuzenus, *Historiae*, 1, 7).

¹⁶ *Correspondance*, ed. Guillard (1927) 55, letter 13, lines 1–3: τοσοῦτοι γὰρ εἰσιν ὥστ’ εἰ καὶ μύσας τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐπιτιγδῆς, ἔπειτα λίθον κατὰ τοῦ πλήθους βαλεῖν ἐθελήσεις, τιμῶντά σε ἀνθρώπων πλήξεας ἂν.

and the invitations and company of the most prominent persons,¹⁷ and returned to Thessaloniki. There, he received the letter mentioned above from Gregoras, in which we also read the following: 'Some time ago we learned that you – very skilfully and rightly – have read the works of Aristotle and those of the old [commentators] who clarify Aristotle's obscurity, and that you have decided to publish some grand work that will be helpful to each of us.'¹⁸ This 'grand work', which is probably the only one that Joseph left for posterity,¹⁹ is his *Synopsis variarum disciplinarum*.

A synopsis of Byzantine learning

I am the source of all beautiful and wise words,
by which the mind is moistened and the brains are sprinkled
and manners take the appropriate order.
For I hold within all knowledge,
appropriately arranged.²⁰

Joseph prefaced his *Synopsis* with an introductory prose text about his life and work, followed by 140 iambic verses,²¹ in which he discussed the topic, structure and aim of his work. The verses just quoted immediately indicate the work's ambitious project, i.e. to gather all possible knowledge and to bring all this together in a structured way, in just one book. In the next verses of this poetic 'table of contents', Joseph explains what he means by this all-embracing knowledge: rhetoric (vv. 16–24), logic (vv. 25–37), physics (vv. 38–53),²² anthropology, psychology and physiology

¹⁷ Theodorus Metochites, *To a friend*, ed. Treu (1899) 26, lines 24–6: φεύγειν ὤετο χρῆναι τοὺς πολλοὺς καὶ τὴν μεγαλόπολιν ταύτην καὶ βασιλεῖς καὶ βασιλεία καὶ πατρίτης καὶ προεδρίας τε καὶ προκλήσεις καὶ ξυνουσίας τῶν ἐν ὑπεροχῇ.

¹⁸ *Correspondance*, ed. Guiland (1927) 57, letter 13, lines 2–6: λόγος ἐκ πολλοῦ παρ' ἡμᾶς ἀφίκετο, ὡς πάντοι εὐφυῶς καὶ ὡς σοὶ γε ἐχρῆν, τὰς Ἀριστοτέλους διεξελεῖν βιβλους καὶ ὅσοι τῶν πάλαι τὴν ἐκείνου διασαφουσιν ἀσάφειαν, ἐβουλεύσω τι αὐτὸς γενναϊότερον εἰς κοινὸν ἐνδείξασθαι ὄφελος.

¹⁹ It is possible that Joseph was also the author of several short prayers and hymns, but this tradition is not certain: see Pentogalos (1970); Stiernon (1974) 1391.

²⁰ *Iambic verses covering in a nutshell the whole content, structure and meaning of the sciences covered in this book and easily taken in by the mind*, edited by Treu (1899) 39–42 (39, verses 9–13). In what follows, I will refer to this text as Joseph Rhak., *Verses*.

²¹ I.e. his previously mentioned *Epitome* and *Verses*.

²² Joseph himself refers to this section as φυσικῶν τοὺς λόγους, 'the principles of nature' (Joseph Rhak., *Verses* 38). The term *physics* may be misleading, since the section's content does not completely correspond with Aristotle's famous treatise *Physica*. Instead, Joseph also covers concrete natural phenomena (like comets and snow) and zoology and botany and even discusses minerals and mining.

(vv. 54–68), mathematics, i.e. the so-called *quadrivium*: arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy (vv. 69–74), ethics (vv. 75–98), and, to conclude, theology (vv. 99–134).²³

Probably due to this wide range of topics, which aspire to cover all human sciences, modern scholars have been tempted to call Joseph's *Synopsis* by the modern term 'encyclopaedia'.²⁴ The definition following this lemma in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* runs indeed as follows: 'reference work that contains information on all branches of knowledge or that treats a particular branch of knowledge comprehensively'.²⁵ Yet, one might wonder whether this is not a risky example of *hineinterpretieren*. Even Lemerle, the 'father' of so-called Byzantine 'encyclopaedism', warns us that 'the word ['encyclopaedism'] did not exist then and the form it took in Byzantium cannot be compared exactly with any other example'.²⁶ Nevertheless my argument in this chapter is that the concept of encyclopaedism is a helpful one for describing Joseph's work, so long as we do not take it to imply that it fits a clearly defined 'encyclopaedia' genre of the kind we are familiar with in post-Enlightenment culture.

The modern word encyclopaedia is derived from the ancient expression *enkyklios paideia* (ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία). In ancient and Byzantine times, *enkyklios paideia* generally referred to an essential part of the education of young students. Although this term was 'loosely employed throughout the whole Byzantine period',²⁷ a general conclusion may be that, in Byzantine literature, it usually referred to preliminary learning, and even often became just an equivalent for 'grammar' (ἡ γραμματική).²⁸ Yet this is the one major

²³ The core of Joseph's *Synopsis* consisted of Aristotelian philosophy. This should not surprise, since Joseph was a great admirer of and expert on Aristotle, despite Metochites' allegation that Joseph thought Plato superior to Aristotle (Theodorus Metochites, *To a friend*, ed. Treu (1899) 11, lines 15–23; see also de Vries-van der Velden (1987) 130–1). Although Joseph was surely not ill-disposed to Platonic ideas (e.g., in his *De virtute* he discusses the neo-Platonic concept of θεωρία, 'contemplation'; see Stiernon (1974) 1391), he overtly refers to and praises Aristotle (e.g. Joseph Rhak., *Epitome* 34, lines 5–6; 37, lines 22–3 and Joseph Rhak., *Verses* 25–37), whereas he does not even mention Plato in his introduction by name.

²⁴ See, e.g., Terzaghi (1902); Criscuolo (1974); Stiernon (1974) 1389; Mergiali (1996) 86. Another reason might be the physical size of the work: e.g., 387 folia in manuscript *Venetius Marcianus* Gr. 529 and 374 folia in manuscript *Florentinus Riccardianus* Gr. 31, which both contain the whole *Synopsis*.

²⁵ See www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/186603/encyclopaedia (last consulted 28/5/13).

²⁶ Lemerle (1986) 309. For the original French text, see Lemerle (1971) 267: 'bien que le mot n'existe pas encore et que son contenu byzantin ne se laisse exactement ramener à aucun autre'.

²⁷ Constantinides (1982) 151.

²⁸ See, e.g., the statement of Georgius Acropolites (1217–1282) (*Annales*, 29, 2–4): τῆς ἐγκυκλίου ἀππλάγμενος παιδείσεως, ἣν γραμματικὴν κατονομάζουσιν οἱ πολλοί ('having finished the *enkyklios paideia*, which people call grammar'). For *enkyklios paideia* in Byzantine times, see Buckler (1962) 200–20; Fuchs (1926) 41–5; Koukoules (1948) 105–37.

school-topic not discussed by Joseph, so that, at this point, it might be strange to call Joseph's *Synopsis* an encyclopaedia – as derived from *enkyklios paideia*. Joseph surely had some educational aims in his *Synopsis*.²⁹ However, his work was not meant as a handbook for beginning junior students, but instead reflected higher education, which consisted of a more serious and thorough study of rhetoric, higher mathematics (i.e. geometry, arithmetic, music and astronomy) and philosophy (both Aristotelian and Platonic) and, if necessary, theology.

During the early Palaeologan period (i.e. Joseph's time), this scene of higher learning was dominated by two different institutions: the so-called 'Imperial University', which was refounded by the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus (1224–1282) and focused purely on secular education, and, on the other hand, the Patriarchal School, which offered courses in both secular and theological studies. Besides these schools, (wandering) private teachers also offered courses in higher education.³⁰ This renewed interest in science and literature was the result of the preceding political events. Since 1204 AD, indeed, Constantinople had been occupied by western crusaders.³¹ Because of the almost sixty-year long occupation, many buildings had to be restored when Michael VIII reconquered his capital in 1261. Due to the long-lasting cultural decline that went with the 'barbarian' invasion, the educational system – especially higher education – also needed to be revived. A new corpus of scientific texts that could be used by students had to be established.³² Although we do not know much about any teaching activities of his,³³ it is clear that Joseph, too, aimed

²⁹ This I will discuss more in detail later in this chapter.

³⁰ See Fuchs (1926) *passim*; Bréhier (1941) 34–69; Constantinides (1982) and (2003) *passim*; Mergiali (1996) *passim*.

³¹ On the fourth crusade and its aftermath in Byzantium, see Geanakoplos (1973) esp. 119–37; Queller and Madden (1997); Talbot (1993); Fryde (2000) 82–90; Angold (2003); Erminio (2005); Laiou (2005).

³² See especially Cacouros (2006) 1–24.

³³ There is no evidence that Joseph taught at a private or public school, as did, for example, Maximus Planudes (see, e.g., Constantinides (1982) 66–89). He seems to have been rather a spiritual leader and teacher of individual, promising scholars, like Thomas Magister (who later became the monk Theodoulos – see *PLP* 16045). The only surviving letter of Thomas to Joseph, in which he speaks highly of Joseph's virtuous and beneficent character and great wisdom and in which he invites Joseph to a scholarly 'meeting' (σύλλογος) in the city of Thessaloniki, has been published in *Anecdota Graeca* (Boissonade (1829–33), vol. II, 212–28; an (insufficient) Latin translation can be found, next to the Greek text, in *PG* 145, coll. 431–46). Another of his pupils was the famous Byzantine physician Johannes Actuarius (see Hohlweg (1984)), who, in one of his letters to Joseph, asks the monk to share his huge learning and wise opinions with him (Johannes Actuarius, *De spiritu animali*, ed. Ideler (1841–2), vol. I, 386, lines 32–8: Εἰ δὲ πη καὶ τῶν τεθεωρημένων σοὶ ἀξιοῖς ἡμᾶς κοινωνοὺς γίνεσθαι διαπορθεύων καὶ ἡμᾶς τὰ κάλλιστα σοὶ θεάματα ['If somehow you deemed us worthy to share

to contribute to this goal with his *Synopsis* – although in his own distinctive way.

As far as the attitude of Byzantine scholars in the Palaeologan period is concerned, Cacouros³⁴ states that it was their aim to produce surveys of the topics taught at school that were both concise and as complete as possible. Joseph's *Synopsis* fits well with this academic aim of creating abridged scientific texts, since – as stated in its twofold introduction – it consisted of a concise, but complete and manageable overview of all the sciences, ranging from rhetoric to theology.³⁵ One of the reasons behind writing his *Synopsis* seems to have been to fill a gap, so to speak, in the educational scene. In his prose introduction, Joseph himself explains that, when he was a young man, he was looking for someone who could 'guide'³⁶ him to true knowledge. Yet, although at Constantinople he found many 'spiritual and wise men' who supposedly could lead him to perfect his higher studies, he was not pleased, since the 'oversupply' of teachers and learning often led people astray from the (more important) pursuit of virtue.³⁷ Therefore, it occurred to him that he had to act himself.³⁸ So he 'studied the books of wise men who had dealt with various subjects . . . And having gone through all of this after a detailed study of the sciences, unwilling to waste my time on frivolities, I gathered one thing from here, another from there, a third from a third place and again another thing from yet another source'.³⁹

From this passage, it is clear that Joseph was well aware of the fact that several of his contemporaries and also many scholars before his own time

also your insights, by transmitting your most beautiful visions to us']. See also Nicephorus Gregoras, *Epistulae* 46, 48–58: Ἄλλ' εἰ μὲν ταῦτα λέγων εὖ λέγω, πλούτιζε τοῖς σοφοῖς σου λόγοις ἡμᾶς ['If I am right in saying this, enrich us with your wise words']).

³⁴ Cacouros (2006) 26. ³⁵ Cf. n. 20.

³⁶ Joseph Rhak., *Epitome* 36, line 14: εἰ πως καὶ τινος ὁδηγίας τύχοιμι σὺν θεῷ ('if, with God's help, I were to get some guidance').

³⁷ Joseph Rhak., *Epitome* 36, lines 17–18: πνευματικοῖς καὶ σοφοῖς ἀνδράσι συγγίνομαι. Παρὰ τούτοις μὲν οὖν ἦν τελειοποιὸν εἶδος διαφόρου παιδείσεως ('I associated with spiritual and wise men. With them, a perfecting form of excellent education was to be found') and Joseph Rhak., *Epitome* 36, line 34 to 37, line 3: ὡς ἂν ἐκκλίνοντι καὶ τὴν ἐν πολλαῖς βίβλοις ἀσχολίαν καὶ γὰρ αὐθις ἐχομένων τῶν ἐξαρχῆς οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀρετῆς καὶ τῆς κατ' αὐτὴν ἐπιμελείας τὴν τοῦ λόγου προθήσομεν ('so to avoid the want of time and trouble caused by a mass of books and to buckle down once again on the very principles. For we will not prefer the pursuit of reason to virtue and the pursuit of it').

³⁸ Joseph Rhak., *Epitome* 36, line 34.

³⁹ Joseph Rhak., *Epitome* 37, lines 5–6 & 37, lines 24–7: ἐνέκυψα βίβλοις σοφῶν διαφόροις πραγματεῖαις ἐσχολακῶν . . . Ταῦτα δὲ πάντα διελθὼν ἐγὼ μετὰ τὰς διεξοδικὰς ἀνελίξεις τῶν μαθημάτων, θέλων ἐκφυγεῖν τὸ κενόσπουδον, ἔβην μὲν τοῦτο, ἐκείθεν δ' ἐκείνο, ἄλλοθεν δ' ἄλλο, καὶ αὐθις ἀλλαχόθεν ἕτερον συνερανισάμενος. Ebbesen (1981) 342, translates θέλων ἐκφυγεῖν τὸ κενόσπουδον as 'not wanting to waste my efforts on vainglorious ostentation of originality', thus strongly emphasising the derivative, unoriginal character of Joseph's *Synopsis*.

had written interesting works on topics similar to the ones he was planning to discuss; he was certainly not the only Byzantine encyclopaedic author who dealt with this wide range of sciences. One cannot deny that he 'recycled' passages from other scholars' compositions, in a way which seems to support the traditional negative judgements about the lack of originality in Byzantine encyclopaedism. Yet, one should refrain from using the derivative character of Joseph's *Synopsis* as a starting point for this kind of value judgement. Complete originality was clearly not the main aim of the author. At the same time, however, the work did have innovative features. For example, Joseph seems to have inspired and urged his friend Johannes Actuarius to compose a medical work,⁴⁰ with the intention of including this in his *Synopsis*. Moreover, he regularly mixed arguments and passages taken from his predecessors with short comments of his own. By rearranging the material of his predecessors, placing it into a new context, he created a work which was new in significant ways: 'I joined, one might say like the prophets, bones to bones and harmony to harmony'.⁴¹ Challenging the existing literary, encyclopaedic tradition, he wanted to do better.

First of all, according to Joseph, 'with his and only his help'⁴² people would reach true and full knowledge, because he was the only one who had really discussed everything. In his prose introduction, Joseph indeed gives a description of the literary production before and during his own time, stating that one had written a compendium on rhetoric, without paying attention to all the other disciplines; another gave an interesting survey of logic and physics, 'but omitted the most important part of logic, the principle of all knowledge, the famous apodeictic and the well-known and most noble dialectic'; still another wrote just a brief survey of 'the four mathematical sciences', without going much into detail; a fourth dealt with the human body, without mentioning the soul, and one who did treat the various functions of the soul omitted a discussion of ethics. By contrast he, Joseph, had discussed 'all of this and had made it plain and clear'.⁴³ Given the emphasis he puts on the fundamental importance of dialectic

⁴⁰ I.e. Johannes Actuarius' *De spiritu animalis*; edition in Ideler (1841–2), vol. 1, 321–86. See Hohlweg (1983) 314; Johannes Actuarius, *De diagnosi*, ed. Ideler (1841–2) vol. 2, 481, lines 23–4.

⁴¹ Joseph Rhak., *Epitome* 37, lines 27–8: καὶ συνθεὶς ὁστέα εἶποι τις προφητικῶς πρὸς ὁστέα καὶ ἁρμονίαν πρὸς ἁρμονίαν. Cf. Ezekiel 37.7: 'So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone'.

⁴² Joseph Rhak., *Epitome* 38, line 25: δι' ὧφέλειαν καὶ μόνην ἐμήν...

⁴³ See Joseph Rhak., *Epitome* 37, lines 6–26. Hannick (1986) 2036, even calls Joseph the first Byzantine match for Martianus' Capella's *De nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae*.

and apodeictic, Joseph seems to be particularly proud of having noticed the incompleteness of Nicephorus Blemmydes' *Epitome logica*, one of the most influential manuals on logic from the Byzantine period and one of Joseph's major sources for his own discussion of logic in his *Synopsis*.⁴⁴ Whereas Blemmydes had not included Aristotle's *Analytica posteriora* or *Topica* in his work, Joseph prided himself on having discussed all the logical treatises of Aristotle.⁴⁵

Moreover, the *oeuvre* of other, traditionally so-called encyclopaedic Byzantine scholars was not only thematically deficient; another problem, according to Joseph, was that it always consisted of many separate books and treatises.⁴⁶ For example, Nicephorus Blemmydes (1197–c.1269), one of Joseph's favourite authors, wrote separate works on logic (his previously mentioned *Epitome logica*), physics (*Epitome physica*), geography (*Abridged history of the earth* and *Synoptic geography*), ethics and asceticism (*De virtute et ascesi*), the soul (*De anima*) and on the human constitution (*De corpore*), besides a good few theological treatises. Georgius Pachymeres (1242–c.1310) was a historian, rhetorician, scientist and philosopher, but wrote individual, specialised works in each of those fields, rather than a comprehensive synthesis. Joseph's friend Nicephorus Gregoras (c. 1290–after 1358) wrote hagiographical, theological, rhetorical and scientific treatises as well as a *Roman History* (*Ρωμαϊκή Ἱστορία*), which makes him one of the most versatile scholars of the fourteenth century. Nicephorus Choumnus (c. 1250–1327), one of the leading scholars of his time, had stated that it was books which were the means of learning and that anyone who pursued higher studies without lots of them acted like a fool and would see all his efforts come to nothing.⁴⁷ Yet Joseph, having himself experienced the problems an 'oversupply' of books could cause when he was young,⁴⁸ rejected this kind of prolific writing, with no clear link between all those

⁴⁴ The only modern edition of the *Epitome logica* of Nicephorus Blemmydes can be found in PG 142, coll. 675–1004. Joseph's *Epitome logica* (in the manuscripts entitled Περὶ πείρας, ἐμπειρίας, τέχνης καὶ ἐπιστήμης, ἐν ᾧ καὶ περὶ τῶν δυναμένων τῆς ψυχῆς) has not yet been published.

⁴⁵ See Ebbesen (1981) 342–3; Stavrou (2007) 59, n. 2. Most likely, Joseph copied the passages which fill the gap in Blemmydes' treatise on logic from the work of another author, whose identity, however, is still not clear, since, so far, no thorough study has been carried out on Joseph's *Epitome Logica*.

⁴⁶ I will confine myself to several examples from the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, Joseph's direct 'competitors', since otherwise a more thorough study of the whole of Byzantine scientific and compilatory literature would be necessary, which would exceed the limits of this chapter.

⁴⁷ Choumnus even compares scholars who do not possess any books with bad craftsmen who are not familiar with the tools of their craft: see Boissonade (1844) 93, 1–16; Constantinides (1982) 143.

⁴⁸ See above, p. 265.

various branches of knowledge. He did not write various separate books, each dealing with one specific topic or science; instead his aim was to compose one useful, continuous *synopsis* of all Byzantine, both ancient and recent, learning, as is shown by his own words:

One unity, simple and continuous, out of various things, that one thing I composed. And I set up this book like a picture of philosophy and the sciences that you can look at, whenever you want, and in which no one will search for a long time nor wander around in circles, but immediately find what is useful.⁴⁹

There are other reasons too for calling the *Synopsis* of Joseph an encyclopaedia. Ilsetraut Hadot has argued that the intrinsic meaning of *enkyklios paideia* was not, in the first place, 'ordinary education', but, rather that the concept originally was the result of a long tradition of complex philosophical reflection (especially in neo-Platonic circles) and so referred to 'complete education', which could be obtained by passing through the different, but connected, stages of a course or 'cycle' of disciplines. On that view the final aim of *enkyklios paideia*, being complete education, was not a thorough knowledge of (mere) details, but a carefully and gradually acquired knowledge of the essence of all those disciplines and sciences, which were all founded on reason.⁵⁰ This was also what Joseph was aiming at with his *Synopsis*, as we can see, for example when he states that 'a discussion or explanation of the sciences that is more detailed than necessary would be bad and would certainly not be commendable'.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Joseph Rhak., *Epitome* 37, lines 28–32: ὁλομέλειαν τινα μίαν καὶ συνεχεῖ ἐκ πολλῶν καὶ διαφόρων πραγμάτων μίαν ταύτην συνεστησάμην καὶ ὡς εἰκόνα φιλοσοφίας καὶ μαθημάτων τὴν παρούσαν ἀνεστήλωσα βιβλίον, ἥ δὲ καὶ τις ἐνατενίζων, ὁσάκις ἐθέλοι, οὐ μακρὰν ζητήσῃ, οὐδὲ περιθρέσεται κύκλῳ, ἀλλ' αὐτόθεν ἔξει τὸ χρήσιμον. See also Joseph Rhak., *Verses*, 3–7: ἀλλ' εἴγε πολλὰς μὴ προσανέχειν θέλεις | βιβλοῖς ταπολλὰ καὶ δαπανᾷν τὸν χρόνον, | κενὸν τιθεῖς σπούδασμα πάντα τὸν βίον | ποθεῖς δ' ἔχειν ἄριστον ἐν βραχεῖ τύπον | ἡθῶν, ἔργων, λόγων τε καὶ θεωρίας ('if you do not wish to devote yourself mostly to many books nor to waste your time, reducing your whole life to a vain pursuit, but you long for the best model of habits, works, words and contemplation').

⁵⁰ See Hadot (2005) 469–81, especially 470–1: 'Le terme technique *enkyklios paideia*... ne doit pas être traduit, comme cela a été fait souvent, par "éducation habituelle" ou "éducation ordinaire", mais par "instruction" ou "culture complète, encyclopédique"... Car, loin de designer l'éducation habituellement prodiguée à la jeunesse appartenant aux classes socialement élevées... l'*enkyklios paideia* est le fruit de réflexions philosophiques complexes qui, en dernière instance, remontent surtout à Platon, mais ne sont pas non plus étrangères à Aristote. Ces réflexions ont mené à la conviction que tous les arts fondés sur le raisonnement formaient un *corpus* unifié... L'*enkyklios paideia* ne voulait pas aboutir à la connaissance des détails, mais à une connaissance de l'essence de chaque art fondé sur le raisonnement'. See also Hadot (2005) 265–8.

⁵¹ Joseph Rhak., *Epitome* 38, lines 16–18: Οὐτε μαθημάτων ὑπὲρ τὸ δεόν ἀνάπτυξις... καλῶς ἐν ἔχοι καὶ λίαν ἀσφαλῶς τε καὶ ἐπαινετῶς.

Secondly, *enkyklios paideia* represented, in the context of (neo-)Platonism, as mentioned before, a 'cycle' or 'circle' (κύκλος) of different disciplines, since these were connected by what Hadot⁵² calls an 'interior unity'. It was assumed that, once one had mastered one discipline, one would (more) easily grasp the essence of the other sciences. It was also assumed that one must study all the other disciplines before being able to completely master one. According to the (neo-)Platonists, this interior unity was guaranteed by the dialectical method.⁵³ Although the latter was greatly appreciated by Joseph,⁵⁴ he pushed things even further, claiming that all the encyclopaedic sciences are not just linked to one another through method, but are also, as will be explained further, intrinsically strongly intertwined – an opinion which set Joseph somewhat apart from his contemporaries.

Ad maiorem Dei gloriam

From their Greek ancestors, the Byzantines inherited a whole treasury of so-called secular learning, referred to as ἡ ἔξω σοφία, 'outer wisdom' – the study of which was called θύραθεν, 'learning beyond the door'. Christian doctrine, on the other hand, was καθ' ἡμᾶς, 'our learning'.⁵⁵ The inner struggle of Byzantine civilisation, which was based on this opposition, divided Byzantine society, since each kind of 'wisdom' had its own supporters. On the one hand, there were those, especially monks, who completely rejected any aspect of pagan learning. In Joseph's time, one of the most fervent representatives of this group was the ascetic monk Athanasius, twice patriarch of Constantinople (i.e. from 1289 to 1293 and from 1303 to 1309), who proclaimed that man could find salvation only in God and the holy scriptures and by no means in the philosophical and scientific texts of pagans like Aristotle.⁵⁶ On the other side of the scales were scholars like Joseph's friend Theodorus Metochites (1270–1332), who were proud to be the heirs of the great, rational spirit and wisdom of old Greece. In Joseph's view, however, there was no reason why strictly adhering to 'outer wisdom' would imply a rejection of, or danger for, 'our learning' and vice versa, since faith and *ratio* went hand in hand, with neither of them able to stand without the other.

⁵² See Hadot (2005) 268; 472. ⁵³ See Hadot (2005) 265–6; 472–5. ⁵⁴ Cf. supra, pp. 266–7.

⁵⁵ See, e.g., Basilios Caesariensis, *Ad adolescentes*, 2.39–47. Many modern Byzantine scholars have discussed this topic. See, e.g., Bréhier (1941) 59–63; Dölger (1953); Nicol (1969) *passim*; Runciman (1970) *passim*, but especially 27–35; Meyendorff (1971) *passim*; Podskalsky (1977) 16–48; Nicol (1979) 31–65.

⁵⁶ On patriarch Athanasius, see, e.g., Meyendorff (1971) 59–62.

According to Saint Basil, Christian scholars, in their relation to pagan learning, should act like bees, which 'possess the power to get', besides fragrance and colour, 'honey from flowers as well. So it is possible here also for those who are pursuing not merely what is sweet and pleasant in such writings to store away from them some benefit also for their souls'.⁵⁷ Church fathers, like Clement of Alexandria, considered the 'earthly' sciences as no more than propaedeutic to the highest truth, theology – an opinion that persisted throughout the whole Byzantine period.⁵⁸ According to Joseph, however, these 'lower' sciences, like rhetoric and mathematics, were not subordinated to theology, but, being more than just the *ancilla* (handmaid, servant) of the highest wisdom, the 'longing for education and the sciences was a close fellow worker (συνεργόν) of the highest and loftiest desire for beauty and for truly perfect happiness'.⁵⁹ The study of natural phenomena offers, he suggests, the chance to contemplate God, since 'nature is the instrument of creation, the creative cause of all things'.⁶⁰ In the same way, by penetrating the secrets of the human soul, 'you will glorify above all the creator of the world, after having seen the indescribable process of creation'.⁶¹

Of course, to proclaim that the study of earthly things can be a useful starting point for someone aiming at the most supreme knowledge was not, in the fourteenth century, a pioneering or novel idea. When Joseph compares, for example the τετράς μαθημάτων ('group of four sciences', i.e. *quadrivium*) to 'a ladder lying somewhere in the middle of the natural and intelligible world, which brings you in a wonderful and rational way out of

⁵⁷ Basilius Caesariensis, *Ad adolescentes* 4.7–8. Translation from Geanakoplos (1984) 394. A similar statement can be found in Johannes Damascenus, *Dialectica*, prooemion, 43–65.

⁵⁸ See Fuchs (1926) 42–5. The study of doctrines of the ancient Greeks was tolerated only for the purpose of instruction: Τοῖς τὰ ἑλληνικὰ διεξιοῦσι μαθήματα καὶ μὴ διὰ παιδευσιν μόνον ταῦτα παιδευομένοις, ἀλλὰ καὶ δόξαις αὐτῶν ταῖς ματαίαις ἐπομένοις καὶ ὡς ἀληθεῖσι πιστεύουσι, καὶ οὕτως αὐταῖς ὡς τὸ βέβαιον ἐχούσαις ἐγκειμένοις, ὥστε καὶ ἐτέρους ποτὲ μὲν λάθρα, ποτὲ δὲ φανερώς ἐνάγειν αὐταῖς καὶ διδάσκειν ἀνεκδοιάτως, ἀνάθεμα (*Synodikon*, ed. Gouillard (1967) 59, lines 214–18: 'To those who study Hellenic sciences and do not take them as tools of instruction only, but follow their futile theories and accept the latter as true, and so are completely in to them, as if reliable, so that they, sometimes secretly, sometimes openly, initiate also others into them and instruct them unhesitatingly, anathema')

⁵⁹ Theodorus Metochites, *To a friend*, ed. Treu (1899) 8, lines 12–15: τῆς δὲ περὶ τὴν παιδείαν τέως καὶ τοὺς λόγους σπουδῆς ὑπερβαλλόντως ἀντιποιεῖται, συνεργὸν τὸν ἐν τοῦτοις πόθον πρὸς τοὺς ἀνωτάτω καὶ ὑψηλοτέρους πόθους τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ τῆς τελείας ὄντως μακαριότητος εἰκότως κρίνων.

⁶⁰ Joseph Rhak., *Verses* 52–3: Φύσις γὰρ ἐστὶν ὄργανον τεχνουργίας, | τῆς παραγωγῆς τῶν ἀπάντων αἰτίας.

⁶¹ Joseph Rhak., *Verses* 63–4: Καὶ δοξάσεις μάλιστα τὸν κοσμεργάτην, | ἄρρητον ἰδὼν δημιουργίας τρόπον.

the material world to immaterial being',⁶² Joseph is simply remaining true to the tradition started by Plato. Yet, whereas for others 'earthly' sciences were merely a possible step (besides others) to theology, they are in Joseph's view essential and indispensable; the reader of Joseph's *Synopsis* moves gradually from one science to another, which all bring him to his supreme aim, i.e. to understand the whole creation and, as a result of this, to honour God, the creator, through reason (rhetoric and logic), through an understanding of the cosmos (physics, mathematics) and through an understanding of the soul (ethical philosophy).

In his *Ethica Nicomachea*,⁶³ Aristotle explains that there are three different modes of living. In the first place, there are 'the most vulgar people' (οἱ μὲν πολλοὶ καὶ φορτικώτατοι), who 'identify the Good with pleasure and therefore are content with the life of enjoyment'. Beside them, there is the 'life of politics' (πολιτικός) 'and, thirdly, the life of contemplation' (θεωρητικός). While Joseph, in his prose introduction, does not really discuss the 'life of enjoyment', he does analyse the 'political life'. He does not reject it as being completely worthless, but since the *politikos* does not always take reason as his guide and often ties himself strongly to earthly things *an sich*, Joseph vigorously prefers the 'theoretical life', since only a man who devotes his life to study and reason, knows what is truly beautiful and what not, using the sciences to guide his mind.⁶⁴

Yet, at the same time, he also states that one may be surprised that a monk, who is supposed to focus with heart and soul on God, pays so much attention to secular learning.⁶⁵ Although other ecclesiasts may have preceded him in this respect,⁶⁶ the fact that Joseph himself points firmly to this possible surprise and disapproval, may be an indication that in his time, it was not accepted as easily by all. One particular reason for his statement

⁶² Joseph Rhak., *Verses* 69–73: Ἐξῆς δὲ τούτων ἡ τετράς μαθημάτων | δίκην κλίμακος ἐν μέσῳ πῶς κεμένη | τῶν φυσικῶν ὁμοῦ τε καὶ νοουμένων | θαυμασίως ἄγει σε κατὰ λόγον | ἐκ τῶν ὑλικῶν εἰς αὐλὸν οὐσίαν.

⁶³ Arist. *EN* 1095b 16–19.

⁶⁴ Joseph Rhak., *Epitome* 34, line 7 – 35, line 26. See especially 35, lines 14–18: μόνος γὰρ ἐκεῖνος (i.e. ὁ θεωρητικός) λόγῳ ζῶν ἀσχετῶς καὶ θεωρίας ἀκραιφνοῦς ἐπιβαίνειν . . . οἶδε μὲν ἀληθῶς τὸ καλὸν, οἶδε δὲ καὶ τὸ αἰσχρὸν, καὶ τῷ μὲν προστίθεται, τὸ δ' ἀποπέμπεται ('For only he absolutely lives according to reason and treads the path of pure contemplation . . . he truly knows beauty as well as ugliness, and he cleaves to the former and keeps away from the latter').

⁶⁵ See Joseph Rhak., *Epitome* 38, lines 8–12.

⁶⁶ Maximus Planoudes (c. 1255 – c. 1305), for example, 'abandoned all prospects of a successful career and dedicated himself to a life of scholarship within the confines of a monastic life . . . By devoting himself entirely to learning he succeeded not only in becoming the most erudite and prolific writer of his period, but also in opening new paths and arousing fresh interest in a number of subjects which had hitherto remained neglected', like astronomy (Constantinides (1982) 66).

may be the fact that he was not one of those religious figures who, in holding an executive position, had to deal frequently with political and more earthly issues.⁶⁷ Joseph instead, 'never owning a knapsack, second garment, shoes'⁶⁸ or money, preferred the wandering life of a saint or mystic – focusing on God and contemplation.⁶⁹ This is probably the reason why he, each of the four times he was offered the office of Patriarch of Constantinople, declined this great honour,⁷⁰ and supposedly why at the end of his life, 'unable to hide his lamp under a bushel',⁷¹ he exchanged the lively political centre of the Byzantine empire for the smaller provincial city of Thessaloniki.

Another explanation for Joseph's firm statement might be the gradually growing influence of the hesychastic movement in his time.⁷² The term 'hesychasm' originally referred to the experience of Christian monastic life, based on eremitism, contemplation and 'pure prayer'.⁷³ The central idea was that God reveals himself to man in immediate communion. Georgius Palamas (c. 1296–1359), the main representative of hesychasm, put the emphasis on the distinction in God between his transcendent and unknowable essence (οὐσία, 'God as God is') and his divine and uncreated energies (ἐνέργεια), or his grace and actual operations in the world, through which man can still acquire knowledge of God and can participate in the divine. According to Palamas, who had himself been a pupil of Theodorus Metochites when he was young, and had thus received an excellent education in, among other things, Aristotelian philosophy, it was not to be denied that pagan, secular learning had some value for laymen, yet for monks, it did nothing but hinder them in their mystical quest for God. He states, for example, that 'the Lord did not expressly forbid scholarship, but neither did he forbid marriage, or the eating of meat, or cohabitation between married persons'; and that 'there are many things that ordinary Christians may do which are strictly forbidden to monks by reason of their special way of life'.⁷⁴ Although the real hesychastic controversy between Palamas and his main opponent Barlaam of Calabria (c. 1290–1348) broke out only after Joseph's

⁶⁷ Georgius Pachymeres, for example, was a deacon and member of the patriarchal clergy.

⁶⁸ Theodorus Metochites, *To a friend*, ed. Treu (1899) 12, lines 31–3: οὐδὲν ἐπιφερόμενος, οὐ πῆραν, οὐχ' ἱμάτιον ὀπιθεῖν, οὐχ' ὑποδήματα.

⁶⁹ Magdalino (2006) 153 remarks that the picture Metochites draws of Joseph in his letter *To a friend* resembles hagiographical models.

⁷⁰ See Theodorus Metochites, *To a friend*, ed. Treu (1899) 25, lines 21–7. See also Darrouzès (1977) numbers 2000, 2028, 2100.

⁷¹ Cantacuzenus, *Historiae*, 1, 7, 9–10: τὸν λύχνον ὑπὸ τὸν μόδιον κρύψαι, οὐκ ἡδυνήθη. Cf. Matthew 5.15: 'No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.'

⁷² See especially Meyendorff (1971) and (1974). ⁷³ See Meyendorff (1974).

⁷⁴ Palamas, *Pro hesychastis*, ed. Meyendorff (1973), 2.1.35. See Nicol (1979) 51.

death, it is not unreasonable to assume that similar ideas had already been gaining increasing acceptance before – which might explain why the wandering monk Joseph had to account for his devotion to secular learning. In his *Synopsis*, Joseph anyway always remains committed to the superior truth of Christianity. For the first part of the treatise *De anima*, e.g., Joseph bases himself on Aristotle – copying Pachymeres' paraphrase of Aristotle's *De anima* – while the second part consists of Christian ideas on the soul. At the beginning of the latter, Joseph emphasises that only the second part of his exposé is completely true, 'because what the Greeks philosophised about the soul has been shown to be vain', whereas his theories are inspired by 'the truth manifested in Christ' himself.⁷⁵

The question remains, however, whether Joseph did actually realise his ambitious plan of writing one comprehensive work, excellently structured and organised, and which really was qualitatively different from and superior to the works of his predecessors. A definitive answer would require a thorough study of the whole *Synopsis variarum disciplinarum*. Nevertheless, we can perhaps give a preliminary answer, taking Joseph's treatise *De virtute* (Περὶ ἀρετῆς)⁷⁶ as a case study.

The core of this treatise consists in the previously mentioned *De virtute et ascesi* (Περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ ἀσκήσεως) of Nicephorus Blemmydes. Joseph supplements this text with, among other things, a passage taken from the *oeuvre* of the seventh-century Byzantine theologian and saint, Maximus the Confessor.⁷⁷ In doing so, he offers a more thorough discussion of the virtues than Blemmydes, 'making one unity, simple and continuous, out of various things'.⁷⁸

Yet, this continuity does not seem to cross the boundaries of the various individual treatises which the *Synopsis* contains. At the beginning of his *De virtute*, Joseph does state that he will first discuss the right way of acting before discussing the right doctrine,⁷⁹ thus linking this treatise with

⁷⁵ Riccardianus Gr. 31, folium 225^r: τὰ δὲ γε ἡμέτερα τῶν ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ τῆς αὐτοαληθείας κεκλημένων, ἔχουσιν οὕτω· καὶ ἔχουσι γε ἀληθῶς... ὅσα γὰρ περὶ ψυχῆς ἐφιλοσόφησαν Ἕλληνες, μάταια ἀπεδείχθησαν.

⁷⁶ A critical edition and English translation of this ethical treatise formed the core of my PhD dissertation. The Greek text will be published in the *Series Graeca* of the *Corpus Christianorum* (Brepols).

⁷⁷ On the relation between the *De virtute* of Joseph Rhakendytès and its sources Nicephorus Blemmydes and Maximus the Confessor, see Gielen (2011) and the introduction of my critical edition of Joseph's *Περὶ ἀρετῆς* (Gielen (forthcoming)).

⁷⁸ Joseph Rhak., *Epitome* 37, lines 28 and following (discussed also above).

⁷⁹ See Joseph Rhak., *De virtute*, lines 3–6: περὶ τοῦ ὁρθοῦ δόγματος ἐν ἐπιτομῇ μὲλλον διαλαβεῖν, εἰκότως πρότερον περὶ τῆς ὁρθῆς πράξεως τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ἐκθεῖναι προήρημαι ('I decided, with the intention of discussing in brief the right doctrine, to discuss similarly the right way of acting in the same way first').

the following one in his *Synopsis*, i.e. the *De pietate* (Περὶ εὐσεβείας), which seems to be a compilation of Nicephorus Blemmydes' *De fide* (Περὶ πίστεως) and the *Expositio Fidei* of John Damascene.⁸⁰ But there are no other cross-references found in the text, even though he could have added them, for example when discussing briefly the different parts and faculties of the soul by referring to similar passages in his treatise on the soul, the *De anima* (Περὶ ψυχῆς), which would have helped to emphasise the continuity and unity of his whole *Synopsis*. Besides, the link, just mentioned, between the *De virtute* and the *De pietate* is not even Joseph's own innovation, but was simply copied from his source Blemmydes, who had stated that he would first discuss the right doctrine (i.e. his *De fide*) and after that the right way of acting (i.e. his *De virtute et ascesi*);⁸¹ Joseph only changed the order of Blemmydes' two treatises.

Furthermore, the general impression we get of the whole *Synopsis* is of a collection of various independent treatises which happen to be placed in one codex, one after another, without any transitional notes added by Joseph to link one treatise with the next. Undoubtedly, Joseph's *Synopsis* has its merits. It offers a systematic overview and classification of the various disciplines of higher education and combines the works of different authors on related topics, as for example in the *De virtute*. It could have been a very handy tool, containing (according to Joseph) everything one should know. However, as far as we can tell from the manuscript tradition, it is clear that in many cases it was not considered as an entity to be read completely from beginning to end, as most manuscripts contain only one or just a few sections of the *Synopsis variarum disciplinarum*, allowing them to be read independently.

Conclusion

In his *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, Diderot in the eighteenth century defined the term encyclopaedia in the following terms:

⁸⁰ See Conticello (1995).

⁸¹ See Nicephorus Blemmydes, *De virtute et ascesi*, lines 8–11: περὶ τοῦ ὀρθοῦ δόγματος ἐν ἐπιτομῇ προδιαβών, εἰκότως καὶ περὶ τῆς ὀρθῆς πράξεως τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ἐπιδιαλαβεῖν οὐ κατώκνησα ('having discussed first in brief the right doctrine, I did not shrink from discussing the right way of acting as well in the same way'). A critical edition of this text will appear in my forthcoming volume in the *Series Graeca* with the critical edition of Joseph's *De virtute* (Gielen (forthcoming)).

Le but d'une encyclopédie est de rassembler les connaissances éparsés sur la surface de la terre, d'en exposer le système général aux hommes qui viendront après nous... Quand on vient à considérer la matière immense d'une encyclopédie, la seule chose qu'on aperçoit distinctement, c'est que ce ne peut être l'ouvrage d'un seul homme. Et comment un seul homme, dans le court espace de sa vie, réussirait-il à connaître et à développer le système universel de la nature et de l'art?⁸²

As a matter of fact, the aim Joseph had with his *Synopsis* was somewhat similar: to gather all knowledge, ancient as well as recent, covering the whole area of human and divine sciences, to the sole purpose of fathoming the mystery of creation. He did not aspire to complete originality. However, it is also clear that he did not just make use of the vast literary and scientific tradition; at the same time, he also challenged it and reshaped it, working within the ancient tradition of *aemulatio*. Although Joseph did not explicitly refer to the so-called *enkyklios paideia*, from which the modern term encyclopaedia is derived, his *Synopsis* should be viewed particularly against the background of classical and Byzantine (higher) education and the cultural situation of his time. Whereas tuition at the various educational institutes was primarily intended to be 'useful' and practically oriented, i.e. to create future officials and politicians, the aim of Joseph's literary work was to arouse words of praise for 'the one who has given and provided all good, God',⁸³ and at the same time to lay out the basis of a moral education. Moreover, at the end of his prose introduction,⁸⁴ he expresses the hope that those who have learned something from him will, in their turn, show the way to other inquisitive young people. Unfortunately, the manuscript tradition of Joseph's *Synopsis* seems to indicate that Joseph's ambitious plan did not achieve its goal, as there are only three surviving manuscripts which contain the whole *Synopsis*, which suggests that it was not considered as a new standard work that could replace all the other manuals and specialised treatises. Nor is there any evidence that any reader of Joseph's *Synopsis* used this monumental work as a basis for teaching new students.

Nonetheless, looking at Joseph's *Synopsis* offers us a valuable and very distinctive insight into fourteenth-century Byzantine culture and 'encyclopaedism'. For Byzantine history has too often been depicted as an example of cultural stagnation, with its derivative 'encyclopaedias' adduced as evidence. However, with his attempt to offer a well-structured and harmonised overview of all the different disciplines, Joseph proves that he,

⁸² Quotation from Hadot (2005) 469.

⁸³ Joseph Rhak., *Epitome* 38, lines 21–2: τῷ τῶν ἀπάντων ἀγαθῶν δοτῇ καὶ παροχεῖ θεῷ.

⁸⁴ See Joseph Rhak., *Epitome* 38, lines 21–8.

as a Byzantine 'encyclopaedist', wants to do much more than just copying and reproducing. Although at its end the Byzantine empire continuously suffered great loss of territory, the fourteenth century was marked both by a cultural renaissance, and by a revival of orthodoxy and spirituality. With his own encyclopaedic composition, and his distinctive way of life, Joseph seems to represent both.

13 | Shifting horizons

The medieval compilation of knowledge as mirror of a changing world

ELIZABETH KEEN

Debates and definitions

Manuscript and printed versions of medieval encyclopaedic texts span the centuries from the early Middle Ages to the early modern period. The origins and development of this kind of writing, the manuscript traditions, and the reception histories of individual works are well-dug fields of historical research, but the boundaries of an encyclopaedic 'genre' and a precise definition covering content, form and function, have been hard to establish. Michael Twomey categorises encyclopaedic texts as 'major' and 'minor' according to their medieval reception and longevity; according to Bernard Ribémont 'empirical investigation reveals a central core, with a range of satellites and one text that is clearly fundamental'. The latter is generally agreed to be Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, while the well-known 'core' includes the later medieval works of Alexander Neckam, Thomas of Cantimpré, Bartholomew the Englishman and Vincent de Beauvais. Compilations deemed to be 'satellites' include those of Hrabanus Maurus, Bede, Lambert of St Omer, Hildegard of Bingen and Honorius Augustodunensis, but this is by no means a comprehensive list.¹

It is common now to see medieval 'encyclopaedic' writing as a category that can include many different kinds of text such as medieval *mappaemundi*, world histories, and preaching manuals, according to the special focus desired by the compiler. William N. West sees both the medieval encyclopaedia and the early theatre as possible 'theatres of learning', imaginary spaces in which moral lessons can be enacted with the willing involvement of an audience.² The important linking factor is a salvatory and penitential primary purpose that tends to present the finite world as a metaphorical 'mirror' or 'covering' of the eternal and divine. Christel Meier, for example,

I thank the Australian National University's School of Social Sciences for the opportunity to prepare this chapter while a Visiting Fellow in the History Program for two years. I also thank Tania Colwell, Julie Hotchin, Joan Stivala and John Tillotson for their invaluable comments and suggestions.

¹ Twomey (1988) 198; Ribémont (1997). ² West (2002) 30–4, 63.