

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS
THE AREOPAGITE: THE *FOURTH LETTER* IN ITS INDIRECT
AND DIRECT TEXT TRADITIONS¹

I. A Hypothesis by Ronald Hathaway

In his erudite and imaginative book, *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius*, Ronald Hathaway proposed a bold interpretation of Dionysius' *Letters*. Among many other interesting insights he noted the following. He observed that the first nine *Letters* constitute the summary of Dionysius' *positive* theology², the tenth being only a kind of addendum to this micro-*Corpus*. Moreover, he noted that the size of the individual *Letters* corresponded to what Dionysius said in the *Mystical Theology* about the increasing number of words that the different parts of his theology required, culminating in the *Symbolic Theology*, which is treated in the most voluminous way³. In the same way,

¹ The bulk of this study was written in Princeton, during a Stanley J. Seeger Visiting Fellowship that I held in 2002/03, enjoying the wonderful hospitality of the Program in Hellenic Studies at Princeton University. It is my most pleasant duty to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the President of the Program, Peter Brown, to its Director, Dimitri Gondicas, to its able and kind co-ordinator, Carol Oberto and her staff, the staff of the incomparable Firestone Library, and last, but not least, to Paul Rorem, with whom I had the privilege to spend long hours discussing Dionysius and who kindly read and commented on an earlier version of this paper. Without the help of all these persons and of many others in Princeton, whom I cannot mention here, this paper and a number of other ones, published or unpublished yet, could never have been written. Finally, I warmly thank my friend Matthew Suff, the faithful and indefatigable proof-reader of my less than idiomatic English.

² R. HATHAWAY, *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius: A Study in the Form and meaning of the Pseudo-Dionysian Writings*, The Hague, 1969, p. 80 (= HATHAWAY, *Hierarchy*).

³ See *MT* III, col. 1033 B-C; p. 147, 4-12. Hereafter the basic text for the references to the *Dionysian Corpus* will be the recent Göttingen critical edition: *Corpus Dionysiacum I: Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, De divinis nominibus*, ed. B.R. SUCHLA (*Patristische Texte und Studien*, 33), Berlin-New York, 1990 (= SUCHLA, *Corpus Dionysiacum I*) and *Corpus Dionysiacum II: Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, De coelesti hierarchia-De ecclesiastica hierarchia-De mystica theologia-Epistulae*, eds. G. HEIL and A.M. RITTER (*Patristische Texte und Studien* 36), Berlin-New York, 1991 (= HEIL and RITTER, *Corpus Dionysiacum II*). The order of the references will be the following: 1. treatise (*DN* = *On the Divine Names*, *CH* = *On the Celestial Hierarchy*, *EH* = *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, *MT* = *On the Mystical Theology*, *Ep* = *Letters*); 2. chapter no. in Roman numbers; 3. column and section in the *Patrologia Graeca* edition of J.-P. Migne; 4. page and line no. in the Göttingen critical edition. *On the Symbolic Theology* is a treatise to which Pseudo-Dionysius often refers in his body of writings, but which is not extant in them. Either this treatise has been lost, or it is a pure fiction, or — perhaps — it is extant, but not under the same pseudonym.

Dionysius' *Letters* continuously grow in length, until the maximum size of *Letter Nine*, obviously treating the subject of symbolic theology, is reached. And Hathaway also added the following:

As we have several times mentioned in passing, the model for the negative theology of Ps.-Dionysius is the Neoplatonist *Parmenides* interpretation. According to that interpretation the long discourse of *Parmenides* consisted of *nine hypotheses*. Could there be some hidden connection between these nine hypotheses and *Letters 1-9*? In a very general way, the correspondence seems already plausible. But the author drops a hint that is conclusive: the very first word of the *Third Letter* is "the sudden" (ἐξαίφνης), and every Neoplatonist knew that the *third hypothesis* of Plato's *Parmenides* dealt with the nature of the moment of simultaneous change (τὸ ἐξαίφνης)⁴.

After observing this correspondence between the *Third Letter* and the *third hypothesis* of the *Parmenides*, Hathaway tried to show the more "hidden connections" between the other *Letters* and the other *hypotheses*. Thus, he established tentative correspondences for the *Fourth* and the *Sixth* to the *Ninth Letter*, but apparently failed to find such for the *First*, the *Second* and the *Fifth Letters*. Perhaps this was the reason why he noted the following:

A word of caution. For obvious reasons, Ps.-Dionysius could not make this parallelism with the *Parmenides* interpretation obtrusive; so we must not expect a series of obvious parallels.

After this, he noted the following "curious facts:"

(1) the *fourth hypothesis* in the Neoplatonist exegesis represents Forms immanent in matter and the *Fourth Letter* deals with the theoretical question of the Incarnation; (2) the *sixth hypothesis* represents (the absurdity) of relative not-being, and the *Sixth Letter* connects the problem of falsehood and appearance with *relative not-being* [...]; (3) the *seventh hypothesis* represents not-being *simpliciter*, and the *Seventh Letter* speaks emphatically about what is "other than really being" [...]; (4) the *eighth hypothesis* represents another kind of relative not-being, that of shadows and dreams [...], and the *Eighth Letter's* surface teaching is that the lowest of the ranks of the hierarchy is furthest from the "light" of God, in the very shadows of shadows, and the *Eighth Letter* ends with a fantastic myth that turns on dreams and visions in the night; (5) the *ninth hypothesis* represents the not-being even of shadows and dreams [...], and the *Ninth Letter*, as stated, treats the whole problem of Scripture or the multitude of "images" therein. The audacity of the author is unmistakable now: Scripture is the stuff of which shadows and dreams are made.

Hathaway did not further develop this hypothesis, and I do not know of anybody among recent scholars who did. However, it is an idea wor-

⁴ HATHAWAY, *Hierarchy*, p. 80.

thy of investigation, even if all the correspondences observed by Hathaway do not have equal value. For example, the correspondence between the key role of the “sudden” in the *third hypothesis* of the *Parmenides*, meaning the metaphysical or ontological point where the “One” passes from eternity to time and *vice versa*, and the “sudden” of the *Third Letter* interpreted as “that which is drawn out, against hope, into visible shape from its former invisibility”⁵ and referring to the Incarnation of Christ, seems to be compelling (Hathaway called it a “conclusive hint”⁶). If so, it is also liable to lead us very far in understanding the Christology of Dionysius, given the fact that in all Neoplatonist exegesis the *third hypothesis* was understood, in one way or another, as referring to the *hypostasis* of the soul, so that, if Hathaway’s hypothesis is correct, we may suppose that the *Third Letter* treats no lesser question than that of Christ’s soul. Much less conclusive is the correspondence that Hathaway wanted to establish between the *eighth hypothesis* being about shadows and dreams and the teaching that he attributes to the *Eighth Letter* of Dionysius on the remoteness of the lowest ranks of the hierarchy, “in the shadows of shadows,” simply because this is something that Dionysius does not say (he even does not use the word “shadow” [σκιά] in the whole *Corpus*). However, the second parallelism that Hathaway established between the *eighth hypothesis* and the *Eighth Letter*, observing that this *Letter* ends with the fantastic narrative about a dream, already seems to be a safer indication of a real correspondence. Moreover, if one considers that the whole *Eighth Letter* is speaking about a very shadowy and dark reality, that of condemnation, in the first part of the *Letter*, and of eternal damnation in the infernal underworld, in the second, one may really guess that Hathaway’s intuition was not only insightful, but also extremely useful, if we are to understand the deeper meaning of the Dionysian text. For if eternal damnation has anything to do with the *eighth hypothesis*, the subjects of which are “in the state of dreams and shadows” as says Proclus⁷, then one may legitimately ask the question whether Dionysius thought of it as of a reality or an unreality, an eternal reality or a shadowy, ephemeral one.

⁵ R. Hathaway’s translation, HATHAWAY, *Hierarchy*, p. 133.

⁶ HATHAWAY, *Hierarchy*, p. 80, cited above. This correspondence has been treated by a number of scholars. See, *inter alia*, W. BEIERWALTES, Ἐξαίφνης *oder die Paradoxie des Augenblicks* in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 74 (1966/67), p. 271-282 and R. MORTLEY, *From Word to Silence*, vol. II: *The Way of Negation, Christian and Greek (Theophaneia, 30-31)*, Bonn, 1986, p. 236-240.

⁷ PROCLUS, *In Parm.* col. 1059, 36-37: δνειρασιν ἐοικότα ἔσται καὶ σκιαῖς. In the following, unless otherwise stated, I will quote Proclus’ *Commentary on the Parmenides* in the translation of Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon: *Proclus’ Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, tr. G.R. MORROW and J.M. DILLON, Princeton, 1987 (= MORROW and DILLON, *Proclus*).

These correspondences need further investigation. They are perhaps not as clear-cut and simple as Hathaway's original hypothesis suggests that they are. In fact, quite normally, in almost every Dionysian *Letter* there are references to more than one hypothesis of the Platonic *Parmenides*. For example the *Fourth Letter* of Dionysius, which treats the subject of the Incarnation, in principle and according to Hathaway's hypothesis should correspond to the *fourth* Parmenidian *hypothesis*. To this it corresponds indeed, but — as will be shown hereafter — together with the *Third Letter* it is also deeply rooted in the Neoplatonic exegesis of the *third hypothesis*. This *Letter*, apparently constituting a possible key to Dionysius' Christology, will be the subject of the investigations in the present study.

2. *The Textual Problem*

Since my conviction is that we cannot have access to the meaning of the Dionysian texts without first clarifying their text tradition and their sources, and since now we have a reliable critical edition, which, in principle, although not always, as will be seen in what follows, lists all the variants in the Greek text tradition, there is a good opportunity to delve deeper into the problems presented by this *Letter*. Moreover, we are in an extraordinarily fortunate situation for examining the *Letter's* text tradition from many angles, given the fact that it is extant, as most parts of the *Dionysian Corpus* are, in the Syriac tradition of Sergius of Rīsh 'Aynō's Syriac translation, for which the *terminus ante quem* is the death of the translator, which occurred in 536⁸. Thus, this translation is just slightly later than the appearance of the Greek *Corpus* at the beginning of the sixth century, so that its study offers the promise of an insight into the earliest phase of the textual transmission of the *Corpus*. The traditional *scholia* of the text, written in different time periods, will also be of great help for scrutinising its transmission. Finally, our exceptional situation in examining this text is only enhanced by the fact that roughly a century after Sergius' death, the interpretation of the *Letter* became im-

⁸ On Sergius' person and activity, see the *Ecclesiastical History* of PSEUDO-ZACHARIAS RHETOR: *Historia ecclesiastica Zachariae rhetori vulgo adscripta*, II, 9, 19, ed. E.W. BROOKS (*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, 84; Syr. 39), p. 136 sqq. See also P. SHERWOOD, *Sergius of Reshaina and the Syriac versions of the Pseudo-Denys* in *Sacris Erudiri* 4 (1952), p. 174-184, J.-M. HORNUS, *Le Corpus dionysien en syriaque* in *Parole de l'Orient* 1 (1970), p. 69-93, and M. QUASCHNING-KIRSCH, *Ein weiterer Textzeuge für die syrische Version des Corpus Dionysiacum Areopagiticum: Paris B.N. Syr. 378* in *Le Muséon* 113/1-2 (2000), p. 115-124.

portant in the Monothelite controversy, so that in its entirety it became the subject of a lengthy commentary by St. Maximus the Confessor in his *Ambigua ad Thomam*. So the *Ambigua* is a precious and unique testimony of the text's status in the way it was read most probably not only by St. Maximus, but also by his Monothelite opponents, mostly residing in the capital of the Empire. So we may tentatively call St. Maximus' text a seventh-century Constantinopolitan version. The examination of these three types of indirect testimonies, that is, Sergius' translation, the diverse traditional scholia, and St. Maximus' text embedded in his commentary, combined with a scrutiny into the text's philosophical and theological connotations, will be a paradigmatic case study for the complex method that I propose not only for the "deciphering" of the *Dionysian Corpus*, but also for further work on its text tradition.

In this section I will first give the *Letter's* Greek text as it is found in A.M. Ritter's critical edition. Together with the *First*, *Second* and *Third Letters*, it is addressed to a certain monk Gaius, whom we understand to be intended to be identified with the Gaius mentioned several times by St. Paul and to whom the *Third Epistle* of St. John is also addressed⁹, but about whom the only thing we know for sure is that he is definitely not identical with this Gaius.

2.a. *Letter IV in the Present State of its Text and the Interpretation of its First Half*

<p>Dionysius, <i>Fourth Letter</i> to Gaius, as it stands in the critical edition</p> <p>Πῶς φήσ, Ἰησοῦς, ὁ πάντων ἐπέκεινα, πᾶσιν ἐστὶν ἀνθρώποις οὐσιωδῶς συντεταγμένος; Οὐ γὰρ ὡς αἴτιος ἀνθρώπων ἐνθάδε λέγεται ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ' ὡς αὐτὸ κατ' οὐσίαν ὄλην ἀληθῶς ἄνθρωπος ᾧν. Ἡμεῖς δὲ τὸν Ἰησοῦν οὐκ ἀνθρωπικῶς ἀφορίζομεν· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος μόνον — οὐδὲ ὑπερούσιος εἰ ἄνθρωπος μόνον —, ἀλλ' ἄνθρωπος ἀληθῶς ὁ διαφερόντως φιλόανθρωπος, ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων καὶ κατὰ ἀνθρώπους ἐκ τῆς ἀνθρώπων οὐσίας ὁ ὑπερούσιος οὐσιωμένος.</p> <p>Ἔστι δὲ οὐδὲν ἦττον ὑπερουσιότητος ὑπερπλήρης ὁ αἰεὶ ὑπερού-</p>	<p>English translation of the <i>Fourth Letter</i>, as it stands in the critical edition</p> <p>How do you say that Jesus, the one Who is beyond all things, is substantially ranked together with all men? For He is not called here man as the Cause of men, but as being precisely what means to be truly man in the entire substance. However, we do not define Jesus in a human way. For He is not only man — nor would He be supersubstantial if He were only man — but truly man is the exceedingly manloving one, the Supersubstantial substantiated above men and according to men, from the substance of men.</p> <p>This notwithstanding, the one Who is always supersubstantial remains</p>
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⁹ Rm 16:23, 1Cor 1:14, 3Jn 1.

σιος, ἀμέλει τῇ ταύτης περιουσία, καὶ εἰς οὐσίαν ἀληθῶς ἐλθῶν ὑπὲρ οὐσίαν οὐσιώθη καὶ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον ἐνήργει τὰ ἄνθρώπου. Καὶ δηλοῖ παρθένος ὑπερφυῶς κύουσα καὶ ὕδωρ ἄστατον ὑλικῶν καὶ γειρῶν ποδῶν ἀνέχον βάρος καὶ μὴ ὑπεῖκον, ἀλλ' ὑπερφυεῖ δυνάμει πρὸς τὸ ἀδιάχυτον συνιστάμενον.

Τί ἂν τις τὰ λοιπὰ πάμπολλα ὄντα διέλθοι; Δι' ὧν ὁ θεῖος ὄρων ὑπὲρ νοῦν γινώσεται καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῇ φιλανθρωπία τοῦ Ἰησοῦ καταφασκόμενα, δύνανται ὑπεροχικῆς ἀποφάσεως ἔχοντα. Καὶ γὰρ, ἵνα συνελόντες εἴπωμεν, οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπος ἦν, οὐχ ὡς μὴ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀνθρώπων ἐπέκεινα καὶ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον ἀληθῶς ἄνθρωπος γεγονώς, καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν οὐ κατὰ θεὸν τὰ θεῖα δράσας, οὐ τὰ ἀνθρώπεια κατὰ ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλ' ἀνθρωθέντως θεοῦ, καινὴν τινα τὴν θεανδρικὴν ἐνέργειαν ἡμῖν πεπολιτευμένος.

more-than-full of supersubstantiality. Moreover, because of the superabundance of the latter, even when He truly came to substance, He was substantiated above substance and performed the human deeds above man. This is shown by the Virgin who supernaturally gives birth and by the unstable water that bears the weight of the material and earthly feet, and does not yield, but through a supernatural power is coagulated to a non-liquid state.

Why would one enumerate the rest, which are indeed many? Through which the one who sees in a divine manner will know above intellect that even those things that are predicated about the manlovingness of Jesus in fact have the sense of transcendent negation. For to say it shortly, He was not even man, not as if He were no man, but from men and beyond men and above man. He has truly become man and, for the rest, performed the divine deeds not as God, the human deeds not as man, but being God man-ified, exerted for us a kind of new godmanly activity

This is how the text stands in the critical edition. As I will show, in this form, which is a faithful reconstruction of our main direct text tradition, it contains such inherent contradictions and stylistic problems that it should be considered secondary and even corrupt. So first, I will try to take into account what is clear and understandable in the text, in order to better see what remains obscure and also the way to proceed.

Thus, Dionysius calls Jesus the one “Who is beyond all things”¹⁰ but is ranked “substantially” together with men. Clearly he means by this

¹⁰ This is apparently a subtle, because Platonicised, reference to Jn 3:31: “the one Who comes from above is above all things.” The Platonicising of the expression consists in using “beyond” (ἐπέκεινα) instead of “above” (ἐπάνω). See PLATO: *Republic* VI, 509 B 9: ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας.; apparently Plotinus was the first to employ the expression ἐπέκεινα πάντων as an attribute of the supreme God (V [10], 6, 13), which is taken over by Porphyry in the form ἐπέκεινα πάντων in the anonymous fragments of a *Commentary on the Parmenides* (fr. 13, 22) in a Turin palimpsest, which first Pierre Hadot identified as written by him. See P. HADOT: *Fragments d'un commentaire de*

the Incarnation, which he understands so that the one Who is beyond all things has somehow descended into the very human substance or, perhaps, assumed the human substance. In fact, we are entitled to interpret the first sentence so, because Dionysius himself uses the very term of “assuming” elsewhere, in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*: ἡμᾶς ... εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀνακαλέσασθαι καὶ τῇ παντελεῖ τῶν ἡμετέρων προσλήψει τὴν τελεωτάτην τῶν οἰκείων μετάδοσιν ἀγαθουργῆσαι, that is, “to call us back to the pristine condition and, by the complete *assumption* of all that is ours, to work out benignly the most complete transmission of all that is His.”¹¹ Thus, from a combination of the two passages we can conclude that Dionysius wanted to teach the assumption, by the transcendent Jesus, of the human substance.

This is confirmed by the next sentence, according to which here the author does not call Jesus a man according to the general rule that he likes to invoke elsewhere, that is, that the cause can be called by the name of the effect, but “as being precisely what means to be truly man in the entire substance.” With these first sentences there is clearly no textual problem at all. Understanding them at face value, we can already draw a preliminary conclusion: what we have to deal with here is a rather pronounced Dyophysite doctrine, laying great emphasis here as elsewhere on the entirety of Christ’s human nature. This already gives us cause to wonder why the hypothesis that the author was a Monophysite or crypto-Monophysite has been and is still held so firmly by so many scholars.

Porphyre sur le Parménide in *Revue des Etudes Grecques* 74 (1961), p. 410-438. Πάντων ἐπέκεινα is a much-cherished expression of Dionysius, who uses it nine times altogether: DN II. 4, col. 641 A, p. 126. 16; IV. 4, col. 697 C, p. 147. 4-5; IV. 16, col. 713 C, p. 161. 14-15; IX. 5, col. 913 A, p. 210. 20; EH I. 3, col. 373 D, p. 66. 8-9; MT I. 3, col. 1000 C, p. 143. 17; I. 3, col. 1001 A, p. 144. 12-13; Ep 2, col. 1048 A, p. 158. 3; Ep 4, col. 1072 A, p. 160. 3.

¹¹ *EH*. III. Θ. 7. col. 436 D, p. 88. 6-8. Sergius’ Syriac version of this passage is different from the Greek text, so that one may wonder whether it translates the same words at all or whether it had a different archetype. It could be translated in two ways. The first is closer to the Greek, without precisely corresponding to it: “The Endeavour of the holy work of all the divine services [that is, Jesus ...] wanted us to rise to the height of our origins, and in our perfect *intimacy* (*b-qūrbān*) to Itself, divinely gave us the perfect receiving of Its mysteries” (*Sin. syr.* 52, 94v.a.). However, for this translation we had to change the punctuation of the word *qwrbn* in the Sinai manuscript, which, in its original form indicates that one should not read *b-qūrbān* (“our intimacy”), but rather *b-qūrōbān* (“our approach” or “our offering”), so that the sentence would mean “[He], in our perfect approach [offering?] to Him, divinely gave us the perfect receiving of His mysteries.” The internal logic of the sentence suggests that the original punctuation is to be retained: to our perfect movement towards him (our “access” [προσαγωγή] or “offering” [προσφορά]), Jesus replies with a perfect reciprocal movement, giving us a share in His mysteries. Whichever solution we choose, the passage loses its Christological emphasis and acquires a liturgical one.

If we continue our analysis, we arrive at less clear passages. For Dionysius says that with all this “we do not define Jesus in a human way.” Here, following the edited text, we translated it thus: “For He is not only man — nor would He be supersubstantial if He were only man — but truly man is the exceedingly manloving one, the Supersubstantial substantiated above men and according to men, from the substance of men.”¹²

It seems to me that this way of translating and interpreting the text leaves much to be desired: in effect, it is perfectly reasonable that Dionysius should say about Christ that He is not only man — this is a necessary statement of any Christology that wants to avoid the danger of adoptionism. However, the explanation immediately adduced (if we follow the present edition, which itself follows the majority of the witnesses), “nor would He be supersubstantial if He were only man,” would not be very informative. In fact it is a simple tautology to say that somebody who is only man cannot be a supersubstantial, that is, transcendent being. Moreover, if we take into consideration how fond Dionysius is of parallel structure, is it really plausible that he employs such an amorphous structure and style in the present sentence? Thus, even at a first reading, I would be inclined to consider this text in its present form a *locus corruptus*. It seems to me that the only thing that we can clearly understand from it is that although the incarnate Jesus is fully man, He is somehow, because He is not only man, simultaneously at the level of men and above the level of men: that is, His humanity is a very special one.

The next sentence seems to be intended to explain this tenet: of “the one Who is always supersubstantial” and is “more-than-full of supersubstantiality,” even “when He truly came to substance” — or, more freely, “descended to substance” — Dionysius says that “because of the very superabundance of this [supersubstantiality]” “He was substantiated above substance and performed the human things above man.” But we can give this sentence another meaning, too, according to which it was precisely the Supersubstantial reality’s more-than-fullness that brought Him to substantiation, thus echoing the “pouring out” of the

¹² Similar is the translation of the text’s editor, A.M. Ritter, who writes as follows: “Er ist ja keineswegs bloß Mensch — wäre er Mensch allein, so wäre er auch nicht überseiend; vielmehr ist er wahrhaft Mensch, er, der aus unvergleichlicher Menschenliebe, die ihn zugleich übermenschlich und menschengemäß werden ließ, aus dem Sein der Menschen sein eigenes Sein gewinnt, wiewohl er mehr als seiend ist” (*Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, Über die Mystische Theologie; Briefe*, ed. A.M. RITTER [Bibliothek der Griechischen Literatur, 40], Stuttgart, 1994, p. 91). This is, in fact, an interpretative translation, while above, I tried to give an almost word-for-word one.

One as an overfilled cup in Plotinus and the subsequent creation of the second entity, which is Being and Intellect¹³. Whichever of these two interpretations we accept, the sentence says that all the deeds of the supersubstantial God in the human form were operated above the human level. This is then proven by two events of Jesus' life, which Dionysius considers to be typical: his supernatural conception and virgin birth from Mary and the walking on water that Dionysius interprets as a miraculous coagulation of the waters in order to bear the weight of Jesus' earthly body.

2.a.a. *Excursus on the Third Hypothesis of Plato's Parmenides*

Here Dionysius stops citing the examples for Jesus' suprahuman humanity. Instead, he proceeds to a philosophical explanation: by these examples and many others that are not listed here, "the one who sees in a divine manner will know above intellect that even those things that are predicated about the manlovingness (*philanthropy*) of Jesus in fact have the sense of transcendent negation." At this point let us pause for a moment: what can this strange statement, which seems to be unique in the *Corpus*, mean in Dionysius' system? If we consider his dedication to the *Parmenides* of Plato in general and Hathaway's hypothesis, mentioned at the beginning of this study, in particular, as well as the way Dionysius uses what the Neoplatonists considered this dialogue's *first hypothesis*, proceeding through negations concerning the One, for establishing his *via negativa*, and what the same Neoplatonists considered the *second hypothesis*, proceeding through affirmations concerning the One, for establishing the *via positiva*, it is plausible to think that an entity, called the "manlovingness" of Jesus, in which the affirmations coincide with the negations, will logically correspond to the *third hypothesis* of the *Parmenides*, which proceeds through simultaneous negations and affirmations concerning the One.

In fact, in the whole Neoplatonist school, beginning with Plotinus, this *third hypothesis* was interpreted as dealing with the soul, although different teachers nuanced this statement in diverse manners. In fact, Amelius thought that the *third hypothesis* was about the rational souls, while Porphyry taught that the *third hypothesis* was about the soul in

¹³ PLOTINUS V, 2 [11], 1, 7-11: In fact, because of the great similarity of the two texts, it is worth quoting Plotinus here: και πρώτη οἷον γέννησις αὐτῆ· ὃν γὰρ τέλειον τῷ μηδὲν ζητεῖν μηδὲ ἔχειν μηδὲ δεῖσθαι, οἷον ὑπερερρῆ και τὸ ὑπερλήρες αὐτοῦ πεποίηκεν ἄλλο· τὸ δὲ γεγόμενον εἰς αὐτὸ ἐπεστράφη και ἐπληρώθη και ἐγένετο πρὸς αὐτὸ βλέπων και νοῦς οὗτος.

general, not only about the rational souls¹⁴. Iamblichus' teaching was that it was only about the "higher — but no longer divine — beings." Proclus refers to Iamblichus, saying that according to "the next set of commentators" the *third hypothesis* is

[n]o longer about Soul, as previous commentators had declared, but about the classes of beings superior to us — angels, demons and heroes (for these classes of being are immediately inferior to the gods and are superior even to the whole souls¹⁵; this is their most remarkable view, and it is for this reason that they assert that these take a prior rank to souls in the hypotheses)¹⁶.

However, the testimony of Damascius to the same Iamblichaeon doctrine identifies these "superior beings" with those "who always follow the gods" (περὶ τῶν ἀεὶ θεοῖς ἐπομένων)¹⁷, referring to *Phaedrus* 248, 1-2 (ἄριστα θεοῖς ἐπομένη), which is about the souls that accompany the gods. So, irrespective of Proclus' attempt at presenting Iamblichus' view as a sheer metaphysical absurdity, if we assume, as is generally assumed, that Iamblichus believed the *first* and the *second hypothesis* to be about the One, and the intelligible and the intellectual realms, respectively, it is logical to suppose that he wanted to dedicate the *third hypothesis* to the higher souls (those of the angels, demons and heroes), the *fourth* — as Proclus also attests — to the rational souls, and the *fifth* "to those secondary souls which are woven onto the rational souls."¹⁸ In this case the "whole souls" that come only after the "higher beings" would be identical with the rational souls.

From Proclus' report we know that after Iamblichus the "Philosopher from Rhodes" divided the second part of the *Parmenides* into ten hypotheses and taught that the *first* and the *sixth* refer to the One, and the *second* and the *seventh* to the intellect and the intelligible, while the

¹⁴ PROCLUS, in his commentary on the *Parmenides* (*In Parm.* col. 1052-1054), quotes anonymously the views of Amelius and of Porphyry. However, the authors are identified by marginal glosses. See the analysis in the *Introduction* of H.D. Saffrey and L.G. Westerink to their edition of PROCLUS, *La théologie platonicienne I (Collection des universités de France; Série Grecque)*, ed., tr. and intr. H.D. SAFFREY and L.G. WESTERINK, Paris, 1968, p. lxxx-lxxxii. This *Introduction* (= SAFFREY and WESTERINK, *Introduction*) remains the authoritative analysis of this entire question.

¹⁵ Κρείττονα τῶν ὅλων ψυχῶν. This is the only point where I have changed the Morrow-Dillon translation.

¹⁶ PROCLUS, *In Parm.* col. 1055, 2-9. For the interpretation of this text, see SAFFREY and WESTERINK, *Introduction*, p. lxxxii-lxxxiii.

¹⁷ DAMASCIUS, *In Parm. (Damascii Successoris Dubitationes et solutiones de primis principiis, In Platonis Parmenidem)*, ed. Ch.E. RUELLE, Paris, 1889 [= RUELLE], p. 247, 15 = *Iamblichus Chalcidensis in Platonis dialogos commentariorum fragmenta*, ed., tr., comm. J.M. DILLON (*Philosophia antiqua*, 23), Leiden, 1973, fr. 12.

¹⁸ PROCLUS, *In Parm.* col. 1055, 10-12.

third and the *eighth* refer to “those graspable by reason” (περὶ τῶν διανοητῶν), which immediately come after the intelligible. Then the *fourth* and the *ninth* are about the “corporeal forms,” and finally the *fifth* and the *tenth* speak about the “receptacle of the bodies,” that is, about matter¹⁹. Given that reason is the specific faculty of the rational soul, and that soul is traditionally situated between the mind and the corporeal forms, one may see that nor has this division departed from the tradition that connected the *third hypothesis* to the soul²⁰. After this philosopher, Plutarch of Athens returned to the traditional interpretation of the first three hypotheses as treating God, the intellect, and the soul in general, respectively²¹; Plutarch’s teaching was modified by Syrianus, his disciple and successor, who took a revolutionary step by including “the whole of deified being [...] in the *second* of the hypotheses, whether it be intelligible, intellectual or psychic,” leaving the *third* to speak only “about the souls which are assimilated to the gods, but yet have not been apportioned deified being.”²² This taxonomy, also followed by Proclus and Damascius, already included the souls of the “superior beings” — that is, the angels, demons and heroes — within the confines of the *second hypothesis*²³. Finally Damascius, who radicalised Syrianus’ innovation even more in the sense that he included in the *second hypothesis* even the deified bodies — still left out by Syrianus’ school — taught that the *third* treated only the individual human souls²⁴. So we may conclude that in the entire Neoplatonist school, the divergences of opinions notwithstanding, the *third hypothesis* of the *Parmenides* was interpreted as referring in one way or another to the psychic realm, so that Dio-

¹⁹ PROCLUS, *In Parm.* 1057, 6-1058, 2, completed by a clause from Moerbeke’s Latin translation (*Commentaire sur le Parménide de Platon: traduction de Guillaume de Moerbeke*, ed. C. Steel [*Ancient and Medieval Philosophy. Series 1, 3-4*], Leuven and Leiden, 1982, p. 354, 48-49). See SAFFREY and WESTERINK, *Introduction*, p. lxxxiv, and Dillon’s notes to his translation: MORROW and DILLON, *Proclus*, p. 414.

²⁰ PROCLUS himself also identifies τὰ διανοητά with the soul in *In Parm.* col. 1060, 39-1061, 2. See also SAFFREY and WESTERINK, *Introduction*, p. lxxxvi. This identification is based on an interpretation of PLATO’s *Republic* 511 d6-e4.

²¹ PROCLUS, *In Parm.* col. 1059, 3-1060, 2, see SAFFREY and WESTERINK, *Introduction*, p. lxxxv-lxxxvi.

²² PROCLUS, *In Parm.* col. 1063, 13 ff. One might ask how revolutionary this step indeed was. For if Iamblichus already included all the divine souls in the *second hypothesis*, leaving to the *third* only the souls of those “that always follow the gods,” this must have been the immediate predecessor of Syrianus’ innovation.

²³ DAMASCIUS, *In Parm.* II. 12.1.2, b.1 (DAMASCIUS, *Commentaire du Parménide de Platon*, ed. L.G. WESTERINK, intr., tr., notes, J. COMBÈS and Ph. SEGONDS [*Collection des universités de France; Série Grecque*], Paris, 1997 [= WESTERINK and COMBÈS, *Damascius*]), p. 159, 18-160, 5 (= RUELLE, p. 221, 26-222, 3). See also Joseph Combès’ notes on this passage on p. 291-293 of the edition.

²⁴ DAMASCIUS, *In Parm.* II. 12.1.2, b.1 (WESTERINK and COMBÈS, *Damascius*, p. 160, 5-12 = RUELLE, p. 222, 3-9) and RUELLE, p. 247, 8-28, 5.

nysius, when characterising Jesus' "manlovingness" as a coincidence of negations and affirmations, this being a property of the object of the *third hypothesis* of the *Parmenides*, most probably was referring in cryptic terms to Jesus' soul.

This interpretation will further become confirmed if we consider the way in which Damascius treats the question of the coincidence of negations and affirmations in the *third hypothesis* of the *Parmenides*. Interestingly enough, Damascius seems to adopt the opposite view to Dionysius. According to him, in this hypothesis, the negations have the meaning of affirmations:

If the atemporal is an affirmation, although it is meant to be a negation of the participation in time, it is clear that the "not one" and the "not many" and the "not being" and all the similar terms should be understood affirmatively as the models of the "others" subsisting in the soul or, rather, already being "others" pre-manifested in the way of a foreshadowing²⁵.

Apparently, Damascius and Dionysius take different positions in the same intra-scholar debate on the precise meaning of the *third hypothesis* of the *Parmenides*. Moreover, in a later section Damascius explains that the simultaneous presence of affirmations and negations in this hypothesis indicates that it refers to the middle species of the souls, given that the higher souls are, rather, characterised by negations²⁶. Plausibly, Dionysius' solution is different from that of Damascius and may be closer to that of Proclus, which we do not know in detail, given that this part of his *Commentary on the Parmenides*, if ever written, has not been transmitted to us. However, we know its essence, according to which the *third hypothesis* is about the souls of the non-divine beings in general, including angels, demons and heroes. In any case, the debate presented in Damascius' *Commentary on the Parmenides* well locates for us the philosophical framework within which we have to understand Dionysius' teaching on the "affirmations that have the meaning of transcendent negations." We can go even further: within this debate Dionysius seems to represent the position that the coincidence of the affirmations and the negations in the *third hypothesis* is no proof that it is about the souls of lower rank: given that the affirmations have the meaning of the transcendent negations, they may well denote a higher rational soul, the

²⁵ DAMASCIUS, *In Parm.*, RUELLE, p. 251, 14-18: Εἰ δὲ τὸ ἄχρονον καταφατικόν, καίτοι ἀπόφασις εἶναι βουλόμενον τοῦ μετέχειν χρόνου, σαφὲς ὅτι καὶ τὸ οὐχ ἓν καὶ τὸ οὐ πολλὰ καὶ τὸ οὐκ ὄν, καὶ πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα καταφατικῶς νοητέον ὡς ὑφεστῶτα ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ παραδείγματα τῶν ἄλλων, μᾶλλον δὲ ὡς ἄλλα κατὰ ἐμφασιν ἤδη πῶς προφαινόμενα.

²⁶ DAMASCIUS, *In Parm.*, RUELLE, p. 266, 1-9.

extraordinary human soul of Jesus. Of course, with this I do not pretend that Dionysius *de facto* replies to Damascius. I simply say that the two positions held by Dionysius and Damascius are witnessing an internal school debate in the Athenian Neoplatonist school on the correct interpretation of the coincidence of negations and affirmations in the *third hypothesis*²⁷. It is within this context that Dionysius places the Christological concepts discussed in the *Third* and *Fourth Letters*. According to the general pattern that can be observed throughout the *Corpus*, without changing the philosophical framework, Dionysius changes the theological meaning: instead of a multiplicity of higher beings, that of the angels, the demons and the heroes, as in Iamblichus, or the non-divine souls, as in Proclus and Damascius, here we deal with only one human, but higher, being, Jesus or, more precisely and probably, Jesus' soul.

2.a.β. *The Second Half of the Letter: Some Indications Concerning Dionysius' Christology*

Dionysius also gives the Christian context of how he means "the predications that have the meaning of transcendent negations." He adds that Jesus "was not a man," although "not in the sense of not being man at all," but "in the sense of having become, from the substance of men, beyond men and above a man, truly man," which is almost nothing other than a repetition of the first part of the *Letter*, yet unfortunately once again leaving us with the feeling that something is not perfectly all right with this text. This feeling is reinforced by what follows, which is at last a perfectly symmetrical and well-constructed sentence, such as one would expect from the excellent stylist that Dionysius beyond doubt was: "for the rest, He performed the divine things as God, nor the human deeds not as man, but being God manifested [in the sense of a male not in the generic sense of a human] He exerted for us a kind of new god-manly activity." Here we at last understand that we are faced with a

²⁷ In a very learned article, Salvatore Lilla indicated a number of parallels between Dionysius and Damascius (S. LILLA: *Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite, Porphyre et Damascius in La postérité de Denys l'Aréopagite en Orient et en Occident. Actes du colloque international de Paris, 29 Septembre-3 Octobre, 1994* [Collection des Etudes Augustiniennes; Série Antiquité — 151] ed. Y. DE ANDIA, Paris, 1997, p. 117-152). In this study Lilla expands upon the previous work completed by R. Roques, L.H. Grondijs and R. Hathaway (see *ibid.* p. 135, n. 100). Lilla interprets these parallels as proving a dependence of Dionysius on Damascius, which is a *petitio principii*, given that for this, first one should prove that Dionysius was a younger contemporary of the last Diadochus. For reasons that cannot be detailed here I think that the real situation is the opposite: the *Dionysian Corpus* should be dated to several years before the literary activity of Damascius, so that the similarities — which are real indeed — should be attributed to the general atmosphere of the school to which both authors belonged, rather than to any literary dependence.

doctrine which seems to involve a very specific understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum*: the affirmations concerning Christ have the meaning of transcendent negations, so that if we say that He is fully man and acts as man, this should mean that He is not God, and this, in the sense of being God incarnate, and that per consequent He performs the divine deeds not as God, but as man. If we say that He is fully God, this should mean that He is not a man, and this, in the sense of being man deified, and that per consequent He performs the human deeds not as a man, but as God. Thus, as “God manifested,” “He has exerted for us,” or for our sake, “a kind of new god-manly activity,” common to God and man.

At this point we can draw some preliminary conclusions without having made recourse to any intertextual material or any method for correcting the text. The doctrine implied in the *Letter* seems to be that of two natures somehow interpenetrating each other in the unique subject who is called “Jesus” and of one common activity for the two, in which their unity is manifested. Moreover, this interpenetration of the two natures seems to occur in something like a soul, even a soul of higher rank, the soul of Jesus, the presence and importance of which is only very subtly indicated by the term “manlovingness” and an allusion to the *third hypothesis* of the *Parmenides* and its interpretation among the Neoplatonists. Far from being tainted with any kind of Monophysitism, this doctrine seems to constitute a philosophical reinterpretation of that professed by the school of Antioch, as expressed by its great representatives, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Nestorius and — at least the early — Theodoret of Cyrhus²⁸. If this interpretation has any truth in it, the text is clearly corrupt: originally it must have had a more symmetrical structure, from which some references to the divinity of Jesus have been lost. In fact, while the text many times asserts that Jesus is fully man, but not

²⁸ Elsewhere, in a parallel Christological passage, Dionysius even explicitly calls, if not Jesus’ human nature, at least His human life “exceptional”: “He has acted and suffered all the eminent and **exceptional** things that pertain to His humanly divine operation” (καὶ δρᾶσαι καὶ παθεῖν ὅσα τῆς ἀνθρωπικῆς αὐτοῦ θεουργίας ἐστὶν ἕκκριτα καὶ ἐξαιρετα: *DN* II. 6, 644 C, p. 130, 6-8). Compare this expression to a fragment of Theodore of Mopsuestia’s *De incarnatione*: “It is clear that He [Jesus] possesses the sonship above all the other men in an **exceptional** manner because of His union to It [that is, to God the Word]” (πρόδηλον γὰρ ἐκεῖνο, ὡς τῆς νιότητος αὐτῷ παρὰ τοὺς λοιποὺς ἀνθρώπους πρόσεστι τὸ ἐξαιρετον τῇ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐνώσει: *PG* 66, 985 B). I have more amply treated this parallel and, in general, Dionysius’ “Mopsuestian” Christology” in I. PERCZEL, *Once Again on Dionysius the Areopagite and Leontius of Byzantium in Die Dionysius-Rezeption im Mittelalter: Internationales Kolloquium in Sofia vom 8. Bis 11. April 1999 unter der Schirmherrschaft der Société Internationale pour l’Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale*, ed. T. BOIADJIEV, G. KAPRIEV and A. SPEER, Turnhout, 2000, p. 41-85, esp. p. 79-80.

a man in the ordinary sense, it seems never to assert that He is fully God, but not God in the normal sense. This balance is restored only in the last part of the text, which concerns the common activity of the two natures.

These conclusions are based on inference and only partial philological evidence. Thus they need verification. Moreover, if the hypothesis of a slighter or greater corruption in this text is well founded, we should find a way to correct it and reconstruct the original. The normal way of doing so is to emend the text by the way of conjectures. Still, we are not allowed to do so, unless we have exhausted all our more objective possibilities. Are there such possibilities in our case? If so, what are they? One possibility would be to go to the *apparatus criticus* of Ritter’s edition and try to find there better variants. However, according to what criteria? Thus, before examining the variant readings of the text, let us look for such criteria, which will, hopefully, also offer the criteria for verifying the interpretative hypothesis sketched above. These criteria are provided by the rich indirect tradition of the *Letter’s* text.

3. *First Criterion of Verification: the Testimony of Sergius of Rīsh ‘Aynō’s Syriac Translation*

We can expect to move a little forward in the understanding of this difficult text if we consider the testimony of Sergius’ translation. Here I give the Syriac text with a parallel English translation:

English translation	Syriac text of <i>Sin. syr</i> 52, f. 119 ^r a-119 ^v a ²⁹
<p>119^r a <i>Fourth Letter to the same [Gaius]</i></p> <p>How do you say that Jesus, Who is beyond all things, has been substantially counted together with all men? For He is not called here man as the Maker of men, but indeed according precisely what the whole substance is, truly man.</p> <p>However, we do not define Jesus in a human way, for He is not only man, nor is He — as far as He is man — only supersubstantial, but truly [119^r b] man is the one Who is</p>	<p>⦿ ⲙⲓⲗ ⲕⲉⲛⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⦿</p> <p>ⲁⲙⲱ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲃⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ</p>

²⁹ The characters and words within square brackets are not visible on my copy, but can be supplemented with great security.

above all the manloving; and above men, according to (lit.: in the image of) men, from the substance of men *has become man* the one Who is supersubstantial.

And even so, *in His humanity*, fully beyond all things is the one Who is always supersubstantial. For it was also because of His fullness *above all things* that He came in truth in the substance and was substantiated above substance and that He also operated above men those [deeds] that belong to men. To these things bear witness the Virgin who gave birth supersubstantially [supranaturally] and the liquid water that endured the weight of the earthly and carnal feet and did not yield, but its liquidity became solidified and endured under them by [the effect of] a supersubstantial [or supernatural] power.

What need would be there for one to cite the rest, which are numerous? By which the one who sees in a divine manner, knows above mind that even the things that are said to be [lit.: that they should be] concerning the manlovingness of Jesus, even those possess the sense of perfect impossibility. And to say it in a comprehensive manner, He was not even man, [not] [119^v a] as if He were not man, but in the sense that the one Who is beyond man had a becoming from men, and above men He became truly man. And therefore He did not perform the deeds belonging to God as God, nor as man those human, but as God become

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this to the Greek, we find that the edited text should only slightly be changed: οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος μόνον, οὐδὲ ὑπερούσιος — ἧ ἄνθρωπος — μόνον, instead of οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος μόνον — οὐδὲ ὑπερούσιος εἰ ἄνθρωπος μόνον —, which means nothing more than a change in the syntax, and the reconstruction of a particle distorted by the effect of iotacism. To this, not only one should add that in Ritter's *apparatus criticus* many manuscripts have ἧ instead of εἰ, but also that precisely the same text as that of Sergius, although not appearing in Ritter's critical edition, is attested by some manuscripts in the Greek text tradition.

Such is at least *Xeropotamou 190* (*Ao* according to the *sigla* of the Göttingen critical edition), a late, fifteenth-century manuscript, which was not used by Ritter³⁰. In this manuscript we read οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος μόνον· οὐδὲ ὑπερούσιος ἧ ἄνθρωπος μόνον. So simply at the cost of accepting — on the testimony of the earliest extant translation of Dionysius — a slightly different variant attested in the text tradition, we have obtained a perfectly clear and coherent text. At this point we may conclude that all the variant readings mentioned or not mentioned in the apparatus of Ritter's edition, that is, εἰ, ἧ, but also ἧ, attested in *Iviron 281*, fol. 25v, a MS containing four excerpts from Dionysius, are simply due to corruption through iotacism of the original text. I would also suggest here accepting another variant also attested in the text tradition, but rejected by the editors: οὔτε — οὔτε instead of οὐδὲ - οὐδὲ, more clearly enhancing the parallel structure of the sentence and excluding the confusion that we find in the majority of the manuscripts, so that we read οὔτε γὰρ ἄνθρωπος μόνον, οὔτε ὑπερούσιος — ἧ ἄνθρωπος — μόνον. In fact, this also seems to correspond to the Syriac.

Let us now continue our parallel reading of the Greek and Syriac texts. The second part of the sentence is almost absolutely identical in the Syriac, with a slight change: Jesus is neither God (insofar as He is also man) nor man, but He is truly man in the sense that he is the

³⁰ In fact on fol. 217r *Ao* writes: οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄνῶς μόνον· οὐδὲ ὑπερούσιος ἧ ἄνῶς μόνον. Unfortunately, I had no opportunity to make any methodical research into the manuscripts that were not used for establishing the critical text of Dionysius by the Göttingen editorial group. I only suppose that the case of *Ao* is not unique. However, a sporadic study into the Greek manuscripts — permitted by a three-month Alexander S. Onassis fellowship in Greece, in 1999, for which I express here my heartfelt gratitude — has revealed that the few manuscripts available in Greece contain a number of variant readings that passed unnoticed in the critical edition. This is no wonder, given the great number of the extant manuscripts, the extremely complicated text tradition of the *Dionysian Corpus* — to which the present study also testifies — and the resulting impossibility of establishing a proper stemma of the manuscripts in the direct tradition. See SUCHLA, *Corpus Dionysiacum I*: “Einleitung in die Gesamtausgabe,” p. 36-91.

Supersubstantial become man in a supersubstantial way. The only change here is that in the Syriac, instead of οὐσιωμένος, that is, “become substance” we read “become man,” a term that should normally correspond to ἄνθρωπος γενόμενος or perhaps ἐνανθρωπήσας. However, given the general tendency of Sergius to concretise and standardise Dionysius’ difficult philosophical expressions, here one should suppose that this is simply a relatively loose, interpretative translation.

Thus, we may say that until this point Sergius has almost word for word followed the Greek text. At the sentence where he slightly deviated from the one that we have in the critical edition, his text offers beyond any doubt a better reading, also attested in the Greek manuscript tradition and solving an important problem of the text’s meaning. All the more astonishing is, then, the next sentence, which is difficult to bring into correspondence with the Greek: “and even so, in His humanity, fully beyond all things is the one Who is always supersubstantial.” However, it is a clearly observable characteristic of Sergius’ translation that he is not too fond of repetition, for which reason he likes to use synonyms and also likes sometimes to loosen too tightly constructed and difficult structures. Moreover “beyond all things” many times stands for ὑπερούσιος, so that we may suppose that here “fully beyond all things” stands for ὑπερούσιότητος ὑπερπλήρης. Thus the only word that may correspond to a Greek word dropped in the later tradition might be “in His humanity,” which would further clarify the meaning of the sentence and give it a distinctive Antiochian-Chalcedonian flavour. Still, at this point it is more sensible to suppose an interpretative addition by Sergius.

In the next sentence, the Syriac Dionysius says “for it was also because of His fullness above all things, that in truth He came to the substance and was substantiated above substance and that He also operated above men those [deeds] that belong to men.” I translated ܕܠܗ ܕܠܗ ܡܢ ܕܠܗ .[ܕ]ܐܘܠܗܐ ܡܢ ܕܠܗܐ by “because of his fullness over all things” because of a close parallel in Sergius’ translation, who renders the “according to its supremacy over all things” κατὰ τὸ πάντων ὑπερέχον of DN XIII, 1, 977 B, 226, 11, with a parallel expression: ܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܗܐ ܕܠܗܐ (Sin. syr. 52, 47 v.b. 20). At the same time, for Sergius, ܕܠܗ ܕܠܗ ܕܠܗ is sometimes, although not typically, the translation of ἐπὶ πάντα³¹. Thus, at this point, one cannot entirely exclude the possibility that Sergius had read something different in his Greek text, but, once

³¹ Such is, for example, the case of DN XI, 1, 949 B, p. 218, 12, where πρόεισιν ἐπὶ πάντα is translated by *nōpēq l-wōt kul* in Sin. syr. 52, 44r.b 16. However, in most cases, the translation of ἐπὶ πάντα is *al kul* (208, 6: 40 r.a, 211, 4: 41 r.b, 211, 12: 41v.a, 214, 1: 42 v.a, 218, 22: 45 r.a, 226, 13: 47 v.b etc.).

again, it is more probable that he had before his eyes the same Greek text as we do, but translated it in this manner.

It is more interesting to see that among the two equally possible meanings of our Greek text, that of Jesus' preserving His supersubstantiality even in His "substantiation," or Jesus' substantiation being a necessary outcome of His "overflowing" supersubstantial abundance, Sergius opted for the second variant. Thus, in Sergius' understanding, it was precisely His "superabundance over all things" that brought the Supersubstantial to substantiation, which means that the last and most important degree of the divine immanence, realised by the Incarnation, is due to a quasi-metaphysical necessity of the superabundance of the transcendent Being. In fact this is a plausible and beautiful Christian Neoplatonist idea, being Evagrian before becoming Dionysian, which implies that the abundant intensity of God's goodness in a certain sense even necessitated the otherwise free act of the Incarnation, so that in God's saving act absolute necessity (flowing from the goodness of the divine nature) and absolute freedom (flowing from its transcendence) coincide. Evagrius expressed this in the *Second Part* of his *Great Letter*, a text that — as I will show in a forthcoming publication — is one of the basic source-texts of Dionysius³².

This Good is His nature, so that when we were not yet and although He had no need of us, by superabundance³³ He created us in His Image and made us heirs to all that is naturally and substantially His³⁴. However, both against His nature and according to His nature is that He descended and

³² *Seconde partie du traité qui passe sous le nom de « La grande lettre d'Évagre le Pontique à Mélanie l'Ancienne », publiée et traduite d'après le manuscrit du British Museum Add. 17192, ed. and tr. G. VITESTAM (Scripta minora Regiae Societatis Humaniorum Litterarum Lundensis, 1963-1964, 3), Lund, 1964, p. 22-24. On Evagrius being an important source for Dionysius, see first A. GOLITZIN, "Et introibo ad altare dei": The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with Special Reference to Its Predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition (Analecta Vlatadon, 59), Thessaloniki, 1994, p. 340-345, and id., Hierarchy versus Anarchy? Dionysius Areopagita, Symeon the New Theologian, Nicetas Stethatos, and their Common Roots in Ascetical Tradition in St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly, 38 (1994/2), p. 155-157 and note 103. See also my studies, Une théologie de la lumière: Denys l'Aréopagite et Evagre le Pontique in Revue des Études Augustiniennes 45/1 (1999), p. 79-120 and « Théologiens » et « magiciens » dans le Corpus Dionysien in Adamantius: Newsletter of the Italian Research Group "Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition," 7 (2001), p. 54-75.*

³³ The expression that the Syriac translator uses here, *d-lō p-yōsō*, is somewhat unclear in this context. Its plain meaning would be "without anybody convincing him," but this would give no clear sense. However, the expression also means "beyond measure," "immoderately." The editor of the text, Gösta Vitestam, was also undecided about the meaning, so that he adduced both senses: "sans pression d'autrui, par surabondance." Gabriel Bunge translates the expression by "unaufgefordert." (EVAGRIOS PONTIKOS, *Briefe aus der Wüste*, intr., tr. and comm. G. BUNGE, Trier, 1986, p. 323).

³⁴ See Rom 8:17, 2Pt 1:4, Jn 16:15.

endured all that which we had acquired by going out of our nature, that is, all that is from the conception to the death. And this happened to Him, not as if He had done something deserving this [capital] punishment³⁵, but through a natural love that aims at saving us from the curse and from all that follows upon it. [...] Against nature is that God should be born from a woman; however, God, because of His love for us, without His nature being bound or subject to any law, was born from a woman as He wanted. [...] He being what He was, in His Goodness put on, together with birth, everything that followed upon birth, until death. [...] It is above nature that a man be born from a woman without man, while the virginity of his mother remains and it is also above the nature of men that somebody should die out of his will and after his death he should rise out of his will without corruption and without the assistance of someone else.

This is a carefully thought-out Christianised version of an authentically Plotinian idea aiming at solving the metaphysical puzzle of a totally transcendent God Who in His freedom is not subject even to His own nature³⁶. Thus, according to Evagrius, not only did God create mankind out of His natural Goodness, but it was also because of this natural Goodness — which in the simplicity of the divine nature totally coincides with the absolutely free will of God — that He put on the human nature. However, in the sense that this implies a temporal human birth of the eternal God, it is also against the divine nature, but above the human nature. This thought — or rather this text — seems to be the source not only of the *Fourth Letter*'s expression “it was also because of His fullness [over all things] that He came in truth at the substance and was substantiated above substance,” as correctly understood by Sergius over against the entire modern interpretative tradition, but also of the whole intricate play on the affirmations and negations concerning Jesus, Who wholly remains transcendent (the “according to the divine nature” in Evagrius), while not acting as transcendent (the “against the divine nature” of Evagrius), and substantially becoming man (the “according to human nature” of Evagrius), but above the human substance (the “above the human nature” in Evagrius). If then, we look for parallel texts in the *Dionysian Corpus*, we will find that whenever Dionysius applies the word “superabundance” (περιουσία) to God, he, in a similarly Plotinian and Evagrian way, does it in order to explain divine immanence from the overwhelming plenitude of transcendence³⁷. This doctrine is also explicitly stated in a parallel text of the *Corpus*:

³⁵ Syriac: *m-sōm b-rīšō*.

³⁶ What both Evagrius and Dionysius echo here is not only the Plotinian doctrine in PLOTINUS, V [11], 2, of the Good acting as a “cup overflowing” in its bounty, referred to in note 13, but also the whole treatment of the One's freedom in *ibid.* VI [39], 8.

³⁷ On περιουσία in Dionysius, see the *Appendix* of this study.

The high-priest every time [...] proclaims to all the true Good Tidings [that is, the true Gospel], that God, who by *His proper and natural Goodness* is favourable to those on earth, *deemed us worthy* to come Himself, in *His manlovingness*, even to us and by the union to Himself to liken, just as fire [likens the iron], all those united, according to their capacity of being deified³⁸.

So, apparently, the Incarnation being a result of God's natural Goodness or Plentifulness is no isolated doctrine in the *Fourth Letter* of Dionysius. I believe that the excursus on this Plotinian-Evagrian-Dionysian doctrine clearly shows how excellent a tool Sergius' translation is not only for establishing the text tradition of Dionysius, but also for understanding its meaning.

I omit here the next section, where Sergius simply mirror-translates the Greek text that we know, without providing any new information, and come to the next interesting sentence: "even the things that are said to be concerning the manlovingness of Jesus, even those possess the sense of perfect impossibility." Here the *ὑπεροχική ἀπόφασις*, normally meaning in Dionysius "transcendent negation," is interpreted as "perfect impossibility." Thus, Sergius' understanding coincides here with my hypothesis expressed above, according to which Dionysius' doctrine teaches that the Antiochian and Chalcedonian doctrine of Christ's perfect humanity and perfect divinity means in fact that He is neither man nor God, just as the "one" of the *third hypothesis* in the *Parmenides* is neither one nor many and the soul in Proclus' and Damascius' system, corresponding to the *third hypothesis*, is neither temporal nor eternal. The rest of the text differs only in one point from the Greek known to us; in fact it re-establishes the lost balance between manhood and divinity in the last but one sentence: "He was not even man, not as if He were not man, but in the sense that the one Who is beyond man had a becoming from men, and above men He became truly man." This sentence, once again, corresponds to a very slight change in the Greek text, a

³⁸ EH. II. 2, 1, 393 A, p. 70 2-7: 'Ο μὲν ἱεράρχης ἐκάστοτε [...] ἀνακηρύττει πᾶσι τὰ ὄντως εὐάγγελια· θεὸν ἴλω τοῖς ἐπὶ γῆς ἐξ οἰκείας ὄντα καὶ φυσικῆς ἀγαθότητος αὐτὸν ἕως [correxī e syriaco; ὡς: MSS graeci secundum editionem criticam et Heil] ἡμᾶς ἀφικέσθαι διὰ φιλανθρωπίαν ἀξιώσαντα καὶ τῇ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐνώσει δίκην πυρὸς ἀφομοιώσαι τὰ ἐνωθέντα κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν πρὸς θεῶσιν ἐπιτηδειότητα. At this point Sergius' Syriac is slightly different, but in no way more dissimilar from Evagrius: "So the high-priest [...] every time preaches to all the true Good Tidings of the Gospel, that God in His mercy towards those on earth and in the natural compassion of His Goodness towards us, Himself condescended to come to us because of His manlovingness and in our unification to Him likened to Himself, just as the fire does, all those who are unified to Him according to the measure of each one of them that becomes according to the deity [or: is deified]" (*Sin. Syr.* 52, 84v.b).

change that makes it more clear and comprehensible than in the main Greek text tradition. This time this change is not supported by any variant reading in the Greek tradition: οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπος ἦν, οὐχ ὡς μὴ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων <δ> ἀνθρώπων ἐπέκεινα καὶ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον ἀληθῶς ἄνθρωπος γεγονώς. For the end of the *Letter* there is no important input on the part of the Syriac, with the sole exception perhaps that it once again coincides with a reading rejected in the *apparatus criticus*, with which the continuation of the just cited sentence will be read like this: οὐ κατὰ θεὸν τὰ θεῖα δράσας, οὔτε [οὐ: Ritter] τὰ ἀνθρώπεια κατὰ ἄνθρωπον — a slight change, it is true, but one that contributes to an enhanced clarity of the text.

To resume, we can successfully use Sergius' Syriac translation for correcting the *Fourth Letter's* Greek text tradition and also for better understanding its meaning. What it teaches us is that Dionysius here adopts a kind of Antiochian-Chalcedonian theology on the full divinity and full humanity of Christ, and gives it a philosophical twist partly by interpreting it in the light of the Neoplatonist doctrine of the soul, itself based on an interpretation of the *third hypothesis* of the *Parmenides*, and partly by following a philosophical interpretation, in Plotinian terms, of the Incarnation, earlier proposed by Evagrius.

4. *Second Criterion of Verification: The Testimony of the Commentary by Saint Maximus the Confessor*

Another plausible method for correcting a corrupt text is to look for indirect testimonies, antedating our manuscript tradition.

Once again, we could not be in any more fortunate situation than the one in which we are, given the usage that the Monotheletes have made of one expression of the *Letter*, the “new god-manly activity,” an expression that they used to support their claim of two natures but only one activity or will in the incarnate Christ. This prompted St. Maximus the Confessor to include a commentary on the *Letter* in his *Ambigua ad Thomam*, written shortly after 634. The text of the *Letter* was so important for him that he went through it word for word, which means that in his *Ambigua* we have not only the entire version of the *Letter*, such as he knew it almost 200 years before our first extant Greek manuscript — the famous Paris manuscript sent to Louis the Pious by Michael the Stammerer in 827 — was copied, but also a detailed commentary on that text, written by one of the most extraordinary minds in the Patristic tradition. This means that even if we suppose that St. Maximus' text also could undergo corruption in the way of transmission, most probably such a

corruption — if it ever occurred — must have happened independently of any corruption of the Dionysian text tradition after that date. Moreover, as we have a recent excellent critical edition of St. Maximus' work by Bart Janssens³⁹, which testifies to a remarkably homogenous text transmission, without serious alterations or signs pointing to the corruption of the hyparchetype of the extant codices — the latter being the case of Dionysian manuscripts as shown by B.R. Suchla and S. Lilla⁴⁰ — we can be fairly certain that the text of St. Maximus' commentary testifies to the state of the text of the *Letter* as the Confessor knew it in the first half of the seventh century. So we can expect no little profit from a study of both the text of the *Letter* as transmitted by St. Maximus and his commentary. Adding his testimony is also an excellent means to check the results at which we have arrived on the basis of our examination of Sergius' Syriac translation.

So here I give the text of the *Letter* as transmitted by St. Maximus, once again with an English translation:

Dionysius, <i>Fourth Letter as transmitted by Saint Maximus the Confessor</i>	English version
<p>Πῶς φῆς Ἰησοῦς, ὁ πάντων ἐπέκεινα, πᾶσιν ἐστὶν ἀνθρώποις οὐσιωδῶς συντεταγμένος; Οὐδὲ γὰρ ὡς αἴτιος ἀνθρώπων ἐνθάδε λέγεται ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ' ὡς αὐτὸ κατ' οὐσίαν ὄλην ἀληθῶς ἄνθρωπος ὢν. Ἡμεῖς δὲ τὸν Ἰησοῦν οὐκ ἀνθρωπικῶς ἀφορίζομεν · οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος μόνον, οὐδὲ ὑπερούσιος μόνον · ἀλλ' ἄνθρωπος ἀληθῶς ὁ διαφερόντως φιλόανθρωπος, ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπους καὶ κατὰ ἀνθρώπους ἐκ τῆς ἀνθρώπων οὐσίας ὁ ὑπερούσιος οὐσιωμένος. Ἔστιν δὲ οὐδὲν ἦττον ὑπερουσιότητος ὑπερπλήρης ὁ αἰεὶ ὑπερούσιος · ἀμέλει τῇ ταύτης περιουσίᾳ καὶ εἰς οὐσίαν ἀληθῶς ἐλθῶν, ὑπὲρ οὐσίαν οὐσιώθη καὶ</p>	<p>How do you say that Jesus, the one Who is beyond all things, is substantially ranked together with all men? For He is not called here man as the Cause of men, but as being precisely what means to be truly man in the entire substance. However, we do not define Jesus in a human way. <i>For neither is He only man, nor is He only supersubstantial</i>, but truly man is the exceedingly man-loving one, the Supersubstantial substantiated above men and according to men, from the substance of men. This notwithstanding, the one Who is always supersubstantial remains more-than-full of supersubstantiality. Moreover, because of the superabundance of the latter, even when</p>

³⁹ *Maximi Confessoris Ambigua ad Thomam una cum Epistula secunda ad eundem*, ed. B. JANSSENS (*Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca*, 48, *Maximi Confessoris Opera*), Turnhout and Leuven, 2002, V, p. 19-34.

⁴⁰ SUCHLA, *Corpus Dionysiacum I*: "Einleitung in die Gesamtausgabe," p. 55-57 and 65-66; S. LILLA, *Zur neuen kritischen Ausgabe der Schrift Über die Göttlichen Namen von Ps. Dionysius Areopagita in Augustinianum* 31/2 (1991), p. 438-439.

ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον ἐνήργει τὰ ἄνθρωπου. Καὶ δηλοῖ παρθένης ὑπερφυῶς κύουσα καὶ ὕδωρ ἄστατον ὑλικῶν καὶ γεηρῶν ποδῶν ἀνέχον βάρος καὶ μὴ ὑπεῖκον, ἀλλ' ὑπερφυεῖ δυνάμει πρὸς τὸ ἀδιάχυτον συνιστάμενον.⁴¹

Τί ἂν τις τὰ λοιπὰ πάμπολλα ὄντα διέλθοι, δι' ὧν ὁ θεῖος ὄρων ὑπὲρ νοῦν γνώσεται καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῇ φιλανθρωπία τοῦ Ἰησοῦ καταφασκόμενα, δύνάμιν ὑπεροχικῆς ἀποφάσεως ἔχοντα; Καὶ γάρ, ἵνα συνελόντες εἴπωμεν, οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπος ἦν, οὐχ ὡς μὴ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐξ ἄνθρώπων ἄνθρώπων ἐπέκεινα καὶ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον ἀληθῶς ἄνθρωπος γεγονώς · καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν οὐ κατὰ θεὸν τὰ θεῖα δράσας, οὔτε τὰ ἀνθρώπινα κατὰ ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλ' ἀνδρωθέντος θεοῦ, καινὴν τινα τὴν θεανδρικὴν ἐνέργειαν ἡμῖν πεπολιτευμένος.

He truly came to substance, He was substantiated above substance and performed the human deeds above man. This is shown by the Virgin who supranaturally gives birth and by the unstable water that bears the weight of the material and earthly feet, and does not yield, but through a supernatural power is coagulated to a non-liquid state.

Why would one enumerate the rest, which are indeed many? Through which the one who sees in a divine manner will know above intellect that even those things that are predicated about the man-lovingness of Jesus in fact have the sense of transcendent negation. For to say it shortly, He was not even man, not as if He were no man, but from men and beyond men, and above man, he has truly become man and for the rest, *performed the divine deeds not as God, nor the human deeds as man*, but being God man-ified, exerted for us a kind of new godmanly activity.

The study of this text indeed yields some interesting results, confirming at least some of our previous conclusions. First of all, it gives no important variant reading for the beginning of the text, until ἀφορίζομεν. This is not surprising, given that the beginning did not present any difficulty of interpretation, and that Sergius' text also perfectly corresponded to the Greek. But it presents a very important variant for the most problematic sentence of the whole *Letter*, the one beginning with οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος μόνον. In fact, St. Maximus' text, which cites and comments upon every single word of the *Letter*, entirely omits any reference to the disturbing interjection of the incomprehensible εἰ ἄνθρωπος, or ἢ ἄνθρωπος in the Greek manuscript tradition (or, at the

⁴¹ In fact, St. Maximus gives the text in the following version: ὑπὲρ οὐσίαν οὐσιώθη· καὶ δηλοῖ παρθένης ὑπερφυῶς κύουσα · καὶ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον ἐνήργει τὰ ἄνθρώπου· καὶ δηλοῖ ὕδωρ ἄστατον ὑλικῶν καὶ γεηρῶν ποδῶν ἀνέχον βάρος καὶ μὴ ὑπεῖκον, ἀλλ' ὑπερφυεῖ δυνάμει πρὸς τὸ ἀδιάχυτον συνιστάμενον. However, this does not seem to constitute any variant reading, but only a reordering of the sentence for the sake of the explanation that St. Maximus adds to it.

limit, ἡ ἄνθρωπος in *Iviron* 281) that we could correct to the meaningful ἡ ἄνθρωπος on the basis of Sergius' Syriac and *Xeropotamou* 190. It is remarkable that St. Maximus' text gives an identical meaning, but presents even better the original parallel structure of the sentence, which constitutes the very backbone of the *Letter*: Jesus is "neither only man nor only supersubstantial," but "the Supersubstantial substantiated" in the human substance. In fact, St. Maximus explains this statement in the following way:

Neither is he only man, because he is also God, nor is he only supersubstantial, because he is also man, given that he is neither a mere man, nor naked God⁴².

This comment seems to be the correct interpretation of the doctrine implied. Commenting on the continuation of the text, St. Maximus has no difficulty in interpreting it in a strictly Chalcedonian sense, also citing and inserting other excerpts from the *Dionysian Corpus*, adducing also some correctives concerning the Cyrillian "hypostatic union" to which no reference is made in the Dionysian *Letter*.

One may also note that St. Maximus, in conformity with the Syriac of Sergius, offers a variant reading: οὐ κατὰ θεὸν τὰ θεῖα δράσας, οὔτε τὰ ἀνθρώπινα κατὰ ἄνθρωπον^{42a}. This fact is already a strong argument for accepting this reading instead of the choice made by the editor: οὐ τὰ ἀνθρώπεια κατὰ ἄνθρωπον. Such small details will be of the utmost importance when we return to the direct text tradition and try to select, on the basis of the evidence provided in the indirect tradition, the really "good" manuscripts.

For the rest, there is no other important variant reading: St. Maximus' text is almost the same as that of the main Greek text tradition. Nor does his interpretation confirm Sergius' alternative versions of the text, such as the "superabundance" of the "more-than-fullness" of the supersubstantiality causing the Incarnation.

From all these observations we may conclude that the text tradition that St. Maximus knew in the seventh century, some two hundred years before the writing date of our first Greek manuscript, more than a hundred years after Sergius' Syriac translation was made, and less than a hundred years after John of Scythopolis' scholia were written, was almost the same as the one attested in the Ritter edition, with the important difference that what in the latter is the most obscure and incomprehen-

⁴² PG 91, col. 1048 B-C JANSSENS, l. 32-34: οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος μόνον, ὅτι καὶ θεὸς ὁ αὐτός, οὐδὲ ὑπερουσίος μόνον, ὅτι καὶ ἄνθρωπος ὁ αὐτός, εἴπερ μὴ ψιλὸς ἄνθρωπος, μήτε γυμνὸς ὑπάρχει θεός.

^{42a} JANSSENS, l. 200-203.

ble sentence of the whole *Letter*, figured in the aforementioned tradition in a much simpler and clearer text, pointing to an Antiochian or Chalcedonian affiliation on the part of Dionysius.

5. *Third Criterion of Verification: The Traditional Scholia*

The scholia of the *Dionysian Corpus*, which in the Byzantine tradition were transmitted together with the main text, were written at successive stages by different authors. At a certain moment of the text transmission they all were put under the name of St. Maximus. In recent times much work has been devoted to their disentanglement⁴³. B.R. Suchla is presently preparing the great edition of the scholia, which hopefully will definitively clarify the complicated question of the authorship of each scholion. However, even until then, on the basis of our present knowledge, one can make some observations of a general character, which will further clarify the *Fourth Letter*'s text tradition and confirm our previous conclusions. Here our question is whether we can draw any conclusions concerning the state of the text at the various moments when the scholia were written. Naturally, here a strong caution should be voiced. In fact, the text tradition of the scholia is even more complicated than that of the main text of the *Dionysian Corpus* and the great diversity in their form and variant readings testifies to the fact that they constituted a less stable element, in what B.R. Suchla calls the *in corpore* transmission of the Dionysian writings⁴⁴, than the main body of the text. However, just as in the case of St. Maximus' commentary in his *Ambigua* — although, given the *in corpore* transmission, with a lesser degree of certitude — we may suppose that if any change occurred in the scholia, this happened more or less independently of the changes occurring in the main text.

⁴³ On this question, see H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Das scholienwerk des Johannes von Scythopolis* in *Scholastik* 15 (1940), p. 31-66; B.R. SUCHLA, *Die sogenannten Maximus-Scholien des Corpus Dionysiacum Areopagiticum in Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen. I. Philologisch-Historische Klasse [= NAWG]*, 1980/3, p. 31-66; id., *Die Überlieferung des Prologs des Johannes von Skythopolis zum griechischen Corpus Dionysiacum Areopagiticum. Ein weiterer Beitrag zur Überlieferungsgeschichte des CD* in *NAWG*, 1984/4, p. 177-188; id., *Eine Redaktion des griechischen Corpus Dionysiacum Areopagiticum im Umkreis des Johannes von Skythopolis, des Verfassers von Prolog und Scholien. Ein dritter Beitrag zur Überlieferungsgeschichte des CD* in *NAWG*, 1985/4 (= SUCHLA, *Eine Redaktion*); id., *Die Überlieferung von Prolog und Scholien des Johannes von Scythopolis zum griechischen Corpus Dionysiacum Areopagiticum* in *Studia Patristica* 18/2 (1989), p. 79-83; id., *Corpus Dionysiacum I: "Einleitung in die Gesamtausgabe,"* p., 36-54; P. ROREM and J.C. LAMOREAUX, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite (Oxford Early Christian Studies)*, Oxford, 1998 (= ROREM and LAMOREAUX, *John of Scythopolis*)

⁴⁴ SUCHLA, *Corpus Dionysiacum I: "Einleitung in die Gesamtausgabe,"* p. 36-37.

The earliest scholia of the text are those written by John, bishop of Scythopolis at some time between 536 and 553⁴⁵. In their recent monograph on the commentary of John, *Annotating the Areopagite*, Paul Rorem and John C. Lamoreaux have identified those scholia to the *Fourth Letter* that most probably are from the hand of John⁴⁶. However, for our purpose, the other scholia, by later hands, will be of equal interest. Given the corrupt state of the scholia in the Migne edition, in this investigation I will rather follow the text of *Vatopedi* 159, an eleventh-century MS (*Ac* according to Suchla's *sigla*), which I believe to offer a much better text⁴⁷.

5.a. *The Scholia of John of Scythopolis*

The first scholion of John is of little interest for us. It simply reiterates the initial negation of the *Letter*, that in its present context Jesus is not called man simply as the cause of men. However, the second (532. 4) is already much more revealing. It refers to a lost (or fake) reference to Africanus in his *Chronographies*, according to which "God is named through homonymy after all the things which are from Him, since He is in all things." Then the scholiast adds already on his own: "But in the economy He is called man as substantiated in the entire substance according to the saying: 'in Whom inhabits the entire fullness of divinity in a corporeal manner' [Col 2:9]." This interpretation shows that John understood Dionysius' concept of a "substantiation" (οὐσίωσις) as the *inhabitation* of the Supersubstantial in the human substance, that is, as being an Antiochian Christological doctrine. In this, he seems to have been perfectly correct. Then, in 533. 2, John explains the expression "even those things that are predicated about the manlovingness of Jesus

⁴⁵ Here we retain the looser dating of SUCHLA, *Eine Redaktion*, p. 189; id., *Corpus Dionysiacum I*: "Einleitung in die Gesamtausgabe," p. 55-57, 65-66. Rorem and Lamoreaux propose a narrower period, between 537 and 543: ROREM and LAMOREAUX, *John of Scythopolis*, p. 38-39. Slightly different is the dating proposed by B. FLUSIN, *Miracle et histoire dans l'œuvre de Cyrille de Scythopolis (Études Augustiniennes)*, Paris, 1983, p. 17-29: between 538 and 543.

⁴⁶ A translation of those scholia can be found on p. 252-253 of ROREM and LAMOREAUX, *John of Scythopolis*. Here I used not only the published monograph of the two authors, but also additional material finally not included in the book, kindly placed at my disposal by Paul Rorem. I warmly thank him for his courtesy, kindness and friendship. In the case of the *Fourth Letter* these are *PG* 4, col. 532. 3, 4, 533. 1, 2, 3 (but only the second part beginning with "How He did divine works but not as God..." πῶς δὲ οὐ κατὰ θεὸν τὰ θεῖα ἔργα ἐποίησεν ...), 536. 1. I did not always follow Rorem's and Lamoreaux's translation.

⁴⁷ Evidently, these observations, based on poor manuscript evidence, will become partly superseded when at last Suchla's critical edition of the scholia is published.

in fact have the sense of transcendent negation,” taking it only in the sense of an affirmation of the full humanity of Christ and interpreting it as pointing to an exceptional humanity of Christ, a doctrine of Theodore of Mopsuestia, as I have shown above. The remaining scholia of John throughout emphasise the same doctrine of exceptional humanity. Being paraphrastic they give little specific information on the state of the text when John read it. Moreover, these scholia do not refer to those parts of the text for which we found variant readings in the indirect text tradition, namely in the translation of Sergius and the *Ambigua* of St. Maximus.

However, the last scholion by John (536. 1) is of specific importance. First because it contains a strange phrase on the controversial “god-manly — or *theandric* — operation” (θεανδρική ἐνέργεια) in the last sentence: “Let no one foolishly say that he calls the Lord Jesus *Theandrites*. For he did not say *theandritic* from *Theandrites*, but “god-manly — *theandric* — operation.”⁴⁸ As H.D. Saffrey has shown⁴⁹, this scholion seems to indicate that John was conscious of a possible link between Dionysius and Proclus, given that Proclus personally venerated the divinity *Theandrites*. Secondly, the scholion is also interesting because it gives an odd interpretation of the “*theandric operation*”; according to John, this indicates only one type of Christ’s activities: sometimes He acted purely as God, sometimes purely as man, and in some miracles He displayed a mixed “god-manly” activity. Ingenious as it is, this explanation lacks any plausibility. What it indicates is simply that by John’s time the expression had become highly controversial — a well-known fact, given that John’s strict Cyrillian opponents, such as Severus of Antioch, used the Dionysian expression for their own purposes.

5.b. *Other Scholia*

Some other scholia, which do not belong to John of Scythopolis, prove to be no less useful — if not more useful — for our present purpose of establishing both the history of the text transmission and the early interpretation of the *Fourth Letter*. Of exceptional importance is 532.5. This scholion, presented as one continuous text in the Migne edition, figures in the *Vatopedi* MS as two different scholia, distinguished by different *sigla*, explaining the same phrase: “we do not define Jesus in a human way.” The first runs thus:

⁴⁸ Given that the text of this scholion is perturbed in the *Vatopedi* MS, I translate it according to the Migne edition.

⁴⁹ H.D. SAFFREY, *Un lien objectif entre le Pseudo-Denys et Proclus in Studia Patristica*, 9/3 (*Texte und Untersuchungen*, 94), 1966, p. 98-105.

He says, we do not define Him through [His] human part — given that we say “above man,” this [humanity] being something strange — [that is, not] according to the definition of the [human] substance, taking the definition from what is common in this nature, but clearly according to the definition of the divinity. For he added: “He is not only man,” that is, but also God⁵⁰.

The translation of the second scholion included in the same lemma in the Migne edition is the following:

Although, as he says, [Jesus] put on the entire substance of man, still we do not separate Him from the divinity, for he adds: “neither is He only man.” Then, having said this, he continues: “nor is He only supersubstantial,” because He is also man⁵¹.

It seems to me that the two notes cannot belong together, and indeed cannot even be from the hand of the same author. The first wants Jesus to be defined uniquely as God, using Dionysius’ reference to Christ’s “suprahuman humanity” to this extent, so that one may wonder whether it was not written by an anti-Chalcedonian. Quite to the contrary, the second note obviously comes from a Chalcedonian author who acknowledges that Dionysius’ teaching is about two natures, divine and human. The author of the second text, just like St. Maximus in the *Ambigua*, quotes the same version of the text lacking the interjection εἰ/ἢ/ἤ/ἢ ἄνθρωπος: “neither is He only man, nor is He only supersubstantial,” and finally the second note echoes what in the *Ambigua* St. Maximus said about precisely the same sentence:

Neither is He only man, because He is also God, nor is He only supersubstantial, because He is also man, given that He is neither a mere man, nor naked God.

So it seems that the second scholion is from the hand of St. Maximus and testifies to the same state of the text tradition as the *Ambigua*: a lack of the interjection extant in different forms both in the main Greek text tradition and in the Syriac version by Sergius⁵².

⁵⁰ *Vatopedi* 159, f. 399v (= PG 4, col. 532 C, 5-10): οὐ διὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινόν φησι τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἀφορίζομεν αὐτόν . καὶ γὰρ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον λέγομεν . ὡς ξένον τοῦτο . κατὰ τὸν τῆς οὐσίας λόγον . τοῦ κοινοῦ τῆς φύσεως ὀριζόμενοι . ἀλλὰ προδήλως κατὰ τὸν τῆς θεότητος λόγον ἔπήγαγε γὰρ . οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος μόνον . τοῦτ’ ἐστι ἀλλὰ καὶ θεός,~. The punctuation reproduces the one in the manuscript.

⁵¹ *Vatopedi* 159, f. 399v (= PG 4, 532 C, 10-14): εἰ καὶ ὄλην οὐσίαν ἀνθρώπου φησι ἀνέλαβεν . ἀλλ’ οὐ διαιροῦμεν αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τῆς θεότητος ἔπαγει γὰρ . οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος μόνον· εἶτα τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἐπιφέρει . οὐδὲ ὑπερούσιος μόνον . καθὼ καὶ ἄνθρωπος,~

⁵² Here I thank Prof. Paul Rorem, who drew my attention to this scholion and suggested its attribution to St. Maximus.

The next scholion (532. 6, D2-7) is also indubitably from the pen of St. Maximus, given that it corresponds almost word for word to a passage in the *Ambigua* (1048 C 9-19). The lemma 533. 3 consists of three different scholia, according to the testimony of the *Vatopedi* MS. Its third part (533, C12-D10) is from John of Scythopolis, while its first part (*ibid.* B10-C6), establishing that the “new god-manly activity” means in fact two activities, one divine and one human, doubtless belongs to St. Maximus. It also confirms that St. Maximus’ reading of the first part of the last sentence was οὐ κατὰ θεὸν τὰ θεῖα δράσας, οὔτε τὰ ἀνθρώπινα κατὰ ἄνθρωπον, over against Ritter’s reading: οὐ τὰ ἀνθρώπεια κατὰ ἄνθρωπον. The other scholia, at least one of them from St. Maximus, will not concern us here and now.

6. Preliminary Conclusions on the Indirect Text Tradition

Having finished this overview of some testimonies to the indirect text tradition of the *Fourth Letter*⁵³, we may already draw some preliminary conclusions: we have established at least three different main variants of the text: one is the majority text, represented in Ritter’s edition. Another is that of Sergius of Rīsh ʿAynō, which at some points presents better readings for the same text than what we find in the majority version, while elsewhere it contains text variants — mainly additions — which may well be Sergius’ interpretative interpolations. Sergius’ text also contains some daring philosophical readings of the *Letter’s* theology, such as the Incarnation of Christ being a direct consequence of the overflowing goodness of the divine nature, which apparently relates it to the thought of both Plotinus and Evagrius of Pontus. John of Scythopolis’ scholia, although of great importance for the history of Dionysian interpretation, in this case do not contribute to the clarification of the text transmission. Finally, the concordant testimonies of St. Maximus’ commentary on the *Letter* in his *Ambigua ad Thomam* and in his scholia permit us to reconstruct the state of the epistle’s text such as St. Maximus read it some two hundred years before the first Greek manuscript known to us was written. St. Maximus’ commentaries partly confirm the results at which we arrived on the basis of the investigation of the Syriac and partly show a text tradition independent from all the others.

⁵³ In fact, for a more complete investigation one should have consulted the other Syriac versions, the Armenian and the Georgian, as well as the one contained in Euthymius Zigabenus’ *Panoplia Dogmatike*. Unfortunately this could not be completed in the present study.

7. *The Direct Text Tradition*

Thus, should we stop here and say that it is thus far that one can go in reconstructing the text and the text tradition of the *Fourth Letter*? Certainly not, until we have exhausted all our philological methods. The next method would be to look for the text's parallels within and outside the *Dionysian Corpus* and eventually to establish its sources. This cannot be the subject of the present study, but will be amply treated in a forthcoming monograph on the *Dionysian Corpus*. Thus, skipping these stages, I will immediately turn back to the direct tradition of the text as represented in Ritter's *apparatus criticus*. For it seems to me that on the basis of the results derived from the — as yet partial — scrutiny of the indirect text tradition, we become able to choose the earliest layer from the immense polyphony of the variant readings represented by the *Corpus*' rich text tradition. In other words, the examination of the indirect text tradition — amply corroborated by the results of the *Quellenforschung*, which I cannot include here⁵⁴ — gives us a method, which I believe to be more reliable in this case than the traditional Lachmannian ones, to single out the “good manuscripts” of the direct transmission of the text. I mean the following.

In what precedes, I have established that the text of the *Fourth Letter* of Dionysius underwent considerable corruption in the majority (or *vulgate*) version of the manuscripts, basically coinciding with the text established in A.M. Ritter's critical edition. Examining a significant part of the text's rich and very early indirect tradition — without claiming to have given any exhaustive treatment to the subject — I believe that I have been able to recover some readings that are anterior to the corruption represented in the *vulgate* text of the *Corpus*. A further examination of the intra-Dionysian parallels and extra-Dionysian sources of the text, completed but not published here, fully confirms these results. On this basis, the next methodological step is to go back to the direct text tradition and see whether there is any group or family of manuscripts that consistently adopts the readings thus established. The restored readings against which the direct tradition can be checked are the following⁵⁵:

⁵⁴ These results will constitute more than one chapter in the forthcoming monograph several times mentioned in the present study.

⁵⁵ The references given here are uniquely those of Ritter's edition. [R] means Ritter's critical text, [I] the text derived, in the present study, from the indirect text tradition of the *Fourth Letter*, while [Q] means the text suggested by the *Quellenforschung*.

1-2. 160, 6-7: οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος μόνον — οὐδὲ ὑπερούσιος εἰ
 ἄνθρωπος μόνον [R] — οὔτε γὰρ ἄνθρωπος μόνον,
 οὔτε ὑπερούσιος — ἧ ἄνθρωπος — μόνον [I + Q].

Οὔτε — οὔτε probably corresponds to the meaning of Sergius' Syriac text and to the results of the aforementioned *Quellenforschung*. The first οὔτε is also the reading of AhAqEcJaPbPnPtRaRd in Ritter's apparatus, while the second οὔτε is the shared reading of AhAqEcJaOdPbPnPtPyRaRd. For the reading ἧ, see above.

3. 160, 8-9: ἐκ τῆς ἀνθρώπων οὐσίας [R] — ἐκ τῆς τῶν
 ἀνθρώπων οὐσίας [Q].

Ἐκ τῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων οὐσίας, a grammatically more correct form, is the univocal result of the *Quellenforschung*. It is also the reading of MSS AhAqEcFaFbHaJaJbLcLeMaOcOdPbPcPdPnPsPtPyRaRdUaUcUeVrWbWc according to Ritter's *apparatus criticus*.

4. 161, 8-9: οὐ κατὰ θεὸν τὰ θεῖα δράσας, οὐ τὰ ἀνθρώπεια κατὰ
 ἄνθρωπον [R] — οὐ κατὰ θεὸν τὰ θεῖα δράσας, οὔτε
 τὰ ἀνθρώπεια κατὰ ἄνθρωπον [I].

Οὔτε, instead of the second οὐ, is the reading of both Sergius and St. Maximus, the latter being consistent in this both in his *Ambigua* and in his scholia to the *Dionysian Corpus*. Οὔτε is also the reading of AqEcFbJaLcOdPaPbPnPtRaRcRd according to Ritter's *apparatus criticus*.

From these data we can draw the following conclusions. There are eight manuscripts which in the above four cases invariably give variant readings corresponding to our reconstructions made on the basis of the indirect text tradition and *Quellenforschung*. Another two manuscripts' readings correspond to three out of these four cases, while two more manuscripts coincide in two cases, out of the total four, with the reconstructed text:

4/4: Aq (13th c.) Ec (11th c.) Ja (9/10th c.) Pb (992) Pn (10th c.) Pt (9/10th c.) Ra (11th c.) Rd (13th c.)

3/4: Ah (14th c.), Od (14th c.).

2/4: Lc (972), Py (12th c.).

Out of these MSS Ah belongs to group 1 in B.R. Suchla's classification, Aq, Pb and Rd to group 4, Pt to group 5, Lc to group 9, Ec, Pn, Od and Ra to group 10, Py to group 11, and Ja to group 13, so that the twelve manuscripts thus chosen belong to seven different groups according to this classification; on this basis, there is little chance that all of them would be just copies of one hyparchetype.

Moreover, one can see that these ten or twelve manuscripts nowhere else give such coherent variant readings, discrepant from the majority tradition, but only in the four major cases, when the combined investigation of the indirect text tradition and the *Quellenforschung* also indubitably justifies the same version. There is, however, one and only one more case of coincidence in the reading of a number of these chosen “good” manuscripts, which is the following:

5. 161, 6: οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπος ἦν, οὐχ ὡς μὴ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων [R = I] — οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπος ἦν, οὐχ ὡς μὴ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλὰ θεὸς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ... [EcLcOdPnPtRa]

This variant is given by half of our twelve chosen manuscripts, the proportion remaining the same if we chose only ten, but it is not attested anywhere in the indirect tradition examined in the present paper. Thus, although it gives a better sense, in perfect conformity with our reconstruction of the *Letter*’s basic Dyophysite Christological argument, still it will be more prudent not to accept this variant over against the entire remaining text tradition.

The results of the investigations can be summarised in the following new edition and translation of the text⁵⁶:

Dionysius, <i>Fourth Letter</i> (Greek)	English
<p>Πῶς φῆς, Ἰησοῦς, ὁ πάντων ἐπέκεινα, πᾶσιν ἐστὶν ἀνθρώποις οὐσιωδῶς συντεταγμένος; Οὐ γὰρ ὡς αἷτιος ἀνθρώπων ἐνθάδε λέγεται ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ’ ὡς αὐτὸ κατ’ οὐσίαν ὄλην ἀληθῶς ἄνθρωπος ὤν. Ἡμεῖς δὲ τὸν Ἰησοῦν οὐκ ἀνθρωπικῶς ἀφορίζομεν · οὔτε⁵⁷ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος μόνον, οὔτε⁵⁸ ὑπερούσιος — ἦ⁵⁹ ἄνθρωπος —⁶⁰ μόνον, ἀλλ’ ἄνθρωπος ἀληθῶς ὁ διαφερόντως φιλόανθρωπος, ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπους καὶ κατὰ ἀνθρώπους</p>	<p>How do you say that Jesus, the one Who is beyond all things, is substantially ranked together with all men? For He is not called here man as the Cause of men, but as being precisely what means to be truly man in the entire substance. However, we do not define Jesus in a human way. For He is neither only man, nor only supersubstantial (as far as He is a man), but truly man is the exceedingly manloving one, the supersubstantial substantiated above men and</p>

⁵⁶ The following text does not contain all the variant readings, so it has no claim to constitute any kind of critical edition. The *apparatus criticus* here below contains only those variants that I judge to be of importance for the purpose of the present study.

⁵⁷ οὔτε: AhAqEcJaPbPnPtRaRd. οὐδέ: alii.

⁵⁸ οὔτε: AhAqEcJaOdPbPnPtPyRaRd. οὐδέ: alii.

⁵⁹ ἦ: Ao, Serg. εἰ: Ritter, ἦ: Cordier.

⁶⁰ ἦ ἄνθρωπος: om. Max.

ἐκ τῆς τῶν⁶¹ ἀνθρώπων οὐσίας ὁ ὑπερούσιος οὐσιωμένος.⁶² Ἔστιν δὲ οὐδὲν ἦττον⁶³ ὑπερουσιότητος ὑπερπλήρης ὁ αἰεὶ ὑπερούσιος· ἀμέλει τῇ ταύτης⁶⁴ περιουσία καὶ εἰς οὐσίαν ἀληθῶς ἐλθὼν, ὑπὲρ οὐσίαν οὐσιώθη καὶ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον ἐνήργει τὰ ἄνθρωπον. Καὶ δηλοῖ παρθένος ὑπερφυῶς κύουσα καὶ ὕδωρ ἄστατον ὑλικῶν καὶ γειρῶν ποδῶν ἀνέχον βάρος καὶ μὴ ὑπεῖκον, ἀλλ' ὑπερφυεῖ δυνάμει πρὸς τὸ ἀδιάχυτον συνιστάμενον.

Τί ἂν τις τὰ λοιπὰ πάμπολλα ὄντα διέλθοι; Δι' ὃν ὁ θεῖος ὄρων ὑπὲρ νοῦν γινώσεται καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῇ φιλανθρωπία τοῦ Ἰησοῦ καταφασκόμενα δύνανται ὑπεροχικῆς ἀποφάσεως ἔχοντα. Καὶ γάρ, ἵνα συνελόντες εἴπωμεν, οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπος ἦν, οὐχ ὡς μὴ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ' ὡς⁶⁵ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀνθρώπων ἐπέκεινα⁶⁶ καὶ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον ἀληθῶς ἄνθρωπος γεγονώς· καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν οὐ κατὰ θεὸν τὰ θεῖα δράσας, οὔτε⁶⁷ τὰ ἀνθρώπεια⁶⁸ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλ' ἀνδρωθέντος θεοῦ, καινὴν τινα τὴν θεανδρικήν ἐνέργειαν ἡμῖν πεπολιτευμένος.

according to men, from the substance of men. This notwithstanding, the one Who is always supersubstantial remains more-than-full of supersubstantiality. Moreover, when because of the abundance of the latter He has also truly come to substance, He was substantiated above substance and performed the human deeds above man. This is shown by the Virgin who supranaturally gives birth and by the unstable water that bears the weight of the material and earthly feet, and does not yield, but through a supernatural power is coagulated to a non-liquid state.

Why would one enumerate the rest, which are indeed many? Through which the one who sees in a divine manner will know above intellect that even those things that are predicated about the manlovingness of Jesus in fact have the sense of transcendent negation. For to say it shortly, He was not even man, not as if He were no man, but from men and beyond men and above man He has truly become man and, for the rest, performed the divine deeds not as God, nor the human deeds as man, but being God man-ified, exerted for us a kind of new godmanly activity.

⁶¹ τῶν: AhAqEcFaFbHaJaJbLcLeMaOcOdPbPcPdPnPsPtPyRaRdUaUcUeVrWbWc. Omittunt alii.

⁶² ὁ ὑπερούσιος: paene omnes. ὑπερουσιώς: PaVs.

⁶³ ἐν τῇ ἀνθρωπότητι, add. Serg.?

⁶⁴ ταύτης: cod. gr. et Max, ἐπὶ πάντα: Serg.?

⁶⁵ ἀλλ' ὡς: paene omnes, ἀλλὰ θεός: EcLcOdPnPtRa..

⁶⁶ ἀνθρώπων ἐπέκεινα: cod. gr. et Max. ὁ ἀνθρώπων ἐπέκεινα: Serg.

⁶⁷ οὔτε: AqEcFbJaLcOdPaPbPnPtRaRcRdMaxSerg. οὐ: alii.

⁶⁸ ἀνθρώπεια: Ritter, Cordier secundum permultos codices. ἀνθρώπινα: multi codices et Max.

Appendix: “Superabundance” (περιουσία) in the Dionysian Corpus

The following are the texts in which Dionysius uses the term “superabundance.”

(1) DN. VI. 2, 856C, 191.12-13: ὑπερεκτεινομένη διὰ **περιουσίαν** ἀγαθότητος καὶ εἰς τὴν δαιμονίαν ζωὴν ...

“[The divine Life] by the **superabundance** of its goodness extends itself even to the demonic life...”

(2) DN VIII. 2, 892A, 201.9-15: [λέγωμεν τοίνυν, ὅτι δύναμις ἔστιν ὁ θεὸς] τῷ ἀφθέγκτῳ καὶ ἀγνώστῳ καὶ ἀπερινοήτῳ τῆς πάντα ὑπερεχούσης αὐτοῦ δυνάμεως, ἢ⁶⁹ διὰ **περιουσίαν** τοῦ δυνατοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀσθένειαν δυναμοῖ, καὶ τὰ ἔσχατα τῶν ἀπηχημάτων αὐτῆς συνέχει καὶ διακρατεῖ...

“[Let us say that God is Power] because of the ineffability, unknowability, and inconceivability of His power that transcends all things, which by the **superabundance** of the Powerful strengthens even weakness, maintains and preserves even the last among its echoes.”

(3) DN VIII. 6, 892B, 204.1-4: [τὸν ὑπερδύναμον θεὸν ὑμνοῦμεν ὡς] ὑπερέχοντα καὶ προέχοντα πάντα τὰ ὄντα κατὰ δύναμιν ὑπερούσιον καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς οὐσι τὸ δύνασθαι εἶναι καὶ τόδε εἶναι κατὰ **περιουσίαν** ὑπερβαλλούσης δυνάμεως ἀφθόνῳ χύσει δεδωρημένον.

“[We celebrate the superpowerful God as] transcendentally containing and pre-containing all the beings according to His supersubstantial power and as giving to all the beings the possibility to be and to be what they are, according to the **superabundance** of His superior power given to them in an unjealous pouring out.

(4) DN XI 2, 952AB, 219.22-23: [ἡ τῆς παντελοῦς εἰρήνης δλότης] πρόεισι ... ἐπὶ **πάντα** καὶ μεταδίδωσι πᾶσιν οἰκείως αὐτοῖς ἑαυτῆς καὶ ὑπερβλύζει **περιουσία** τῆς εἰρηνικῆς γονιμότητος ...

“[The wholeness of perfect Peace] proceeds **to all things**, communicates itself to all things according to each one’s capacity, and gushes forth by the **superabundance** of its peaceful fertility...”

(5) CH. III. 3, 168A, 19.14-15: τοὺς δὲ καθαρτικοὺς **περιουσία** καθάρσεως ἑτέροις μεταδίδοναι τῆς οἰκείας ἀγνότητος ...

⁶⁹ ἢ: LILLA, *Osservazioni sul testo del De divinis nominibus dello Ps. Dionigi l’Areopagita* in *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, Serie III, 10 (1980) (= LILLA, *Osservazioni*), p. 174; sic et in Sergio (*Sin. Syr.* 37r.a); ἢ: Suchla.

“The purifying [orders] by the **superabundance** of their purification communicate to others their own purity...”

(6) CH. XV. 3, 329D, 53.10: κρατητικὸν δὲ πάντων τῆ τοῦ νοῦ **κατὰ περιουσίαν** δυνάμει ...

“It holds all things by the superabundant power of the intellect...”

(7) Ep. IV, 1072B, 160.10-11: ὁ ἀεὶ ὑπερούσιος ἀμέλει τῆ ταυτῆς [that is, τῆς ὑπερουσιότητος] **περιουσία** καὶ εἰς οὐσίαν ἀληθῶς ἐλθὼν ὑπὲρ οὐσίαν οὐσιώθη ...

“Certainly, when the one Who is eternally supersubstantial, by the **superabundance** of this [supersubstantiality] truly came to the substance, He was substantiated above substance....”

[I do not treat here a manifestly perturbed text, which has already challenged the understanding of the erudite Dionysian scholars, B.R. Suchla and S. Lilla:

(8)* DN IX. 4, 912C, 210.4-6: [τὸ δὲ ταυτόν] **περιουσία** καὶ αἰτία⁷⁰ ταυτότητος ἐν ἑαυτῷ καὶ τὰ ἐναντία ταυτῶς προέχον κατὰ τὴν μίαν καὶ ἐνικῆν τῆς ὅλης ταυτότητος ὑπερέχουσιν αἰτίαν.

The original of this text seems to be preserved by Sergius, who reads οὐσία καὶ αἰτία,⁷¹ a standard combination in Dionysius. So, according to Sergius’ version, the Same “is the Substance and the Cause of sameness in itself,” which already makes sense in the philosophical framework of the *Dionysian Corpus*.]

From this list one can see that Dionysius uses “superabundance” invariably with the meaning of an overflowing fullness of the higher beings’ quality, which makes them almost naturally communicate it with the lower beings. In the case when this higher being is God Himself, the stress is on the full trajectory this overflowing accomplishes. Divine Life, in its abundant goodness, extends itself even to the most wretched beings, the demons (1); the abundant virtue of the divine Power strengthens even the weakness (2); it gives being and identity to all by the superabundance of its transcendent power (3); the perfect Peace gushes forth in its superabundance and makes all beings share in it (4). Apparently the doctrine of the *Fourth Letter*, which explains the Incarnation as a natural outflow of the supersubstantial transcendence of God

⁷⁰ περιουσία καὶ αἰτία: Suchla; <καὶ περιουσία [καὶ αἰτία]: LILLA, *Osservazioni*, p. 178; οὐσία καὶ αἰτία: Serg.

⁷¹ *Sin. syr.* 52, 40v.b.

(7), is a logical continuation of this general Dionysian doctrine. As mentioned above, this doctrine is not Dionysius' own invention. Most probably he took it directly from Evagrius of Pontus.

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Abstract: The present study aims at a complex investigation into the meaning and the text of the *Fourth Letter* of Pseudo-Dionysius. For this endeavour it uses methods pertaining to the history of philosophy, the history of theology, philology, text criticism, the study of text transmission, and *Quellenforschung*. The result is a reinterpretation of the text and meaning of the *Fourth Letter* and, per consequent, of the stance of Pseudo-Dionysius in the contemporary Christological debates. Thus, besides providing a new edition of the Greek text of the *Fourth Letter*, it also reconstructs the essential elements of Dionysius' Christological doctrine, showing that it is an artful blend composed of the Neoplatonist exegesis of the *third* and *fourth hypotheses* of Plato's *Parmenides*, of the Origenist theory of the Incarnation elaborated by Evagrius of Pontus, and of the Christological doctrine of Theodore of Mopsuestia. It also shows the importance of the indirect text tradition of the *Dionysian Corpus* for a critical study of its direct text transmission.