A NEW SOURCE OF THE *SYNOPSIS* OF JOSEPH RHAKENDYTÈS

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Joseph Rhakendytès, also called the Philosopher (ca. 1260-ca. 1330), was one of the central figures of the cultural scene of 14th-century Constantinople, counting, among others, Theodorus Metochites and Nicephorus Gregoras among his friends¹. To this day, his major work², his so-called *Synopsis Variarum Disciplinarum*, remains for the most part unpublished. Besides the twofold introduction, edited by Treu³ in 1899, only of the *Σύνοψις τῆς ῥητορικῆς*, which, based on the manuscript tradition, seems to have been the most popular part of Joseph's *Synopsis*, a modern, (to some extent) critical edition is available to us⁴, which, however, also itself highly needs revision, given the very limited number of manuscripts used by the editor.

This lack of an easily accessible, sound corpus of texts complicates the search for the sources Joseph has consulted to compose his *Synopsis* – also, not in the least, because Joseph never mentions his sources by name, writing, instead, as if it were his own words⁵.

Yet, especially at the end of the 19th and in the beginning of the 20th century, several scholars made an attempt to uncover the authors behind Joseph's composition.

1. See especially M. TREU, *Der Philosoph Joseph*, *BZ* 8, 1899, p. 1-64.

2. Joseph might have also been the author of some *στίχοι ἱκετήριοι πρὸς τὴν Ὑπεραγίαν Θεοτόκον, μεγαλυνάρια εἰς τὴν Ἁγίαν Τριάδα*, and some prayers. See G. PENTOGALOS, *Ἰωσήφ Ῥακενδύτου θρησκευτικοὶ ὕμνοι, Ἑλληνικά* 23, 1970, p. 114-118.

3. M. TREU, *art. cit.*, p. 34-42.

4. C. WALZ, *Rhetores Graeci ex codicibus Florentinis, Mediolanensibus, Monacensibus, Neapolitanis, Parisiensibus, Romanis, Venetis, Taurinensibus et Vindobonensibus*, III, Osnabrück 1832-1836 (= 1968), p. 478-569.

5. In his *Περὶ ἀρετῆς* (of which we are preparing a first critical edition for the *Series Graeca* of the *Corpus Christianorum*), e.g., we read: ... *περὶ τοῦ ὀρθοῦ δόγματος ἐν ἐπιτομῇ μέλλων διαλαβεῖν, εἰκότως πρότερον περὶ τῆς ὀρθῆς πράξεως τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ἐκθεῖναι προήρημαι*. On the other hand, unwilling to condemn Joseph (who lived in 14th-century Byzantium, where ideas on originality different from ours prevailed) as an unrelenting plagiarizer, one should also keep in mind that Joseph, in his introduction, actually had announced that he had “gathered one thing from here, another from there, a third from a third place and again another thing from yet another source”, using older, as well as more recent sources. See M. TREU, *art. cit.*, p. 37²⁵-38³.

In 1894, Vitelli gave a detailed description of the content of the 14th-century manuscript *Florentinus Riccardianus gr. 31* (K.II.4)⁶. This paper codex, which consists of 383 folios, contains the complete *Synopsis* of Joseph. As for the sources, Vitelli was able to identify the original authors of the following sections: Joseph's *Περὶ πείρας, ἐμπειρίας, τέχνης καὶ ἐπιστήμης* corresponds to parts of the *Epitome logica* of Nicephorus Blemmydes; parts of Joseph's section on the φυσικὰ ἀρχαί are indebted to George Pachymeres' *Compendium* and Blemmydes' *Epitome physica*; one part of Joseph's *Περὶ ἀρετῆς* was copied from Maximus the Confessor; and for the last section of his *Synopsis*, Joseph got his information from Blemmydes and Cyril of Alexandria.

Eight years after Vitelli, Terzaghi⁷ tried to complete Vitelli's overview. According to him, the first section of Joseph's *Synopsis*, *Σύνοψις τῆς ῥητορικῆς*, was taken from an anonymous author⁸, who strongly depended on the work of the late-antique rhetor Hermogenes. He also pointed to some resemblance of Joseph's text to the *De anima* of Alexander Aphrodisiensis, and to some more overlaps between Joseph and Pachymeres. Moreover, he continued, the second part of Joseph's *Περὶ ψυχῆς* and his *Περὶ σώματος* correspond to Blemmydes' treatises with the same titles⁹. In 1974, Criscuolo¹⁰ refined Terzaghi's assertion, stating that, for some passages, not Alexander Aphrodisiensis was the direct source of Joseph's, but the 12th-century commentator of Aristotle Michael of Ephesus, reproducing some parts of Alexander's work.

Now, as we are finalizing our critical edition of Joseph's *Περὶ ἀρετῆς*, the second last part of the *Synopsis*, we are able to indicate the correct source of yet another section of Joseph's *magnum opus*.

Treu¹¹ asserted that Joseph "die Tugend nach dem Anonymus Christianus behandelt", thus following Vitelli, who had noticed that the text of Joseph's *Περὶ ἀρετῆς* corresponds to the *anonymi Christiani philosophi liber de vir-*

6. G. VITELLI, Indice de' codici greci Riccardiani, Magliabechiani e Marucelliani, *Studi Italiani di filologia classica* 2, 1894, p. 471-570 (here p. 490-493).

7. N. TERZAGHI, Sulla composizione dell'*Enciclopedia* del filosofo Giuseppe, *Studi Italiani di filologia classica* 10, 1902, p. 121-132.

8. For this, Terzaghi based himself on Treu, who stated that "es liegt also auch auf der Hand, dass wir auch die Synopsis der Rhetoric... nicht für die eigene Arbeit Josephs halten dürfen. Auch dieser Teil muss in wesentlicher Anlehnung an Hermogenes einem anderen Byzantinischer gehören" (see M. TREU, *art. cit.*, p. 46).

9. For the relation between the *Περὶ ψυχῆς* of Blemmydes and that one of Joseph, see M. VERHELST, Le *Περὶ ψυχῆς* de Nicéphore Blemmyde. Préliminaires à une édition critique, *BF* 4, 1972, p. 214-219; EADEM, Le "Traité de l'âme" de Nicéphore Blemmyde. *Histoire du texte, édition critique, traduction et analyse du contenu doctrinal*. Thèse présentée pour l'obtention du grade de Docteur en Philosophie et Lettres, I, Université Catholique de Louvain. Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres 1976 (unpublished), p. 279-283.

10. R. CRISCUOLO, Note sull'*Enciclopedia* del filosofo Giuseppe, *Byz.* 44, 1974, p. 255-281.

11. M. TREU, *art. cit.*, p. 46.

tute, edited in Augsburg by Johannes Wegelinus in 1603¹². Yet, this 17th-century text is, in fact, not an edition of Joseph's source text, but nothing else but an edition of Joseph's own text, based on the 16th-century manuscript *Augustanus, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek*, 2^o Cod. 240¹³. Where, then, did Joseph take his text from?

Vitelli had rightly noticed that parts of Joseph's *Περὶ ἀρετῆς* had been taken from Maximus the Confessor's *Ad sanctissimum presbyterum Marinum* (CPG 7697.1)¹⁴. Yet, as we discovered after a detailed comparison with various ethical treatises of the Byzantine period, the text in which the Maximus-passages are embedded, was not itself from the pen of the church father also, but reproduces more or less in full the (nowadays rather unknown) treatise *Περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ ἀσκήσεως* of Nicephorus Blemmydes, for whom Joseph seems to have had a special predilection, considering the rather large number of Blemmydian works on which Joseph drew for the composition of his own *Synopsis*. On his ethical treatise, which he probably composed around 1263, Blemmydes wrote the following himself: "I composed a book *On faith* and another *On virtue and asceticism*: I particularly made plain all that a person who chooses to lead a really pious life should not ignore and should not leave undone"¹⁵.

Since there is no good edition of Blemmydes' *Περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ ἀσκήσεως* (the only edition being the *editio princeps* by Voulismas in 1784¹⁶), we are also preparing a critical edition of this text¹⁷, so there is a solid basis for a well-considered comparison of Joseph's text and its source.

This, perhaps, will also enable us to determine – previously undone – which manuscript Joseph may have had at hand while compiling his *Synopsis*, or, at least, his *Περὶ ἀρετῆς*.

Of course, we may not lose sight of the (quite reasonable) possibility that this 'source manuscript' of Joseph's got lost. Moreover, up to now, we still

12. G. VITELLI, *art. cit.*, p. 492; *Anonymi Christiani philosophi liber de virtute*. E ms. codice graeco, iamprimum editus, latinitate donatus, et hypomnematis illustratus a Iohanne Wegelino Augustano, Augustae Vindelicorum 1603.

13. H. SPILLING, *Handschriftenkataloge der Staats- und Stadtbibliothek Augsburg*, Wiesbaden 1984, p. 274-275. Joseph's *Περὶ ἀρετῆς* – without reference to the authorship of Joseph – can be found on f. 35-57.

14. This letter can be found in PG 91, 9-37. The passages used by Joseph are PG 91, 12³²-24²⁶. A new edition of this text is currently being prepared by Dr. B. Markesinis for the *Series Graeca* of the *Corpus Christianorum*.

15. NICEPHORUS BLEMMYDES, *Autobiographia*, II, 75¹¹⁻¹⁴. See J. A. MUNITIZ, *Nikephoros Blemmydes. A Partial Account. Introduction, Translation and Notes* (Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense. Études et Documents 48), Leuven 1988, p. 27 and 133.

16. Νικηφόρου μοναστοῦ καὶ πρεσβυτέρου τοῦ Βλεμμίδου ἐπιτομὴ λογικῆς [...] μετὰ τῆς ἐπιτομῆς αὐτοῦ φυσικῆς [...] περὶ σώματος [...] καὶ περὶ ψυχῆς [...], περὶ πίστεως καὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ ἀσκήσεως τοῦ αὐτοῦ Βλεμμίδου, προηγουμένης τούτων τῆς καθολικωτέρας αὐτοῦ ἐπιστολῆς, ed. D. VOULISMAS, III, Lipsiae 1784, p. 121-140.

17. This text will appear in the same volume of the *Series Graeca* of the *Corpus Christianorum* as Joseph's *Περὶ ἀρετῆς*.

were not able to get hold of (a reproduction of) all the manuscript witnesses of the *Περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ ἀσκήσεως* of Nicephorus Blemmydes, so our current suggestions are just preliminary results. Nonetheless, of the manuscripts that have already been subject of our research, there were some especially worth considering in this respect, and a close comparison of these with Joseph's text enabled us to at least already decrease the group of probable candidates by two.

First of all, indeed, our attention was immediately drawn by manuscript *Monacensis gr. 225*, as it contains both Blemmydes' ethical treatise (f. 359-373) and Maximus the Confessor's Letter to Marinus (f. 2^v-6^v). Unfortunately, unnoticed by Hardt¹⁸, this codex turned out to consist, in fact, of two separate parts (the first devoted to Maximus the Confessor, the second to Nicephorus Blemmydes) of different time and origin and which were joined together only in the 16th century, when acquired for the Fugger library in Augsburg¹⁹.

Secondly, we turned our attention to manuscript *Romanus Vallicellianus gr. 30* (C4)²⁰, since it had been suggested as possible source manuscript of Joseph by Kontouma-Conticello²¹, containing quite a lot of texts that possibly form the basis of parts of Joseph's *Synopsis* – among them, also Blemmydes' *Περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ ἀσκήσεως*. Yet, based on our collation, also this manuscript is definitely to be excluded as Joseph's model, since none of the variant readings with which Joseph's text distinguishes itself from Blemmydes' text²², is present in this 14th-century witness of Blemmydes' ethical treatise.

With this, however, the 'source-problem' of Joseph's *Περὶ ἀρετῆς* has not been solved completely. The end of Joseph's treatise does not, indeed, coincide with the end of Blemmydes' *Περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ ἀσκήσεως*. On the contrary, after having copied the last paragraph of Blemmydes' text, Joseph adds twelve more paragraphs (in the edition of Wegelinus)²³, discussing first how

18. I. HARDT, *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Regiae Bavariae*, II, Seidel 1806, p. 462-471.

19. See J. H. DECLERCK, *Maximi Confessoris quaestiones et dubia* (Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca 10), Turnhout-Leuven 1982, p. LXXXVIII; J. A. MUNITIZ, *Nicephori Blemmydae autobiographia sive curriculum vitae, necnon epistula universalior* (Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca 13), Turnhout-Leuven 1984, p. XVIII-XXI; B. MARKESINIS, *Le Monacensis gr. 225*, ff. 1^r-40^v, et Georges de Chypre, alias Grégoire II de Constantinople, *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* 54 (n.s.), 2000, p. 259-273 (here p. 259-262); B. JANSSENS, *Maximi Confessoris ambigua ad Thomam, una cum epistula secunda ad eundem* (Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca 48), Turnhout-Leuven 2002, p. LXII-LXIII.

20. E. MARTINI, *Catalogo di manoscritti greci esistenti nelle biblioteche italiane*, II, Milano 1902, p. 48-54.

21. V. CONTICELLO, Pseudo-Cyril's *De SS. Trinitate*. A Compilation of Joseph the Philosopher, *OCP* 61, 1995, p. 117-129 (here p. 129). According to her, the *De SS. Trinitate* is a compilation of fragments of Blemmydes' *Περὶ πίστεως* (or *Sermo ad monachos suos*) and John Damascene's *Expositio Fidei* by Joseph. All those passages seem to be present in manuscript *Romanus Vallicellianus gr. 30*.

22. These will be discussed more in detail in the forthcoming edition of the ethical treatises of Joseph and Blemmydes.

23. *Anonymi Christiani philosophi liber de virtute*, ed. J. WEGELINUS, paragraph 27-39.

“the sage of olden times, having advanced many and diverse theses on this topic”, dealt with philosophy and ethics²⁴, then describing in short, once more, the four cardinal virtues with their respective vices, and the most important ‘minor’ virtues, also accompanied by their vices.

Intriguingly, in one manuscript containing almost the complete *Synopsis* of Joseph, *Florentinus Mediceus-Laurentianus gr. plut.* 58, 20 (14th century)²⁵, Joseph’s *Περὶ ἀρετῆς* stops with the last words of Blemmydes’ treatise on virtue (... τεθεωσθαι, μακαριώτατος on f. 372^v), thus omitting the overview of the ancient philosophers and that one of the virtues²⁶. Moreover, in the margins of manuscript *Florentinus Riccardianus gr.* 31, already mentioned, at the end of Blemmydes’ text (f. 353), we read ἐναρξίς, thus suggesting another, new passage (of a different author?) starts.

At this moment, we have not yet identified the original author of this passage. Maybe, we should even not rule out the possibility that Joseph has actually written this part himself. He seems to have set great store by a high degree of clarity of the text for the reader²⁷, and such a summarizing chapter seems to fit quite well with this intention. Yet, given the highly reproducing and – from a modern point of view – ‘unoriginal’ character of the whole *Synopsis*, and more specifically now, of the first part of Joseph’s *Περὶ ἀρετῆς*, this option seems less likely. Moreover, very recently, we discovered two manuscripts, *Vindobonensis phil. gr.* 192 (15th century)²⁸ and *Venetus Marcianus gr.* IV, 43 (16th century)²⁹, which seem to contain both a (anonymous) text ‘*de virtutibus*’ that apparently starts with the very same statement on “the elder sages”, that they “have advanced many diverse theses on

24. JOSEPH RHAKENDYTÈS: Ἄλλ’ ἀναληπτέον καὶ αὐθις τὸν λόγον, καὶ σαφηνείας χάριν λεκτέον ὅτι ὁ περὶ ἀρετῶν λόγος πολὺς καὶ πολυειδὴς τοῖς πάλαι σοφοῖς καταβέβληται. Οἱ μὲν γὰρ σποράδην καὶ διηρημένως ἐν τοῖς οἰκείοις συγγράμμασι περὶ αὐτῶν διεξήσαν.

25. A. M. BANDINI, *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Mediceae Laurentianae varia continens opera graecorum patrum*, II, Firenze 1764-1770 (= 1961), col. 459-462. Sections of Joseph’s *Synopsis* that are not present in this codex are the prose- and verse-introduction, a chapter of the treatise *Περὶ αἰσθήσεως καὶ αἰσθητῶν*, both letters of John Zacharias Actuarius (forming the section on medicine), the last chapter of Joseph’s *Περὶ εὐσεβείας* and the following fragments attributed to Cyril of Alexandria.

26. Instead, we find the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *De virtutibus et vitiis* (f. 372^v-374), in the manuscript’s margins entitled *σύννομις κατὰ τοὺς ἐκ τοῦ Περιπάτου τῶν ἀρετῶν τε καὶ τῶν κακιῶν* by a later reader.

27. In his introduction, e.g., Joseph proclaims that “on the spot [his reader] will understand that which is useful and he will not shrink from things that come quickly one after another”, and that “he has collected all those things and has made them plain and clear” (M. TREU, *art. cit.*, p. 38¹³⁻²⁰). Another (small) example is given by R. CRISCUOLO, *art. cit.*, p. 265, while discussing the relation between Joseph’s *Περὶ ἀστρονομίας* and the source text: “... L’anonimo autore elenca i nomi egizi dei mesi; Giuseppe, per maggior chiarezza, sovrappone a ciascuno il corrispondente nome latino, grecizzato, s’intende. Mutamenti di siffatto genere, frequenti in ogni parte dell’*Enciclopedia*...”.

28. H. HUNGER, *Katalog der griechischen Handschriften der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, I (Museion. Veröffentlichungen der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek. Neue Folge 4.1.1), Wien 1961, p. 301-303.

29. E. MIONI, *Bibliothecae Divi Marci Venetiarum codices Graeci manuscripti*, I/2, Roma 1972, p. 231-232.

virtues”, as in the final section of Joseph’ *Περὶ ἀρετῆς*³⁰. A detailed collation and comparison of both texts with Joseph’s text will (hopefully) prove whether or not we are dealing here with other witnesses of the original source text of the concluding chapters of the *Περὶ ἀρετῆς* of Joseph Rhakendytès.

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30. Cf. *supra*, note 24.